



UNIVERSITY OF NIŠ
The scientific journal **FACTA UNIVERSITATIS**
Series: **Linguistics and Literature** Vol.2, No 7, 2000 pp. 201 - 202
Editor of series: *Nedeljko Bogdanović*, e-mail: nedbog@filfak.ni.ac.yu
Address: Univerzitetski trg 2, 18000 Niš, YU, Tel: +381 18 547-095, Fax: +381 18 547-950
<http://ni.ac.yu/Facta>

In Memoriam

Vida E. Marković, the author of the introductory paper to this issue of FACTA, has not lived to see it published - she died on March 25th 2001 in her 85th year.

On finishing Grammar School in Zagreb, where she was born in 1916, Vida E. Marković moved to Belgrade, where her father Edo Marković, the well-known economist, patriot and democrat settled with his family of six children and was killed at the threshold of his home in 1939. In Belgrade Vida E. Marković obtained a B.A. at the English Department, winning the St. Sava Prize as the best student of Belgrade University in that academic year.

Vida E. Marković started her career as a teacher of German only to abandon it on April 6th 1941 and resume it as a teacher of French and English at the French and English Institutes. Soon after the end of World War II she got the post of editor and translator in TANJUG and as such was engaged at the Paris Peace Conference and the first session of the United Nations in New York. On return from New York Vida E. Marković joined as a teaching assistant at the English Department, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade. During a three month stay in England in 1951, sponsored by The British Council, she met the distinguished professor Bonnamy Dobree from the University of Leeds, who accepted her proposal for a doctoral thesis on John Galsworthy, which she presented and defended with distinction three years later. Due to the prolonged sojourn of her husband, the first secretary of the Yugoslav Embassy in London, she rejoined the English Department in 1955.

That year is a landmark in Vida E. Marković's brilliant university career. Now as a docent (reader), well equipped and acquainted with modern methods and trends in teaching literature, based on the assumptions derived from the approaches of I.A. Richards, F.R. Leavis and Edmund Wilson, she begins teaching Modern British and American Literature. That means teaching literature as an exploration of human experience. From 1960 to 1970 as Head of the English Department she carries out a radical reform of English Studies at the Department, opens it to and establishes lasting links with the leading British and American universities, plays host to outstanding professors of literature and linguistics and helps younger members of her own department to win grants for shorter and longer stays at various British and American universities. The doors of the Department are thus wide open to the new achievements in English Studies. She herself lectures as visiting professor at numerous universities in Yugoslavia and abroad, becomes a member of several international associations of professors of literature as well as several editing boards.

The 1960s and 70s are Vida E. Marković's most fruitful period in strictly academic terms - she writes critical essays, articles on literary topics, introductions, translates from English and writes books from which generations of students acquire fundamental knowledge of modern English literature: *Galsworthy in English Criticism* (doctoral thesis); *The Modern English Novel I, II*; *Discrepancy Between Word and Play (Raskol između reci i igre)*, which, based on the text of *Hamlet*, reconsiders a clash between two aesthetics - drama as literary text and as theatre; *A Contribution to the Epistemology of Literature*, a book which, based on research, brings forth her views of teaching literature as an interaction with student as active recipient in the process of mutual fruition; *The Changing Face (Podeljena licnost)*, first published in the USA, which deals with the disintegration of man in the modern British novel as a common phenomenon in 20th century art; *Encounters*, with the portraits of seven great men, mainly men of letters, gives her work a sense of roundness and completeness.

Her success in reading and teaching Modern British and American literature would have certainly been impossible without a thorough knowledge of Shakespeare, to whom she recurrently refers and with whom she ends her teaching career - A Special Course in Shakespeare.

In 1971, when the local and university authorities of Niš initiate talks on the opening of the Faculty of Philosophy, Vida E. Marković is invited to join the Founding Board and participate in all the activities that lead to the opening of the English Department as one of the seven departments that receive the first generation of freshmen in November 1971. She, as the first Head of the Department and Ljiljana Mihailović as Vice Dean (whom Vida had persuaded to leave Belgrade for Niš), embark on a new academic adventure as if they were at the outset of their careers. Niš to them is both a challenge and a test - under their guidance the Department, with the young assistants selected from their former students and those from Niš, gains quickly a reputation for the high quality of teaching and as the only department in Yugoslavia where all teaching is in English from the first day of the students' enrollment. Vida E. Marković is proud that she can do in Niš what she could not have done even in Belgrade, to achieve something towards which all great professors of literature are heading, to use Northrop Frye's words: 'the end of literary teaching is not simply admiration of literature; it is something more like the transfer of imaginative energy from literature to the student.' After her lectures students leave the classroom with unconcealed admiration for both literature and the lecturer, as well as with a feeling of gratitude for being enriched with an experience which enables them to see themselves and others with new eyes.

In 1981, when the young members of the staff, due to her guidance and immeasurable efforts, become fully qualified by obtaining Ph.D. degrees, to take over Ljiljana's and her work, Vida E. Marković retires, with a *Festschrift* published in her honour. For her it is a new beginning - she turns to fiction, a specific kind of autobiographical novel. The sequence opens with *Nezustavljeno Vreme (The Unstopped Time)* in which she brings to life and gives meaning to her recollections from childhood. In *Festina Lente* she further examines the events that have confirmed her forebodings of the tragic situation into which we were thrown. In *Između dva sveta (Between Two Worlds)* she enlivens the periods and dilemmas they brought, alongside the reminiscences of London, Belgrade, Paris and New York before, during and after World War II. With *Ex Cathedra* she resumes her life story, dominated by the encounters with the famous writers and university professors (William Faulkner, Christopher Isherwood, Austen Warren). Her last novel *Svi moji univerziteti (All My Universities)*, whose content is suggested by the title of the book, ends with a question which occurred to her on leaving New York for Belgrade, just at the end of the 60s: "Will America, as a big power, be able to lead mankind into a better future, or will it, being as it is, with its rude force, become humankind's biggest threat?" The answer was supplied at the public presentation of the book in Autumn 2000: "She, who had during her entire teaching career talked about the wealth and values of Anglo-American culture and civilization, has lived to see aircraft coming from that culture and civilization bomb her country and people for almost three months, adding, not without bitterness, that those who have done that have betrayed and denied the values of the culture from which they come."

The news of Vida E. Marković's death reached us a day after the burial. Such was her last will. Only a few days before her death, in a telephone chat, did she ask for some details from the time of her work in Niš - just a check before 'putting' them into the book she was writing. The fact that the book on the Great Decade of the Niš English Department by its founder remains unfinished makes the great loss of an erudite and prolific writer of inexhaustible energy, a dedicated teacher, humanist and a friend even greater.

Ratomir Ristić