

**ABOUT SLOVENE PROBLEMS AND
MISUNDERSTANDINGS WITH
VLADIMIR BARTOL'S *ALAMUT***

Peter Vodopivec

Ever since its first publication in 1938, the novel *Alamut* by the Slovene author Vladimir Bartol, born in Trieste in 1903, has been an unusual phenomenon, with a specific, uncommon fate. At the time of its publication, the public welcomed it, while reviewers in daily newspapers and cultural magazines were much more divided and more reserved. While the critic in the Christian-social magazine *Dejanje* called it an “exotic historical novel,” which “also greatly concerns the present time”—i.e., the second half of the 1930s, when it was published (Legiša 1939)—the reviewer in the nationalist-leftist oriented *Sodobnost* claimed that it was “marginal literature” with “no ear for the most essential, although simple matters of man and his inner self” (Zadravec 1958).¹ In the liberal newspaper *Jutro*, one could read the enthusiastic opinion that *Alamut*, through its “reflective and historical topic, supported by Oriental and Greek philosophy, the Koran, Gnostic and a sort of Oriental Nietzschean philosophy” was “one of the most original works of Slovene literature,” which “simply called for a sequel” (Borko 1938), and again in *Sodobnost*, a totally negative point of view that it was an “artificial” novel of an “idea” without artistic power and depth, comparable to crime stories of the popular English writer Edgar Wallace (Kalan 1939).

Alamut then, after WW II, sank into oblivion for more than four decades. Literary critics and historians for the most part overlooked it or cursorily perused it and Vladimir Bartol, in spite of his fairly comprehensive literary opus, was not given an equal place in Slovene literature of the twentieth century with authors such as Ferdo Kozak, Juš Kozak, Slavko Grum, Miško Kranjec, Anton Ingolič, Ivan Potrč, and others. On the twentieth anniversary of the first publication of *Alamut* in 1958, when its second edition was published in Trieste, Bartol thus stated with resignation that “to date the novel has remained misunderstood and unexplained,” and until his death in 1967 he was persuaded (not entirely without grounds) that he had been “his only literary historian” all his life” (Bajt 1984: 453).

Seven years after the author’s death, attention was only drawn to Vladimir Bartol and his literature again by the literary theoretician Taras Kermauner, who in 1974 wrote the introduction to the first selection of

¹ Fran Zadravec is writing in 1958 about Ferdo Kozak’s editorship of *Sodobnost* at the time the novel appeared.

Bartol's novels published after WWII, entitled *Demon and Eros*, and designated Bartol the forerunner of contemporary modern Slovene literature. In 1976, *Most*, the Slovene cultural magazine in Trieste, organized the first symposium on Bartol's literary work, and published the symposium contributions in a special issue. However, Slovene literary critics and historians only placed Bartol firmly on the Slovene literary Parnassus in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1984, Bartol's previously unpublished novel *Čudež na vasi* (Miracle in the village) was published in Trieste, as well as the first book edition of his youthful, short prose, *Don Lorenzo* and, in the same year, Obzorja publishing house in Maribor also published a new (third) edition of *Alamut*, with the first really profound analysis of the novel, written by the literary critic, editor, and translator Drago Bajt. In 1988, on the fiftieth anniversary of the first edition of the novel, *Alamut* was relaunched on the literary market by the publishing house Mladinska knjiga. Bartol's fellow citizen from Trieste, Miran Košuta, wrote an extensive introduction to this edition. The collection of Bartol's short stories entitled *Med idilo in grozo* (Between idyll and horror), which was also published in Ljubljana in 1988, was accompanied by critical literary essays by as many as five young literary authors, and the Bartol Fund was also established a year later, which organized a symposium on Bartol and his literature in Ljubljana in 1990. (Papers from the symposium were published in a special issue of *Problemi* literary magazine in 1991). "The outcast of Slovene literature," as the writer Andrej Blatnik called Bartol in 1988, thus finally became an equal member of the community of Slovene authors at the time of Slovene state independence (Blatnik 1988: 261).

Something totally unexpected also happened in 1988. Bartol's novel *Alamut* was published in French by Phebus publishing house in Paris, and the first edition of thirty thousand copies was sold out in a few months. The French publication of Bartol's novel was supported by Jean Didier Castagnou, a French expert in Slavic studies living in Ljubljana, who contacted Phebus publishing house in 1986. It was then also discovered that on the initiative of the writer Mira Mihelič and the Director of the National and University Library of Ljubljana, Jaro Dolar, the novel had already been translated into French, at the beginning of the 1970s by Claude Vincenot (he was lecturer of French at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana from 1962–64), but his translation, due to a lack of interest from French and Slovene publishers, languished at the Slovene Writers' Society for a whole fifteen years.² In 1987, however, Jean Pierre Sicre, editor of Phebus publishing house, welcomed the translation by Vincenot. He shortened it a little (he left out the parts in verse) and updated it and on its publication in 1988, *Alamut* became a French bestseller. The book and the author, among others, were

² Marko Crnkovič, The Continuing Story of Bartolo Bill, *Čudež na vasi*: Bilten Bartolovega sklada ½, p. 6-9.

discussed in Bernard Pivot's popular TV show *Apostrophes*, while the novel was also called a "brilliantly written work" by the well-known economist and adviser to President Mitterrand, Jacques Attali. The following year, *Alamut* was published in Spanish and Italian; in 1990, when the war in Yugoslavia was already under way, the poet Josip Osti translated it into Croatian for a Sarajevo publishing house and two years later it was also translated from French into German. In only four years, from 1988–92, Bartol's novel became the most internationally successful and internationally best selling work of Slovene literature. Foreign and Slovene critics explained its international success by its political topicality, while the author's narrative skill and the multi-layered content of his text, which, in the words of the literary historian Boris Paternu, mingled "the elements of a historical, philosophical and trivial novel," allowed various receptions, interpretations, and readings (1991: 88). In 2004, *Alamut* was also published in English, in an excellent translation by Michael Biggins, who also completed his translation by an extensive afterword in which he presented various Slovene readings of the novel since its first publication in 1938, and his own view of it and of its contemporary reception.³

According to Biggins, one of the special strengths of Bartol's *Alamut* is the author's "ability to virtually disappear as a perspective agent of the novel and let his characters carry the story. There is no authorial voice passing judgment or instructing readers which characters to favor or dislike, in fact readers may find their allegiances shifting in the course of reading, becoming confused and ambivalent." In this sense, Biggins sides with the interpreters of *Alamut* who were (and still are) of opinion that Bartol deliberately wrote "an enigmatic book." According to Biggins, the Slovene interpreters of the novel can be in this respect divided into several groups (2004: 430).

To the first group belong (mostly early) interpreters who read and understood *Alamut* as a historical, although highly fictionalized novel about Islamic religious schisms in eleventh century Iran and the resistance of the Persian Shi'a against Seljuk-Sunni rule. According to his memoirs, Bartol got the idea for the novel in 1927 from Josip Vidmar, who, during their meeting in Paris, drew his attention to the travel diaries of Marco Polo. He later collected the material to write *Alamut* for almost a decade and initially actually intended to write a historical novel. "I studied all the available historical sources... the novel framework is historical," he wrote in the introduction to the novel's second edition in 1958.

Hassan ibn Sabbah conquered the fortress of Alamut in Northern Iran in 1090 and already two years later, with the help of hashish and the Garden of Eden, he trained his

³ References in this article are to the 2007 publication. Sanje reissued Biggins's English translation of *Alamut* in 2012.

fedayeens as his living daggers... The death of two fedayeens, who killed themselves in the presence of the Sultan's envoys, on the order of the supreme commander, the first by stabbing himself with a knife and the second by throwing himself from a high tower, is described by almost all Oriental chronologists... (Bartol 2007a: 215, 217)⁴

The story of the fortress of Alamut in mountainous northern Iran and of the leader of the Shi'a sect of Ismaili, Hassan ibn Sabbah, who, in the last decade of the eleventh century strove to unify the Islamic sects within the framework of Ismaili, and to liberate Iran from Seljuk rule, has therefore (according to Bartol) real historical foundations, while an actual historical background is also thought to be included in the chapters of the novel telling how Ibn Sabbah, also called Seiduna or Our Master, tried to achieve his goal with the help of fervent young religious followers, fedayeens, which were trained into highly disciplined soldiers, dedicated to the Prophet and their religious leader and, with the help of drugs and an elaborated scenery of the Garden of Eden, were tricked into being his obedient tools. Hassan's "experiment" with the fedayeens was apparently a real success, since the "master of life and death" in *Alamut* successfully used his "living daggers" to eliminate his enemies.

Hassan ibn Sabbah is therefore the central figure of Bartol's *Alamut*, and his spiritual horizon, as Drago Bajt already persuasively pointed out in 1984, the key to understanding the novel. However, Ibn Sabbah is no longer a man of the Iranian eleventh century, but a man of the twentieth century, aware that knowledge and awareness of the world are highly limited and subjective, and it is therefore possible to manipulate "the truth and the values of human life" ad infinitum; simultaneously, despite claiming to be a prophet, he also has doubts in God and religions and he knows "the truth of death, which is an absolute necessity of man's being." "Look at this limitless vault of heaven! Who can count the stars scattered across it?" Ibn Sabbah asks himself in Biggins's translation (246).

Where is the human intellect that can grasp that? And still, everything is efficiently arranged, as though it were governed by some conscious will. Whether that will is Allah or blind nature is irrelevant... Against the limitlessness we are ridiculous invalids... Gone is my faith in Allah and the Prophet, gone is the heady spell of the first love... The realization that our world is just a grain of dust in the universe and that we are just some mange, some infinitely tiny lice on it—this realization still fills me with despair... (246)

⁴ See also: Bajt (1984: 455).

According to Drago Bajt, the universal doubt and recognition of the relativity of everything based on this recognition are the weapons with which Hassan ibn Sabbah tries to shape the world according to his vision. He sees humanity divided “into two fundamentally different layers: the handful that knows what really is, and the vast multitude that do not know. The former are called to lead and the latter to be led. And according to his firm belief the first are entitled to freedom, represented in the frames of the motto: “*Omnia in numero et mensura*” by the top motto of the Islamili: “Nothing is real, everything is allowed.” In such a world, the power of any institution, according to Ibn Sabbah, is “predicated on followers who have been deceived” (230–31).

Some interpreters of *Alamut* persuasively point out the close relation between Bartol's novel and his previously published literary works, particularly the book of short stories, *Al Araf*, first published in 1935, and this connection was mentioned several times by Bartol himself in his notes. The protagonists of Bartol's short works in prose and of the collection of short stories, *Al Araf*, in this respect are the conceptual forerunners of Hassan ibn Sabbah, and the questions of “truth of life and death,” of the potentials of human knowledge and changing the world and of “strong” individuals who, on the one hand, dominate the multitude of non-thinking people through their knowledge and doubt while, on the other, they themselves are the helpless subject of “the blind justice of fate,” are the central topics of his literature. “The core of *Alamut* is movingly human,” Bartol wrote in the second half of the 1950s.

Someone who has lost faith in the possibility of knowledge, in truth itself, and has power, starts to create ‘his own truth’ and consciously leads into error those who trust him, believe in him and love him, and starts exploiting their faith and their ignorance... The central issue of *Alamut* is the issue of lie and truth, the issue of a conscious deception of people, who trust the deceiver and the terrible disappointment arising from it... (Bajt 1984: 480)

Bartol's biographers mentioned that, in addition to literary models such as Goethe, Dostoyevsky, Edgar Allan Poe, Stendahl, and Anatole France, he was particularly influenced by Freud, Jung, and Nietzsche, while Biggins also greatly stressed the impact of the French Personalists, with whom Bartol became familiar during his studies in Paris. One could add to the latter the early Existentialists, while there has been surprisingly little comparison between Bartol's literature and the literary creativity of contemporaries of his generation elsewhere in Southeast Europe (for instance, authors such as Boris Shivachev in Bulgaria and Anton Holban and Mircea Eliade in Rumania, all of whom, like Bartol, were French “students,” while Eliade also has an interesting “Oriental” literary opus) (Spasov 2011).

As has already been said, Bartol first conceived his story about Alamut and its master, who established his authoritarian and highly unscrupulous rule on the blind faith of fanatical adherents, as a historical novel and, when writing it, in addition to several historical works, he also based it on the biography and some chapters from the autobiography of Hassan ibn Sabbah. However, when he started writing the novel in 1936, he constructed it more and more with the dictators, leaders and “procurers of crowds” of the twentieth century in mind and with the thought of “the quintessence of big and dark energies of the epoch,” which, as he discovered in 1957, only ended with Stalin’s death. As a modern variant of “an oriental despot,” in Bartol’s own words—the Slovene from Trieste, particularly sensitive to conditions in Italy—the first “to grimace in his face was Mussolini,” who was similar to the “historical Hassan” in his vanity, disdain of crowds and his view of religion’s utility but as a personality of “incomparably smaller stature,” and therefore “useless” in comparison with the master of Alamut (Bartol 2007a: 237–46; Bartol 2001: 426). He therefore briefly contemplated dedicating the novel (ironically, of course) to Mussolini, but quickly changed his mind. Nevertheless, he constantly repeated that *Alamut* was not only a “faithful presentation of the beginning of the history of the Ismaili at the end of the eleventh century” but also a “vivid image of the period of terrible dictators between the two world wars.” He wrote:

I stole the fluid from dictators and I suddenly found myself an equilibrist on a rope, walking from the past into the present, and from the present into the future and back. And I did not even notice that the notion of time, in the sense of the present, the past and the future, disappeared and that I experienced with the same intensity what was to come as what was at the moment, or what had been in the near or more remote past. (Bajt 1984: 459)

He had, according to his comments, written in 1958, also Stalin, who “precisely in those years (1936–38) shocked the world with his monster processes,” in mind, when he was writing the novel.

Some recent interpreters of Bartol’s literary work, however, doubt that he actually looked towards the Kremlin in the search for models for the presentation of Hassan ibn Sabbah in the 1930s, and point out that he wrote the aides memoires in which he described the creation of *Alamut*, twenty years later, immediately after the XXth Congress of the Soviet Union’s Communist Party and under the influence of the condemnations of Stalin’s cult and regime issued during the Congress. However, Slovene intellectuals, communists, to whom Bartol grew somewhat closer precisely in the mid-1930s, viewed the novel on its first publication highly critically and negatively, as “magazine-literature” in which there was no real life, and called Bartol a “Nietzschean” (some of them even accused him of

sympathies for fascism, which was, of course, absurd).⁵ Bartol strongly rejected the reproaches of “Nietzscheanism,” even in the second half of the 1950s, and claimed that Nietzsche had nothing to do with the novel, except for the fact that he (Bartol) adopted from him the top slogan of the Ismaili sect “Nothing is real, everything is allowed.” Nevertheless, Slovene literary critics and historians, as already mentioned above, were unfavorable to Bartol’s novel even after 1945. It is probably not wrong to assume that, on the one hand they themselves understood it as a metaphor of twentieth-century dictatorships and, on the other, it remained a riddle for them, which they solved simply by ignoring it.

In his introduction to the American edition of *Alamut*, Michael Biggins mentioned another, more recent interpretation, which, he wrote, tries to persuade the reader that the novel is an “a-clef representation of what should have been the ideal Slovene response to the German and Italian totalitarianism” threatening the Slovenes in the 1930s—in other words, a mirror image of the Hassan ibn Sabbah as Mussolini-Hitler-Stalin reading. According to this interpretation, *Alamut* has a clear, although disguised nationalist message (431). Bartol was by origin a Slovene from Trieste, a decisive opponent of Italian irredentism and fascism and, simultaneously, a friend and supporter of the followers of the Slovene terrorist group TIGR, which conducted violent attacks on Italian institutions and individuals in the Italian-Slovene border regions at the beginning of the 1930s. According to the interpretation mentioned by Biggins, Bartol was supposed to have written *Alamut* with this group and one of its leaders in mind, who was caught by the Italians in 1930 and condemned to a long prison term. In this sense, Hassan ibn Sabbah, with his positive characteristics of rationalism, intelligence, and knowledge, was supposed to be a personification of the national rebel and liberator, to whom it was clear, as he professed to one of his fedayeen at the end of the novel, that “national liberation” from foreign rule (in the Iranian case the liberation of Iranians from under the Seljuks, and in the Slovene case, that of Slovenes from under the Italians) was only possible if the “oppressed nation” takes its fate into its own hands. In this respect, Bartol’s *Alamut* (as claimed by the fiercest supporter of this interpretation, the literary historian Miran Hladnik), in spite of its apparent difference, was supposed to be a logical link in the “Slovene literary

⁵ However, in the same breath, as my father, Vlado Vodopivec told me, a student group of communists greeted the novel in 1938 as a criticism not only of Nazism and fascism, but also of communist authoritarianism. Some group members, including my father, were among the students expelled from the communist party because they disagreed with the leadership’s authoritarian politics. After WW II, my father was also convinced that Bartol’s novel *Alamut* is a criticism not only of Nazism and fascism, but of communist authoritarianism as well. He first pointed out the book to me and encouraged me to read it in 1963, when I was still in high school.

system,” which was a tool of Slovene national “awareness, sacrifice and encouragement” for the entire twentieth century (Hladnik 2004).

Biggins persuasively rejected this interpretation as “facile and flat” (432). Not only does there seem to be no foundation for it in the novel, except for a short episode at the end, when Ibn Sabbah persuades a young fedayeen that he had dedicated all his endeavours “to the liberation of the Pahlavi speaking population of Iran from foreign domination,” there is also no foundation in Bartol’s notes and memoirs, except for a short note in the diary of 1930 that he will revenge his friend, a Slovene nationalist condemned to a long-term prison. Biggins is certainly justified in asking how to harmonize Hassan’s alleged nationalism “with his far more exhaustively articulated nihilism, his rejection of any ideology, his acceptance of power as the ruling force of the universe, and his implacable pursuit of power for its own sake” (432)? It is true that Bartol does not moralize in his novel and allows each of its protagonists to speak for himself without, as the narrator, siding with one or another but, in the same breath, there is no doubt that the spiritual horizon of Ibn Sabbah and his entire project are something terrible and absolutely unacceptable in Bartol’s eyes. According to his own statements, as also set out by Biggins, Bartol was fairly reserved in his attitude to politics and to the great ideologies, if not entirely indifferent; from all we know about him, he was never a particularly fervent Slovene nationalist, although he was an open anti-fascist, a fact that brought him closer to the communists before the outbreak of WW II and to the Liberation Front during WW II. After the war, he again drifted away from politics because, as a liberal, he was equally alienated from both the post-war Yugoslav and Italian political regimes.

The Slovene “nationalist reading” of Bartol’s *Alamut*, as quoted by Biggins, does not have many supporters, although, as revealed by the symposium on Bartol at the beginning of the 1990s, Slovene literary historians and scholars of comparative studies still remain very divided in evaluations and interpretations of Bartol’s literature. At the aforementioned symposium, Professor Janko Kos, in his paper with the significant title “Troubles with Bartol,” rejected not only Bartol’s claims of a real historical background to the novel but also his emphasis on a connection between Ibn Sabbah and the dictators of the 1930s (according to Kos, the ideas of Hassan ibn Sabbah could not be compared to the political views and practice of Mussolini, Hitler and Stalin), and he also pointed out that the slogan “Nothing is real, everything is allowed” was taken from Nietzsche and had nothing to do with the Ismailies of the eleventh century. According to Kos, therefore, *Alamut* was “the most consistent thematization of European nihilist problematics...” in Slovene literature (Kos 1991). At the same symposium, a younger scholar, Marko Juvan, called *Alamut* an “encyclopedic” novel, full of twists of meaning, approaching post-modernism and reminiscent of Umberto Eco and his novel, *The Name of*

the Rose (Juvan 1991). For the literary historian Boris Paternu, *Alamut* was simply the most “non-Slovene novel of Slovene literature,” which Bartol uprooted from narrow provincialism and provided with a European framework of thought (Paternu 1991: 87–89).

In spite of Slovene literary critics highlighting the weaknesses of Bartol's language and literary expression, in the 1990s *Alamut* thus became the best selling and most widely read book of Slovene literature to date. Numerous readers undoubtedly read it primarily as an imaginative and skillfully written historical novel, others as a topical reading and a prophetic vision of the ever more strained relations between the Arabic, Islamic world and Western countries and the USA, and yet others as a literary metaphor of the still influential authoritarian regimes and unscrupulous political Machiavellism, as there were plenty of modern “old men from the mountain,” as the Spanish writer and publicist Fernando Sanchez Dragó picturesquely put it, even in the waning years of the twentieth century. *Alamut* is indeed first and foremost—to refer to Michael Biggins once more—a thorough critical study and deconstruction of dogmatic ideologies and their protagonists, which defy common sense and promise the kingdom of God in exchange for one's life or one's freedom. According to Biggins, Bartol's Hassan ibn Sabbah, although a hyper-rationalist, by simultaneously excluding any emotional aspects of human experience as irrational and invalid and proclaiming the absence of any absolute moral restraints, is himself a dogmatic ideologist (433–34). From the historical point of view, one could even speculate in respect of this whether Ibn Sabbah, in his hyper-rationalism, dangerously jeopardized only by the unpredictable feelings of his “subjects” and “soldiers,” is not more similar to Stalin than to his two authoritarian contemporaries. It is interesting that this is an aspect of reading *Alamut* to which contemporary Slovene literary historians and theoreticians pay almost no attention. However, in this connection we must agree with Biggins again: *Alamut* is above all a work of literature and its chief job is not to convey facts and arguments in a linear way but to do what only literature can do: “provide attentive readers... with the means of discovering deeper and more universal truths about humanity, about how we conceive ourselves and the world and how our conceptions shape the world around us...” (433). The sales success experienced by *Alamut* in the last two decades shows that, more than half a century after it was written, Bartol's novel still continues successfully to encourage such reading and, in this respect, at least as far as Slovenia is concerned, is even more successful today than it was in the decades after WW II, when there was no proper space and understanding for an individual's search of “deeper and more universal thrusts” in the ruling political system in Slovenia and Yugoslavia.

Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino

Works Cited

- Bajt, Drago. 1984. Bartolov Alamut (Bartol's *Alamut*). In *Alamut*, by Vladimir Bartol, 461–67. Maribor: Obzorja 1984.
- Bartol, Vladimir. 1984. *Čudež na vasi*. Trst: Založništvo tržaškega tiska.
- . 1984. *Alamut*. Maribor: Obzorja.
- . 1985. *Don Lorenzo*. Trst: Založništvo tržaškega tiska.
- . 1988a. *Alamut*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.
- . 1988b. *Med idilo in grozo: Novele: 1935–1940*. Ed. Drago Bajt. Commentaries by Andrej Blatnik, Igor Bratož, Marko Crnkovič, Miran Košuta, Luka Novak, and Tadej Zupančič. Ljubljana: Književna mladina Slovenije.
- . 2004. *Alamut*. Translated and afterword by Michael Biggins. Seattle, WA: Scala House Press.
- . 2007a. *Alamut*. Translated and afterword by Michael Biggins. Ljubljana: Sanje.
- . 2007b. Romantika in platonika sredi vojne (Romanticism and platonic love in the midst of war) In *Mladost pri Svetem Ivanu* (The youth at St. Ivan) III. Ljubljana: Sanje.
- Blatnik, Andrej. 1988. Iz dialoga (From the dialogue). In Bartol 1988b, 261–62.
- Borko, Božidar. 1938. Vladimir Bartol, Alamut. *Jutro* 16 November 1938.
- Hladnik, Miran. 2004. “Nevertheless, is it also a Machiavellian novel?”: Review of Michael Biggins, *Against ideologies: Vladimir Bartol and Alamut*. *Slovene Studies* 26 (2004): 107–15.
- Juvan, Marko. Alamut – enciklopedičen roman (Alamut – an encyclopedic novel). In *Pogledi na Bartola*. Ed. Igor Bratož, 91–103. Ljubljana: Revija Literatura.
- Kalan, Filip (Filip Kumbatovič). 1939. Iz dnevnika (From the diary), *Sodobnost* 7, no. 3: 132–36.
- Kermauner, Taras. 1974. Commentary to *Demon in Eros; Al Araf*, by Vladimir Bartol. Ed. Severin Šali. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.
- Kos, Janko. 1991. Težave z Bartolom, (Troubles with Bartol). In *Pogledi na Bartola*. Ed. Igor Bratož, 9–52. Ljubljana: Revija Literatura.
- Košuta, Miran. 1988. Introduction to *Alamut*, by Vladimir Bartol. In Bartol 1988a, 551–97.
- Legiša, Lino. 1939. Vladimir Bartol (Književna poročila – Book reviews), *Dejanje* 2, no. 4: 166–72.
- Most: revija za kulturo in družbena vprašanja* 47–48/49–50 (1976–77).
- Paternu, Boris. 1991. Vprašanje recepcije Bartolovega Alamuta (The question of the reception of Bartol's *Alamut*). In *Pogledi na Bartola, Problemi*. Ed. Igor Bratož. Ljubljana: Revija Literatura.
- Spasov, Malamir. 2011. Ekvilibristiki na A-za (ili koi razkazva medžuvoiinja psihologičeski roman Na Balkanite). Sophia: Izdatelstvo Faber.

Zdravec, Fran. 1958. Ferdo Kozak v času urejanja *Sodobnosti* (Ferdo Kozak in the period when he was the editor of *Sodobnost*). *Svet ob Muri* III: 260–70.

POVZETEK

O SLOVENSКИH PROBLEMIH IN NESPORAZUMIH O BARTOLOVEM ALAMUTU

Avtor v članku opozarja, da so bralci roman slovenskega tržaškega pisatelja Vladimira Bartola *Alamut* ob izidu leta 1938 zelo lepo sprejeli, poročevalci v dnevnem časopisju in kulturnih revijah pa so bili bolj neenotni. V katoliškem in liberalnem tisku so ga zvečine ocenili pozitivno, medtem ko je kritik v levičarsko usmerjeni *Sodobnosti* trdil, da gre za »periferno literaturo«, ki nima »posluha za »najbolj bistvene... zadeve človeka in njegove notranjščine«. Po letu 1945 je *Alamut* v Sloveniji za več kot štiri desetletja utonil v pozabo. Na pisatelja je leta 1974 znova opozoril literarni teoretik Taras Kermauner. Vseeno so slovenski založniki, bralci in literarni kritiki Bartola, roman *Alamut* in druga pisateljeva dela znova odkrili šele potem ko je *Alamut* v osemdesetih letih doživel velik knjižni uspeh v Franciji, hkrati pa je bil preveden v druge tuje jezike (leta 2004 v odličnem prevodu Michaela Bigginsa tudi v angleščino).

Avtor članka predstavlja različne razlage Bartolovega romana. Zgodba o trdnjavi *Alamut* in o voditelju shiitske sekte ismailcev Ibn Sabi, ki je v 11. stoletju težil k združitvi islamskih ločin in osvoboditvi Irana izpod seldžuške nadoblasti, ima stvarne zgodovinske temelje, te pa naj bi imela tudi poglavja romana, ki govorijo o tem, da je poskušal Ibn Saba svoj cilj doseči s pomočjo mladih gorečnejev, ki so jih na *Alamutu* izurili v disciplinirane, verskemu voditelju povsem predane vojščake. Toda, ko je začel Bartol leta 1936 pisati roman, ga je po lastnih besedah zasnoval tudi z mislijo na diktatorje 20. stoletja in »kvintestenco mračnih energij dobe«, ki se je leta 1957, iztekla šele s Stalinovo smrtjo.

Slovenski literarni teoretiki, kot je razkril simpozij o Bartolu v začetku devetdesetih let, so v ocenah Bartolove literature še naprej zelo neenotni. Profesor Janko Kos je na simpoziju zavrnil Bartolove trditve o stvarnem zgodovinskem ozadju romana in njegovo poudarjanje zveze Ibn Sabe z diktatorji tridesetih let, za literarnega zgodovinarja Borisa Paternuja pa je bil *Alamut* preprosto najbolj »neslovenski roman slovenske literature«, ki ga je Bartol iztrgal iz provincializma in mu dal evropski format.

Avtor članka pritrjuje interpretaciji Michaela Bigginsa, da je Bartolov *Alamut* predvsem literarno delo in zato njegov glavni namen ni bil in ni premočrtno posredovanje dejstev, temveč to kar literatura vedno počne: posredovanje sredstev odkrivanja obćih resnic o človeku, o tem,

*kako se dojemamo, kako oblikujemo in dojemamo svet in kako naše
predstave oblikujejo svet okoli nas.*