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## **SACRIFICE AND SELF-SACRIFICE IN LITERATURE**

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The quest for distinguishing literary from historic truth, for determining and emphasizing their differences in order to better understand the similarities that bind them together, has magnetically attracted numerous thinkers of the past times, and it still lasts, captivating with the same intensity the attention of modern researchers in literature. Taking this into concern, the Joint Research Center of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences and the University of Niš, together with the Department of Serbian Language and Literature of the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš, came to the idea to organize international scientific meetings on *Literature and History* in this very town that has recorded many events from the rich history of European nations. The meetings were conceived to indicate the directions of new research in this field through the papers to be presented.

Three scientific conferences have been organized on this topic so far. They included the reports of eminent experts in literature from several European countries (Yugoslavia, Russia, Greece, Macedonia, Bulgaria), which had been published in the Proceedings and offered to the wide scientific and cultural public during the period from 1995 to 1998.

The communication with the myth, started in some papers of the Proceedings first and second volume, was accomplished more directly in the third volume, published in 1998, in which the authors focused their interest to the topic *Sacrifice and Self-Sacrifice in Literature*. This was absolutely expectable, as the act of making human sacrifice, either voluntary or forced, is linked to the ritual practice of the original mythological conscience, in which a sacrifice is regarded as the possibility of removing certain peril threatening to endanger the survival of the community. This motif has been present in literature from its beginnings, and it marks the most significant literary works in Serbian literature, as well. The anthropological structure of sacrifice and its meaning within an anonymous or individual literary work have been acquiring new psychological, social, existential, ethic and aesthetic functions, which, in fact, were subjected to the research of the Proceedings authors.

The topic of sacrifice and sacrifice making is included into universal poetic themes. It has been appearing in its variations in almost all literary periods, starting from the primary comprehension of a sacrifice as an imperative of a higher crucial force that rules the human life, over the Romantic attempt to attribute to the sacrifice the meaning of a heroic and sacred act, through the realistic apprehension of the sacrifice as the result of a social injustice, to the modern literary trends in which the sacrifice is transferred into

deeper text layers and linked to an alienated or suffering personality.

Pursuing the answer to the questions related to the history in literature and literature in history, the authors of the presented papers tried to investigate all the aspects of a literary work. The genesis of a literary work in history was discussed, as well as the historical context of a work, history as the subject of a literary work, and the documental value of a work. Different forms of creation, literary procedures, models and techniques of narration were also explored, together with the relations between the legendary and the historic and between the real and the fictitious, as the possibility of literary superstructure.

The topic of the fourth conference (1999) is *Slavic Historical Novel*.

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