

**ALBENA
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historiography and literature

on social constructing
of historical concepts
and grand narratives
in Bulgarian culture
XIX and XX century

volume I

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*I dedicate this work to my colleagues and friends –
historians, sociologists, culturologists, philosophers,
who came along when I was crossing and observing disciplinary boundaries
– with love and gratitude.*

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ADDENDUM

**HISTORY AND NOVELISTIC
GENEALOGIES: VERA MUTAFCHIEVA**

In Lieu of Introduction:
Historiography and Literature
as Choice Policies

... whether I moved into Cem, or vice versa ...
NonFables, Book III: 150

In the last lines of the last fourth book of Vera Mutafchieva's memoir series *NonFables* ²¹³ she writes: "*... I realize that I lived wonderfully – on the border between reality and fiction. Which I wish you too. And if there is something wrong – I am sorry!*" (*NonFables*, IV: 294).

Well, we would immediately say that there really is something – and in this case it is a deliberate ambiguity about the where the border passes, the what it divides, the where and what are those epistemological and social checkpoints through which it can be crossed. Saying goodbye, Vera Mutafchieva smiles and hides in the cliché about the border, leaving the reader the choice whether to live in the cliché or to reconstruct the border, which only through its reconstruction would permit to be crossed.

The first book of *NonFables* begins without an explanatory preface and in a startlingly fictional way – witness verb forms write events before the birth of the witness: "Mom and Dad got engaged in October 1927. And the wedding was postponed for the next summer vacation" (*NonFables* I: 5). The memoir series starts with something that can be anything but a memoir.

²¹³ Mutafchieva, Vera. *NonFables*. Books I–III. ~~NonFables~~. Book IV. Sofia: Anubis, 2000–2005.

Further, the reader forgets that the beginning has refuted his genre expectations, or attributes it to stylistic causes and effects; reassures that witness forms are riveted to an already existing biographical entity that substantiates them; fluent prefaces emerge as well, growing from the second to the fourth book; political history also invades, along with its ability and weakness to capture human life, to design, argue, and explain it. The gap between genre and language has closed, but the memory of reading holds it in as a vague hint.

Then the memoir goes its due course, not least because the reader of Vera Mutafchieva is accustomed to her fictional history being the exact opposite. He is accustomed to the plot of history being made by a complex and dense mosaic of various third-person human lives (*Chronicle of the Troubled Time*, 1965–1966) or by the encounter of various I-stories (*The Cem Case*, 1967; *Me, Anna Komnene*, 1991), and not from a self-conscious autobiography like in *NonFables*, going through various changing stages of life and points of view. Moreover, the self-consciousness of the life written on its own behalf has more to hide than to reveal, as we know from the *Book of Sophronius*, 1978. In this sense, the memoir series can very easily deceive the lover of pure genre forms, if he underestimated his deceived expectation in the opening lines as he reads the witness forms of the events of the still unborn woman.

The series actually helps the reader by insisting on thematizing the difference between ‘reality’ and ‘fiction’ to the point of closing both between different covers, volumes and titles. In the three *NonFables* (“Bivalitsi”) fiction is only at the level of the allegories comprehended, only in the dependence of the text on the human occasions, reasons and intentions of its author. The creative stories, the readers’ and critics’ reactions, the political vicissitudes of the texts are closed in the fourth volume with a changed title, under the clearly dissecting ~~*NonFables*~~ (“Ne/Bivalitsi”). Science, the biographical life of the professional historian, the articles and monographs of scientists are in the *Bivalitsi*, and art is in the *Ne/Bivalitsi**. In addition to clarity in composition, this traditional, classical classification also contains, of course, ideologies - it works for the memoir genre, drawing a “non” to being in a world long considered autonomous. By the way, the titles themselves undermine this clichéd division, very characteristic of the time when Vera Mutafchieva decided to take up both crafts of the language identically and institutionally. The neologism “bivalitsi” is made by removing a prefix, but it could mean nothing if – like any neologism – it does not preserve the semantic memory of the dictionary mother-word, i.e. keeps the reading of the deleted “non”. “Ne/Bivalitsi” does

* Nebivalitsi = nonfables is an old word established in the language, composed of the negation "ne" and the non-existent word "bivalitsa", which could be thought of as a noun derived from the modal verb "bivam" = may, occur, exist, be. – *Note of the translator.*

not completely return the tradition of the dictionary, but puts the dash, which is very similar to the already crossed fence between the meanings. The question, however, is what identities and affiliations of the text are exchanged and replaced in the constant wandering across the border.

In an interview of Emy Baruch with Vera Mutafchieva, given at the time of writing *NonFables*, the interviewer proceeds from the classical premise that historiography is a place of reality and truth, and literature – of myths and fiction; that intuition is for the writer and analysis is for the historian. However, Vera Mutafchieva's answer completely calmly exchanges the places and their contents:

“– Are the writer's intuitions or the historian's analysis a more reliable starting point for looking ahead? The writer creates the myths, the historian refutes them...”

– ... In your opinion, the writer created the myths, and the historian refuted them. This would be the case if both the historian and the writer acted in a laboratory setting, even better in an airless environment. If they themselves were tailored to an exact drawing. But a large number of facts refute your statement: too often the writer sets about demythologizing history, while the historian contributes not only to the preservation but also to the creation of myths. It all depends on the presumed concept in one or the other type of work, as well as the nature of the artists... As a general rule, myths are compensation for the poor self-esteem of a society, but also the result of its excessive self-esteem. The myth does not resist one thing, it appears to me: thrashing, thrashing, thrashing” (Mutafchieva, V. 2004: 321–323).

This answer, in fact, flatly refuses to reflect on historiography and literature in the ‘field’ regime. Differences are not a function of their action, they are in the ‘presumed concept’ of the writer, either of historiography or of literature. For Vera Mutafchieva, these are nothing more than genre differences, each of which can perform the functions of the other in either mythologizing or demythologizing. Yet the existing preconditions and prejudices about their fundamental difference are not insignificant at all, because they allow cultural-historical mimicry in the very gesture of the demythologizing action. They allow it to ‘hide’ in the old cultural identity of the other field; or to disguise itself as the other one, and thence to carry out its demythologizing action without radicalism and revolutionary assertion, but with sufficient consistent social perseverance in carrying out his suggestions. This means, among other things, that it is in this attitude that the differences between the fields are preserved, and sometimes more strictly than it seems at first glance. Because the ‘presumed concept’ of the person writing definitely chooses in each case the genre format through which to carry out his interpretive moves; and

this choice, clearly or mutedly, always carries within itself the very alternatives from which to choose. The *conceptual activity* of the writer is always present, whether the literature or the historiography will be intended as a subject of this activity for each individual case. Therefore, depending on the chosen genre subject of this conceptual activity – historiography or literature in their always maintained connection – we will further talk about Vera Mutafchieva's *aesthetics of knowledge* or *romance of commentary*.

However, there are also formats in which the genre picture of conceptual activity is blunted. Thus appear, as literary critics call them, the 'essayistic deviations' in our historian's novels, or plainly 'essayistic novels' or even 'genre-indeterminate novels', such as *The Last Shishmanides* (1969) or *A Personage Impossible. Rakovski's Youth* (1983). The difficulty in reconstructing the 'presumed concept', however, is not in the formulation of the genre ('essay' in this case is a saving-compensatory and in this sense not quite inaccurate name), but in the fact that the conceptual activity of Vera Mutafchieva in different cases is untraceable in clear genre and thematic typologies. That is, the when of one field turning out to be an instrument for deconstruction of the other field and at exactly which points of the subject matter and interpretation this happens, cannot be said at once, and no such observation would have – even if only for the work of Vera Mutafchieva – wide enough theoretical validity. For the time being, we will give only some easily observable preliminary examples, which also carry clear-cut political frameworks for the choice between the roles of historiography and literature.

Even if the 1960s return nationalism to historiography and encourage the new flowering of the historical novel, Vera Mutafchieva (unlike other authors during this period) does not share any affiliation to the model in which nationalism and genre are impossible without each other – the historical novel of the right from the interwar period. In an extensive interview of Atanas Svilenov in 1979 with the author, the critic tries to trace her literary genealogy, her belonging to this genre tradition in Bulgarian literature. In her answers, Vera Mutafchieva directly rejects any possible affinity with the historical novel of the 1930s, both politically and literary:

„– In Bulgarian literature, historical themes have been relatively long and widespread. There are even periods when it is in a state of a real 'boom' - the thirties, then the sixties, etc. In my opinion, there are high examples (Vazov of course, then St. Zagorchinov, D. Talev, more recently E. Stanev, A. Donchev, G. Stoev, etc.), but also a huge mediocre, gray production... What do you consider to be our most significant achievements and what are the most significant shortcomings?

– It has always annoyed me that some authors choose a plot from the past to beautify it with exoticism and pathos, with unimaginable adventures and implausible characters. The historical theme allows this... Maybe I'm wrong, maybe the problems inherent in the historical fiction of the 1930s, for example, which we will not deny mastery, professionalism, simply tell me nothing... The tacky historical novel also has a permanent place in our book production. The thirty years that the peaks you mentioned in the historical novel have left us were especially rich in piles of Royal, Boyar, Bagatur and Bagain books, in shallow patriotism and disproportionate nationalism.“ (Mutafchieva, V. 2004: 48–51).

Let us add to this the foreword of Vera Mutafchieva to the 1986 edition of Fani Popova-Mutafova's *Ioan-Assen II* quoted in our previous pages on another occasion, where it is said – with tolerant respect, but without any admiration and monumentalization of the work of the interwar writer, – that her characters “move, act and speak as in a baroque opera, and their destinies are already dramatic... one feels the need for both colorful and beautiful tales. It seems to me that Fani Popova-Mutafova's place in Bulgarian historical prose will be preserved, because she gave life to this very kind of novel“ – and it is with this kind of novel that Vera Mutafchieva flatly refuses to identify her own writing ²¹⁴.

However, this does not mean that her identifications with or against a tradition are typologically rigid. In the interview quoted above, she does not stop at the super-popularity of Vazov's historical drama. For her, his Ivan Alexander from *Towards the Abyss* is a harmful and limiting prejudice: “*Let's take Ivan Vazov's Towards the Abyss as an example. Today we would not say that this is a great drama, nor a great concept. But since the premiere of Towards the Abyss Ivan-Alexander – one of the most interesting rulers that the Bulgarians had – has been ruined, there is no way to rehabilitate him. Short-sighted, depraved old reveler, active enemy of the Bulgarian*

²¹⁴ Again, as far as the interwar historical novel is concerned, Vera Mutafchieva shows an inherited respect for Stoyan Zagorchinov, but also clearly refuses to identify with his literary heritage: „ It was then and there, as I was working on the *Chronicle*, when I received a postcard... An invitation to a meeting signed with a name I had cherished since childhood: Stoyan Zagorchinov... He eloquently mentioned how he met my father while working on *The Last Day, the Day of the Lord*. He had learned that I was writing a novel ... After reading a hundred pages, the man called me again with a postcard (he would not have been able to afford a phone) and set out his opinion in great detail. Almost like a student's teacher on a writing in class. I listened reverently. And I didn't listen to him, of course – a sin in my soul! – knowing (well, I didn't know anything) that this is not how novels happen. On the other hand, as soon as the book came out and I presented it to him with sincere gratitude, Zagorchinov rejoiced, as if he really saw his follower. And then, in time, he would call me again and again to a conversation in which I would appear accurately – I was hurt by the icy loneliness in which he had been shivering in his last days. Forgotten; thank God, at least not insulted... I hope the hermit from Aprilov Street has made peace and light for himself in the beyond – he was a proud stoic, but internally vulnerable man. It's lucky that he lived to see the sudden Italian edition of his *Lord's Day* in a prestigious series of European novels. Rarely does something fair happen before the end of the comedy” (NonFables III: 215–216).

future, the main reason for our falling into slavery...” (53). To a large extent, her Ivan Alexander from *The Last Shishmanides* (1969) is a resisting antithesis of Vazov's. But *A Persona Impossible. Rakovski's Youth* (1983), without, of course, being a retelling of Vazov, never manages to release the scope of Vazov's ode “Rakovski” from *The Epic of the Forgotten*, which set not only the formula of the title in 1983, but also the very framework of the interpretation of the Rakovski case. There is no ‘aesthetics of knowledge’ inherited from historiography here that would call Vazov's reading and writing of Rakovski's personality into question.

The same goes for historiography. Petar Mutafchiev's [1883-1943] daughter is the author of the essay *The Road*, her early work, which clearly bears the ancestral marks of her father's work *The Old Road through the Gate of Trajan* (1937). However, the late co-authorship that Vera Mutafchieva undertook, writing the third part of his *History of the Bulgarian People* (1995) after her father, does not demonstrate genetically the same approach, method or voice. She says it clearly in her introductory words: “*I hesitated for a long time whether to co-author with my father for understandable reasons. The first: it is wrong to force yourself to co-author someone who is unable to refuse you. Second: each generation has a different view of the past, its own methods and concepts, its own handwriting. Like any author – within generations. I thought that there would be a mismatch and it really is present*” (Mutafchiev, Mutafchieva, 1995: 7). In her memoirs, she expressed her great piety for the interwar academic intelligentsia, but repeatedly, including after 1989, acknowledged her tilt towards historical materialism as a method of historical research (she was particularly attached to the writing of the ‘semi-classic’ Engels). However, her historical-materialist scheme turns out to be devoid of determinism, the idea of ‘historical necessity’ turns out to be interrupted precisely in its causal knots, and this is one of her novels’ strategies for thinking about man in history. And so on.

Therefore, the legacies of historiography and literature are not enough to explain the relationship between them, even just in the writing of Vera Mutafchieva, as she treats them not as compact traditions, taken, accepted or not accepted in their entirety. Her choices are ‘intermittent’, non-typological and non-linear. And their conceptual activity has different bases each time, which direct the action of the interpretive tools in different ways.

For all that the novels leave a sense of common features, embedded in the principle of interpretation (regardless of the always possible change of instruments and directions of interpretation), which Vera Mutafchieva offers and which are recognized as a kind of ‘genre innovation’ since the 1960s: multiplication of narrative techniques; disregard for

the heroic; the complete absence of naive nationalism; the neglect of pathos and the introduction of various, but always human, suppressed or glamorous ironies; the rejection of plot clichés and romantic characterologies; lack of omnipotent men, lovely women and great love stories, etc. However, these large common features emerge precisely in the comparisons with the genre heritage, and as we have already said, for Vera Mutafchieva it does not appear to be monolithically predetermined at all and the attitude towards it is not at all uniform and homogeneous. In any case, it is not simply available, but is always commented on – with a consistent critique of its sanctioning ability to ‘tell the truth’ and therefore play the role of history itself.

Romance of commentary

Of all the meanings of history that heritage provides, Vera Mutafchieva accepts as final and always available only the first one, that of Herodotus – history as a search, investigation, interrogation ²¹⁵ – and it permeates each of her pages. Such an attitude precludes any confidence in the obviousness of the story as a text and a Great Story, always present, whether articulated or background. That is why the investigation, the interrogation of Vera Mutafchieva is always realized what concerns the plot as a resistance against the found, inherited text in its role of final truth and evaluation.

The resistance develops on different levels – doubt in the authenticity, reading against the ideography which is settled in the genre format (legend, chronicle, biography, apology); or reading, which ignores the frozen messages of the text in order to focus on the characterologies of the writer herself. But in any case, the reading-writing of Vera Mutafchieva goes against the solemn finality of the old text, especially when it is the real historical heritage. When in the *Chronicle of the Troubled Time* Pazvantoğlu dictates to Kalinik a letter to the Russian emperor, its style (“*The common joy of various peoples, subjects of Your Imperial Majesty, extending to the ends of the earth, testifies to your paternal justice and to your sage government in general...*”) makes Kalinik just think: “*No, really... really Pazvantoğlu doesn't know where to stop, if he starts to pretend to be a karagyož...*” (530 ²¹⁶). The cool story of Cem’s fate from *The Cem Case* stands against the background array of troubadour songs of his time and of the

²¹⁵ “It is clear from the opening phrase of the work that its original title is ‘*Historías apódexis*’. Of course, this meaning could be accepted if in the time of Herodotus the word *historia* had its present meaning. But then it means something broader – searching, research, a kind of science that is done through surveys and interrogations and the result of which is a special story. So in Herodotus *historías apódexis* means rather ‘*exposition of inquiries...*’ (Bogdanov, B. 1986: 9)

²¹⁶ All quotes from the *Chronicle of the Troubled Time* are here from the edition: Mutafchieva, Vera. *Chronicle of the Troubled Time*. Fourth edition. S.: Bulgarian writer, 1984

seventeenth-century writers who exalted the unfortunate Zizim... We also find serious ironies addressed to the hunger of the Great Story ²¹⁷ for an event, for a plot. To tell the storylessness of the fall of Bulgaria, Vera Mutafchieva first retells the matrix with its negligent outlook: “*And when it comes to the Middle Ages (it is believed that there can not go without a fairy tale, without some poisonous water supply, a sudden plague broke out, the machinations of insidious foreign princesses, horses shod in the opposite direction of action, or three hundred cattle with candles glued to their horns), if we are talking about a medieval siege, we must look for its solution in an event. By the way, let us give up the events ...*” (*The Last Shishmanides* ²¹⁸, 33).

The resistance in such cases is also a resistance against literature and its plots, against its styles, and not only as far as the tradition of the historical novel is concerned. Vera Mutafchieva is probably the most unquoted Bulgarian author, in her texts the intentional or unconscious intertexts, the legacies of the Bulgarian literary memory cannot be clearly traced. Her novels behave as unrelated to literature. We will adduce an example which may seem of more ancillary nature, but in our opinion it is indicative enough: in the teenage novel *The Knight* (1970) a playful French library is disposed, presented in its form of passing acquaintances of Roger de Fre: it is about the neighbor Laroche-Foucault and his daughter, about the peasants of Senor Saint-Exupéry and his estate, about the drunk knight De Musset, the blacksmith Daudet, Baron Dumas, the knight Descartes... With the exception of Descartes, the others are episodic and their names do not make any special hermeneutic environment, complicated citations, etc. – this library is just cheerful, self-sufficient hedonistic, it is built not so much to get literature together as to take it out of its own canonical inertia.

Even where there is a vague quotation in Vera Mutafchieva's language, the foreign author's voice is aimed at meaning not what it actually means, it has left its ‘places of memory’: “... *the dying man himself must admit that he has no feet to cross with... that he has no hands to reach out*” is a sentence that does not refer at all to Balkandji Yovo, but to every human old age in the *Book of Sophronius* (1978 ²¹⁹, 155). *Me, Anna*

²¹⁷ In this case, we do not fully respect Lyotard's parameters of the term ‘Great Narrative, which refer to the scientific narrative and metanarrative, and we scoop from the more popular uses of the term in the sense of an institutionally rigid, substantial in respect to identification purposes and super-popular narrative on the history. In connection with Vera Mutafchieva, however, the deviation from Lyotard may not be so great as to become methodologically problematic, as the scientificity and meta-levels of the story are always restrained in her writing through those attitudes that we call here ‘aesthetics of knowledge’ and ‘romance of the commentary’.

²¹⁸ Here we quote the text by: Mutafchieva, Vera. *The Last Shishmanides* (and their time). S.: Anubis, 2002.

²¹⁹ The quotes from *Book of Sophronius* here are based on the edition: Mutafchieva, Vera. *Book of Sophronius*. 2nd edition. S.: Military Publishing House, 1979.

Komnene contains excerpts from the original *Alexiad* so that Anna Komnene's novel voice can clearly enough push itself away from her own classic work. In the first two cases, this leads to the final termination of the connection with the genre - *The Last Shishmanides* is an 'essay novel' (in *NonFables* Vera Mutafchieva calls the essay 'reticent art'), and in the dictionary article about Vera Mutafchieva (*Dictionary of New Bulgarian Literature*, 1994) S. Belyaeva categorically refers to the *Book of Sophronius* as "a book of an indefinable genre"²²⁰.

In general, there are ambiguous relations between history as the Great Story and the forms of literature in Vera Mutafchieva's work. They are at times levelled, at times unequal in their power over the audience and in their ability to create identifications: "...*history has seen much more miserable, more heroic, more worthy princes... Why did Cem remain in the legend of several nations ... I can hardly reveal an unknown truth: the song did it ... The poet has more power than the king*" (*The Cem Case*²²¹, 163). In the same novel, however, poetry and history are difficult to reconcile: "*Cem was a poet, inappropriately involved in history, and almost all of his steps, which did not turn out to be wrong, were at least ridiculous.*" (196). In both cases, the story is colder, more unintentional than poetry, and poetry and legend are in the biased extrahistory of 'living'. However, the two may be too similar, as they are inherently random in their choice of name immortalized: „*Because the song, like the story, is always looking for a face, a name; and the song, like history, very often selects them wrongly – Krali Marko, the hero whose heroism is unanimous by all the South Slavs, is a convincing example in this regard*" (*The Last Shishmanides*, 35).

In order to observe more closely how the conceptual activities of historiography and literature on Vera Mutafchieva's part coincide, we will dwell for a moment on how she constructs the story contained in the historical concept of [Bulgarian National] Revival in her novel *Chronicle of the Troubled Time*. The novel begins by clearly stating the year 1762, in which three men were born – Selim III, Kara Feyzie and Osman Pazvantoğlu – and one text, *Slavonic-Bulgarian History*, but offering an anthropologically colorful and dense, and non-hierarchical picture of what was happening then, which seems out of line with the conciseness of the Great Story ("1762 is the beginning of the Bulgarian Revival") distilled by the classical version of Marin Drinov. By the way, V. Mutafchieva introduces the version just as it is already available, as a quoted one: "...*the new history... It started, it is said, from this one – one thousand seven hundred and sixty-second year*". It is precisely the 'anthropological' density of the beginning, however, that

²²⁰ See *Dictionary of New Bulgarian Literature 1878–1992*. S. : Hemus, 1994, pp. 244.

²²¹ All quotes here from *The Cem Case* are in the edition: Mutafchieva, Vera. *The Cem case*. 4th edition. Varna: Georgi Bakalov, 1982.

deprives it of the ease and memorization of the version, of our prior knowledge of what is ‘most important’ in it: “*The Sultan called on foreigners to strengthen the fortresses on the northern Black Sea coast... The Grand Vizier ordered a new tax – a fine for decanting wine... The Dragoman at the High Gate began to take money from the Deutschen, because France gave a low price for his dangerous betrayal... Stoyko [the would-be bishop Sophronius], the small sheepstock dealer from the Kotel village, received the priesthood and offered his first prayer...*” (8) and so on.

Chronicle of the Troubled Time makes a version of the Revival, which is very particular in relation to both literary and historiographic tradition. The model is in the fate of a family from the village of Konare, which split during the riots and after the village was raided by Mehmed Sinap. The three brothers and their sister take completely different paths, and each of them has his completely personal and not at all dialectical-materialistic reasons for this. The eldest brother Parvan ‘hit the forest’ (becomes a kircali-hajduk, immersed in the unrest); the second – Stoyan, stubborn and firm, concerned only with his family (“*He lived as a farm animal...: from sowing to digging, from digging to harvesting, to threshing*”), stays in the village, because “*someone still has to stay*” (264); the youngest, Dobrie, weak, sick, ‘faint’ and ‘swoony’, the only literate of them all, goes to the Bachkovo Monastery, but there he learns from the abbot the rumor that somewhere there was a book about the old Bulgarian kings, which the young man sets off to search and after a long journey reaches Sophronius and his transcript of *Slavonic-Bulgarian History*; the sister Stamena picks up her family and goes to Filibe, where the former villagers sit down in the urban handicrafts.

So hastily mentioned, the four seem too schematic, but they are not just ‘socio-psychological types’ at all, as science would say. There is too much human in them, undetermined by ordinary typologies. And if any prototype schemotechnics works, it is those of the various ‘revivals’²²² that can be divided and collected, but not in the line of some linear teleology, but in the *maelstrom* [subtitle of Book I of the *Chronicle of the Troubled Time*] and *spillage* [subtitle of Book II of the *Chronicle...*], of chaos, coincidences and destinies. Stamena is the ‘economic revival’ – by the way, it is with her that the term is said with its capital letter and its singular number; it is also the shortest, most ‘scientifically’ developed of all, and most completely coincides with its historiographic version in Vera Mutafchieva’s monograph *Kircali Time*: “*No tale has captured the victory of Stamena, of the thousands of stamenas, who quietly but difficultly conquered the cities of the Bulgarian land. She was forgotten – although it*

²²² On the question of the different revivals and their gathering in the concept of Revival, as well as on a wider horizon of this concept and its versions in the Bulgarian culture, we will dwell in more detail in the first part of the second volume of this study.

was from this victory that the Bulgarian Revival arose” (*Chronicle of the Troubled Time*, 745) – “**the influx of peasants to the cities** (and precisely the rural population of Rumelia was predominantly Bulgarian) **strengthened the Bulgarian urban element**. It is no coincidence that after the anarchy subsided we notice a telling process: the economic and spiritual stirring among the Bulgarians **in cities**” (*Kircali Time*, Mutafchieva, V. 1993: 390). This formulation resurrects in the 1960s the then forgotten ‘urban’ version of the Revival, which runs in different ways from Ivan Shishmanov to the early Hristo Gandev. And the figurative of its science was achieved precisely through the lack of art that would compete with her: “No tale has captured Stamena’s victory...”.

Let's go back to the plot of the divided family. Parvan and Dobrie, of course, are clearly thematically prototypical (temporally – from before the time of the Church question or the national liberation struggles) to the historiographical parameters of the ‘spiritual’ and ‘political’ revival. Stoyan is no Revival at all – being the one who stayed in the village, merged with the earth and died on it (by the way, the only one of the four who dies within the novel’s plot) he has a lot of human dignity, but is a counterpoint to the other three models. The village and the sedentariness, – the permanence of the tradition do not lead to a ‘revival’ precisely in the sense of the historical concept. That is why it would probably be quite interesting to read the paradigmatic apology of premodernity, for example Elin Pelin’s story *The Geraks* – retrospectively through such an ideography of the 1960s, in which ‘the Bulgarian’ and ‘the revival’ are made precisely through divisions of people and models, rather than by withholding their long-standing premodern togetherness.

The long-running critical question of whether V. Mutafchieva is a ‘more’ historian or a ‘more’ writer in her novels today can mostly lead to a series of paradoxes and is hardly very productive. Because in the *Chronicle...* the fictional, entirely belles-lettrical people of the Stano family in Konare are in fact disguises of historiographical theses, while the historically real characters such as Kara Feyzie, Osman Pazvantoğlu and Selim III are thought to be somehow incumbently deprived of their due literariness. The latter is clear from an epilogue to the *Chronicle...* in its first edition, then unpublished in reprints of the novel and reappeared only now, in the corpus “Selected Works” of the author ²²³. It says that none of them found ‘their singer’ though Selim had too many opportunities to be thought of as Hamlet, Pazvantoğlu as Wallenstein, and Kara Feyzie as Robin Hood or Scaramouche; this leads the author to the statement, which she further maintains in her

²²³ Mutafchieva, Vera. Selected works in 12 volumes. Plovdiv: Janet 45, 2008.

writing in various ways: about the semiotic, cultural and historical silentness and loneliness of the Balkans.

We will very briefly note that if this had happened, i.e. if indeed the three were turned into literary characters, then it was Vera Mutafchieva who would deliberately read them *against* their literariness. Just as she reads Cem Sultan against the European troubadour model of ‘unfortunate Zizim’; as she reads Sophronius against his own *Life and Sufferings...*; or Anna Komnene with the anti-appologetics of her *Alexiad*. *And if on Vera Mutafchieva’s part there is a constantly flowing plot, it is realized just in the constant tension between literature and historiography, which arose in their great ability to write and transmit differing stories.* It is this detachment that is the precondition that makes possible both the interplay between them and their exchange as genre subjects of conceptual activity, of interpretation. We see the detachment in her writing most clearly against the background of the constant thrusts, which since the interwar period have been pressing the fields together, undermining their autonomy and erasing the boundaries of their difference. And it is exactly this difference that is fundamental for Vera Mutafchieva: in working on it, she seems to introduce a special, own ‘genre’, which we synthetically call the *romance of commentary*.

We can observe it from the entrance of the circumstance that the quotations on Vera Mutafchieva’s part are too obviously and scientifically aware; they do not stand in the motor memory, in the adherence to the tradition, on which the author does not feel much dependence. They are placed categorically aside from her critical commentary voice, they stand in their foreign independence. Each section of *The Last Shishmanides* begins with a medieval passage, clearly demarcated from the proposed commentary; The Book of Sophronius contains the entire text of Sophrony’s *Life and Sufferings...*, with admired disbelief commented by the author in each of its sections. Thus, the image of the “two Stoykos”, with which the first book of the *Chronicle of the Troubled Time* begins, has become the backbone of the ‘romance of commentary’ – *Book of Sophronius*. There, the speech of Vera Mutafchieva: “*Stoyko, without exception, underestimated his social environment...*”; “*... money, money, money! As if nothing else affected the priest-merchant in the Kotel village with its sheepstock dealers and craftsmen public*” (54-55), “*the sheep affair*”, etc., outraged some of the then first readers of the book, including Peter Dinekov ²²⁴, in fact follows exactly the facts of *Life and Sufferings*. However, the commentary realized the resistance against the text of Sophronius itself as a formulation of the life activities and circumstances hidden by the revivalist – the two transcripts of *Slavonic-Bulgarian History*, the probable secret

²²⁴ See ~~Non~~Fables IV:102-106.

activity in Vidin, the participation in the affairs of Zambin, the Land army... The instrumentality of this respectful and admirable resistance against *Life and Sufferings of Sinful Sophronius* is openly acknowledged in the preface: “*The priest Stoyko from Life and Sufferings... has ousted Sophronius of Vratsa. But while living children in turn become parents, the works of the spirit are childless and immortal. It is impossible to erase the character from Life and Sufferings... in order to resurrect its creator. What we can wish for is that Sophronius, in turn, will become hero of someone’s work in order to gain the same immortality that priest Stoyko from Life and Sufferings... has acquired. I hope that at least to some extent they somehow will live side by side ever after.*” (6)

In this self-recognized instrumentality lies something else that seems very important to us: in Vera Mutafchieva’s desire for versions and interpretations ‘to live side by side’ lies a clear rejection of the hitherto generally accepted idea of the history of historical science as ‘history of mistakes’. This essentially Hegelian idea (which we dealt with in more detail in the first part) means that ‘historical truth’ is achievable through the gradual and one-way rejection of previous ‘wrong’ interpretations. ‘Living side by side’ is a completely different model that affirms history as a history of differences of interpretation, a kind of history of ideas that do not compete in the regime of ‘truth’ but in the regime of their social life, which gives and the grounds of each. In such an attitude, however, the conceptual activity that produces the next interpretation cannot stop only at its genre format or at its identity of a ‘field’ that has its own rules of social construction. Thus, for Vera Mutafchieva, *both historiography and literature have equal opportunities for conceptual activity, and therefore for social action.*

It is the romance of the commentary that is the most obvious embodiment of the author's biased choice of the meaning of ‘history’ – investigation, search, interrogation, while disbelief, resistance to the quoted text is the core of the investigation. The ‘genre’ specificity of the romance of the commentary is the author's passionate, loving disbelief in human speech; unbelief, which requires further speech and further interrogation and investigation²²⁵. However, it does not take away from the territory of the existing

²²⁵ In that sense, if there is full confidence in a text from the available tradition, the romance of the commentary cannot be triggered and do its conceptual work. That is why here, too, we will connect as a cause and a consequence two things that in *NonFables* have no causal connection with each other. Vera Mutafchieva clearly defines her book *A Persona Impossible. Rakovski’s Youth* (1983) as a failure. In the course of this confession, it is said about the admiration that the author feels for those characteristics of Rakovski, which Vazov gave him in the ode “Rakovski” from *Epic of the Forgotten*: “*After reading the available research, biographies, apology of that fiery revolutionary, published by Vazov and others until today, I did not find a more accurate description of him. This is called intuition, masterfully cast in two dozen words...*” (*NonFables* IV:40) Here we will assume that *A Persona Impossible...* is a failure because the author has completely agreed with Vazov’s interpretation. There is no resistance to the existing interpretations here: the agreement with Vazov and the not fully radical reading of Rakovski’s *Innocent Bulgarian*

aesthetic – the admiration of Tsamblak, the Life of Sophronius, and the *Alexiad* of Anna Komnene accompanies every line of their distrustful interpretation. The strategy of "truth" in these cases is also very intriguing: the investigation actually convincingly cancels the reader's previous belief in the text under investigation without violating its value, and replacing it with a critical comment willingly or unwillingly puts the commentary in the place of truth in the consciousness of the reader. In *NonFables* Vera Mutafchieva repeatedly shares her annoyance with the naive mass reader's question "Is this true?" Her complaint is not very fair, insofar as her investigative interpretation, canceling the socially settled 'truth' of facts and inherited interpretations, works itself to the end in a figurative of truth; both in the communicative and in the hermeneutic grounds of truth, the finality of which the reader thinks he has finally received thanks to the investigation ²²⁶. Because the genre of any investigation (including Herodotus' investigation called 'history') ultimately requires the detective to tell his listeners and readers the very truth. Perhaps this is one of the possible explanations for the socio-cultural features of the phenomenon – the high popularity of a completely non-mass reading due to its scholarly synthesis and intellectual charge such as the novels of Vera Mutafchieva, who, in turn, do not enjoy much commitment from side of academic critique; or how 'professor's prose' turns out to be widely recognized and loved, as if it were written by a 'folk writer'.

And then the tools of Herodotus' investigations of Vera Mutafchieva can be of any kind. In the *Book of Sophronius*, the romance of the commentary is generated from a non-basic and not at all belles-lettrical point of view, which seeks the contours of political history behind the pitiful subjectivity of Sophronius' fictional "I". In contrast, however, *Me, Anna Komnene* (1991) does not commission the investigation in a language other than belles-lettrical. On the contrary, the claims of artistry and the genre of apology in *Alexiad* are also critically commented on by artistry, which, however, relies on 'living', on the secret history of a public human destiny. So the romance of the commentary in both cases is brought out in two completely different genres. And two completely different genres are tested by it – the suffering 'life' and apology. That is why Vera Mutafchieva herself opens the entrance to the suspicion that every genre can interrogate

take away from the novel the power of *Book of Sophronius* or *Me, Anna Komnene* and accordingly leave no conceptual space in *A Persona Impossible...* about the action of the *romance of commentary*.

²²⁶ Of course, it is never final. The commentary 'corrects' the habitual reading of the text, but the commentary itself is not the last on the horizon of 'truth'; it has no belles-lettrical form to limit it and make it definitive in its claims. The most illustrative proof of this is the correction of the finale of *The Last Shishmanides*. Fruzhin, who in the editions from 1969 onwards was destined to die in the last battle in the Balkans, in the 2002 edition is provided with an appendix imposed by a historical document that has emerged in the meantime, according to which the last Shishmanide Fruzhin actually survives as a Martolos in service of the Sultan. The moral strength of critical commentary is that it corrects itself; and by correcting itself, it pushes the truth even further, and thus makes obvious the incompleteness and infinity of them both.

and every genre can be interrogated through the instrumentality of the romance of the commentary.

And this puts the 'I-memoir' series *NonFables* in front of the same reader's attitude, already brought up by the movements and hesitations in the figurative of the truth. The series submits many means in this respect: the strictly maintained balance between expressed and concealed statements (between the two statements, curiosity is aroused and maintained); the many illegible initials, but along with close, passionate details of people and circumstances; the publicistic intonation of *NonFables* (see the publicistic collection of Vera Mutafchieva *Reactions*, 1995), but along with the sweet for each type of historian slow retrospective/perspective of the condensed flowing time. "Bivalitsi" is actually waiting for its future biasly distrustful and resisting reader – as the one designed by Vera Mutafchieva herself. They should be read as she reads *Life and Sufferings of Sinful Sophronius* in *Book of Sophronius* or Anna Komnene's *Alexiad* in *Me, Anna Komnene*, not as a genre but as a genre mask that hides more than reveals.

Of course, such an investigation cannot be carried out here and for the time being. However, we can focus on something else, no less important – the concept of history in the exchange of genres, triggered by the romance of commentary.

History: figuratives versus metaphysics

“– I know that of all problems, none disturbed him so greatly nor worked upon him so much as the abysmal problem of time. Now then, the latter is the *only* problem that does not figure in the pages of *The Garden*. He does not even use the word which signifies *time*. How do you explain this voluntary omission?”

I proposed various solutions – all unsatisfactory. We discussed them. Finally, Stephen Albert said to me:

– In a riddle whose answer is chess, what is the only prohibited word?

I thought a moment and replied:

– The word *chess*.

– Precisely, said Albert. – *The Garden of Forking Paths* is an enormous guessing game, or parable, in which the subject is time; this recondite cause prohibits its mention.”²²⁷

²²⁷ Borges, Jorge Luis. *Everything and Nothing*. New York: New Directions Publ. 1999, p. 49.

We use this famous passage from Borges' *Garden of Forking Paths* to illustrate the fact that it is the historical novel that does not use the word 'history' in its vocabulary. And indeed, it seems that no one from Fani Popova-Mutafova to Gencho Stoev relies on this word precisely, because it is the signified of their novels, not their signifier. Thus, without naming their genre term in their narrative fabric, the novels achieve the genre, materialize it, embody it. And inserting 'history' into the obviousness of the signifiers would destroy the matrix of the genre; for if it becomes a riddle which contains its answer in its problem setting, this would be either an error in its logical formula, or a game with this logical formula. In the second case, therefore, the answer would be different from the one already set in the genre subject – and therefore, skipping the genre subject, this other answer would most likely develop into a series of insolvabilities.

In the context of the Bulgarian tradition of the historical novel and in this logic of the non-use of the genre term, Vera Mutafchieva's novels cut sharply and obliquely, risky. The word history is an extremely important part of the story itself, and its choice of predications, connotations and value decisions gives rise to whole novel genealogies, internal developments, fruitful perspectives and dead ends in this decades-long creative work. That is why we will now focus on the uses and meanings of the word 'history' itself in the historical novels of Vera Mutafchieva. Such a research choice presumably relies on a seemingly too narrow gap to the texts, but this governing term formulates more than just literary ideologies and genre explosions. Through its figuratives it leads whole worldviews, narrative techniques and human destinies. Even if it doesn't say everything, it says a lot, so curiosity about following it is hardly superfluous; due to the suspicion that the word 'history' – covertly or more openly – here governs everything else, and this in its capacity as the heart of the core for all possible historical concepts.

And one more thing: we are convinced that the uses of 'history' in Vera Mutafchieva's novels are part of her 'aesthetics of knowledge' because they are inherited from the tradition of historiography. To this day, historical science uses phrases non-reflexively and trustingly, such as "*history knows*", "*history will show*", "*history has ruled that...*", in which, despite its stated dialectical-materialist nature for at least fifty years, it reveals its methodological core – the very concept of history – as clear and deeply metaphysical. We repeat, this is not just the stylistics of a cliché in the craft of the historian, but a clear metaphysical construct, on which the very algorithm of scientific argumentation rests. It is in this capacity that Vera Mutafchieva conveys it in her novels. Let's follow in a little more detail how this happens.

Let us repeat again that the *Chronicle of the Troubled Time* (1965–1966) began with a non-belles-lettrical point of view of a higher order and laid through the year 1762 the

‘parallel biographies’ of three men – Selim III, Kara Feyzie and Osman Pazvantoglu – and one text – *Slavonic-Bulgarian History*. Quite logically, in this introduction, history is the main argument, final as a pointe – the “*new history of his kinship*”, the “*history of this land*”. However, these pointes of the introduction are prepared by enumerating ‘lists’ of what happened in 1762, which do not seem to belong to the Great Story embodied in the word ‘history’: “*The Sultan called on foreigners to strengthen the fortresses on the northern Black Sea coast... The Grand Vizier ordered a new tax – a fine for decanting wine... Expensive goods were sold at the market in Edirne: girls from Georgia, Morea, Dagestan and the region of Pleven... The Dragoman at the High Gate began to take money from the Deutschen, because France gave a low price for his dangerous betrayal... Stoyko [the would-be bishop Sophronius], the small sheepstock dealer from the Kotel village, received the priesthood and offered his first prayer...*” (8-9). The syntax of these list could practically not have ended if the word ‘history’ had not finally stopped it with a single paradigmatic gesture, with the very force of its term. To disappear immediately and for a long time: after the initial sentence “*The traveler long ago turned his back on Gradets and was already coming out of the passage*” (10), the first two books of the novel seem to forget the word ‘history’ and after the abrupt entry they begin with a slow and sweet narrative to unfold the belles lettre of the human, still imperceptible as ‘historical’.

The term is restored only in the third book, and this – probably not accidentally – in the vocabulary of the Western scholar Roberto Lorenzo, a doctor of Shehzade Selim, for whose sociolect this is a common word (when used by specific people, the word ‘history’ in the *Chronicle*... is always connected with the argumentation of the enlightened and educated ones like Lorenzo, Selim III or Ivan Zambin). And even in its first fictional appearance, the paradigmality and institutionality of history was introduced negatively, as unable to explain anything, and that is the individual – a treatment that Vera Mutafchieva consistently defends throughout her work. The introduction of the term is justified by the fact that history is actually a text: “*Convinced of the multifaceted but coherent logic of the world, of the strict laws that drive history, progress, human thought and behavior, the scientist had come across an inexplicable exception: he found something illogical and inexplicable in Selim's personality ... Lorenzo also read a lot. History*” (150).

After this logical and socio-culturally cautious use, the word ‘history’ detaches itself from its dependence on and attachment to a given consciousness and enters the third-person authoritative and omnipresent narration of the novel, in the naked speech of Vera Mutafchieva. Thus the learning of the people in whose thoughts history appears as

an argument is replaced by the very (problematic, insufficient and incomplete) scolarity of history, it slowly and persistently becomes a subject:

“The struggle of Voltaire was beyond his strength all the time and what it left at last was a pile of letters and a mockery of history”; “...if Selim was a semi-barbarian prince, Louis XVI was a commonly accepted fool. History has only confirmed this general opinion”; “...he who knows all this could pass for a man of his time. To leave his name on the pages of history...”; “...what history would call "nizam-i jedid" – the New Order ... If you unfold the history, it claims that there was neither any order invented and imposed by Selim Khan, nor – something new...”; “History does not tell how twenty Bulgarians from the village of Konare, the Filibe kaza, walked the road from Odjak on the Black Sea to the Danube in late winter and early spring in the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety-two...”; “Even though Trasteniklioğlu Ismail aga had not yet taken his place in history, many already knew his name”; “Not everyone has seen history in my place as to forgive me” (*Selim*); “Blessed are the people who once believed that they were chosen, who die with this faith (it is rare when history overlooks, but there are some)”; “How long will it be like this, will we still trail behind history?” (*Ivan Zambin*); “After all, if we took history too much to heart, we would have been dead to the last person” (*Ivan Zambin*); “...when will it finally be time for history to fix its look on us?” (*Ivan Zambin*); “...the children you have to feed in spite of times and history”; “With all his scholarship, Ivan Zambin first noticed in the news what history was going to notice...”; “In any case, the reproach of Istanbulers and history that Selim III was led this time once more by the French ambassador is unfounded”; “...someday, after many years, people would imagine who knows how the birth of the new Bulgarian literature. And it was quiet and simple, as with any significant thing in history”; “And Selim Khan was sublime. Even history, which is picky about the rulers, acknowledges it”; “...even at that hour Selim Khan remained an exquisite writer of great stature – history later acknowledged this too...”; “This ended the second and last day of the insurrection, marked by history as the First Revolution of Constantinople. The two days of turmoil were by no way a revolution...”; “And in one more thing Mustafa Khan completely repeated Selim Khan, although history does not count him as a ruler...”; “Sometimes history considers some things to be so small that it just passes them by... “; “But history doubts as well this conclusion it made. It easily accepts the low human arguments... But if it sees itself forced to admit to someone that he was driven by human impulse, history loses confidence – it has a very bad opinion of mankind... Thus Mustafa Bayraktar rode to Istanbul

driven by motives which remained obscure to history"; "No one would be able to decipher the whims of history, this genuine tale, in which the iron law is inextricably intertwined with the ridiculous, sometimes funny, and often cruel coincidence... A mistake of history, ha?"

This long line of quotations comes to illustrate clearly the motions in the term 'history'. They are such that the concept it names has simply disappeared from the Weberian regime of its ideal denotative unambiguity. But this denotative ambiguity, the 'layers of time' in the concept, which Koselleck would like to see from the estranged point of view of the historian of concepts, is also definitely missing. 'History' in this case simply does not function as a concept and its ambiguities turn out to be of a completely different order.

The first thing that comes to mind is that Vera Mutafchieva with conscious pleasure submits the notion of a new introduction to his old metaphysical posture in the language of historiography and also to his old figurative cliché. History – always so articulated, final, singular number – bears both its modern role as an institution and its archaic humanity, but the two tendencies play different games and roles in the text, and there is a noticeable logical difference between them. History – in its meaning of the Great Story ("*to leave its name on the pages of history*") – is a place where one enters, signs in with its deed it is the last sanction, the limit to which one reaches, and always his final and ready, already found monumentalized predicate. The second tendency is to see it as a humanized subject. However, the great prosopopeia is traditionally also a superhuman sanction - it knows, remembers, judges, etc. Vera Mutafchieva noticeably multiplies the human predicates of history – to the point of destroying the cliché by consolidating it to an intention beyond its borders: history is ridiculous, it confirms someone's opinion, calls something in one way, but claims the exact opposite of the name it gives; it leaves unsaid, sees, overlooks, stops its gaze, notices, reproaches, is picky, admits, notices, counts someone, thinks, doubts, loses confidence, someone's motives are not clear to it, it has its whims, mistakes, etc.

Such universal humanization 'degrades' both the metaphysical in the term and the institution embodied in it, insofar as it removes history from its limitations to the human and turns it into a human being, namely in one that is not at all perfect and final. Instead of managing the genre of historical novel, history becomes one of its characters. It is completely equivalent to what it does not see clearly: in addition to people with their daily lives and deaths it overlooks also its own role in the Great Story. In the same way, the novel completely maintains the asymmetry between history in the sense of the Great Story and history as a person wandering among the multitude of other people – it

keeps the mismatched edges between the institution and prosopopeia always with empathetic understanding and calm irony. And this is the end of the metaphysical life of the word 'history' in historiography. The metaphysics of history ceases the moment its subjectivity is fully aligned with that of a human.

Such a thing was not seen in historical novels until the 1960s, and therefore it rightly raised critical concerns that even if the genre is not completely annihilated, at least the genre's expectation is certainly deceived. Literary critics unanimously take into account the news – the attention to the individual, incommensurable with the institutional clichés of history, – but also hesitates in its attitude to the decomposition of the genre matrix. The balance of power and competence between the human and history, made by the *Chronicle...*, can focus the critical glance on any of the poles that this balance holds – and thus give rise to unbalanced and, in fact, completely opposite observations. This can be formulated through the ingrained opposition in those decades between the professional historian and the literary writer ²²⁸; or through doubts raised by Vera Mutafchieva in the inherited organics of the genre (and said by means of the critics' vocabulary of the time: in the problem of history-modernity) ²²⁹; or as a difference between novelist's craft and the modern point of view, understood as a difference between narrative layers (the 'modern' one is precisely that in which the word history appears most frequently), to such an extent that interpreters introduce other genre names into the genre. For S. Belyaeva, these are manifestations of “*essayistic-publicist reflection... essayistic fragments*” ²³⁰, and for B. Nichev – “*cultural-historical*

²²⁸ Thus, Toncho Zhechev accuses the author of retreating from scientific historiography: “But as much as Mutafchieva's publications in the field of historical science and source studies are closely specialized and distant from fiction, so are her historical novels in the convention of our historical narrative which developed away from historical science being the work of mainly amateur historians... In any case, Vera Mutafchieva's first novel bears many of the features and marks of the illustrative historical narrative...” (Zhechev, T. 1980: 195). On the contrary, however, Boyan Nichev claims (and also perceives it as a shortcoming): “She stayed with it more as a historian than as a writer” (Nichev, B. 1978: 259). The role of the historian as a guard against illustration is seen by Elka Konstantinova and K. Kuyumdzhev: In *Chronicle of the Troubled Time, The Cem Case, The Last Shishmanides, The Knight*, as well as in *Alcibiades the Great* the writer does not turn to the past with didactic or purely psychological tasks, but with her inherent research passion as a historian...” (Konstantinova, Kuyumdzhev 1980: 392).

²²⁹ This is also the presumption from which Rozalia Likova interprets the lack of illustrativeness: “Her purpose is not the task of the conscientious creator of the ‘spirit’ of the epoch, of the painter of artistic facts and the illustrator of historical regularities. Her novels... cover not only the main phenomena of the epoch, but also the problems of time and human in general, seen from the level of the contemporary” (Likova, R. 1978: 125). However, Boyan Nichev interprets the same characteristic as a departure from the traditions of the epic: “...the corrective of the modern point of view is present everywhere in the novel... The main characters know more about themselves and the story than they would have if the author with epic indifference would have remained only in her material” (Nichev, B. 1978: 259–260). Sabina Belyaeva expresses the most radical approval for the violations in the genre: “Her novels are in the broadest sense of the word contemporary.” (Belyaeva, S. 1977: 78).

²³⁰ Belyaeva, S. 1977: 89

deviations, which often reveal the author's undisguised presence and testify more once for the non-epic nature of the work"²³¹. The last observation seems captivating now because of its borderline: it turns out that this last thick novel of tradition – ‘*trust novel, mosaic novel*’²³² – turns out to be the last not only in its genre name ‘historical’ but also in the general ‘novel’, which in itself inherited, and here – questioned – centuries-old genre habits.

Today we can say that a large part of the critics’ concerns of that time was probably instinctively due to the unusual image of history which stretches from the institution to the prosopopeia that has gone so far as to destroy its own cliché; the latter ultimately turns history into an imperfect person, equal in his actions to the rest of human beings. Probably that is why man becomes free, independent of its infinite and indefinite assessments and judgments. And this – explosively innovative for the 1960s and 1970s – frees Vera Mutafchieva’s characters from the predestination of being ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ (now like funny, this dichotomy was then valid both politically and theoretically). There is no hero who would not find a reason for his humanity, just as history has a reason for its own. This prepares the understanding and acceptance of man from all times – as it is written in the memoir series *NonFables*, “let’s not put fingers on each other”. But this is not an ethical amalgam that absorbs the possibilities of evaluation, but rather an existential project in which the parameters of “life” and “living” are categorically devoid of any scheme, paradigm, rigid boundaries and immediate allegorical ability – and precisely therefore, they have yet to be studied.

For now, we will focus only on the fact that in addition to ‘*trust novel, mosaic novel*’, *Chronicle of the Troubled Time* is probably a ‘mother novel’. The set of meanings of ‘history’ embedded in it is a generative nucleus, which gives birth to various paths for the further texts of Vera Mutafchieva. From there, the flexible, multiple prosopopeia ‘history’ can only diminish and continue through thematic choices, genre solutions, and messages.

“...*Before I wrote the second volume of the Chronicle, Cem was already with me*”, says Vera Mutafchieva in the third volume of her memoir series *NonFables* (III: 150). This biographical circumstance can formally explain the inertial intrusion of the word ‘history’ that infected the *Chronicle*... in *The Cem Case* (1967). We say ‘inertial’ because it is precisely in this novel that this very word should not exist.

As it is known, probably the most popular and loved and the most translated book of Vera Mutafchieva was constructed as the first-personally testimonies of contemporaries

²³¹ Nichev, B. 1978: 261.

²³² Nichev, B. 1978: 260.

and participants in the case of Cem before the court of history. Of course, the ‘court of history’ is also a cliché of historiography, but also a self-conscious figure in which the objectivist historian recognizes his identity. We dwelled on the concept of the historian as judge in the introductory theoretical pages of this volume of our study, and here we will give a little more of the way in which Paul Ricœur’s reflexive hermeneutics thinks it.

“The comparison between the task of the historian and that of the judge is undoubtedly expected... As for the most general and stable compulsions on the respective crafts of the judge and the historian – at least in the geopolitical area of the West in the epochs that historians call ‘modern’ and ‘contemporary’, adding to this the ‘history of the present’, – the starting point of the comparison is inevitable: it lies in the structural difference that distinguishes the process conducted within the court from the historiographical critique undertaken within the archives. In both situations, the same language structure is involved – that of the testimony... from its rooting in the declarative memory in its oral phase until its entry in the bosom of the documentary mass, preserved and codified in the institutional framework of the archive, thanks to which an institution preserves the trace of its past activity for subsequent consultation... Before emphasizing the most obvious contradictions that distinguish the use of the certificate before the court and its use in the archives, it is allowed to dwell on the two common characteristics of the two uses: the care of the evidence and the critical examination of the authenticity of witnesses; these two characteristics go together. In a short essay entitled “The Judge and the Historian”, Carlo Ginzburg willingly quotes Luigi Ferrajoli: “The trial is, so to speak, the only case of “historiographic experimentation” – it drives the sources *de vivo* not only because they are brought together, but also because they are opposed to each other, cross-examined and encouraged to reproduce as in psychodrama the act being judged on. (Ricœur P. 2006: 325, 327).

In *The Cem Case*, The Court of History, of course, is another cliché that Vera Mutafchieva deliberately quotes, undertakes, materializes, and destroys. The Court in the novel does not have a single institutional outline, it does not have a face, its sociality and representation are not clear (history, historians, our contemporaries, ordinary readers?), and it does not issue any sentence, even if it is only “*conditional and extramural*”. If this is a court of history, then in it history is silent and listens.

It has lost both its article form and its singular number, so witnesses address invisible judges with the simple ‘you’: “*But you are silent*” (Nishanji Mehmed Pasha, 21); as people to people who are not deprived of spontaneity of reactions: “*Someone is*

laughing, it seemed to me...” (Grand Master D’Aubusson, 95). Witnesses actually accuse the court of some ignorance and responsively educate it: “*Obviously you don't know either...*”; “*You don't seem to know...*” (Nishanji Mehmed Pasha, 12, 21); “*You do not know Lycia... You are too far from our time, everything is different with you. You don't know...*” (Saadi, 75-76). The Court is often the object of obvious leniency: “*Glorify his greatness as much as you want – it is your opinion...*” (Qaitbay Sultan, 67), and of the non-procedural intimacy with which Saadi once addressed the judges with ‘friends’. Conquered by the literary images and decisions of the ‘*de vivo* sources’, the court has lost its formidable superiority and institutionality; it communicates implicitly but warmly, quite colloquially, allows someone to tell it that it is not aware of something, allows even the witness to control the speech, to anticipate the inquiries of the final instance: “*The first thing you will ask me is how I, a poet by heart and craft, performed...*” (Saadi, 31), or to interrupt the court's implied procedural order: “*Wait! – one more word*” (Seljuk Hatun, 57). Moreover, the Court obviously does not know the time of the witnesses well (that is why it asks them), but some of them obviously know very well the time that is examining them, and therefore have the power over the juxtaposition: “*Forgive me for introducing you to judgments so obscene to you and your time*” (Saadi, 33). Functionally, communicatively, institutionally, and procedurally in *The Cem Case*, there is in fact no Court of History at all, even not as only the figurative framework of the whole, implied in the preface.

Witnesses are not evenly generalized; here, as in the *Chronicle...*, the speech is sociolectically justified. Respectively, different social positions, educations, worldviews ascribe to the Court different ability for knowledge and judgment: “*You don't seem to know the root cause of Cem's rebellion*” (Grand Vizier Nishanji Mehmed Pasha, 20) – “*Probably so; you read books, you know things. And we didn't knew that*” (Etem, son of Ismet, 30). The common ground between the witnesses and the Court is also heterogeneous in its hermeneutics; one and the same testimony can introduce both differences and similarities in the interpretive and evaluative abilities of people from different times: “*And why do you, who know so much, rebuke a dead man just like that, beyond the measures of his time, based on some extra-historical justice?*”; “*Yes, I departed from the subject. I had to explain to you that in our days we did not understood events very differently from you*” (Grand Master D’Aubusson, 93, 99).

This rhetorical and communicative attitude is far from limited to *The Cem Case*, but here we will give just one example of its deliberately undertaken long-term genealogical strategy – the memoir series *NonFables* (2000–2005), though both at first glance are quite different. In *The Cem Case*, many minds make the mosaic of the same space of time; in *NonFables* a single ego-consciousness expresses itself in changing and flowing

decades. In the memoir series speaks – in the ‘witness’ matrix of the position, which is equally characteristic of the memoir genre and the ‘procedural’ role before the ‘court of history’ – ‘only’ Vera Mutafchieva (most of the other participants in the biographical and historical time come as arrays of initials, a Birnam Forest for the Uninitiated); in the novel, the only one who is not called to speak is Cem himself.

The late memoirs and the early novel play a common game with conversationality: the narrative is constantly turned to the reader, but in such a way as to make him silent and practically deprive him of all power in the conversation. In *NonFables* there are questions to the former ‘self’, which today are frankly rhetorical, but involve the reader in a dialogic mode. “*And who will stop me, let me hear?*”; “*...numb shyness: what if I have no gift?*”; “*...do I know whether something passable will come out in the end?*”; “*What it means to fall into your natural element and how come I didn’t know it in advance?*” (III: 128–130). The given examples are high-frequency, in this case they are taken from three pages of text, they always complete the paragraph and direct, albeit purely conditionally, the curve of the question mark to the reader. Conversationality gives him the floor, but ahead of him, and then, many paragraphs begin with his preconceived question or statement: “*Maybe you imagine it was all about fine literature? Come on. I explored... revolutions*” (II: 229); “*Don’t bother us, it’s your business!*” – *I would be interrupted here by anyone who is justifiably interested in the results, not the process of their production. Though.*” (III: 275), and so forth. The flow of everyday shared conversationality actually masks something else: a high oratory that anticipates, predetermines and formulates questions and arguments, and answers or challenges them (“*Come on.*”, “*Though.*”) in advance. The reader retains some power only in the fact that he was a reader also before the *NonFables*. Thus the memory of fictional people and languages rushes; they break the boundaries of Vera Mutafchieva’s autobiographical narrative “I” and instill it in those whom she herself calls “my people”. We know the techniques of conversationality in the memoir series from *The Cem Case* – here is an example of the conscious role of the final rhetorical questions: “*...gather under your banners the whole army, which is not yet on Hünkar Çayırı. Huh?*” *She had a custom [Seljuk Khatun, Mehmed the Conqueror’s aunt] to end her words with this “huh”, which was not a question.*” (48). And the introductory mode of dialogicity in the paragraphs of the memoirs is especially strong in the novel: just as today’s reader, a judge of the *NonFables*, is helpless as an interlocutor in front of the personal and strong eyes of the surviving witness, those who testify before the court of history in *The Cem Case* have in fact dumb and anonymous interlocutors whose implied reactions are both too easy and too insufficient to pose a full-scale question on history. Their role is to imply the ‘humaneness’ of hearing and responding, not their ultimate judgment ability.

The warm communicative humanization of the Court of History in *The Cem Case* can also be seen as a legacy of the *Chronicle of the Troubled Time* and its founding multiplary flexible propopoeia ‘history’ (the history that tells or does not speak, sees, overlooks, reproaches, thinks, doubts, loses confidence, etc.). However, what in the *Chronicle* are humanizing predicates of history, in the *The Cem Case* are developed to people with their characterologies, limitations, speeches, destinies, etc., and that not only in their role as witnesses, but – through the communicative and rhetorical reactions of witnesses – in their role as judges as well. It is the figurative of ‘history’ as embedded in the *Chronicle*, that in the *The Cem Case* loses its figurativeness and dissolves/condenses into human presences. And with the disappearance of the figurative, the word ‘history’ that has carried it along should have disappeared, so that it remains only in the framing and consistently undermined by the novel clichéd-metaphorical scope of the ‘Court of History’, but this is not the case. The History (again articulated and singular) is a word at least as frequent as in the *Chronicle of the Troubled Time*.

And this is part of the successful battle of *The Cem Case* with the clichéd parameters of his own novel framework – i.e. the Court of History. Apart from the fact that the Court does not behave like a court and does not actually convict anyone, it is not a court of history either. History is somewhere else and in a different position, the witnesses are not talking to it, but about it. The testimony of the Grand Vizier Nishanji Mehmed Pasha, with which the novel begins, contains the assurance “*I cannot witness what happened after May 5, 1481. I was killed on the evening of 5th*“(21); at the same time, the vizier is well acquainted with the statements of history after his death: “*I am glad that history has confirmed my opinion of Bayezid II; ... though history almost points to me as his only adversary; ... not today, after history* ”(16–17). Grand Master D’Aubusson, on the other hand, formulated the apparent incompetence of the Court and therefore sent the judges to read a little history: “*You still do not go beyond the measures of your time ... with us it was completely in order, leaf through the pages of history*” (95).

Here’s a closer look at the uses of ‘history’ in *The Cem Case*:

“I am glad that history has confirmed it...” (*Nishanji Mehmed Pasha*); “Don’t tell me about law and crime, don’t make mention of the dictates of history!”; “...history considered him... the first impetus in Cem’s rebellion”; “... he went down in history as Cem Sultan”; “History has accused Cem of frivolity, of misunderstanding the world game” (*Saadi*); “...I do not agree with the assessment of history on our ruling house, for example” (*Qaitbay Sultan*); “history shows me as the most eminent Grand Master of the

Order”; “...contemporaries who left an enviable mark on history”; “pointed out by history as the unifier of France”; “...no one is indifferent to the evaluation of history”; “... to lie that this very day is the pinnacle of human history”; “it justifies me before history”; “...Pope Sixtus IV, who would have rotted out of history if it were not for his unworthy quarrels with the Medici and Ferran ...” (*D’Aubusson*); “I want one thing: to justify myself to ours, to the memory of my father, to the descendants and history” (*Saadi*); “Cem was devoted to a contemplation that had nothing to do with world history” (*Saadi*); “I don’t know if history will appreciate it, Hussein Bay, or I will pass as a ruler who has not conquered any country”; “You may have noticed – history only mentions my name once” (*Hussein Beg*); “Cem was a poet who got mixed up inappropriately in history” (*Saadi*); “I relied on military glory to sign at least between the lines of history”; “Even one Bayazid, a savage, as he was described to us and as history did not confirm...” (*John Kendall*); “And Cem Sultan will go down in history as an unfulfilled promise...”(*Saadi*).

It is noticeable to the naked eye that, despite the high-frequency use of ‘history’ in the ‘direct speeches’ of witnesses, the use of the term consistently strikes only one meaning, the variations of which are so fleeting that they confirm its monotonous singularity. Whether in the logical position of a subject or a predicate, here history is only an established institution of power, the Great Story. In *The Cem Case*, history confirms or does not confirm, commands, considers, accuses, points, mentions someone’s name, evaluates. The person facing it can only pass into it, stay in it or rot outside it, at least sign between its lines or justify itself in front of it. Moreover, entering history, one never remains in it ‘with one’s entire being’ – someone’s contemplation, for example, does not affect history at all, and the poet who falls into it is inappropriate... Here history is not ridiculous, it does not hesitate, it does not overlook, it does not doubt, it does not lose confidence, there are no human impulses that are not clear to it. The vast scope of prosopopeia in the *Chronicle of the Troubled Time* here, in *The Cem Case*, is frozen in only one rigid power identity.

This semantic reduction and hardening of ‘history’ is not a disadvantage, but an important operational tool of *The Cem Case* and a final touch in the fact that the Court of History in the introductory words to the novel is only an ironic working on the cliché. The witnesses, in whose statements history is an institution of power, a final sanction, a superhuman magnitude and a ruler of every single reputation, have not shuddered at all from fear and respect for the Court itself, their eloquence leaves it no monumentality. ‘History’ in *The Cem Case* is a solid single threshold that witnesses mention as they cross it. The judges do the same, albeit non-verbally. What we called “aesthetics of knowledge” in the first pages is part of the calm gesture that people and people,

witnesses and judges meet and pass by, and history is just the border they cross to apply corrections and instill themselves in the opposite world.

In the *Chronicle of the Troubled Time*, everything is still covered by 'history', every important or unimportant human presence is part of it, moreover, each action points to 'one' thing, laid down in the high introduction to the first book: "*They had built and continued to build one thing – the history of this land*". That is why history, so constructed, holds multiplied human predicates, the unified and multiplied prosopopeia equates its term with each one. In the *Chronicle*, each person is set as historical, and history is each person. *The Cem Case* provides another solution. In it, 'history' is narrowed and petrified to an institution of power, but also disempowered insofar as it is perhaps the most extreme, but still only one of the human arguments. The novel points out how much human there really is outside and beyond its sanctioning scope. People 'not remained in history' also testify before the Court of History. That is why *The Cem Case* can be read as a novel about the thematically stated rivalries between 'life' and 'history', whereby for Vera Mutafchieva the existential project remains stronger, more attractive and more successful than the historiographic one from *The Cem Case* onwards ²³³. Narrowing the figurative scope of institutionalized 'history', the novel shows that man does not fit into its term at all.

The existential project, the 'aesthetics of knowledge'

²³³ This major difference, in our opinion, between the two novels is also reflected in their narrative techniques. Only the omnipresent narrator in the *Chronicle* can coordinate the mutual dissolution between the human predicates of history and the people themselves in the novel. What irritates B. Nichev, for example – the non-epic features of the novel, the centrifugal nature of its events and even the fact that its main historical characters never meet (which – purely factually – is not quite an accurate observation, and, let us add, that there is no need for them to gather and that just their non-meeting makes the volume and power of their own time over them – Nichev, B. 1978: 259–261) –, can be read as an escape from the hardened 'historical laws' and from the illustrative traditions of the Bulgarian historical novel. *The Cem Case* relies only on the subjectivity of different people, focused on only one chain of events and only one person; the novel radicalizes the 'meeting' of the different ones to such an extent (not only in the space of the 'court' but also in the singular meaning of the word 'history') that it achieves synchronicity, including of Saadi and Cem, who have never been contemporaries outside the novel.

The difference also refers to those narrative techniques that B. Nichev calls "cultural-historical deviations", and S. Belyaeva – "essay fragments": "*But while in the Chronicle the essay fragments are a moment of objective epic narration and belong to the only omnipresent narrator, in The Cem Case they grow into the testimonies of the multitude of different characters. Then the question arises: which of them is closest to the objective truth of the artist*" (Belyaeva, S. 1977: 89). Skipping the term 'objective truth', we would argue here that the ideological shadow of the ubiquitous narrator in *The Cem Case* is only where the antagonists say the same thing – for example, in the way D'Aubusson and Saadi speak about the East.

and various stories

Despite Vera Mutafchieva's repeatedly acknowledged fidelity to the methodology of historical materialism, it is nowhere in the novels present in the doctrinaire scheme in which historiography of those decades converts it. This is so because in it the existential project strikes precisely the causal knots in the historical-materialist historical machine. Humans are the ones who make differing causal connections in history; such as they are unknown to the method and its then politically reduced arguments.

The kircali Kara Feyzie from *Chronicle of the Troubled Times* becomes what he is – a dark force that changed the life of the Peninsula – due to the very unhistorical desire to ride a horse, to feel the wind, movement and space. Anna Komnene from *Me, Anna Komnene* lost the throne over the Romans because she fell in love. In both decisions there is no shadow of romanticism, there is only sympathetic skepticism towards 'humaneness'. One morning Sophronius of the *Chronicle* is "as rheumy as a kitten"; the queenly Seljuk Khatun from *The Cem Case* speaks "as an old soldier would speak"; a very great and very enigmatic English poet in *A Persona Impossible* looks like this: "Lord Byron, a rich and educated lad, distrustful of verbal spells because he himself used to invent them as he wished, nevertheless perished, decaying by cholera, in a dilapidated port on the Gulf of Corinth – he was drawn to the poetic appeals of Rigas" (*A Persona Impossible*, 1983²³⁴, 162). Beyond history is also the stillness of the presence, especially when it belongs to a historical man like Ivan Alexander: "According to one part of the history, Alexander was a protector of the rightful church; according to another part, he half-openly encouraged this or that heresy. The truth is that neither is true; Alexander was just present" (*The Last Shishmanides*, 11). Beyond history is also the exceptional, passionate attention to the human body, beauty, being in love with the world, the three-dimensional sculptures of nature, joy, pleasure, contemplation, suffering, the deep fatigue of man. And last but not least – outside of history is the amazingly tolerant, warm communicativeness of the novels, which equates man and man, whether they are characters or readers. Beyond history and its assessments is the astonishingly cool ethical indifference radiated by these texts, according to which good and bad, good and evil, in principle, are simply naturally equal facts of 'living'²³⁵. For Vera Mutafchieva, the constant rivalries between the existential project and the institutionalized history are a way of life of historical belles-lettres.

²³⁴ Mutafchieva, Vera. *A Persona Impossible*. Rakovski's youth. S.: Military Publishing House.

²³⁵ "Evil has no name and good has no name" writes Ani Ilkov for the second volume of *NonFables* (Ilkov, A. 2001: 6). Here we will add that this feature is not valid only for the political decades to which the memoir series refers, but for Vera Mutafchieva's view of 'history' and 'life' in general.

At first glance, we could attribute this merit to literature, i.e. let us assume that it is precisely the power of the fiction here that is the power of the human; while from historiography comes the deterministic narrative, which does not notice man in his separateness and in his own – incomprehensible to materialist thinking – causes and consequences of ‘living’. This is not difficult to notice, especially since Vera Mutafchieva says it in plain text in *Book of Sophronius*: “*And yet, even in those pages, man... continued to be present in spite of history. The writer broke the mold of the chronicle, mixed it with artistry: knowledge of man, understanding of the human prevented Sophrony from being a pure chronicler*” (112–113). We could easily attribute this role to literature if, however, ‘life’ was not an illusory horizon of sanction for historiography itself; and if this were not a situation more principled and broader than within the framework of a given historiographic method, whatever it may be, even though it is contemporary narrative history that problematizes it everywhere and sharply raises again the question of ‘history and fiction’. This is how this sounds again in the explanation of reflexive hermeneutics:

“The problem is posed, which will be the torment of any literary philosophy of history: what difference separates history from fiction, if both narrate? The classic answer that history alone retraces what actually happened does not seem to be contained in the idea that the narrative form has within itself a cognitive function. This aporia, which we can call that the truth of history, becomes apparent through the fact that historians frequently construct different and opposed narratives about the same events. Should we say that some omit events and considerations that others focus on and vice versa? The aporia would be warded off if we could add rival versions to one another, allowing for submitting the proposed narratives to the appropriate corrections. Shall we say that it is life, presumed to have the form of a history that confers the force of truth on this narrative? But life is not history and only wears this form insofar as we confer it upon it. How, then, can we still claim that we found this form in life, our own life and by extension that of others, of institutions, groups, societies, nations? This claim is solidly entrenched in the very project of writing history. The result is that it is no longer possible to take refuge in the idea of “universal history as lived.” Indeed, what relationship could exist between the presumed unique and determined kingdom of universal history as lived and the histories we construct, when each one has its own beginning, middle and end, and draws its intelligibility from its internal structure alone?” (Ricoeur P. *Memory and History, Forgetting* (2004) The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 241-242)

In this light, Vera Mutafchieva seems to be precisely an advocate of the modern understanding of ‘narrative history’, but it definitely does not fit the opposition that theorists of historiographic narratology (Frank Ankersmit, but not only) bring between ‘narrative’ and ‘historical novel’ since in this case the preconditions for a ‘narrative story’ occur precisely in historical novels. However, another pressing question arises here: whether Vera Mutafchieva's ‘existential project’ is not so much an expression of the relations and differences between historiography and literature as of the relations between different – and thought of as alternative – conceptual formats and paradigms of historical science whose retirement to the roles of the concept of ‘history’ in practice can be done precisely by the literature?

Asking such a question requires a comparison with the syndrome of Vaptsarov's poem *History*, which we have considered in more detail at the end of the second part. Vera Mutafchieva also has a clear outline of the ‘oral history’, including the relaxed conversation and warm communication that the ‘witnesses’ demonstrate before the ‘Court of History’ from the *The Cem Case*. To continue the juxtaposition, here we will give a little more of an interpretation of the poem *History* at the point where the issue of the inclusion of ‘life’ in the contours of ‘history’ and the nature of exchange, the ‘economy of exchange’ is developed between them:

History begins with the question “*What will you give us, history, / from your yellowed pages?*” History is not expected to give, but rather to take, and confirms a third stanza dedicated to feeding and taking up history. The idiom, however, is “going into history”, an act, it implies giving access. History gives those people and events that provide it with a contour. This economy of exchange has nothing to do with the metaphor of metabolism, according to which history absorbs contents, flesh and blood, but returns only contour and form, only the labyrinth of the letter. In fact, the whole argument is based on this rhetorical slip: the story it absorbs is the event itself, it gives nothing and does not return; history as historiography is governed by the economics of exchange. The Minotaur of history is nothing but a rhetorical effect of mixing the two kinds of history. However, this Minotaur is not a monstrous dream of Vaptsarov's mind. It is historiography's claim to history as events and facts that gives birth to the minotaur of history, which consumes human lives and throws up the thread of Ariadne: the story of the murder of the monstrous myth and the beginning of a story captivated by the causality to which Theseus returns to the beginning, to the origin, avoiding the diverging paths of myth and literature. The emptiness inside is exactly what the official historiography misses: the bodies, the lives, the drama of the human” (Kamburov, D. 2004: 350).

The serious difference that emerges from the comparison is in the fact that what Vaptsarov begins to ask about, for Vera Mutafchieva is a *status quo*. As we have already noted, in *The Cem Case* she narrows the meanings and roles of ‘history’ only to the character of a power institution prescribed to it by official historiography, which is also a ‘court’, that is, to those ‘empty’ in Vaptsarov’s view; but it is the ‘court’ that is undermined in its institutional identity, because it not only allows but also summons ‘out-of-history’ witnesses. Should we not interpret the difference in the meaning of the already socially manifested ‘other stories’ that the novel could ‘quote’ and incorporate as already available, unlike Vaptsarov’s poem, in which we see them as not yet happened – the oral story, social history, the history of everyday life ²³⁶, the biographical narrative? And should we not assume that it is their – now conceptually possible – combination that does not allow the official, at least in the *status quo* of its metaphor, ‘Court of History’ in *The Cem Case* or in any other novel by Vera Mutafchieva to be able and willing to issue any sentence?

In these questions, as well as in their possible answers, we should not miss the purely literary solutions. One of them, and it is very important, is the roles that Vera Mutafchieva attributes to the sexes in her novels – on their plot surface these decisions of hers tempt them to be easy to read as ‘feminist’ judgments of the author ²³⁷. The obviousness of the conceptual differences between the sexes regarding the concept of ‘history’ (and as a female attack on the rigidity and contents of the Great Story of History) we read, for example, in the understandings of the Thracian Timandra, the last woman in the life of Alcibiades the Great: “*Timandra didn’t like his particularly important memories, which were meant to stun history. Like any woman, she regarded history as a testimony to male madness and unnecessary slaughter, to insane efforts*” (*Alcibiades the Great*, 1976,²³⁸ 414); also in Irene Doukaina’s assessments of the historical activity of her royal husband: “I have never... sympathized with my man’s accomplishment in war, army, warfare and so on. ...I was fed up with Alexios’s trite triumphs... There is no woman who will agree with such imbecility” (*Me, Anna Komnene*, 1991,²³⁹ 178).

²³⁶ For example: we can see the ‘history of everyday life’ as an ‘image’ of the narrative sculpture of the characters from historical novels, and in the fact that even before the institutionalization of the paradigm of the history of everyday life in our country Vera Mutafchieva – from the affiliation of her writing to historical science – makes a volume like *Rumelian Holidays and Weekdays* (1978).

²³⁷ See for example Angelova-Damyanova, Sofia 2004; Dimitrova, Sofia 2005, etc.

²³⁸ The quotations from *Alcibiades the Great* are here acc. to the edition: Mutafchieva, Vera. *Alcibiades the Little. Alcibiades the Great*. Sofia: Publishing House of the Patriotic Front, 1984.

²³⁹ The quotes from *Me, Anna Komnene* are here acc. to the edition: Mutafchieva, Vera. *Me, Anna Komnene*. Sofia: Hemus, 1991.

Vera Mutafchieva, who does not share any feminist platform (this is especially evident in her journalism and memoirs), assigns the woman a very important place – outside of history, because, as already mentioned, this is the place of ‘living’, of the existential project. The women in her novels are in fact the *longue durée* of history (men are the ‘short’ and the eruptive in its course – they are in charge of change, feat, battle, luminosity, death, legend). And women, usually ‘no more young’ and sometimes nameless, provide the blood, the flow, the protection of life, like the woman from the only three human nights of Kara Feyzie in *Chronicle of the Troubled Time* or Timandra from the finale of *Alcibiades the Great*. The only two women witnesses in *The Cem Case* – Seljuk Hatun and Filipine Hélène de Sassenage – did not use the word ‘history’ in their testimony before the court of History.

This line in Vera Mutafchieva is so consistent that it also applies to women who really ‘made history’ and ‘remained in history’, such as Anna Dalassene, Irene Doukaina and Anna Komnene in *Me, Anna Komnene* (1991). *The Cem Case* sets out the later narrative techniques of *Me, Anna Komnene* – first-person testimonies, which, however, are not framed here by any ‘court of history’. Here women speak of ‘history’ as a man’s work, sometimes with irony and anger, sometimes with indifference. ‘History’ is a word inhabited by masculine deeds and names – beyond it (beyond its ‘only contours’, as Vaptsarov would say) spills the much larger ‘feminine’; much more naked, as it is in the project of ‘living’, before which the Great Story seems like only one story:

“And now – what for? To make history remember you for shameful failures or for at least misfortune. Go figure men! – I used to think”; “Really quite pretty superficial knowledge transmits and retransmits history: politics, wars, trade. And again: trade, politics, wars. Here and there the image of a hero runs up, as a rule – simplified to the point of impossibility to believe him”; “...with a strong belief in the ability of Vrienius to put himself in the history of literacy. I hope he believes in himself too” (*Irene Doukaina*); “After the Komnenes, states the impartial history, night descended upon Byzantium”; “Once in the throne... one gains opportunities... he gives his name to deeds done by millions of nameless people. He puts himself in history, that is...”; “What would the rule of this autocrat look like for history?” (*Anna Dalassene*); “...Leo and Nikephoros – royal sons, past whom history had streaked keeping eyes closed to stop at strategists like Botaniates and Alexios”; “In this way, history punishes the winner – to take power is nothing compared to keeping it”; “Like Justinian, he went down in history through his ability to rely on the work and sacrifices of another”; “...he is a victim of an obsessive thought: Anna Komnene in his place would have stunned her contemporaries and bequeathed a name in history” (*Anna Komnene*).

Unlike the version of the female, in Vera Mutafchieva the version of the male is completely subordinated to the Great Story and this in its purest form is the case of *Alcibiades the Great*. Even if the character is designed as extraordinary, changeable, 'excessive', he is in fact completely subordinated to history, frozen to the predicate 'entering history' (the reader may notice that in the plot's time of the novel in Athens' agora there is a lot of talk about entering history, and in a very modern way, and the disputants in the plot are then just in the Herodotus' century):

"...history does not forget such merits"; "After all, this is a path to history, if not a wide road... How many of us will it mention at all..."; "It seems to me that everyone has the right to a great rest before pushing himself between the cogs of history..."; "It's been two months since he went down in history. Not the one – the tiny and sad and funny history about many small parts of the land, such as Greece – but in world history"; "...a failure about which history has been mercifully forgetful"; "Only victories wed a king with history"; "...the democrat Thrasybulus himself was experiencing something that cannot be determined... the feeling that you are going down in history"; "Alcibiades uttered this as a spell – he took a vow before history"; "...such is the choice of every man with conscience and honor, with care for his name in history..."; "...he was again looking for historical glory for himself and his fighters"; "And lately I've come up with a new, much more mature pastime – let me amaze history!"; "How much does it cost to break an order when such a violation brings you into history?"

Thus, in Vera Mutafchieva, historiographical concepts are outlined through gender. Women's contempt for the urge to 'enter history' legitimizes them, as we have noted, as belonging to the longue durée of history, rather than to the official format of political history and the intention to 'enter' it. Thus, genders also serve the later constituted methodological condition for the particularity of the stories of social history. And in the *Chronicle of the Troubled Time* the woman is assigned to make the economic history of the Revival – there Stamena is the one who takes her family out of the anarchy-threatened village of Konare to hide it in the city, but together with this to make the great Bulgarian transition from agriculture to handicrafts.

All this can explain the lack of great love stories in Vera Mutafchieva's novels: just as – paradigmatically speaking – social history and political history cannot have much in common and cannot have anything romantic in common. Because in the writing we are talking about, sexes, in addition to people and humanity, are also covertly figured out and alternative historiographic schools gathered in the convention of fiction.

However, the big difference between the models of historiography in Vaptsarov's *History* and those in Vera Mutafchieva's novels is something else. We have already noted in the second part of our study that Vaptsarov, in the point of his magnificent poem, makes the sudden and final attempt to introduce his 'existential project' of nameless passive human suffering into the form and language of official political history, dictating it the thematic conclusion that in no way does not fit his own lyrical narrative – "*But recount... that we fought bravely*". In her time, Vera Mutafchieva no longer felt the need to do so, and not only because other formats of historiography already existed or were anticipated, at least theoretically, even in Bulgarian conditions. She refuses to interpret in terms of the 'struggle' both the relationship between historiographic schools and the relationship between the 'existential project' (in which historiographic schools it is embodied) and the established official political history. There is even no 'struggle' between the sexes – i.e. between historiographic models – there are only different types of intolerance or reconciliation between them (settled deep love always happens late and for a short time). And in her novels' plots, people and schools always end up equally intercepting and judging the inability of the person living them to the conscious, sought and achieved duration of 'living' that would overcome their theoretical and methodological predestinations.

And one more thing – the lack of terms and attitudes as a 'struggle' in Vera Mutafchieva entails the lack of any revolutionary or even radical staging of the existential project. It is in this way that it equally permeates the various historical times – the ways of living with sharpened political reflection, but without gesture political revolt, can refer to living in communism, but not only in it:

"... no time embodies in its purest form the idea of coryphaeuses and demiurges ... It is not of granite, but of a porous rock. If there were no gaps at all times, there would be nothing accidental, nor would the great accumulation of displeasing thoughts take place" (*NonFables*, II: 228); "I wonder when I gape at those eager for power, some for omnipotence, who keep growing in their own eyes. It doesn't take much intelligence to realize that this is fiction, glibber than those the authors here and there mold for their own and the reader's entertainment. Total power is simply impossible, lasting total – by no means." (*NonFables*, IV: 260).

"Stoyko realized that this obedience – the Bulgarian one – should not be understood exactly. Countless are its nuances, its rates... The good thing about violence was that being powerful, it was also short-sighted, so the working Bulgarians misled it easily" (*Book of Sophronius*, 21).

It is this stated and easily recognizable similarity between texts with references to different historical times that illustrates Vera Mutafchieva's consistent conceptual dumbness of the 'existential project' – this type of political and personal living could not be described neither as a 'struggle' nor as a non-participating 'survival'. To be labeled as the first, it is hindered by a lack of political activity; to be labeled as the latter, it is hindered by the presence of political reflection. It is the resulting conceptual dumbness – as Ani Ilkov puts it in his review of *NonFables*, “*evil has no name and good has no name*” – that ensures the ethical composure of novels, the absence of an easy ability to evaluate and qualify human beings affiliations, choices and solutions in them. It then categorically protects the 'Court of History' from its authoritarian and reckless tendency to pass final sentences on both historical schools and historical people.

“Entering history” and exiting it:

moves and developments of the Bulgarian case

If in Vera Mutafchieva's first novel *Chronicle of the Troubled Time* the prosopopeia 'history' has such an expansion that it is completely equated with the subjectivity of the human, and it therefore suspends those metaphysicality of 'history' settled and sanctioned in the uses of historiography itself; if *The Cem Case* narrows this scope only to the parameters of 'history' as an institution of power, which, however, is constantly undermined by the voices and testimonies of 'non-historical' people, but also by the very dialogic nature of court and people, then *Alcibiades the Great* narrows the meaning of 'history' only to its essence as an institutionalized and petrified narrative and to the only possible human project: 'entering' history. These developments clearly show that in the growing progressiveness of Vera Mutafchieva's novels at the time of their writing, the meanings of the prosopopeia 'history' in turn consistently diminished and narrowed. In short, the trend looks like this: the early conceptual revolt against the cliché of the 1960s gradually subsided and eased off, so the metaphysics of the concept gradually recovered until it became a primary argument for the 'existential project' of Alcibiades the Great.

Thus it is Alcibiades the Great who fully balances the existential project and the metaphysical power of history, because the whole life of Alcibiades himself is subordinated to the intention *to enter history* (the novel does something different from its character only when he decides to go out of history and remain with the woman Timandra, in Thrace, in 'living', and in the conclusion “*how inglorious it is to be human*”). This equalisation sounds almost philosophical, because Alcibiades conducts it

as a refrain dispute with none other than Socrates: the alternative in which Socrates in his dying moment and the already dead Alcibiades finally exchange positions: the thinker is already convinced that “*life, I just said to myself, it's probably provided to us for us to provide for its course, not to replace providence in brooding over it*”; and the “great insatiable” Alcibiades also reversed his whole position: “*Today I would exchange everything done and achieved for another month's profound understanding of being, for another night of love*” (436). However, it can be seen that both the alternative and its exchange have finally suppressed and made the argument that the whole novel tells through the fate of Alcibiades disappear – the ‘entering history’. In the end, no one remembers his intention – only the existential project and the reflexive contemplation have to argue and exchange their places, which is a completely different matter.

And this makes even more interesting that the concept of ‘entering history’ from *Alcibiades the Great*, which fell due to the clash and exchange of alternatives, found application almost ten years later in an unexpectedly different text by Vera Mutafchieva. Alcibiades' finally abandoned ‘legend of himself’ is structured to fit perfectly with the matrix of ‘entering history’. However, the characteristics of the exorbitant but in fact matrix Alcibiades arouse serious curiosity in the following comparison:

“He is always and completely immoderate”; “Inconsistent, variable... manyfaced...”; “His lightness, the terrifying lightness of a demon – only for ghosts there will be no difference between cold and heat, between day and night, between good and evil at most... there was no human quality that Alcibiades lacked”; “everything Alcibiades thinks, speaks or does is immoderate... we bring up our children in moderation. The Western project is simply a lack of such a moderation”; “Alcibiades enjoyed it – this still uncovered, boundless blue world ... At home he did not mention to anyone how much he was oppressed, how his senses were offended by the smallness of the City, which was called to lead the whole of Ellada” (*Alcibiades the Great*, 1976).

“if the descendants had known the man closely, they would have kept the memory of something swift-moving, elusive, and far too immoderate”; “The clan of the family of Stoyko had fallen due to lack of measure”; “...to push everywhere and in any way his own way, his own!”; “One of the lasting features of Rakovski's personality were the transitions, the speed of those transitions”; “...it was neither embarrassing nor ridiculous for him to carry out his unimaginable whims one after the other... the hail of assertions, drawings, vows, retreats, attacks and extremes that Rakovski heaped incessantly”; “To your scattered, otherwise passionate love, the world responded coldly ... Kotel was not the place from the

point of view of the creation... to become your own man, your home must be the world” (*A Persona Impossible. Rakovski's Youth*, 1983).

Accordingly, Rakovski is in fact infinitely subordinate to ‘entering history’; and his immoderacy is subordinated to the parameters of ‘history’, to the inscription, the compliance, the placement in it:

“...years ago he had set off to sign – almost as a teenager – in the history of the world in question”; “And now that one, two or three times history had hinted that this man was not indifferent to it, it had to intervene now once again ... Subby [Subby Stoykov Popovoch, aka Georgi Savva Rakovski] understood that the deeds of some men of his clan are pieces of history”; “The historic sense showed Georgi that the future of any nation depends on the future of nations in general”; “The point is to do it where it will be beautified by nature and included in a rosary of previous and next world events. That's how you inscribe it in history”; “From an early age he was aware that he was about to perform historically important deeds for the Bulgarians”; “Here you are: once you combine your human existence with history, you are obliged to relentlessly conform your steps to its...”.

Strange as it may seem, *Alcibiades the Great* is the genealogical nucleus that gives birth to the *A Persona Impossible* (the similarities do not stop there, they are also in the way the prisons are described in the two books, and in the blond beauty of the two men, and so on). The ancient hero has already proved his freezing into a type, and his ability to generate analogues even through *Alcibiades the Little* (1975), but unconsciously the action of the analogy continues, to halt ten years later in *Image Impossible*. At the same time, in the descriptions and assessments of the ancient Alcibiades we find a lot of... Vazov's vocabulary and ideography from the ode *Rakovski* in *Epic of the Forgotten*, and not only in the word ‘demon’ (and in *A Persona Impossible* Vera Mutafchieva fully agrees with Vazov's interpretation of Rakovski, whereby the very work of her romance of commentary is hindered). However, she herself assesses *A Persona Impossible* as her failure²⁴⁰. Today we will agree that *A Persona Impossible* dwindles in the repetition of an already worked out, very narrowed and even finally dropped model in *Alcibiades the*

²⁴⁰ For example, I got into a trouble with Georgi Savva Rakovski. I anticipated my closeness with him as pure pleasure – with that improbable oddball, a persona impossible, who contains everything conceivable and more... Now I will paint him in all his absurdity, an alloy of genius and tastelessness ... I turned out to be not self-confident, but overconfident... I thought I was being honest, leaving my work on the same model unfinished: if Rakovski did not want us to communicate, I had no right to annoy him. Nothing decent could result for either of us. And the memory of my vain efforts to achieve him bequeathed a lesson to me: beware of everything immoderate, it is the enemy of good things, that is, of the human” (*NonFables* IV: 39–43).

Great and therefore remains an unfinished intention ²⁴¹. And one more thing – according to the stereotype of Alcibiades the Great, Rakovski seems just like an echo of an already characterologically worked out historical type, for which it does not matter whether it is past or modern, ancient or belonging to the national liberation period, foreign or Bulgarian. However, the latter is always very important in its difference for Vera Mutafchieva – she decides that the field for the Bulgarian case is not where man and history deliberately and radically coincide.

This difference can also be expressed as the way Alcibiades the Great and Sophronius refer to history – both in terms of theatrical forms. For the ancient hero, history (and all his actions are aimed at ‘entering’ it) is a complete, final, but analogously always open for further copies, clichéd and in fact quite funny text: “*A comedy with the same content... You change the amphitheater, new actors come out instead of the old ones, but it remains always the same comedy: hopes and expectations in action first, terrible noise in action second, and in the epilogue – tragic disappointment, dramatic renunciation, suicide or murder, which comes as a just revenge...*” (*Alcibiades the Great*, 292). For the Bulgarian Sophronius, however, it is neither a text nor a theater in one of the rare candid fictions in *The Book of Sophronius*: “*...and at night he sank into the Civil Disgrace**. Theater! – the scribbler thought for himself. Should you call the bitter banishment abroad a theater... Are the unbearable inaction, the fears that everything will stay that way, a theater?.. What kind of theater can this be? For us who play it, it’s a living torment...” (195). Sophronius’ refusal to recognize ‘the Bulgarian kind’ in any ready form, in a frozen narrative, and his formulation of ‘living torment’ (in agreement with the classic Vaptsarov’s ‘unwritten torment’), the other place of ‘the Bulgarian kind’ is to be seen through, and it is different from the oft-repeated ‘place in history’.

In fact, the ‘place in history’ and the institutional features of prosopopeic history, which led Rakovski to a deadlock in *A Persona Impossible*, are the aspirations of Ivan Zambin from Vera Mutafchieva’s first novel *Chronicle of the Troubled Time*: “*How long will it*

²⁴¹ It is ‘unfinished’ not only in the literal sense, in the incompleteness of the novel; it is unfinished in that Vera Mutafchieva leaves halfway to settle here her most successful ideological undertakings from her other novels. There is also a lack of productive tensions between ‘history’ and ‘living’, as they still break out in the finale of *Alcibiades the Great*, but not in *A Persona Impossible*.

* “Civil Playhouse” [the serbian word for theater means “disgrace” in Bulgarian – *translator’s note*] is a translation [by Sophronius] from Greek of the book “θέατρον πολιτικόν”, which is a translation of “Theatrum politicum” by Ambrose Marlian, published in 1802. Until 1963, the book was mistakenly considered a translation of the book of the Protestant Willem Strateman. The excerpt from the Second Vidin Collection includes anecdotes about Persian, Greek and Egyptian rulers. In some places, Sophronius uses anecdotes to inspire the reader with his thoughts: the need for education, advice to the people not to give unnecessary alms to the monasteries, reproaches to low morals and ignorance of the clergy. – *Wikipedia*

be like this, us to be plodding behind history?"; "...when will it finally be time for history to set its eyes on us?" (449, 521). Ivan Zambin's longing is homologous to what the novel does to him – the entering up of Zambin's early impetus into history, the inscription of his selfless and then futile effort to inform Russia and the Great Story about the existence of the Bulgarians. The much more 'Mutafchieva's kind' remark of Zambin "After all, if we were to take history very much to heart, we would have been dead to the last person" (450) is left by the novel uncontinued and characteristically undeveloped since it assigns the respective ideology to other characters.

At the opposite pole to Ivan Zambin in the *Chronicle* stands Sophronius, who never once in his direct speech, nor even when he thinks and speaks of Paisius, does he mention the word 'history'. It seems to be absent from his dictionary in the *Chronicle of the Troubled Time*, as well as from his own *Life and Sufferings*. Although directly connected with Zambin's actions and his mission in Russia, Sophronius seems to have pushed the political plot into the background, carried away in the compilation and printing of the *Nedelnik*: "...along the "Nedelnik", Sophronius really abandoned the affairs of the Bulgarian refugees ... As Athanas listened to the confused words of the bishop, he could feel himself slowly boiling over" (659). However, unlike the *Chronicle*, in the *Book of Sophronius*, in a critical reading exactly of Sophronius' *Life and Sufferings*, it turns out that what is found everywhere, being the surface of political history, is interpreted by Sophronius just as hidden. If the new Bulgarian history actually begins as a history of literature, then the passionary of Sophronius hides from literature precisely the 'historical'. And this is a presumption not only of 'living' but also of writing, just the opposite of the pathos of 'entering history'.

The Bulgarian absence from the Great Story is a constant topic for Vera Mutafchieva. She interprets it with her inherent dispassion, but at the same time feels great mercy not only for the 'beaten in history' but also for those who do not belong to history (in a certain perspective *Predicted by Pagane* (1980) can be read as a novel about the impossibility of the survival of Bulgarian history as a 'record' of the chronicler and in general as a text). And the gesture she allows herself – to interpret the Bulgarian case as a quiet 'making of history' – contradicts her own understanding of history as a text, and not as an action expressed in the preface to *Clio is a Muse too* (1969): "They created' is the right word, although we assume that history is created by action – a social action that someone later describes in a historical work. But the action itself is not history. "Now I will tell you, read, write a story", say people from ancient times to the present

day. Nobody says, “I’m going to do history now”. By the way, history means a narrative – a work whose substance is the words spoken or written” (7²⁴²).

And to the Bulgarians Vera Mutafchieva attributes just the paradoxical, according to her, wordless ‘making of history’. Peter the Devil becomes predictable and leaves the ironies of the novel *The Knight* (1970²⁴³) in his conversation with De Fré in the Battle of Adrianople and abandons the ‘getting into history’: “Don't hope for it [the history], it won't descend to somebody inferior than a count or voivode. But it is more important to feel that you are making history than be inscribed into it” (603). Even in the silence and simplicity of history the author interprets its significance: “Someday, many years later, people would imagine who knows how the birth of the new Bulgarian literature. And it was quiet and simple, as with any significant thing in history” (*Chronicle of the Troubled Time*, 632). However, it was the father of the new Bulgarian literature, who when measured against the Great Story expressed his absence from it and gave birth to ‘parallel biographies’, which are one of the most bitter pages in the *Book of Sophronius*: “In the year of Stoyko's birth, 1739, the treatise “Of Human Nature” of the English philosopher D. Hume was published. Bach, Händel, Rameau were composing with everything they've got... By the time Priest Stoyko got mixed up in that sheep trouble and was nearly subjected to impalement, the Great French Revolution broke out, Goethe published the first excerpt from Faust, Schiller became a professor in Jena, and Washington became president of the United States... This is what history looks like if you look at it in cross section...” (*Book of Sophronius*, 131–132).”

It is the ‘cross section’ that shows the Bulgarian case as ‘appended’ to history. The Kircali time is a thematic model of three different genres in Vera Mutafchieva – and they are the novel *Chronicle of the Troubled Time*, the commentary book *Book of Sophronius* and the scientific monograph *Kircali time* (1977), and this allows us to compare different intentions and different versions of the texts. Thus, the novel's beginning manifests itself as a significant difference with the monograph: if *Chronicle of the Troubled Time* presents Kara Feyzie as the greatest leader of the Kircali time, as ‘Shaitan’, around whom the legend of invincibility is carried, his first mention in the monograph is associated with defeat: “...in 1973 the combined forces of Kara Feyzie, Bilal aga from Radomir and Suleiman Kircali from Dupnitsa attacked Samokov region, but were fought off” (Mutafchieva, V. 1993: 104). The novel singled out the Dönme from Breznik as one of the elements of the Kircali period, but in the official Ottoman

²⁴² Mutafchieva, Vera. *Clio is a muse too*. Plovdiv: Hristo G. Danov, 1969

²⁴³ Here we quote the text from *The Knight* by: Mutafchieva, Vera. *Selected works*, V. III. Plovdiv: Janet 45, 2008

documents around the armistice with the chiefs he is called “a new robber”; the magnificent pages in the *Chronicle* that nothing but the majesty of the city stopped Kara Feyzie in front of Istanbul have no verification in the monograph. In general, the novel man has different outline and it is again drawn not by the ‘historical’, but by the projects of ‘living’.

And yet the most important difference in the interpretations probably supervenes from the fact that the monograph *Kircali Time* repeatedly states at its very outset that “*Kircali brigandage in essence does not belong to the history of Bulgaria*”, “*the phenomenon in question is Ottoman in its essence...*”, “*The Kircali time is part of the past of the former Turkish colonists in the Bulgarian lands, and not of the Bulgarian lands as Bulgarian*”, “*in the present study the issues of Bulgarian history will be avoided*” (5-43); The effects of the epoch on the ‘Bulgarian affairs’ are identified by the scientist only in the conclusion of this work of hers. But the novel contains them, however, again as ‘unhistorical’: with the exception of Zambin and Sophronius (whose main work in the *Book of Sophronius* turns out to conceal the ‘historical’ of the hero’s political activity), the Bulgarians of the Stano family from Konare are completely fictional. That is why it is not at all uninteresting when Vera Mutafchieva herself registered the relinquishment of the ‘strictly scientific tone’, and that in the conclusion of the monograph with the only then introduced Bulgarian issues:

“So far, according to the methods of *scientific* research, the roots have been sought, the development has been outlined and the specific manifestations of the sum of processes and phenomena, which in essence do not belong to the history of Bulgaria, have been specified. For their delineation were used primarily foreign sources – Ottoman, Western European, Russian. Issues that directly affect Bulgarian history have almost always been out of the attention of the Turkish government or a foreign observer. We can shed light on these issues through the extremely scarce, often inaccurate, undated, but sometimes astonishingly insightful Bulgarian testimonies. Let it be forgiven that in its last part the research will leave the strictly scientific tone” (Mutafchieva, V. 1993: 383).

Thus, both in science and in the novel, it is bias and mercy that separate the Bulgarian from the whole cluttered human babel of the troubled time. They distinguish it also with value caution in the use of the terms – special attention in Vera Mutafchieva deserves the constellation of the terms ‘Kircalis’, ‘hayduks’, ‘robbers’ in the *Chronicle*, in the monograph *Kircali time* and in *Book of Sophronius*. Protecting them from the connotations of other terms, the author describes the Bulgarians Parvan, Velko and Kondo only within the framework of ‘hayduk’; despite the meaning with which

Sophronius regularly uses it in the sense of 'brigands' in *Life and Sufferings*, although the positive meaning of the hayduk was made only in Rakovski's and most classically – in Botev's texts. Without making Parvan, Velko and Kondo 'people's protectors' in the slightest, without glorifying and pathetizing Parvan's hungry small party, Vera Mutafchieva simply keeps them without comment within the limits of this term alone, which provides their 'added value' in the historical economy of value.

The separation of the Bulgarians from the metaphors of anarchy – the 'vortex' and the 'spill' – and the addition of them to the movements of 'history' in the *Chronicle of the Troubled Time* are evident, for example, in that Kondo's cavalry and Velko's company in the service of Pazvantoglu in the novel are Bulgarian. And right here, in the battle for Vidin, without any Bulgarian national cause or nationalist ecstasy, the following paragraph emerges, whose deaf-mute pathos deserves special attention:

"The Bulgarians stood on the battlefield.

Since when? Since when did the Bulgarian not go out in battle to meet the enemy face to face... Have any of these ones heard that centuries ago the Bulgarians had a kingdom, and their kingdom – an army? That it stood under Constantinople, under Thessaloniki and Edirne, that kings and chroniclers considered the Bulgarians a plague, more terrible than the plague, that for many centuries the Bulgarians kept in their country a land burnt by invasions, land at the crossroads – the most disputed land of the Old World?

Kondo, a craftsman from Sliven who had caught the forest, did not know it; Parvan had no idea about it...

– Yurush!

– Yuruush!

– Hah, brah! ... Deh, brah! ...

They didn't even know how to shout properly – it was so long ago when the Bulgarian kinsfolk had fought battles and stood under siege, they did not even know how to shout properly: it was so long ago, when the Bulgarian family had fought battles and stood under siege, that they had forgotten the battle cries. So they passed on to each other the thirst for movement and victory with the words with which the last twenty generations of their kinsfolk have loaded wood, dragged caïques and grazed cattle" (*Chronicle of the Troubled Time*, 487).

This paragraph is not confirmed in the monograph *Kircali Time*: Kondo and Velko (otherwise historical figures) are not mentioned in the chapter "The Siege of Vidin"; it was not until the outbreak of the Serbian uprising that it was said that "*it was there (in*

Serbia) that a company of several thousand Bulgarians emerged under the leadership of the hayduk Velko Petrovic, who came to support Kara Georgi” (Mutafchieva, V. 1993: 400). Again, the novel has added the Bulgarian and military component, which do not exist in the historiographic narrative. The *Book of Sophronius* states that “*in Bucharest there was talk of the exemplary feats of Hayduk Velko, of Kondo Voyvode, men whom Sophronius knew intimately*” (170). However, it is precisely in the *Chronicle of the Troubled Time* that this acquaintance is nowhere specifically noted, it is not brought to direct communication and direct speech. So Velko and Kondo ‘flicker’ along the line of adding or disappearance of the Bulgarian line in the three different texts and their different aesthetics of knowledge – and once again confirm the syndrome and techniques of the addition itself.

The Bulgarian realities stands as addendum in *Me, Anna Komnene* too, however only as an unimportant repetition compared to the already existing examples. There, the grandmother of the Byzantine princess, mother of Irene Doukaina and descendant of the Cometopuli dynasty Maria of Bulgaria suffered in her lands near Ohrid the Old Testament (Cain's) sin of her kin, in order to invoke the condescension of the historically educated Anna: “*...the fateful family curse that caused the whole family of Samuel and Aaron to live in misery. Grandmother almost cried while recounting her story, and I felt uneasy to comfort her that according to us, family stories like this Bulgarian one were not only common, but somehow in the scheme of things*” (*Me, Anna Komnene*, 116). The tragic uniqueness of the Bulgarian case in this case (and not only in this case) turns out to be someone else's cliché, a very old cliché, which also allows superordinate comparisons, takes the Bulgarian substance out of its subjective experience and deprives it of pathos, puts it into the composure of typologies. However, this is what Anna Komnene, the woman in history who writes history, does – and she does it as a preterition, she tells it as something she did not tell the people of that time, leaving them at least the possession of the illusion that the model in all its tragedy is only and precisely theirs.

While absent from history, however, ‘the Bulgarian’ turns out to be a ‘place’²⁴⁴ (the context in the novels decides whether the place is called Thrace before the new era, Rumelia in the Ottoman centuries, or Bulgaria), where the foreigner can come and therefore go out of the Great Narrative; a place where the person doomed to history (be

²⁴⁴ Including just geography, sometimes devoid of ethnic determinants, as in *Alcibiades the Great*. Even if it was written in the heyday of Thracology, the novel sends Alcibiades into a geography that is put in paranthesis like this: “*Here, where Hebros (later named Maritsa) spilled his waters wide...*” (*Alcibiades the Great*, 396); but the Thracian Timandra, of course, is nowhere called ‘Bulgarian’, nor is any continuity between Thracian and the Bulgarian sought on the basis of ‘land’ or ‘territory’.

he Belisarius, Roger de Fre or Alcibiades the Great) can go out of history here, fall in love and/or die, i.e. to carry out for the last time the existential project.

Clio and Aesop: Reunions and Separations

A short and mocking definition of Yordan Eftimov for the historical novel reads: “an allegorical work that must justify retrospectively the course of recent political history” (Eftimov, Y. 2002: 55). However, justifying the course of recent political history in the obviousness of some thematic part of the allegory, the historical novel is able to compensatory develop other allegories around the same thematic axis, which will condense other policies within the observed ideological imperative.

The 1960s obviously set the historical novel the task of the negative image of the West. This is very clear in the reviews of H. Hristov and D. Angelov (quoted in Part 2 herein) with the recommendations on how Fani Popova-Mutafova should correct her interwar right-wing thinking, mostly in the direction of her not entirely negative attitude towards the Latin crusaders, the popes and the people from the West in general. As we have seen, the author fulfills the order – and in the very course of this performance she manages to fully preserve and even further strengthen the central allegory of nationalism for the interwar period: Great Bulgaria, the kings – unifiers of the people and the Peninsula, and so on. That is, a given allegory does not exclude the other one, on the contrary, it can become a tool for its reaffirmation. In 1967, Vera Mutafchieva's *The Cem Case* was also an entirely anti-Western novel ²⁴⁵, in which sense it fits into the ‘course of recent political history’. However, this observance is a by-product of a very different allegory, which is in fact the main one – the praise of the East, and is expressed equally strongly by the antagonistic witnesses Pierre D’Aubusson and Saadi. And something more – the East in the face of the protagonist of the novel Cem, son of Mehmed the Conqueror, wins a hitherto and later on unseen in Bulgarian literature positive image of nothing but the Ottoman. That is, observing the same imperative of the current politics of the 1960s, Fani Popova-Mutafchieva and Vera Mutafchieva managed to develop compensatory allegories equally, but they are polar to each other – the former regenerates its nationalism, and the latter sneaks a completely anti-

²⁴⁵ This circumstance has been noted by literary critics since 1989: “*This text may be somewhat overshadowed by the spirit of a time when the West was necessarily interpreted as an Empire of Evil. But it would be a rude vulgarity to define “The Cem Case” as ‘propaganda’, as ‘ideologically-conjunctural’ work... Apart from her reputation as an excellent epic narrator, V. Mutafchieva also defended her brilliant erudition as an Orientalist-Ottomanist, in love with the subject of her scientific activities*” (Stoyanova, L. 1994: 118).

nationalist tendency, presenting the Ottoman as a man, as a refined, profound, suffering and defeated man. Of course, in *The Cem Case* such an image of the Ottoman and such a defense of the Ottoman against the Western European is possible in the late 1960s in a Bulgarian novel, mainly because the Bulgarians are not in it thematically ²⁴⁶.

Vera Mutafchieva obviously takes full advantage of the ability of the allegory to thematize more or less hiddenly other residual, compensated, multiplied and splitting up allegories, provided that what is signified in the central political allegory is never sufficiently overflowing with thematic imperatives of its signifier. That is why the signifier may turn out to be not too much attached, determined in its connection with the signified, and in the signified other contents may be hidden. For example, in *NonFables*, the author speaks of *The Cem Case* as the result of an analogy between the West in the Middle Ages and the West during the Hungarian events of 1956, together with the emigration of Vera Mutafchieva's brother (*NonFables* IV: 22– 29). Thus, the second one – the allegory of intention – does not thematically refute the allegory of the current political imperative of the 1960s, but is added to it as an alternative reference, as an alternative political intention. Thus, in the 1960s, the negativity of the West can be read in Vera Mutafchieva as an expression of the fact that it is an enemy of the regime, that it hinders the regime; and as an expression of the fact that it did not hinder the regime enough.

It is interesting that such a constant pushing of new signifiers and new signified ones in the matrix of the allegory, which multiply it and constantly problematize its uniqueness, is accompanied by a complete compromise of its uniqueness, by the negation of its 'fable' function. Then, however, after all the multiplied, narrowed, changed and chosen meanings of 'history', Vera Mutafchieva turned to some constancies, which we can without remorse call referring to a worldview. We have already talked about the first of them – Herodotus' meaning of 'interrogation' and 'investigation', which gave birth to her romance of commentary. The second – equally constant and consistently advanced meaning – is the complete, absolute absence of the 'teacher of nations' from the entire fund of prosopopeia.

Apart from being extremely consistent, this lack is also fully realized – in the preface to the essays *Clio is a Muse too* (1969) the 'teacher' is rejected with calm justification: "*The same one who was a teacher of nations. And this is an exaggeration... it was hardly*

²⁴⁶ Today we hardly realize to what extent in those decades the lack of the Bulgarian line in a Bulgarian historical novel contradicted the habits of the genre – T. Zhechev finds the lack of the Bulgarian in *The Cem Case* a disadvantage, a circumstance that hinders the 'sharpness' and 'drama' (as if they are a privilege only of the Bulgarian): "...the Bulgarian is absent, it remains outside the scope of the novel and this to some extent deprives it of sharpness and historical drama..." (Zhechev, T. 1980: 198) .

intended to teach the nations” (14-15). And this, by the way, means the dissolution of the old ties between Clio and Aesop, i.e. the challenge of unambiguity in the allegorical capacity of history.

Vera Mutafchieva does it in the most literal way too – she removes a fable from the most popular and popular notions of Bulgarian history, the fable of the old father who teaches his sons family solidarity with the help of a bundle of sticks; a plot that stands in the codified circle of works called ‘Aesop’, and not only there. With a changed lesson (family solidarity has been changed into national unity), the fable has long been in the first historiographic notions of the student in primary school as a plot for the bundle of sticks of Khan Kubrat at the founding of the Bulgarian state. In the teenager’s novel *Predicted by Pagane* (1980), which is the basis of the script of the film “Khan Asparuh” for the jubilee of the 1300th anniversary of the Bulgarian state, Vera Mutafchieva removes the bundle of sticks together with its moral ²⁴⁷.

The very first change of the moral, however, means that the genre format of the fable is destroyed and the meaning is intercepted by a whole multitude of signified ones, who in turn come from different historical contexts. If the same bundle of sticks can mean premodern family solidarity, modern national unity, the repressive totalitarian “whoever thinks differently, history punishes him” or even the meaning of the Italian signifier of the same bundle in the term ‘fascism’, then history, with vague changes in its very meaning (old father in general or exactly Khan Kubrat), is not a producer of plots, but of lessons, i.e. it turns out that it has disappeared from historicism itself and that it is absorbed by some constant, gaping wide open and immovable scope of allegory. And if we are allowed to approach for a while with fictional irresponsibility, we will say that if some literary hero of Vera Mutafchieva would break a bundle of sticks, it would be only because he feels like to break sticks or because he wants to light a fire, but in any case will break the sticks to refute the quote.

Removing the unambiguous allegory, i.e. the fable (not only from the plot of the founders of the Bulgarian state, but in general from the thinking about history and man)

²⁴⁷ In the fourth book of *NonFables*, the plot with the removal of the bundle looks like this: “*The bundle of sticks of Khan Kubrat. I had risked missing the episode, probably imprinted in most Bulgarian heads, by reason of the fact that every government and regime demands from its subjects unity, unification, consolidation. They drive a lesson in the minds of children: whoever thinks differently, history punishes him. And it turns out that the Bulgarians failed because they did not listen to their father. But in the next lesson it was proved that there is no failure, there is their triumph – they made not one, but three countries, despite the father's warning: the local one lasted until our anniversary, and what's so bad about this. However, a film could not be done without the bundle of sticks, the director went wild. “Fascio, you say! – I countered sarcastically. – “As for it, we find it in a host of myths. Naive copy-paste”* (NonFables IV: 216).

is characteristic of this creative works. This is not just about the fact that the author's preference has already chosen between the figuratives and that it definitely relies on the movements in prosopopeia against the unambiguous referential aims of the fable. The rejection of the latter – and of the fable lesson – however, is the rehabilitation of Aesop himself and the fable, which in his own antiquity has no lesson (the lessons, says specialized knowledge, were instilled in Aesop by the Middle Ages in love with allegory). Thus the novels, going against the fable, resurrect Aesop as a narrator with open, multiple messages unformulated from a single lesson.

Analogy, of course, is the main tool in the construction of allegory, but analogies always have the potential to be of any kind, i.e. to give birth not only to a fable allegory, but to different series of allegories – through the permanent openness of the analogy creating procedures, capable of reproducing both the levels of the signifier and the levels of the signified. For example, kircaliism – both as a scientific and as a fictional temptation – accompanies Vera Mutafchieva in all her writing, and it turns out to be a mobile signifier, capable of calling events beyond its own historical limit. In the memoir series *NonFables* things are defined as Kircali that look so different in history as the October Revolution (“*The Great October... It invariably inspired me to study the Kircali time after twenty years – “there was an analogous case in our village” according to the widespread joke*” – II: 232-233) and the post-communist period in Bulgaria, where the memoir no longer comments on the novel or doctoral dissertation, but the famous journalistic text “Kircali time” from 1994 (“Although the writing “Kircali time” updated the subject by journalistic means and experienced a dozen reprints, we do not observe any yen for civil resistance against its [of the phenomenon] revival” – IV: 279). However, only the model core of the Kircali time remains in the signified – the chaos, the connotations connected with it and its structuring, its clarification, so that there is not just a lack of allegory, but a perceived insufficiency of even analog thinking. The similarities in history appear as unfinished and therefore abortive, the teacher of nations cannot teach anyone, because, as it is written in book IV of the memoirs, “*If history repeated itself, we would not study history*”.

That is why we will not find history in Vera Mutafchieva as an unambiguous, fabular political allegory. The lesson to other times is missing in the *Chronicle of the Troubled Time*; *The Cem Case* does not make clear even its own context of writing and its own reason – the Hungarian events of 1956 and the obscure loneliness of Eastern European man²⁴⁸. To this day, the most common ideological features of the novel engage the

²⁴⁸ At the oral conference “To live and write socialism. Discussion on the memoir series *NonFables* by Vera Mutafchieva”, held on October 27, 2005 at NBU, Boyko Penchev shared the following: “*For example, I admit that I was ashamed when I realized that I missed the obvious allegory in The Cem Case – that it*

reader by going against the whole inherited and hitherto obligatory Bulgarian axiology and win him while in the plot of ‘Ottoman’ and ‘European’ the human value is definitely embodied in the ‘Ottoman’ – this sharp novelty remains to this day no less important than the political ‘Aesopian’ plan of the novel ²⁴⁹ and significant to such an extent that the current political context of those days is increasingly difficult to see today beyond the confession of Vera Mutafchieva herself in *NonFables*.

And here is another difference between ‘history’ and ‘man’ in view of their susceptibility to analog regimes; history does not repeat itself, but “*man does not change. As astonishing as it is, he turns out to be eternal, unchanging*” (*NonFables*, IV: 64). In such an ideography, Vera Mutafchieva does not hide the repetitions – both Cem Sultan and Sophronius are among ‘all the beaten in history’ – and even turns the repetitions themselves into a plot that connects people from different times in a single characterology in *Alcibiades the Little* (1975) and *Alcibiades the Great* (1976), i.e. accommodates different signifiers in the same signified. However, this does not reduce the human to some ‘typologies of character’ that are subject to fable reading; on the contrary, the human is invariable precisely in its inexhaustible variety, it is precisely this that makes man pansynchronous. That is why Vera Mutafchieva's ‘lessons’ are never historiographical or ethical, but come again from ‘living’ – they are innumerable, unsystematic and multifaceted statements of the existential project, for which we will give only a few examples:

“Or, at last, what ultimately is burden on human life is insult. It is to wash away the insult from oneself.” (*Chronicle of the Troubled Time*, 613).

“Why on the Agora, where a host of philosophers preach eternal, ever-eternal and only true truths, did someone not teach a boy some time ago: Do not strive to conquer the world, there is no conquest of the world – it will exist after you, without you... Your conquest can only be another man – also mortal in a fragile way, also suffering, also hungry to possess another man...” (*Alcibiades the Great*, 425).

is about the deceived hope of the Eastern European ... this is Cem Sultan – the Eastern European before 1956, before the events in Hungary” (To be Continued Magazine, issue 13, 2005, p. 15)

²⁴⁹ This characteristic is especially clear in the ‘foreign’ point of view, for example that of the specialist in Bulgarian studies Marie Vrinat-Nikolov (also a translator of *Me, Anna Komnene* in French): “*Vera Mutafchieva gives here (in The Cem Case – author's note – A. H.) her personal and very nuanced conception of a specialist in Ottoman history and was the first to dare to ignore the ruling ideology shared by a large part of the population (since five centuries of Ottoman rule led to very persistent myths of collective identity) and to present Ottoman culture in its diversity, richness and contradiction*” (Vrinat-Nikolov, M. 2001).

“People who do not know how to achieve and acquire are dying with difficulty. Is it bitter? – a handful of ashes are our achievements, our gains... Life punished me, showering me with the best... Thank you, God, for turning your face away from Caesaress Anna, for depriving her of prosperity! The main thing: You gave her a lot of time to live deprived” (*Me, Anna Komnene*, 266).

“I’m leaving now, Cem. If you still understood, you would understand: one can give a person a lot, an awful lot, an incredible and unbearable amount. But not quite everything. There isn't such one, Cem. Goodbye.” (*The Cem Case*, 379).

Such an approach places the very term of the concept of history in the next ambiguous position. It is at the same time different from the existential project and very dependent on the human in its unified prosopopeia. The *Book of Sophronius* (1978) states: “History is not incomprehensible, as long as you arrange its cluttered fragments without prejudice” (166). This sentence, in addition to explaining retrospectively the narrative technique of the *Chronicle of the Troubled Time*, also reminds us of its initial question – what happens to the riddle if the answer is a term from its very condition; then the answer should be quite different and develop into a series of insolubilities that are not in terms of the signifier and are not correlated to it, as is the case with the existential lessons of the teacher of nations. By the way, the insolubility in response was also given to us by Vera Mutafchieva in Saadi's council to the court of history from *The Cem Case*: “...when you explain history, leave a small but obligatory part of it unexplained. It is like this, inexplicable, put up with it” (409).

Instead of a conclusion:

The novel as an autobiography, the memoirs as novels

The romance of the commentary, as well as the battles between the existential project and the great story of history, the play of analogies and reproductions of the signifiers and the signified in the allegory find their personal interplay, of course, in the memoir genre of the four-volume *NonFables*. It is there that the fact that Vera Mutafchieva's last novel – *Me, Anna Komnene* (1991) can be read as autobiographical is somehow thematized. If in 1991 only Anna Komnene's decision to write an apology for her father – and the deconstruction of the apology genre through the ‘existential project’ that led to Anna Komnene's writing, led to such reading, then *NonFables* indirectly interfered with the figure of the mother as autobiographically readable in the novel (and the figure of

another woman who was the first to make the analogy in biographical time ²⁵⁰). But the two lines of blood relationship *Me, Anna Komnene* solves differently.

The father's apology – outside the actual medieval genre of apology – permeates both the writing and the biography of Vera Mutafchieva. Late memoirs reveal this as a payment of a debt to the father, who, however, is nowhere romantically apologetized. The commented reprints of the classic books of Petar Mutafchiev, which Vera Mutafchieva undertook in the late decades, are not at all pathetic and exalting and kinship is by no means their main reason. They are commented on as a fulfilled duty to the history of science, as a return to today's readability of a scientist. The oratory of apologetics to the father is not characteristic of either *NonFables* or *Family Saga* and *Unraveling the father* ²⁵¹, in which the power of the image is not in the presumed cliché of continuity, but in the gaps, the recognized void between what the daughter got to know and the father's recognizability. They are also combined in the unperemptority, in the incompleteness of Herodotus' 'investigation' of the father, postponed in the grammatical incompleteness of the verbal adverb – 'unraveling', in which the action of unraveling cannot stop to leave and open a place for apology.

Without wanting or being able to analyze the psychoanalytic and biographical in the relations between historiography and literature that Vera Mutafchieva develops and demonstrates, we will mention only the most obvious – the ancestral guilt that both Vera Mutafchieva and Anna Komnene feel when turning to literature. Since the father – a historian in life and a military leader in the novel – is dead, he could not testify the guilt, and so this role is left to the mother – and she turns out to be classically divided, mirror-oppositional, psychoanalytically split in the novel and memoirs, and its messages in both texts open up issues in which we cannot delve into here as its seriousness deserves:

“Every mother knows her child more accurately than it is aware of, Dukene taught me sternly. – You were born for prose, daughter! – Mom said clearly as a prophecy... – I have a task for you, Anna! She caught my other hand, now holding me captive. – Write the chronicle of Alexios' time!.. Only you, – Mom continued cheerfully, – would write a chronicle of Alexios, the trickster who played everyone!

²⁵⁰ “...the old, good-natured lady G. Ts. invariably replied: “Do not doubt, you are the fated Anna Komnene.” I had no idea who the Greek translator was referring to, so I once asked her. And she: “the most glamorous author of the Middle Ages, the daughter of Alexios Komnenos. She was born with a white star on her forehead, marked by God”... On top of everything, the sentimental G. Ts. greeted me in the morning with the salutation: “Here is the Starhead!”. During the period when I was considered nobody at the Institute, she drove in me a flattering suggestion. That's that.” (*NonFables* IV: 21–22).

²⁵¹ Mutafchieva, Vera. *Family saga. Unraveling the father*. Sofia: Balkan Publishing Company Ltd., 2000.

I don't want the truth about your father from you, Anna, that truth would be pretty sad. I want an apology!

I seemed to catch her cheerfulness – it was a funny idea: both of us, in a sense sacrificed by the political craft of our husband and father, were now in power to make Alexios whatever we wanted. To reproduce him, for example, as a combination of the ancient gods Zeus and Ares, eh?

As far as I remember, your attitude towards your father was not so apologetic, – I said. In response, the old woman burst into a cultivated laughter...“*(Me, Anna Komnene, 272-273).*”

“On a not exactly nice autumn morning, I announced to my mother: “I'm starting to write a novel.” She looked at me sadly, her weapon was grief, those of a widow. “Now you will fall down completely!” – she prophesied. For reasons unknown in her premonitions I have always been someone threatened with failure and in every way frivolous. “If you abandon your science, it's all over!” – she added” (*NonFables III: 129*).

If the autobiography is in principle divided between living and writing life and between their two different times ²⁵², then Vera Mutafchieva is about playing around four times: if the circumstance that *Me, Anna Komnene* can be read as (including) an autobiographical novel, is derived through the allegorical double compound, while the instrument that reveals and clearly thematizes this double compound is the autobiographical of *NonFables* which in turn reproduces all the allegories of the novels by placing them in the own level of the signifier.

“*I lived a wonderful life – on the border between reality and fiction*” we read on the last page of the fourth memoir book. However, the one who leaves his space and crosses the border is the main character of the novels, regardless of whether his name is Kara Feyzie, Alcibiades the Great, Alcibiades the Little, or Cem Sultan (“*Cem, a tragic fusion of East and West, incest between Christianity and Islam, a misconception between Epicureanism and Stoicism*”, as defined by Saadi). Perhaps the parallel reading of the memoirs and the novels will suggest that an even more radical boundary has been crossed, that between the self of the memoirist and all those written by her, whom she calls ‘my people’: “*Which means I want the fourth book to be funny... I've had a yen for a long time to write something funny. But, apparently, I was still not sad enough; the*

²⁵² “The appearance of the autobiography is caused in most cases by the value insufficiency of our own time, of our own ‘here and now’. Autobiographies usually appear when a person cannot find enough value supports in his own present and is forced to look for them and bring them out of the past and through its values to make sense of his present”(Kozludzhov, Z. 2005: 41).

measure of worldly losses has not been met in order to survive only derision in its role of last comprehensive compensation against them (~~Non~~Fables, IV: 7-8)."

However, this position is regal, regardless of the first person preserved for the memoirs or the third person of the novels. We always find it in the final aftermath of rulers written by Vera Mutafchieva: "Let me not forget to emphasize: I already laugh too often – whether over the world, or over the memory of my almost reign? And this laughter is so dear to me..." (Anna Komnene in *Me, Anna Komnene*, 261); "Power is no big deal for sure!" – Selim continued to rejoice in his discovery: the great derision in whose light everything seemed "no big deal!"..." (Selim III in *Chronicle of the Troubled Time*, 714); "Well – with a calm derision: I tried a lot and achieved a lot. Lying down, I contemplate the comedy I wrote through my male deeds..." (*Alcibiades the Great*, 398). We would say that the sentence from book IV of the memoirs is only a personal confession of Vera Mutafchieva – "I kept laughing during my occupation with history. From the bottom of my heart I thank to the unfathomable that the opposite did not happen to me: to take it too much to heart" (101) –, if forty years before Ivan Zambin had not uttered the following words in *Chronicle of the Troubled Time*: "After all, if we were to take history very much to heart, we would have been dead to the last person" (450).

Here we hardly make a special discovery, as the first live reader of the *Chronicle of the Troubled Time* was prepared for this; the man was astonished by the young author's appearance: "I imagined you at least as a sixty-year-old, but mostly a man. Even with a mustache" (~~Non~~Fables IV: 278). At that time the reader was completely right (the description includes not only the kircali, but also a priest, a separatist, a peasant or a sultan) – but the insufficiency of his vision is chiefly historical, he has not yet read the unwritten *Me, Anna Komnene*. It is there that art utters a strong female, initial, dynastic and ruling 'me' in its title – *Me, Anna Komnene* (and for the reader it is enough just to put the thoughts of the Byzantine princess about prose to the thoughts of Vera Mutafchieva about prose in *NonFables* in order to have the tool for recognition). From the memoir series we judge that the incarnations go beyond gender and its character, as well as beyond the different stories and socialities of the characters from the novels, which turned out to be signifiers of the memoirs. Or a childhood that in the first book of *NonFables* looks like an socially incredible cross between the childhood of Princess Anna Komnene (see, but not limited to, the 'two-horned' in the memoirs and the 'star-headed' in the novel) and the kircali Kara Feyzie... As we mentioned above on another occasion, in the *Chronicle of the Troubled Time* the authentic desire hidden under the rage, the banditry, the murders of Kara Feyzie, is the longing to ride a horse, but the same is true for the child Vera in one horse farm near Preslav: "...Ah, how astonished I

was by this great discovery! And no less gusto: to ride a horse” *NonFables* I: 58), and the already frank: “*From eleven to fourteen years of age I was a kind of power plant; rage and kircalism*” (I: 152).

Of course, these examples are too partial to suggest the ways in which the rather conditional first person of the memoirs and also the very conditional grammatical persons of the novels are constructed. They would come to light only in a monstrous reading, staring at everything written by Vera Mutafchieva at the same time; for the time being we can only be sure that the mergers, the mutating-changing repetitions, the streamlined contexts are devoid of any easy chronology. In such a dissolution of identities into each other, genealogies change their orders too; they become reversible. Contempt for the textbook oppositions (happiness-unhappiness, victory-defeat) also applies to both – “*Only from the side, some people look happy, others – unhappy. While in fact – just the same*” (*NonFables* I: 366) – “*Who actually won in the Cem case and who lost? Nobody, I dare say*” (Antoin de Jimelle in *The Cem Case*, 403).

For a literary criticism which has come away from the decaying author–hero dichotomy and is staring at the text, it is now difficult to ask the question of who creates whom: the author – the characters, or the characters – the author (“*whether I moved into Cem, or vice versa*”, *NonFables* III: 150). Is this the revenge that experience got on art, in which art seems to be overcrowded by first personal, individual and contemporary to itself point of view? Isn't such a power subjectivity actually carried out according to the logic of the lyrics, to whose “*Me, and me once again!*” Vera Mutafchieva is otherwise openly condescending? Or this is the revenge of the no-nonfables on the nonfables – once the created fiction invades and conquers the private realities of a living person, the literary characters write the memoirs of their author.

From her beloved Sophronius, Vera Mutafchieva also inherited a beloved word for writing (“*he started to ‘work out books’, as he puts it*” – *Book of Sophronius*, 163) and which is repeatedly used not only in *NonFables*, but also in *Me, Anna Komnene*. There the word shines, torn between the fact that it was said by a Bulgarian writer, that it is also said by a Byzantine princess, that it means work, a craft for which sublime awe is not the main thing, and that to this proud and self-ironic use it has been worn out in the form of a long-standing student cliché: “*Yes, but then I was a royal daughter. And I wrote a work*” (286).

We would only say that in the last work the previous ones gather, return to the subjectivity of living, acknowledge and illuminate their genealogies. In the biographical identity of *NonFables* Vera Mutafchieva simply takes back her people; and despite the partial examples here, we will say – all of them.