

DUNJA DUŠANIĆ  
(UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE)  
ORCID 0000-0002-5227-6506

## THE POETRY OF GOLI OTOK<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The largest facility in a network of prisons and labour camps established in Yugoslavia after the Cominform Resolution of 1948, Goli otok has inspired a vast corpus of prose texts, mostly composed by former inmates and published several decades after the events took place. Partly for this reason and partly because of a narrow, strictly documentary understanding of testimony, scholars have focused their attention on oral testimonies, memoirs, autobiographies, short stories, and novels to gain a deeper understanding of the functioning of state repression and the prisoners' experiences of Goli otok. And yet, poetry was not only a part of life in the camp; for its inmates, it was a vital means of making sense of their experience – both during and after imprisonment. With that in mind, this article will offer an overview of the poetry of Goli otok as a phenomenon in its own right and outline the recurrent motifs, themes, and techniques in the works of former prisoners, focusing in particular on the poems of Ante Zemljar, Veles Perić, Ženi Lebl, and Jovan Stanojević.

**KEYWORDS:** Goli Otok poetry, state repression in Communist Yugoslavia, Ante Zemljar, Veles Perić, Ženi Lebl

In December 2017, the historian Milica Prokić published an article on Goli otok which included the video testimonies of several former inmates of the infamous Yugoslav Gulag (Prokić 2017). When asked to share their experiences of the camp, two of these witnesses resorted to poetry: Vladimir Bobinac recited several lines from a poem by the Croatian classic Jure Kaštelan, *Jadikovka kamena* [The Stone's Lament], unconsciously modifying the original text to reflect his own feelings and concerns, while Joca Ševaljević chose a poem composed by a former prisoner of

---

<sup>1</sup> The research presented in this article was conducted within the framework of the PRIN 2022 PNRR project "Literature of Socialist Trauma: Mapping and Researching the Lost Page of European Literature (LOST)", ID: P2022Z45X8, CUP: B53D23029360001, Principal Investigator: Andrea Gullotta (University of Palermo). The project was funded by the Italian Ministry of Education, Universities, and Research (MIUR) under the 2022 PRIN PNRR Call for Proposals, Directorial Decree No. 1409 of September 14, 2022.



Copyright © 2024. The Author. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are properly cited. The license allows for commercial use. If you remix, adapt, or build upon the material, you must license the modified material under identical terms.

Goli otok, Petar (aka Veles) Perić. Known as “The Poet” amongst his friends and fellow inmates, Veles Perić appeared on the Yugoslav literary scene in the late 1940s as a socially engaged, Eseninesque young poet with bohemian inclinations. After being twice imprisoned as a sympathizer of the USSR and having spent five years on the island between September 1949 and January 1955, he practically ceased publishing poetry.<sup>2</sup> For those who knew him, Perić was a symbol of the tragic destiny of many prisoners of Goli otok, of the pointless waste of talent and the destruction of innocent lives. In his interview with Prokić, Ševaljević explained that Perić’s poem *Ne*, which the poet had whispered to him, was never written down nor, to his knowledge, published.<sup>3</sup> It survived solely thanks to Ševaljević, who had learned it by heart:

Možda su neki lepše i tiše  
doživeli nebesku kupolu.

Ja sam je doživio tako,  
kako nikom ne želim da doživi više,  
– zaljubljan do nje u bolu.

Some may have seen the sky’s dome  
In a finer, quieter way.

May no one ever see it  
As I did,  
– blown sky-high by pain.

Bili su to udarci koji su prevazišli planetu!  
Samo sa svešču u vatrometu  
mogli su da se izdrže.

Nothing could match those frenzied blows!  
Only a mind beyond frenzy, out of this world,  
could endure them.

Vinuvši se dotle kao komunist u svetu,  
Posmatrao sam Zemlju kao maketu  
i osećao sam Sunca kako prže.

Soaring this high, a proud communist,  
I saw the Earth like a tiny model  
and felt the Sun’s scorch my skin.

Visoko, do neba, podiže se palata bola,  
od mojih dana sazidana.  
U prozorima suza blista.  
Ja sam je obiš’o po simsu Zvezdanih kola,  
Sićušan k’o iskra  
iznad ambisa.  
Ja sam je obiš’o pevajući,  
Ja sam je obiš’o snevajući,

High, reaching the sky, rises the palace of pain  
built from my days.  
There is a tear in the windows.  
I saw its brightness from the Dipper’s ledge,  
Small like a spark  
above the abyss.  
I saw it as I walked singing,  
I saw it as I walked dreaming

<sup>2</sup> The only book of poetry to appear during Perić’s lifetime, *Poema o fudbaleru* [A Poem about a Football Player, 1976], was published under the pseudonym Gace Gray. It is a long narrative poem, recounting the main episodes in the career of a fictional football player – a rather thinly disguised, allegoric autobiography, based on an extended metaphor of life as a game.

<sup>3</sup> The version of the poem recited by Ševaljević and published in Prokić’s article was translated into English by Ivana Anđelković and published on the website *Mašina*: <https://www.masina.rs/eng/adriatic-getaway-anticommunists-revisionists/> (accessed 3 September 2022). A slightly different version of the original poem in Serbian was actually published in 1995, under the title *Ne* [No], in the posthumous collection of Perić’s poems edited by his friend and former inmate Galib Sulejmanović, see Perić (1995).

<p>Sto puta veće palate sreće za sve! A pesma, koju sam pevao palati bola na Zemlji, zvala se – “Ne”! (Perić 1995: 49)<sup>4</sup></p>	<p>of palaces of joy a hundred times bigger, made for all! And ‘No’ was the name I gave to the song I sang to Earth’s palace of pain!</p>
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

If there ever was a monument built to the victims of Goli otok, concluded Ševaljević, it should take the form of a stone boulder from the island, with this poem, unwritten and unknown to the world, inscribed upon it.

Ševaljević’s statement perfectly encapsulates both the role of poetry on Goli otok and its status in the Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav space: the firm belief in poetry’s superior expressive powers and its supreme testimonial value, shared by many of the prisoners, and its almost complete marginality in the world outside the camp. Today, Goli otok may be known for many things; poetry is not one of them. Whether they were professional poets – like Ante Zemljar (*Hajka za mnom po otoku 2: golootočke varijacije*,<sup>5</sup> 1991, 1997), Jole Stanišić (*Гольий остров – дно ада* [Goli otok – The Depths of Hell], 2012), and Andrija Vučemil (*...Bio jednom jedan otok...Goli otok* [...Once upon a time there was an island...The Barren Island], 2007), or amateurs, like Jovan Stanojev (*Golootočke refleksije* [Reflections on Goli otok], 2002) and Milorad Todorović (*Crveni apostol: golootočka Golgota* [The Red Apostle: The Golgotha of Goli otok], 1997) – former prisoners of Goli otok had tremendous difficulty in securing a publisher for their works.<sup>6</sup> To this day, the poetry of Goli otok has received practically no critical attention and nothing even remotely resembling the anthology *Poezija uzničkov GULAGA*, edited by Semen Vilenskii (Vilenskii 2005) and comprised of hundreds of poems written by former prisoners and victims of Soviet repression, has been done for Goli otok.

The reasons for this relative silence go beyond the mere fact that the corpus of Goli otok literature is dominated by prose, whether autobiographical, semiautobiographical, or fictional. They are also the consequence of a documentary understanding of testimony based on a set of notions about factual veracity that dominated Yugoslav historiography and scholarship since World War II.<sup>7</sup> These have propelled

<sup>4</sup> Unless stated otherwise, the translations are mine, D. D.

<sup>5</sup> The title of the collection roughly translates as *The Island Manhunt for Me 2: The Goli otok Variations*. As a direct reference to Zemljar’s first collection of poems, *Hajka za mnom po otoku 1* (Zemljar 1985), which describes his experience as a member of the partisans during World War II, it suggests a clear analogy between the Croatian fascists or Ustasas, who tried to hunt him down on his native island of Pag during the war, and the Yugoslav State Security, Goli otok being a variation on the same traumatic experience.

<sup>6</sup> Rare exceptions to this rule include the slim volume of Veles Perić’s poems, *Kroz zeleni talas*, and the more recent edition of his selected poems, published by the poet Miloje Dončić, *Barjak na oluji* [A Flag in the Storm] (Perić 2022).

<sup>7</sup> Very little research exists on the status, features and functions of testimony as a historical and literary genre in Socialist Yugoslavia, though certain aspects of this issue were addressed by Jovan

generations of historians of Goli otok to focus their research mostly on transcribed oral testimonies and memoirs, to a lesser degree on novels and short stories.<sup>8</sup> But if the goal of historical research is to gain deeper insight into the functioning of state repression in Socialist Yugoslavia, as well as the prisoners' experience of persecution, confinement, physical and psychological torture, and their aftermath, then there is no valid reason to exclude poetry from it. Indeed, poetry was not only a part of life in the camp; for its inmates, it was a vital means of making sense of this experience both during their imprisonment and after their release. To even attempt to comprehend it, we need a more comprehensive and, at the same time, more nuanced understanding of the relationship between literature and experience.

### THE GOLI OTOK CAMP AND STATE REPRESSION IN SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA

Viewed in the broader context of state repression in Eastern Europe, the case of Goli otok appears as somewhat of a paradox. The largest and most infamous camp in a network of prisons and labor camps established in Yugoslavia after the Cominform Resolution of 1948, Goli otok is a telling example of how the Soviet model of state repression was adopted, developed, and modified even in a militantly anti-Soviet regime.<sup>9</sup> At the beginning of the conflict between Tito and Stalin, the camp was conceived as an instrument for the "political re-education" of Stalin's supporters within the Party. The idea, at least declaratively, was that once this task had been achieved, and the deluded Party members "rehabilitated," having also formally renounced Stalin, they would be permitted to rejoin political life. With the escalation of the conflict in the autumn of 1949 and the overwhelming fear of Soviet invasion, Stalin's actual or alleged supporters (the so-called *ibeovci* or *kominformovci*) were interpreted as a threat to the very existence of the country and denounced as renegades and traitors. Subsequently, the scope and methods of persecution were expanded: the State Security Administration (UDBA) targeted a large and varied population comprised of all sorts of enemies of the regime, non-communists and apolitical Russophiles included. They also introduced Bolshevik radicalism in the camp, with violence as the basic principle of "political re-education" (Previšić 2019: 472–477). This violence was an essential component in a hierarchical system of self-

---

Byford and Stijn Vervae in relation to the testimonies of Holocaust survivors. See Byford (2010); Vervae (2018).

<sup>8</sup> This is, of course, too vast an issue to be tackled here, but see Taczyńska 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Widely publicized denunciations of Soviet state repression, including personal testimonies, featuring detailed descriptions of atrocities, became a common instrument of anti-Stalinist propaganda during the early fifties in Yugoslavia. Testimonies by former inmates of both Nazi camps and Soviet prisons, such as Margarete Buber-Neumann's *Under Two Dictators: Prisoner of Stalin and Hitler*, published in Zagreb in 1952, were also instrumentalized for that purpose (Previšić 2019: 253–254).

management, introduced by the secret police as a multifunctional strategy, which served to promote the “autochthonous” values of Yugoslav socialism and maintain discipline. But the system of self-management was not only that – in Milorad Todorović’s succinct formulation, the “*samoupravni sistem uništenja čoveka čovekom*” was a mechanism of totalitarian rule that operated by turning men against each other (Todorović 1997: 43). Its main goal was to preclude solidarity between the prisoners, creating what David Rousset famously referred to as “brotherhood in abjection” (*fraternité de l’abjection*, Rousset 1993: 742).

For those who wished to be rehabilitated, the standard procedure entailed a painful journey through the camp hierarchy. Rising on the ladder meant not only hard (and often pointless) work, but also the obligation to regularly inform on other inmates and take part in acts of collective violence against them. Those who tried to refuse or avoid these duties were *boycotted* – excluded from the community and submitted to various forms of physical and psychological torture. The feeling that the boundaries between the victims and their oppressors were erased continued long after the inmates’ release: all prisoners of Goli otok had to sign a document (*obaveza*) guaranteeing that they would remain silent about the camp, collaborate with and regularly report to the secret police. Thus, erasing boundaries between the camp’s management and those higher up on the ladder proved to be a highly effective means of annihilating the inmates’ sense of self and their core moral values.<sup>10</sup>

Despite some of these specificities, however, the Yugoslav model of state repression, as exemplified by Goli otok, remains strikingly similar to the Soviet model, the similarities being not only structural but also “genetic,” many members of the UDBA having been trained in NKVD’s political schools and centers from 1944 to 1946 (Nikolić 2014). To a certain degree, this contextual analogy can account for the presence of shared themes, motives, characters, and techniques in the literature of political prisoners in Yugoslavia and all over the Eastern bloc. However, and I will revisit this point briefly at the end, these similarities are not solely the result of a particular set of social, political, and historical circumstances. For now, taking a cue from Andrea Gullotta, who divided the vast and heterogenous body of Gulag poetry into three large sub-corpora (Gullotta 2016), I would propose a similar classification of the (much less vast but nonetheless heterogenous) corpus of Goli otok poetry. Although this classification should not be taken without reservation or applied too rigidly (for reasons which will be explained later), I believe that it is useful to introduce an additional distinction – between public and private (sometimes referred to as “mental” or “clandestine”) poems. The first sub-corpus of Goli otok poetry would then consist of public poems, composed and disseminated in

<sup>10</sup> The system of self-management, its mechanism and purpose, its psychological consequences and ethical repercussions, is a central topic in Goli otok narratives, and the literature on this issue is vast. Probably the most concise and powerful account was given by Dragoslav Mihailović in *Kratka istorija satiranja* (Mihailović 1999). See also the introduction to the five volumes of interviews with witnesses which he conducted and transcribed (Mihailović 2016: 5–46).

the camp; the second one of private poems, conceived by the prisoners during detention but typically written down and published after their release; and the third one of poems composed and written in their entirety after the prisoners' release, when (in theory, but not in practice) there should have been no impediment to their public circulation.

### POEMS OF POLITICAL RE-EDUCATION: PUBLIC POETRY ON GOLI OTOK

The cultural production on Goli otok, was, like everything else, shaped by the doctrine of "political re-education", which was the guiding principle of all camp activity. Indeed, all forms of cultural content – press, music, theatre, film, and art – to which the inmates had access had the same didactic function; poetry was no exception. It should be noted, however, that the largest portion of the inmates' (public) creative output consisted of contributions to wall newspapers and songs. Lyrics, rudimentary in form and content, were composed for the prison choir, which performed on festive occasions and even accompanied daily activities. Indeed, the incessant collective chanting is one of the features of camp life most frequently mentioned by its witnesses. The repetitiveness and simplicity of these lyrics made them easy to memorize, which is also why they survived. Here is an example of a catchy Goli otok ditty, recited by Vladimir Bobinac and transcribed by Martin Previšić:

Nad ovim otokom Galebi ne lete,  
već na njemu rade naše radne čete!  
Idemo, rušimo stene od granita  
i na put se vraćamo Partije i Tita!

Above this island no seagulls soar,  
only our work brigades toil!  
Hey ho, on we go, tear those rocks down  
and return to the Party and Tito!

Gde su nekad brujale oluje i bure,  
gradićemo domove narodne kulture.  
Idemo, rušimo stene od granita  
i na put se vraćamo Partije i Tita!

Where storms and tempests once thundered  
there we'll build cultural centers.  
Hey ho, on we go, tear those rocks down  
and return to the Way of the Party and Tito!

Za Tita, za narod, dižemo glas svoj,  
protiv klevetnika, s Partijom u boj!  
(Previšić 2019: 266)

For Tito, for the people, we raise our voice,  
against the slanderers, with the Party we  
march to war!

Naïve lyrics of a somewhat different character were remembered by Ženi Lebl, who recalls a song sung by female prisoners as they watched the *Punat* ship, carrying male prisoners to freedom, pass them by:

Stojim jedna na malom mostiću,  
 Prođe dragi na *Punat* brodiću.  
 Rukom maje, pozdrave mi šalje,  
 a ja ostadoh da još nosim tralje.  
 (Lebl 1990: 131)<sup>11</sup>

On a tiny bridge I stood alone,  
 On board the *Punat* I saw  
 my darling pass by.  
 He waved his hand to say hi,  
 I lingered on at the wheelbarrow.

However, melancholy overtones such as these were an exception rather than a rule; the public poetry of Goli otok was aggressively optimistic and, of course, thoroughly propagandistic.

A typical instance of how poetry served the goal of political re-education is the collection of poems *Klesani mermer: pesme kažnjenika, bivših pristalica rezolucije Informbiroa* [Carved Marble: Poems of Convicts, Former Supporters of the Informbureau Resolution], handwritten, compiled and schapirographed on Goli otok in February 1950 (Kosier *et al.* 1950). It was presented, as a gift, to major Budimir Gajić, by the repentant members of the third work brigade, which included some familiar figures of the Yugoslav literary landscape, such as Berislav Kosier, Marko Vranješević, and Žarko Đurović. Written in Serbo-Croatian, Macedonian, Albanian and Slovenian, the poems are organized into four cycles, the third one consisting of odes to Tito and the Party and the last one of lyrics for the choir. Thematically more varied, the first two cycles are comprised of poems denouncing the Cominform Resolution as slander (e.g., “*Moskva govori*” [Moscow Calling], “*Poruka klevetnicima*” [Message to the Slanderers]) and casting the main features of camp life – the desolate landscape, the unbearable and pointless work, the collective violence and psychological torture – in an uplifting, positive light. This perverse logic is made explicit in the preface, signed “V. V.,” which plays on the metaphor of barrenness to present the re-education of political renegades as a rebirth: through hard work, the Barren Island has been transformed into a communist paradise. No longer populated by rocks, thorns, and lizards but by buildings, gardens, swimming pools, football pitches, and loyal comrades, it has become “the worksite of our homeland” (*radilište naše domovine*). Thus, the speaker of Vuk Trnavski’s “*Pesma o nama*” [A Poem about Us], is presented as a gigantic, collective body, which, having been regenerated through work, is blossoming into a spring landscape:

Razvedravaju se kotline u nama  
 i dani bistro pred očima teku,  
 Pucaju bezdane dubine kô zore,  
 i razvija se proleće u čoveku.  
 Sa svakim svitanjem čovek izrasta  
 i nad vodama vidi koliko je velik.  
 (Kosier *et al.* 1950: 15)

The abyss within us is clearing up  
 and the days ahead seem bright,  
 The darkest chasms open like skies at dawn,  
 and spring blossoms in man.  
 With every sunrise, man rises taller  
 and sees his greatness reflected in the waters.

<sup>11</sup> The infamous *Punat* was a ship used to transport prisoners to Goli otok. The terrible conditions of the transfer, frequently evoked by witnesses, were also the subject of poetry. Jole Stanišić, for instance, devoted two poems to the *Punat* (see Stanišić 2012: 23–26).

Similarly, in Kosier's "*Kamen*", stone is transformed from a burden and an instrument of torture to a blessing:

Ideš u koloni, znoj niz čelo lije  
 sa umorom katkad prebacuješ kamen  
 Ali, dragi druže, ovo teret nije!  
 To je sreća, druže, čistilišta plamen.  
 (Kosier *et al.* 1950: 6)

You march in line, drenched in sweat,  
 often too tired to handle the stone,  
 But, comrade, there is no going back!  
 This is the joy of purgatory, you're no longer  
 alone.

The perversity and hypocrisy of this ideological mechanism will feature as a prominent topic of Goli otok literature and a recurrent motif in former detainees' testimonies.

### POETRY OF/AS CULTURAL RESISTANCE: PRIVATE POETRY ON GOLI OTOK

The second sub-corpus, consisting of poems conceived or composed by the prisoners during detention but typically written down and published after liberation, corresponding to what Claudia Pieralli has dubbed "zone poetry" (Pieralli 2013), is challenging to reconstruct for several reasons. As Gullotta rightly pointed out regarding Gulag poetry,

even though the authors composed their poems within the camps, the versions that were passed on through memoirs or samizdat had been put on paper and, somehow, prepared for publication (real or hypothetical). Therefore, there is no certainty that, when put on paper, these texts were not modified. It is indeed highly probable that, before 'publishing them', authors would go through them again and modify them, as did Varlam Shalamov with his poems in *The Kolyma Notebooks* (*Kolymskie tetrady*). (Gullotta 2016: 177)

The poets' retroactive statements also confirm this. In the afterword to the collection *Golootočke refleksije* Jovan Stanojev affirms that "it wasn't easy to write poems, or anything else, about the ambient, events and people of Goli otok" and that he had "recorded a small number" of impressions while he was still on the island. These served as a basis for his later work:

The reader is probably faced with a logical question: how and when did I write these poems in those conditions? I wrote most of them upon my return from Goli otok while the memories were still fresh. The poems I had written over there, within the bounds of possibility, served as a basis for adding and supplanting parts that I hadn't dared write over there. (Stanojev 2002: 91–93)

Stanojev does not reveal how he managed to smuggle this material out of the camp, but by accompanying each poem with a date and location, he makes an effort

to clarify the distinction between poems written “from memory” soon after his release and those that were conceived while he was still in camp. Indeed, there is a noticeable difference between the poems presumably written on Goli otok in 1951 and 1952 and those written after the events, in Stanojev’s native village of Uljma in 1954. Unlike the more elaborate poems composed after liberation, the poems from Goli otok display shared features – such as short lines, simple rhymes, frequent repetitions, and relatively modest use of figurative language – which, because of their capacity to facilitate memorization, typically abound in prisoner poetry. As a characteristic example (and a telling contrast to Kosier’s ode to stone), one can quote a few lines from Stanojev’s poem “*Kamen*” [Stone], composed on Goli otok, in the spring of 1952:

<p>Kamen dole, Kamen gore, Svud okolo Sinje more. Na kamen sedam, U kamen gledam, Kamen čupam, Kamen lupam, Kamen nosim, Na kamenu Snagu trošim. Jednog dana sve će stati, Neću moći ni hodati, Ni čupati, ni lupati. Kamenom će moje telo, Mesto zemljom zatrpati. (Stanojev 2002: 13)</p>	<p>Stone is here, Stone is there, And the blue sea Is everywhere. Sitting on a stone, Looking at a stone, Pulling at a stone, Banging on a stone, Carrying a stone, All passion spent, Alone. One day everything will stop, I’ll be unable to walk, To pull at a stone, To bang on one, Instead of earth They’ll throw stone On my body, Alone.</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Ante Zemljarić, on the other hand, describes how he rescued his poems from camp in more detail. The sequence *GOLI kameni šiljci* [BARE stone spikes] was, for the most part, written “on the spot”, wrote Zemljarić in the preface to his collection *Hajka za mnom po otoku 2* (Zemljarić 1991: 5). Taking advantage of the slightly improved conditions of camp life in late 1952 and early 1953, Zemljarić would steal small pieces of wrapping paper from cement bags and write poetry on them in an encrypted shorthand. With the help of friends from the camp’s press, he managed to type and bind together two volumes of politically correct short prose about the partisan struggle in World War II (prisoners assigned to the camp’s cultural section were allowed to write – with the censors’ permission, of course). The encrypted poems were inserted into these slim volumes, which Zemljarić had sworn to publish after his

release. He smuggled them out of the camp, knowing he was risking his life but willing to die for the chance to tell his tale. It took him more than 35 years to muster the courage to decipher and publish what he had written.

Several poems from the collection, notably “*scherzo*,” “*toplina šutnje*” [the warmth of silence], and “*ispomognut u vjetru*” [helped by the wind], invoke the importance of poetry in the camp. Composing poems as a means of survival is recounted in “*scherzo*,” where Zemljar describes how the painter and caricaturist Alfred Pal helped him by memorizing his poetry:

<p>plesali smo, prebiti, dok nam se dan dužio          Fredy Pal i moja tanka sjena –          natovaren stijenjem za Schubertom je tužio;          tri mu stiha tajno dodah u meni skamenjena</p>	<p>we were dancing, all beat up, as the day grew          longer          Freddy Pal and my thin silhouette –          rock-laden, he longed for Schubert;          I slipped him three lines, that I'd kept in me,          petrified</p>
<p>zašutjesmo skupa – za podvalni plan          istog časa mogao bih biti predan          svakom psu – ukopasmo trostih bijedan          tonući u sebe kako je tonuo dan          (Zemljar 1991: 66)</p>	<p>together we fell silent – for this cunning plan          I could be handed over, at any moment,          to any dog – we buried the sorry tercet          sinking, inside of us, as the day sank</p>

In “*ispomognut u vjetru*” poetry is equated with home (*vraćati se stihu/zavičaju*. Zemljar 1991: 73), while “*toplina šutnje*” describes a coded conversation between the speaker of the poem and the poet Risto Trifković. In a bitter parody of the idyll, the two poets use their free time to discuss the classics of prison literature, Walt Whitman and Ivo Andrić (invoked as the author of the most famous prisoner memoir in Yugoslav literature, *Ex Ponto* [1918]). By talking about Whitman and Andrić, they manage to keep quiet and at the same time speak volumes about the reality of the camp.

Unlike Jovan Stanojev and many other “accidental” poets who resorted to writing to resist the brutality they were subjected to, Zemljar was a professional poet and a literature student before his imprisonment. With that in mind, it is interesting to compare his approach to representing Goli otok to a fairly typical instance of prisoner poetry, such as Stanojev’s “*Kamen*”. The thematic similarities are many, stemming as they do from the victims’ shared experiences of incarceration and torture. Recurrent motifs, such as the shock of the arrest and the “enhanced interrogation” of the suspects before their sentencing, the difficult voyage and the welcome parade,<sup>12</sup> the desolate, rocky and arid landscape, bodily sensations, such as pain, cold, thirst, and hunger, various forms of physical and psychological

<sup>12</sup> The welcome parade on Goli otok entailed an obligatory run through the gauntlet, analogous to the Polish *ścieżka zdrowia*, which came to be known as the *hot rabbit*, due to the success of the novel *Tren 2* [Moment 2] (1982) by Antonije Isaković, who coined the phrase.

torture, the humiliation and dehumanization of the prisoners, transformed into lizards or, in Zemljar's favourite metaphor "rags" (*dronjci*) – feature prominently in the poetry and prose of former prisoners, independently of their formal and artistic qualities. Jole Stanišić, for instance, gives a complete catalogue of these experiences in his book of poetry *Голый остров - дно ада* in a quasi-realistic manner. Zemljar, on the other hand, found original ways of representing them: he creatively appropriated the Goli otok short lyric by emulating its vocabulary, simple rhythms, rudimentary rhymes, and hypnotic repetitiveness. The language and the sounds of Goli otok were thus subversively transformed and turned into an artistic means of conveying the embodied experience of political re-education. Since this technique is employed throughout the sequence, I will mention only a few characteristic examples.

The poem "*U kljешtima zločina*" [In the clutches of crime], for instance, plays on the way that the authorities and those higher up in the camp hierarchy used the word *banda* (literally, "criminal gang"; figuratively, "scum") to refer to unreformed political prisoners (Zemljar 1991: 46). For their heads (*glave*) to be set straight, the scum (*banda*) had to be punished and beaten; Zemljar recreates both the insults and the beatings which accompanied them by paronomastically playing with the words "scum" and "head" (which is where the most painful blows would land):

bando bandoglava bandusino bezglava	you dogged dog you drossy dumbhead
avetinjo bukoglava hrgo baloglava	you thick-headed thug you bumpy bullhead
brljotino vjetroglava čvorugo busoglava	you brainless blot you snaggy shithead
upamtit češ kijaču kako nam zakonom landara	you'll remember how the law's bat bashes
po tjemenu se udara po ušima se udara	on the head they hit on the ears they hit
po leđima se udara po očima se udara	on the back they hit on the eyes they hit
i iznova se udara i prije i poslije udara	and again they hit before and after the hit
i nakon otplaćene nova se optužba stvara	and no sooner a debt is paid then a new one is
(Zemljar 1991: 46)	made

Similarly, in "*Odmaknuti osmjeh smrti*" [Death's distant grin], Zemljar transforms a familiar chant into a refrain – *boj-kot ban-di/boj-kot ban-di* – to highlight not only the physical pain of the sentence but also the prisoners', far worse, psychological suffering. "Death turns the flesh to dust, the dead are lucky / boycott – it obliterates everything, even the dust" ("*smrću umire čovjek tjelesan, blago njemu/bojkotom – cjelokupan, i zemlja u njemu*", Zemljar 1991: 64), concludes Zemljar. And in "*Iz brevijara preodgoja*" [From the breviary of re-education] he quotes two lines from a Goli otok hymn, typically sung at the end of a day's work – "if anyone tries to pull a trick/ we'll give his ribs a kick" ("*tko pokuša da nas vara/dat ćemo mu porebara*") – to convey the brutal reality behind the hymn:

vudri ga, darni ga	kick him, knuckle him
pukni ga, šupni ga,	smack him, shove him,
klopni ga, zdrmaj ga	bash him, shake him
zgazi ga, marni ga	boot him, crush him
po labrnji, porebara	on the mouth, on the ribs
opa, opleti, opletača	boo, beat, the backbiter
ošini po prašini	thrash the trash
šakanje, gruvanje, pesničenje	slapping, thumping, thwacking
najbijanje, kijačenje, gumaranje	cramming, cudgeling, coshing
bojkot bandi, udri bandu	boycott the scum, hit the scum
stroj, stroj, stroj... (Zemljar 1991: 42)	run, run, run the gauntlet...

A solitary voice rises from this chanting collective in the second part of the poem and asks: there are countless euphemisms for crime and thousands of ways to name the act of beating; why did they have to put it in poetry?

This strategy, especially when woven into an intertextual dialogue with the poet's incarcerated or exiled predecessors, from Ovid, via Dante, to Andrić, can produce fine, even sophisticated effects, which seem far removed from the largely circumstantial poems of Zemljar's fellow inmates. Nevertheless, the strategy points to an essential feature of Goli otok poetry and prisoner poetry in general, which is present even in less complex and ambitious poetic testimonies. Zemljar's suggestion that these poems were composed "on the spot" is a convention – an important one in testimonial poetry, but a convention nonetheless. It is a generic signal – meant to point the reader in a specific direction – not a factual claim. Hence the question of whether these poems can be treated as documents *from* Goli otok is not particularly useful if we wish to understand their purpose. Judged by the standards of non-fictional prose, a poem is bound to fail or, at best, appear as a third-rate document – maybe a moving illustration of what it felt like to be in the camp for some prisoners, but certainly not a testimony.

However, because the very fact that poetry operates in a different regime of authenticity than prose, where different standards of veracity apply, does not mean that poets take liberties with the truth that prose authors do not. Readers usually have no difficulty grasping this. Certain conventions that prisoner poetry relies on quite frequently, such as the use of present tense to convey bodily sensations more immediately and directly, as if the speaker were experiencing them at that very moment, would have a highly negative impact on the author's testimonial *ethos* in prose texts, typically written in the past tense and based on the assumption that such sensations could probably not have been articulated and recorded on the spot. Factors that play a major role when ascertaining the authenticity of prose testimonies – such as the issue of probability – have a much more modest one in poetry. On the other hand, features that play a relatively minor role in prose testimonies – e.g., the relationship between diction, tone, and subject-matter – become crucial when evaluating the

authenticity of poetic texts.<sup>13</sup> This is why the question of the exact moment and place in which the testimonial poems of Zemljarić, Stanojević, Perić, or Lebl were composed or written down has relatively little bearing on the reader's perception of the poet's *ethos*. While it may be important to a historian or a biographer, it is not particularly useful as a criterion of generic classification.

## AFTER GOLI OTOK: POST-TRAUMATIC POETRY

To illustrate this point further, I will take the example of Ženi Lebl's poem "Snovi-đenja" [Dream Apparitions], published in the appendix to her prose memoir, *Ljubičica bela: vic dug dve i po godine* [The White Violet: A Two-and-a-Half-Year-Long Joke, 1990]. A Nazi prisoner during the war and a journalist after, Lebl was famously sent to Goli otok for passing on a joke about Tito that she had heard from a friend. For this crime, she was punished with two and a half years of hard labour, which she served in various prisons, on Ramski rit, St. Grgur, and Goli otok.<sup>14</sup> The poem seemingly opens with a description of everyday life in the camp, of its routines and its faces:

Umivanje u morskoj vodi Glinom – ako se nađe. Lica mlada, zborana, Kao plugom zaorana,	Face-washing in sea water With clay – if there is any. Young faces, wrinkled, As if ploughed by a rake,
Ranjenih nogu, Napuklih ruku, Leđa prebijenih, Očiju slepih	Legs wounded, Hands cracked, Backs beaten, Eyes blinded
Na prvi sumrak dana, Zubi se klate, Glad mori, žeđ pali... San stiže tek pred zoru, Pred svitanje... „Drugarica“ Marija – o, strave – Eto je i u snu... (Lebl 1990: 198–199)	As darkness gathers, The teeth begin to clatter, Hunger creeps, thirst scorches... Sleep arrives only at the break of day, Just before sunrise... “Comrade” Marija – oh, the horror – Here she is, even in a dream...

The appearance of “Marija”, already known to Lebl's reader as an agent of state security and a particularly sadistic interrogator from her early days as a prisoner on Ramski rit, conflates the different timeframes present in the poem. Marija's evil

<sup>13</sup> On the relationship between prose and poetic testimonies, and the different regimes of authenticity in poetry and prose, see Dušanić (2021: 9–53, 227–235).

<sup>14</sup> On Lebl as a survivor and witness to double persecution, see Taczyńska (2017).

green eyes now turn into a screaming mouth: “Sign here, you goddamn scum! Prove yourself!”. The sudden shift renders the first three stanzas ambiguous – are we reading an account of everyday life in the camp, ending in a few hours of restless sleep, or the representation of a recurrent nightmare in which memories from various camps and prisons haunt the speaker? Was the poem composed on Goli otok, while the memory of Marija was still fresh, or after Lebl’s release from camp? If these questions seem odd, it is because Lebl’s poem obviously cannot be read in the same way as a narrative account of a day in the life of a prisoner – i.e., the sort of testimony that one might use as evidence in a tribunal or as a source for the history of Goli otok. Indeed, as readers quickly realize, the poem is not a description of the camp’s grim realities but a poetic representation of a mind haunted by the experience of persecution and torture. For the traumatized mind, there is no passage of time, past or future, only the eternal repetition of the wounding. The poem’s speaker, whichever space she may physically occupy, is trapped in the *now* of a nightmare that she cannot escape. She will always remain on the “inside,” writing, as it were, from the realm of the dead, wondering, “Will there be life/ after this death?” (“*Hoće li biti života/ Posle ove smrti?*”).

What Lebl is articulating here is the paradox of the witness to atrocity, which, following Giorgio Agamben’s interpretation of Primo Levi, has become a critical topos in the discussion of Holocaust literature (Agamben 1999; Levi 1989).<sup>15</sup> According to the agambenized Levi, the poem’s speaker is an “incomplete witness”: that Lebl was able to communicate her traumatic experience implies that she must have already left the realm of the dead. To paraphrase Charlotte Delbo, those who came back from the other side must forget what they had learned over there, if they wish to live:

I have returned  
 from a world beyond knowledge  
 and now must unlearn  
 for otherwise I clearly see  
 I can no longer live. (Delbo 2014: 230)

And anyway, says Delbo, it’s better not to believe in these stories of revenants, who keep coming back without being able to explain how:

After all  
 better not to believe  
 these ghostly tales  
 for if you do  
 you’ll never sleep again  
 if you believe  
 these ghostly phantoms  
 revenants returning  
 yet unable to tell how. (Delbo 2014: 230–231)

<sup>15</sup> For a critique of Agamben’s interpretation of Levi, see Mesnard, Kahan (2001).

Yet the revenant is unquestionably there, and there is nothing incomplete about either Delbo's or Lebl's account of their experience of the survivor's liminality.

The struggle to speak at all cost and to be heard, to get through to an audience that, whether out of fear, ignorance, or mere indifference, disbelieves the revenants' stories, is the most conspicuous feature of the poetry written and published by former prisoners of Goli otok after their release. The victims' isolation from the familiar social world – for which Zemljar uses the metaphor of a solitary cell with glass walls (“*ostaklena samica*”) – continues and becomes even more acute after liberation. Those who come back quickly discover that their every move is still being closely monitored (Stanojev, “*Uhode*” [Spies]) and that the persecution never ends (Zemljar, “*neizbježnost mreža*” [the inevitability of nets]). They discover that their loved ones have grown old (Perić, “*E, godine...*” [Oh, the years...], “*Vreme*” [Time]), moved on or abandoned them under threat of imprisonment (Stanojev, “*Susret posle*” [A subsequent encounter]). They feel lost in their own homes (Zemljar, “*goli polustoljetni inventar*” [a half century's naked inventory]), for even there, they're not allowed to speak about the ordeal they went through. They are on endless probation (see Lebl, “*Cena uslovne slobode*” [The Price of Probation]), forever required to denounce everyone, even their closest family members, to the police:

Ni oca, ni brata da poštediš:  
 Da javiš ako te žale,  
 Ako te pitaju – a pitaće te –  
 Gde si bila,  
 Šta si radila,  
 Zašto si nestala...  
 [...]
   
 Trči u udbu,  
 Javi, otkucaj, ispričaj,  
 Da ponovo ne doživiš sudbu!  
 (Lebl 1990: 205–206)

You can't spare anyone, father nor brother:  
 If they feel sorry for you, report to the police  
 If they ask – and ask they will –  
 Where you were,  
 What you did,  
 Why you disappeared...  
 [...]
   
 Run straight to the UDBA,  
 Report, snitch, tell  
 Or else, go through it all again!

The later these poems were written, the more visible became another tendency – to work through the trauma of Goli otok by integrating it into a (loosely defined) autobiographic structure, thereby conferring some meaning on what would otherwise seem as arbitrary, pointless suffering. Both Stanojev's *Golootočke refleksije* and Todorović's *Crveni apostol* follow a linear, broadly chronological pattern, in which the trauma of Goli otok is embedded in a more or less conventional autobiographic narrative. The structure is based on a well-known temporal dichotomy (*before* and *after* the traumatic event), its nexus being the experience of Goli otok, a “hoarstone”, in Stanojev's words, that had split his entire life in two. In time, explains Stanojev, this watershed event became a black pit, a chasm he tried to jump over in order to reassemble the disjointed parts of his life. He thought that writing about it would make this task easier, but the chasm only grew darker (Stanojev 2002: 92).

The tendency is also evident in Zemljar's work, beginning with the title of his collection, *Hajka za mnom po otoku 2: golootočke varijacije*, which, by presenting the volume as a sequel to his book *Hajka za mnom po otoku 1* (Zemljar 1985), suggests that the experience of Goli otok is a variation on a familiar theme. This notion is conveyed even more explicitly in the collection's penultimate sequence, "*autobiografska balada dežurnog izdajnika*" [the autobiographical ballad of a designated traitor], where the persecution of Zemljar as a Stalinist traitor is presented as part of a larger pattern, a lifetime of unjust accusations and unwarranted suffering, inflicted on the individual by totalitarian regimes. Ženi Lebl, speaking as both a political prisoner and a Holocaust survivor, also frames her experience of Goli otok in a broader history of persecution. As she is being shoved into a train headed for an unknown direction, the speaker of Lebl's poem "Not again?" ("*Zar opet?*") is reminded of a similar scene eight years earlier and wonders how is it possible that history should repeat itself so soon (Lebl 1990: 181). The nightmare and the terrible realization that there will be no justice or compensation for the victims, is noted with bitter succinctness by Stanojev on the occasion of Khrushchev's visit to Yugoslavia in 1955: "*Sad Nikita grli Tita./ Jednom nada, drugom dika./ Ala je to politika*" ("Now Nikita's hugging Tito./ They're the best of friends./That's politics, I guess", Stanojev 2002: 79).

Indeed, for the authors who were the focus of this paper, writing poetry about Goli otok was not just a way of addressing a personal trauma or telling the story of their lives, although it certainly had both a confessional and an autobiographic dimension. What they make abundantly clear, especially in the prefaces and post-faces to their works, is that writing poetry was an act invested with profound moral significance – it was meant as a tribute to the victims and a means of counteracting the lies spread by the regime.<sup>16</sup> In this respect, the poets of Goli otok, such as Zemljar, Lebl, Stanojev, Vučemil, Todorović, and Stanišić, acted as moral witnesses to mass terror.<sup>17</sup> They understood their poems as evidence of the crimes committed by the Yugoslav State and as a plea to the readers, written in the hope that they might one day reach a moral community sympathetic to their plight.

## CONCLUSION: THE POETRY OF GOLI OTOK IN CONTEXT

Goli otok is a crime that remains unpunished. Its creators and perpetrators were never brought to justice. Instead, they were even given ample space in public debates about the actions of the Yugoslav State against its citizens and treated as

<sup>16</sup> On the notion of testimony as a *counterdiscourse*, see Carel, Ribard (2016: 39–55).

<sup>17</sup> The notion of "moral witness" should be understood here in the sense given to the term by Avishai Margalit: as a special kind of eyewitness, who has not only knowledge but direct experience of suffering inflicted by an unmitigated evil regime (Margalit 2002: 147–182). I have found Margalit's discussion of the moral witness particularly useful for understanding the specificity of literary testimony and distinguishing the poetry of witness from other poetic genres (Dušanić 2021; Dušanić 2024).

participants in a dialogue of equals (Nikčević 2010). In these exchanges, some former officers of the UDBA, notably General Jovo Kapičić, repeatedly accused the victims of Goli otok of lying: “The stories that Goli otok was some sort of medieval torture chamber are nothing but a fabrication! Nobody can claim that!” (Kapičić 2010). Far from negating his role in the crime, Kapičić insisted up to his death in 2013 that no torture had ever occurred on Goli otok. In a documentary directed by Darko Bavoljak (*Goli otok*, 2012), he explained that while “we may have overdone it at times,” that was understandable because the *ibeovci* were “bacteria that infected a healthy organism” (Bavoljak 2012) – and hence needed to be eradicated. Kapičić’s statements may be an extreme, pathological version of an attempt at self-justification. Still, they are the symptom of a cluster of deeper – legal, political, and social – dysfunctions which characterize the post-Yugoslav space and the unresolved heritage of Yugoslav Communism.

The analogies between the poetry of the Gulag and that of Goli otok result from social and political constellations based on shared mechanisms of state repression that prevented their victims from being fully acknowledged and given justice. These analogies need to be explored “intercontextually,” as Leona Toker has recently done by reading Gulag and Holocaust prose comparatively (Toker 2019). However, the poetry of Goli otok is not only connected to the poetry of political prisoners written all over the Eastern Bloc,<sup>18</sup> nor to the (historically and geographically more extensive, but still largely 20<sup>th</sup>-century) genre of camp poetry, but also to the time-honored tradition of prison writing. Not only did prisoners such as Todorović, Stanojev, and Zemljar intentionally seek out literary models from the past to convey and make sense of their suffering, with Dante figuring most prominently in their writing, but they also relied on images, tropes, and strategies of resistance and consolation inherited from antiquity.<sup>19</sup> As I have already suggested, these similarities cannot be accounted for only by the fact that their poems were created as a reaction against the mass terror perpetrated by totalitarian regimes. They are also the result of literary traditions operating much more universally and constituting a poetics of the “carceral experience”<sup>20</sup> that is both painfully real and genuinely intertextual. A more comprehensive reading of the poetry of Goli otok should begin by exploring contextual analogies but also by acknowledging the double dynamics at play in these poems. The present article was intended only as a first step in that direction.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Petra Čáslavová’s account of the connections between the poetry of Soviet and Czech political prisoners (Čáslavová 2013: 21–45).

<sup>19</sup> For the most compelling recent account of these strategies see Zim (2014). On the tropes of prisoner literature or, to be more precise, the prison as a literary trope, see Fludernik (2019). Fludernik’s book has the disadvantage of omitting the literature of state repression altogether.

<sup>20</sup> On the notion of carceral experience see Zim 2009: 291–311.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- AGAMBEN G. (1999): *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, Zone Books, New York.
- BAVOLJAK D. (director) (2012): *Goli otok*. Art de Facto, 2012, 52 min. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-sb8ycxXfA>.
- BYFORD J. (2010): "Shortly afterwards we heard the sound of the gas van": *Survivor Testimony and the Writing of History in Socialist Yugoslavia*, "History & Memory", 22/1: 5–47.
- CAREL M., RIBARD D. (2016): *Témoigner en poésie. Le cas de Marc de Larréguy*, "Poétique", 179/1: 39–55.
- ČASLAVOVÁ P. (2013): *The Bulwark against Trauma: Poetry as a Means of Survival in Totalitarian Prisons*, "Bohemica literaria", 16: 21–45.
- DELBO C. (2014): *Auschwitz and After: Second Edition*, Yale University Press, New Haven.
- DUŠANIĆ D. (2021): *Sa silama nemerljivim: pesnici kao svedoci modernog terora*, Dosije, Belgrade.
- DUŠANIĆ D. (2024): *From 'Natural Institution' to Poetic Genre: Literary Testimony and the Issues of Witnessing in Verse*, "Genre", 57/1: 25–52.
- FLUDERNIK M. (2019): *Metaphors of Confinement: The Prison in Fact, Fiction, and Fantasy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- GREJ G. (1976): *Poema o fudbaleru*, V.Perić, Belgrade.
- GULLOTTA A. (2016): *Gulag Poetry. An Almost Unexplored Field of Research*, in: FISCHER VON WEIKERSTHAL F., THAIDIGSMANN K. (eds.), *(Hi-)Stories of the Gulag: Fiction and Reality*, Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften Universitätsverlag, Heidelberg: 175–192.
- ISAKOVIĆ A. (1983): *Tren 2: kazivanja o Čeperku*, Prosveta, Belgrade.
- KAPIČIĆ J. (2010): *Da se razumemo: bio sam bog!*, "Politika", March 17. <https://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/127899/Da-se-razumemo-bio-sam-bog>.
- KOSIER *et al.* (1950): *Klesani mermer: pesme kaženjenika, bivših pristalica rezolucije Informbiroa*. Goli otok. National Library of Serbia, special collections, P 1294.
- LEBL Ž. (1990): *Ljubičica bela: vic dug dve i po godine*, Dečje novine, Kultura, Gornji Milanovac, Belgrade.
- LEVI P. (1989): *The Drowned and the Saved*, Vintage, New York.
- MARGALIT A. (2002): *The Ethics of Memory*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts.
- MESNARD P., KAHAN C. (2001): *Giorgio Agamben à l'épreuve d' Auschwitz*, Kimé, Paris.
- MIHAILOVIĆ D. (1999): *Kratka istorija satiranja*, Narodna knjiga/Alfa, Belgrade.
- MIHAILOVIĆ D. (2016): *Goli otok. 5 Vols.*, Službeni glasnik, Belgrade.
- NIKČEVIĆ T. (2010): *Goli otoci Jova Kapičića*, VBZ, Sarajevo.
- NIKOLIĆ K. (2014): *Mač revolucije: OZNA u Jugoslaviji 1944–1946*, Službeni glasnik, Belgrade.
- PERIĆ V. (1995): *Kroz zeleni talas*, Nova 105 Slobodana Mašića, Belgrade.
- PERIĆ V. (2022): *Brajak na oluji*, Revnitelj, Niš.
- PIERALLI C. (2013): *The Poetry of Soviet Political Prisoners (1921–1939): An Historical Typological Framework*, in: ALBERTI A., GARZANITI M., PEROTTO M., SULPASSO B. (eds.), *Contributi italiani al XV Congresso Internazionale degli Slavisti*, Firenze University Press, Firenze: 387–412.
- PREVIŠIĆ M. (2019): *Povijest Golog otoka*, Fraktura, Zagreb.
- PROKIĆ M. (2017): *Adriatic getaway for anticommunists and revisionists*, "Mašina", December 28. <https://www.masina.rs/eng/adriatic-getaway-anticommunists-revisionists/>.
- ROUSSET D. (1993): *Les Jours de notre mort*, Hachette, Paris.
- STANIŠIĆ J. (2012): *Golyi ostrov – dno ada*, Vakhazar, Moskva.
- STANOJEV J. (2002): *Golootočke refleksije*, Self publishing, Vršac.
- TACZYŃSKA K. (2016): *Dowcip trwający dwa i pół roku. Obraz Nagiej Wyspy w serbskim dyskursie literackim i historycznym końca XX i początku XXI wieku*, Wydawnictwo DiG, Edition La Rama, Warszawa-Bellerive-sur-Allier.

- TACZYŃSKA K. (2017): *A Scattered Mosaic of Records and Reminiscences: Ženi Lebl's War Odyssey in Her Personal Writings*, in: MARKOWSKA-MANISTA U., PILARSKA J. (eds.): *An Introspective Approach to Women's Intercultural Fieldwork*, Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej, Warszawa: 68–102.
- TODOROVIĆ M. (1997): *Crveni apostol: golotočka Golgota*, Grafampromet, Ruma.
- TOKER L. (2019): *Gulag Literature and the Literature of Nazi Camps: An Intercontextual Reading*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- VERVAET S. (2018): *Holocaust, War and Transnational Memory: Testimony from Yugoslav and Post-Yugoslav Literature*, Routledge, London & New York.
- VILENSKII S. (2005): *Poeziia uznikov GULAGA: antologija, Mezhd.* Fond "Demokratia", Moskva.
- VUČEMIL A. (2009): *...Bio jednom jedan otok...Goli otok*, Riječki nakladni zavod, Rijeka.
- ZEMPLJAR A. (1985): *Hajka za mnom po otoku 1*, Spektar, Zagreb.
- ZEMPLJAR A. (1991): *Hajka za mnom po otoku 2: golotočke varijacije*, Stručna knjiga, Belgrade.
- ZIM R. (2009): *Writing Behind Bars: Literary Contexts and the Authority of Carceral Experience*, "Huntington Library Quarterly", 72/2: 291–311.
- ZIM R. (2014): *The Consolations of Writing: Literary Strategies of Resistance from Boethius to Primo Levi*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.