

Pig's Head. Stories of Tito's Childhood

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The problem with adults is that, for the most part, they are so successful in being adults that we often forget that they have not always been adults. In other words, a good number of adults, and this is particularly true of those who have achieved a fair degree of fame and prestige in their adult lives, play the card of obscuring from their vitae the fact that they, too, many, many years ago, were non-adults, i.e. children. Childhood and adolescence stories hide all kinds of traps and sour spots which may not only be painful to remember for the former child itself, but, more importantly, it can easily happen, through no fault of the child itself, that those early tales appear ill at ease when compounded to the grand saga of the adult's life. What if one of the parents was a criminal? What if there were serious mental disturbances in the family? Family suicides rarely provide for a smooth and easy-to-hear story. The family history of Croatia's first post-communist president, Franjo Tuđman, is a case in point. In 1946, his father Stjepan Tuđman, already mentally severely distressed, killed his wife (Franjo Tuđman's stepmother) and subsequently committed suicide. When Franjo Tuđman became the President of Croatia, an attempt was made by his biographers to erase from his biography this unpleasant detail of insanity in the family, while at the same time trying to fit the new truth into the context of Croatia in the 1990ies. The president himself accepted and promoted a story, according to which his father and stepmother were killed after the war by the Yugoslav secret police, UDBA. This was supposed to put an anti-Yugoslav and anti-communist sign on his childhood years.

Furthermore, growing up may be no fun at all: being forced to live under a certain (parental?) regime, in which the right to vote is the least of one's worries, undergoing hormonal changes and their sometimes appalling consequences, undertaking less than thought-through actions and suffering their disastrous outcomes, acquiring education in a system, in which pedagogical theorists, perhaps, speculated "that the buttocks were created in order to facilitate the learning" (Greenblatt 2004: 26). Why bother to retell stories of those times at all, when for the most part they exhibit a potential to embarrass us and taint the image of our perfect self? At the same time, stories of beginnings may prove exceptionally useful for adult individuals. Writing of a slightly different phenomenon, Pierre Nora noted, "the greater the origins, the more they magnified our greatness" (Nora 1989: 16). If properly related, genesis, including even the earliest glimpses of light, can empower the beholder and legitimise his or her claim to the present and future. Even in a communist society, in which the so-called "re-forging myth" theoretically guaranteed that "bad" social origins could not deprive a person of a fair possibility of being re-made, it turned out that *varia & insignifica*, such as one's place of birth or the parents' professional occupation could

become both positively and negatively important (Fitzpatrick 1999: 115).

In cases of "unique personalities", as Tito was often dubbed by Yugoslav authors, chronicles of early years were considered especially interesting and thus subjected to thorough studies. As early as 1955 Tito (informally) declared that his childhood experience was not as important to him as the experience of the liberation struggle. He claimed that his calling and path were not determined by his childhood, but rather by later struggles in life (Jevtović 1962: 6). Despite that, his most faithful and most influential biographer, Vladimir Dedijer, as well as all those less famous who followed after him, took great care to investigate and document not only what might be termed Tito's social background, but also some other, seemingly unimportant details, such as Tito's pets and favourite sweets. The tale of his growing-up was all the more interesting, if we consider that this model socialist citizen, whose contribution to the communist revolution could hardly be overestimated, entered the socialist period burdened with the past of a bourgeois inheritance. At the dawn of Yugoslav socialist history, he celebrated his fifty-third birthday. As this text hopes to show, the story of Tito's childhood was a narrative of "the dark past". The purpose of the narrative was to elucidate the type of "light" that shone through the past to bring about the shiny present.¹

The aim of this article is to reconstruct the story (or stories) of childhood and early years of Josip Broz Tito, demonstrating how they were created as part of a much larger saga of his (and not only his) life. This is thus a reconstruction of a double discursive construction. The first one accepts the (modern) concept that childhood indeed represents a separate part in the continuity of human life, marked by specific ideas, modes, and cultural codes. In this way a certain set of principles, institutions, and activities are defined which construct a special social experience, which we "recognise" as childhood.² This article aims to reassemble a historically and socially specific instance of the childhood-construction: its Yugoslav socialist version.³ At the beginning of the Yugoslav story, there was a narrative written by Vladimir Dedijer. He authored the first biography of Tito, which he started in 1950 and published in 1953 under the title "Josip Broz Tito. Prilozi za biografiju" (translated: "Josip Broz Tito. Contributions Towards a Biography") (Dedijer 1953). This edition crucially determined the body of topoi and the narrative trope of all subsequent Yugoslav publications about Tito's life. During his life-time, Tito never published an autobiography,⁴ and he insisted that Dedijer's semi-official biographies were not titled as "Biography", but rather always and only as "Contributions towards a biography", as he believed that "in history-writing we must obey the theory of distance" (Dedijer 1980: VI). By naming a publication "biography" or "autobiography" (a designation which leaves a final and rounded

impression on the reader) all future authors could be somewhat discouraged to pursue the investigation of Tito's life and work. Moreover, all further reinterpretations would be forestalled by an authoritative official (auto)biographical account. And yet, these subsequent reinterpretations, at least as far as childhood stories are concerned, did not follow. The discursive web created in 1953 was in the following years only further enriched or, more commonly, unimaginatively mechanically reproduced. This analysis of stories of Tito's childhood is founded on the basis of Dedijer's first publication, as well as all those who followed his lead, stepping in and around his footsteps. This article is therefore NOT a story of Tito's childhood, but rather a story of stories of Tito's childhood.

Geography and history of birthplace

The exact date of Tito's birth is surrounded by a small dose of confusion. Writing in February 1935 while on duty in Moscow,⁵ Tito declared that he was born in 1893 (Broz 1977). This is most definitively incorrect, as all other versions of his biography cite 1892 as the year of birth, and that same year was carved onto his tombstone decades later. There was more to the confusion surrounding the exact date. Tito's birthday became one of the most popular and most important Yugoslav state-holidays, and its celebration started in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. The last armed conflicts with fascist forces in Yugoslavia ended on May 15, 1945, and only ten days later, on May 25, Tito celebrated his first post-war birthday in Zagreb (Štaubringer 1974: 19). When it was discovered a few years later that parish records and Tito's school matriculation document listed May 7 as his day of birth,⁶ the date of the official celebration of his birthday was not changed, apparently because Tito personally insisted on keeping the wrong date for official holiday's purposes (Dedijer 1953: 22).⁷ It comes as no surprise that in a peasant family with fifteen children (only seven of whom lived to be older than two) not all the children, Tito included, would know the exact date of his birth. But this confusion, it would seem, rested uneasily with Yugoslav writers and biographers. They strove to exonerate Tito's "lapse of memory" concerning this issue by pointing either to the inconsistencies in the existing historical sources⁸ or by reminding the readers of Tito's long years of work in illegal circumstances,⁹ during which he was forced to use falsified documents with false names and identities (Matošec 1982: 8). His less than perfect memory was thus perfectly excusable.

The place of birth occupied the imagination of the writers much more extensively, and despite its size it offered a stage for truly poetic performances, most importantly because it enabled them to construct stories of continuity of the revolution and to identify one historical person, whose glorious past tradition Tito would bring to fruition. But let us turn first to the mere geography of the place. Tito was born in the village of Kumrovec, located less than two hours' drive by car from Zagreb. Even in the 1980s, in terms of its size, it

was a rather insignificant place: slightly over three hundred inhabitants (Matošec 1982: 7). When writers took upon themselves to travel to Kumrovec, they proudly noted that everyone they asked for directions knew where Kumrovec was; there was no fear of getting lost, despite of the village's modest size (Bevk 1980: 69). Maps of Yugoslavia would not normally record villages of such minuscule proportions. While it cannot be verified with absolute certainty, the claim that "this small Kumrovec you can find on every geographical map of our homeland [Yugoslavia]" (Matošec 1982: 7) seems quite plausible. Somewhat less plausible was the assertion that "today the whole world knows where Kumrovec is" (Popović 1980: 14), but the claim's farfetchedness could not diminish its force, quite on the contrary.

Kumrovec is a village in the northwestern Croatian region of (Hrvatsko) Zagorje. One adjective that Yugoslav authors most commonly associated with the landscape of this region is *pitomo* (e.g. Bevk 1980: 5; Štaubringer 1974: 10), best translated as gentle, mild, calm, tame. With a rare but significant exception of Miroslav Krleža,¹⁰ to whom we will return shortly, most writers were quick to extol the natural beauty of Zagorje, its "vineyards, magnificent valleys, green grasses, translucent springs (...), inebriating scents of pear, apple, and locust tree" (Štaubringer 1974: 10). They were day-dreaming of Zagorje's simple but charming small houses spread over the foothills, countless birds gathered on the roads, chickens, ducks, turkeys, geese (Bevk 1980: 69). It is there, the authors claimed, that Tito's great love for nature – "greenery, flowers, and birds" – originated (*ibid.*). This special love would enable him, many decades later, to successfully plant his favourite silver birch tree in the gardens of his official residence in Belgrade, even though the professional gardener claimed that birch trees could not prosper on that soil (*ibid.*, 11).¹¹ The romantic side of the scenery was enhanced by the fact that the surrounding hills of Kumrovec had in the past been home to two medieval towns, Kunšperk and Cesargrad. In them, former noble landlords of the surrounding region had lived, while their serfs had ploughed the land on the foothills and in the valleys. By Tito's time, only ruins of the two noble towns were visible, but their existence gave a strong sense of history to the region, even if Tito's ancestors, as we will see, worked as serfs on the nobility's land. Particularly the masters of Cesargrad, the Hungarian noble family of Erdödy, left many horrendous stories to be told by the inhabitants of Kumrovec (Bevk 1980: 70). The landscape of Zagorje had to be so familiar to an average Yugoslav that "when one arrives to Zagorje for the first time, it is as if he had already been there, in the basins encircled by round green hills. [When one comes here,] one has the impression, as if one had already seen these clear springs. Perhaps in one's own birth place" (Jevtović 1962: 14). Clearly, not all Yugoslavs could remember landscapes similar to Zagorje from their childhood, among other things because, strictly geographically speaking, soft and gentle hills and valleys were not characteristic of much of Yugoslavia. As in most of the Balkans, mountains were the predominant Yugoslav motif, combined with the narrow maritime line, the fer-

tile Pannonian plain to the North, and the dark woods of central Serbia. But it was not quite an exaggeration to claim that Yugoslavs from different parts of the country were intimately familiar with Zagorje's landscape. On the one hand, in the mid-1970s it was estimated that roughly 300,000 people visited Tito's house of birth annually (Štaubringer 1974: 14). While there were certainly non-Yugoslav citizens among them, it is safe to assume that the majority of the visitors were of Yugoslav origin: frequent trips to Kumrovec enabled them to experience "gentle Zagorje" firsthand. Much more importantly, countless poems and prose texts about Tito comprised a thick discursive space, in which references to Zagorje's natural beauty were ubiquitous: "dreaming land, birds descending to the roads" (Marković 1980: 4), "peaceful grass" and "small flowers opening their heads", "autumn all of silk" (Krklec 1975). Perhaps then, indeed, everyone had seen this landscape.

The poetic image of Zagorje – "children racing around houses", "golden moonlight", "frogs singing on the river banks", "dogs barking from far away" (Jevtović 1962: 15–7) – was denounced by the rare voice of Miroslav Krleža as something belonging to the palette of literary devices, without any resemblance to reality. Reminiscing about the short trip he and Tito made to Zagorje in 1937, Krleža wrote in his diaries many years later a passage which merits a longer quotation:

"[Returning to Kumrovec in 1937, Tito found] the same scents, the same fences, same mud, same dogs ... Doors are squeaking, doormen of Kumrovec still haven't oiled them, god damn them! They have no petroleum, no oil, no salt, no bread, no nothing! ... (...) Here in Kumrovec dogs bark as they did thirty-four years ago [when he left the village] ... as if nothing is happening in the world ... as if Europe is not standing before a new world war. A new international disaster is looming, the fascist gorilla is sharpening his knives, and here ... Kumrovec snores ... damnation of Kumrovec's nocturne, when dogs bark, and everything stands still as if cursed ... 'Kumrovec snores, god bless it, how long will everything and everyone around here snore?', asked Tito angrily..." (Quoted in Štaubringer 1974: 43–4).

While strongly leftist, Krleža's pre-WW II opus, in which he wrote about Zagorje on more than one occasion, had little flattering to say about this region, which for him was above all the site of a torturous existence for peasants, a place characterised by decades of economic and social backwardness. Awkwardly enough, Yugoslav writers were happy to quote Krleža's passages about Zagorje in their descriptions of Tito's birthplace (mostly because of their literary beauty and power), without at the same time adopting Krleža's enraged tone (e.g. *ibid.*). When they searched for Zagorje's history, they found another set of references that were more pertinent for communist Yugoslavia. "Ottomans never conquered Zagorje", exclaimed Dedijer early on (Dedijer 1953: 8). For a country, the bulk of which cherished the

Antemurale Christianitatis myth and fed on the legend of "500 years of the Turkish yoke", this was a tremendously important achievement. On the one hand, it testified to Zagorje's uniqueness, its natural and architectural fortification, as well as to the numerous brave soldiers who were recruited from that region in defence against the Turks (Dedijer 1953: 8–11). At the same time, this relative freedom (despite the continuous Ottoman threat) and the fact that Zagorje did not belong to the military border of the Habsburg Empire, allowed Zagorje and its immediate surrounding "to cultivate science in culture, even if in very limited circles" (Dedijer 1953: 11). It was important for Tito's biographer to establish that some of the most educated people in Croatian history either originated from or received their education in Zagorje, namely at the School of Philosophy and Theology established by the Paulist order in Lepoglava in the mid-seventeenth century.

Stories of Tito's childhood readily testify that in Zagorje the awareness of the importance of education resonated beyond elite circles. According to Miroslav Jevtović, the inhabitants of Kumrovec decided at some point, presumably in the first half of the nineteenth century, that to build a school in the village was important for their children. They waited for the state to take over the initiative, but nothing happened. Determined to "save their children from darkness and backwardness", they had to take matters into their own hands and taxed each house in the county for the purpose of financing the new school. Even their local feudal master denied them any help, claiming that educated peasants were poor workers. Eventually, the people of Kumrovec succeeded, and the school building was erected in 1889 (Jevtović 1962: 40–1). While the plot of this narrative is situated in the nineteenth century, all of its main features bear communist imprints: self-awareness of the lower classes, determination to change their social status, reliance on education as the tool for personal and social liberation, the evil master who, knowing very well what education means, wishes to enslave his serfs in ignorance, self-organised action by the peasants themselves that would ultimately be crowned by success. Paradoxically, this tale contradicted another topos in Tito's biographies, shared by Jevtović as well: the claim that the adult peasants of Zagorje, Tito's parents included, usually allowed their children to attend school only after all household chores were completed. Tending animals and farming land was an all-day job, and it was not unusual that sometimes children skipped classes entirely, since the parents did not seem to take their children's education very seriously. This slight discrepancy in the narrative does not seem to have raised (m)any eyebrows. Additionally, despite his different personal experience, Tito very persistently promoted the cult of school and learning, quite in accordance with the communist belief in the power of knowledge and education to change people and the community.¹² During his numerous encounters with school children, he rarely missed an opportunity to ask the famous question "Do you work hard in school?", while reporters concluded that nothing brings a smile on Tito's face like a diligent, hard-working pupil (Bevk 1980: 87). As Petr

Roubal has showed, only children were seen in the communist imaginary as “the true new people”, because they shared no burden of the past with the adults (Roubal 1999). Children were perceived as *tabula rasa* waiting to be filled with qualities and ideologically correct content (Erdei 2004). As such, only children could be the true future inhabitants of the communist heaven.

Historical predecessors and family ancestors

There was more historical allure to Tito's Zagorje than its impressive record in resisting the Ottomans. In the local dialect, this area is commonly referred to as *puntarski kraj*, which roughly translated means ‘rebellious region’. This flare of rebellion was important for Yugoslav writers when they tried to account for some traits of Tito's personality and his ability to detect and pursue the right cause. It is therefore important to explain how the text and the context of Zagorje's rebelliousness was constructed, even long before Tito's historical arrival. In a text from 1905 that is still easily the most beautiful travelogue about Zagorje, the famous Croatian writer Antun Gustav Matoš referred to it as “Gubec's region” (Krklec 1975). Matija Ambroz Gubec was a sixteenth-century serf in Stubica, in Hrvatsko Zagorje,¹³ who reached the peak of his local glory as the leading figure of the famous peasant uprising of 1573, directed against the entire local nobility of Zagorje, both those with Hungarian (Erdödy) as well as Croatian (Drašković) sounding last names. It was a historical event hardly unprecedented for the time and place. Slightly over half a century earlier, György Dózsa had led Hungarian peasants in a similar uprising, while the great peasant wars in German lands 1524–5 were even more famous. The Yugoslav Communist Party recognised in the tradition of Gubec's name and his heritage something they could rely on in building the prehistory of the Communist movement.

In Tito's biography, Dedijer was careful to reconstruct the 1573 uprising. On January 29 of that year, serfs of Cesargrad broke into the medieval town, decapitated the governor of the estate, burnt a section of the town, and plundered the armoury. Barbara Erdödy, the lord's wife, was hidden in a part of Cesargrad that the peasants were unable to reach. They chose Matija Gubec as their leader and Ilija Gregorić as the main military commander. The uprising spilled over to the entire Zagorje region, as well as parts of Carinthia and Styria. Hard winter conditions and the superior armament of the nobility's forces worked against the peasant cause. Gregorić's forces were gradually subdued, and the final battle took place on February 7 in Stubica.¹⁴ The peasant army, led by Matija Gubec, was thoroughly defeated. Ilija Gregorić and Matija Gubec were both captured. Croatian bishop Juraj Drašković, inspired by his Hungarian colleagues, asked and gained the permission of the Viennese court not only to execute Gubec, but also to crown him with a heated iron crown.¹⁵ Dedijer detected in the 1573 uprising allusions to the storm that would come to Zagorje and the whole region a couple of centuries later (Dedijer 1953: 14–5).

Almost without exception all authors discussing Tito's place of birth and his early years mention at some point Gubec and his uprising. “The peasant king”, as Gubec was sometimes gently referred to, was a highly significant figure for Yugoslavia in general and Croatian communists in particular. Another of Tito's biographers claimed that people remembered the uprising and the heavy punishment visited upon the rebels (Jevtović 1962: 26). Exactly what and how people remembered was recently carefully scrutinised by a reputed Croatian anthropologist, Ivo Žanić. Using local traditional folk epics, Žanić reconstructed Gubec's doubtless survival in the local folk imagery as a fighter for the peasants' just cause. In the nineteenth century, with the dawn of the Croatian “national re-awakening”, Matija Gubec became an interesting figure for the first generation of Croatian professional historiographers, Ivan Kukuljević and Franjo Rački, who were the first to print sources and studies of the 1573 uprising. Croatian professional writers followed the lead. In 1859 Mirko Bogović published the drama “Matija Gubec, Peasant King”, while August Šenoa finished his novel “Peasant Uprising” in 1877. Šenoa's historical novel, heavily based on research and available sources, aimed to teach Croats about their history, “for the past is always the mirror of the present time”, a place where Croats would recognise themselves in the years far away (Šenoa 1963: 10). Šenoa's and other “national awakers” work resulted, as Žanić points out, in securing Gubec a firm place in the Croatian national Pantheon as a martyred fighter for equal rights (Žanić 1998: 323–4).

From that point, Gubec's name was happily used by the emerging Croatian political parties as an epitome of “Croatian national power”, while he continued to enjoy undisputed popularity in the folk epic production (*ibid.*, 324). None of it could have passed unnoticed by the Croatian communist circles that officially started appearing in 1919. For them, Gubec had two features that were particularly appealing. On the one hand, his social status as a peasant made him an ideological figure they could easily recognise and adopt. In the later years, his aura would open the way to stories of the “never extinguished tradition of the ancient peasant uprisings” (Krklec 1975). The word “ancient” should be understood in a rather literal meaning. The communist search in the past for a useful tradition had already extended all the way to ancient Rome and the rebellion led by the slave Spartacus in 73 BC. Spartacus was, in temporal mode, the most distant communist cousin, and Gubec stood halfway between Spartacus and the grand achievements of communist revolution.¹⁶ It comes as no surprise that on the 400th anniversary of the peasant uprising in Zagorje, Yugoslav historians declared the uprising to have been “a social peasant revolt with visible revolutionary characteristics” (Jelić 1973: 328). In this way, Gubec became, in the words of Ivo Žanić, “the incarnation of the repressed people who rise against the unjust and cruel ruler” (Žanić 1998: 323).¹⁷

There was a second dimension to Gubec's image particularly liked by the communists and very significant for his relation to Tito. As legend and scholarship had it, Gubec did not rise against just any given

ruler: his battle was with foreign-born rulers, in this case, with Hungarians.¹⁸ In the eyes of the Communist party, the same was true of Tito. Only keeping that in mind we can understand why, as a Yugoslav author claimed, “when you reflect on Tito, it is logical also to think of Gubec: they are the leaders of the two greatest revolutions in our history” (Popović 1980: 14). That is how in the aftermath of World War Two Zagorje became “the cradle of Gubec and Tito” (Jevtović 1962: 15). That Tito was also intimately acquainted with legends of Gubec is beyond any doubt. His biographers reported that, as was customary in villages at the time of his childhood, the young and the old came together around the fireplace on cold winter evenings. The old stories of the past came alive by retelling tales from one generation to another, “about the peasant uprising of Matija Gubec, the nobles, kuluk (feudal levee), and the old justice. About the massive hunger, when people gave away a piece of their land for a piece of bread. While listening to these stories, Josip’s [Tito’s] fingers were squeezing, blood freezing in his veins. He was experiencing the heavy moments that people had gone through” (Bevk 1980: 18). Decades later, on the wall of his study room in his official Belgrade residence, he hung Krsto Hegedušić’s painting “The Battle at Stubica”. The image of Matija Ambroz Gubec was there to inspire and incite during his long working hours.

In the process of establishing patterns of continuity and traces of different types of genealogical succession, no detail is too insignificant to be passed by in silence. Tito’s biographers thus could not avoid mentioning that the first member of the Broz family who came to Zagorje in 1554 bore Gubec’s first name: Ambroz (Popović 1980: 14). There are no sources to tell what was happening with the Broz family during the uprising, and Yugoslav authors, to the best of my knowledge, did not try to take a leap of faith and suggest that a member of the family had fought in Gubec’s peasant forces. Clues were only left scattered around for the readers to piece together a story by means of their own imagination. At the same time, Tito’s words in a speech on the 400th anniversary of the battle at Stubica left little room for (re)interpretations of the true meaning of the 1573 uprising: the class character of the struggle, repressed masses, fight for freedom, fire lit in Zagorje’s villages four-hundred years ago, continuity of the progressive striving of our people for freedom and social justice (Tito as quoted in Štaubringer 1974: 26–7). The “greatest son of Zagorje” could thus always be proud of his countrymen. Gubec’s tradition, as he claimed, inspired them during the Second World War, which explained why the Croatian fascists, Ustasha, never took root in Zagorje. People of Zagorje sacrificed their sons in the struggle against fascism, not only in the region, but all over the former Yugoslavia (Tito as quoted in Popović 1980: 44). To recognise the contribution of the Broz family to that struggle, no leap of faith was required. As books about Tito noted, four sons of Tito’s older brother, Dragutin, were the first ones from Kumrovec to join the partisan forces. None of them returned home (Popović 1980: 22).¹⁹

What about the rest of the immediate Broz family?²⁰ Tito’s parents, Franjo Broz and Marija Broz née Javoršek, do not appear to have differed in any significant way from their contemporaries. When they married, in January 1881, she was only sixteen years old, but he could not have been much older either. She was Slovenian, he Croatian. This “mixed” ethnic origins of Tito, considered from the perspective of post-1945 Yugoslavia, was something writers gladly commented on. One should not forget that more people died on Yugoslav territory during the Second World War as a result of inter-ethnic struggles than were killed by the Nazi and Italian fascist forces. “Such marriages, in which a groom comes from one and the bride from the other side of the river were not rare then, as they are not today either” (Matošec 1982: 9). In this case, the metaphor of the river with two sides was a literal one: the continental borderline dividing Slovenian from Croatian lands has for centuries been the river Sutla. It is one of the oldest and most stable natural borders in the whole of Europe. In this context, the name of the nineteenth-century Croatian writer was remembered, Ante Kovačić, who preferred for the river Sutla “to evaporate rather than divide our two peoples” (quoted in Krklec 1975). Tito, it was claimed, never felt unease due to his parents’ different ethnic origins, for there were no antagonisms “between two neighbouring countries and two brotherly peoples” (ibid.). Tito himself later used the fact of his mixed ethnic origins to declare that while he was born in Croatia, he felt to be Yugoslav “by his function, by everything” (Broz 1971).

Little information was given about Tito’s parents, but we learn that in general life was hard in Kumrovec. And here is where the fairy-tale picture of Zagorje becomes tainted beyond repair. The land was “stingy”, it bore little fruit (Dedijer 1953: 20). There were very few rich people in the region at the time, and very many hungry ones. The aristocracy and priests oppressed serfs and lived off the serf’s “work, sweat, of his blisters and blood” (Matošec 1982: 8). Adults in the Broz family had to take over even the hardest jobs to feed their hungry children (Jevtović 1962: 26). Hunger was a frequent guest at the table. Together with a complete lack of medical care, this might help explain the high mortality rate in Zagorje. Tito was the seventh child in Franjo’s and Marija’s family, and one might add “the lucky seventh”, as out of the fifteen children Marija bore, only seven survived the first two years of infancy.²¹ As biographers noted, Marija and Franjo had different ways of coping with the burden of hunger and poverty, and this opens a possibility to comprehend different levels of Tito’s displayed emotional attachment to his parents. Franjo, a soft and benign soul, was becoming dispirited and depressed, reaching ultimately for the final salvation in the glass. Marija, on the other hand, is continuously portrayed as a very strong, energetic woman, who was able to take over providing and caring for the entire family (Jokić 1984: 9, Dedijer 1953: 20). “She was a proud woman”, Tito was quoted as saying on many occasions (Matošec 1982: 9). He particularly admired her determination never to show to neighbours or relatives the true

dimension of despair and hardship faced by the family. When he returned to Kumrovec in 1920, he learned that she had died two years earlier: he declared this moment to have been the hardest life-blow he ever took. On the basis of that, one journalist concluded that the figure of the mother had played the same role in building Tito's character as Marx and Lenin had in shaping his thought (Popović 1980: 13). Be that as it may, Tito's inclination towards the proud image of the mother perfectly corresponded to his perception of the Yugoslav people many years later: he readily described them to foreign observers as "a proud people" (Broz 1983: 161). The motif of pride was, as we will soon see, the most popular figure in Tito's childhood stories.

Parental house and beyond

The house in which Tito was born and lived during his childhood years, was built by his grandfather Martin Broz in 1860. It was a one-floor building with a surface of 133 square metres. Two families (parents with their children) lived in the house, which meant that, given the usual high number of children in the family, space was limited and privacy non-existent. Apparently, in the aftermath of World War Two, people started spontaneously visiting Tito's house.²² In November 1948, the statue built by artist Antun Augustinčić, which would become the most famous monument of Tito, was erected before the house on the occasion of the Second Congress of the CPY. It depicted Tito walking in his military coat, his head slightly bowed. As Krleža commented, perhaps the success of the artistic creation should be sought precisely in the fact that this was not a statue picturing a victor. Instead, it depicted an almost melancholic moment of a man, pressed by worries, deep in his thoughts, as he walked through the fortress of Jajce, that place where the first building stone of the new Yugoslavia was set (Krleža as quoted in Popović 1980: 41). Tito was not present during the unveiling of the statue.

Three institutions in Zagreb, The Ethnographic Museum, The Institute for Restoration, and The Museum of Art and Craft, were entrusted with the task of turning Tito's house into a museum. The house and the lot were carefully rebuilt and restored to their original shape. In 1953 the Council for Science, Education, and Culture decided to found "The Memorial Museum of Marshal Tito" there. The institution functioned under that name for about twenty years and was renamed first into "The Museum Kumrovec" and finally into "The Memorial Park Kumrovec". As the changes in the name suggest, Tito's birth house was no longer thought to be *lieu de mémoire*, a site for studying his legacy only, but was gradually turned into an ethnographic museum dedicated to the preservation of the remnants of the old village way of life from Tito's childhood. The inner arrangement of the house testified to that fact. Out of the several rooms in the house, only the left one was used for staging a historical exhibition dedicated to Tito's life. All other rooms contained old village furni-

ture and were supposed to help the visitor imagine life in the countryside at the time of Tito's childhood. The most precious piece of exhibited furniture was Tito's original cradle that was found, restored, and returned to Kumrovec (Jokić 1984: 20). Many other objects were presented, such as old kitchen utensils, stove, wooden drawers, beds.

The left room of the house held the exhibition of Tito's life-story. The first version was put on display in 1952. One part of it was a biographical depiction of Tito's childhood and life, while the other part was less biographical and more artistic, containing art objects related to Tito. Thirteen years later, the whole exhibition was turned into a display of Tito's life. Since Tito was very much alive and politically active, the exhibition received additional new materials and acquired its final form in 1974.²³ It contained seventy-one objects, mostly photographs and documents. They depicted moments such as the arrival of the Broz family to Kumrovec in the sixteenth century, the marriage of his parents, Tito's birth, his schooling, the period he had worked in Slovenia, Croatia, Germany, and Austria, the several prison terms he had served, his participation in the October Revolution, his work in the CPY, World War Two, as well as episodes from modern Yugoslav history (the conflict with Stalin, non-alignment, self-management) (Jokić 1984: 26). Contrasted or taken together, the biographic and the ethnographic parts of the exhibition tell the story of how modest Tito's roots were and yet how glorious the story. The ethnographic room displayed, among other things, a large communal bowl called *skleda*, from which all members of the family ate at the same time, grabbing the food with big wooden spoons. Opposite the room with *skleda* and wooden spoons, on the wall of the room with the biographic exhibition, visitors could see a map of the world, on which Tito's main travels in the capacity of the President of Yugoslavia were written. From *skleda* to the White House, Beijing, and New Delhi, from wooden spoons to Moscow, Paris, and London. No matter how measured, it was a long road.

With the exception of the biography-related objects in the left room, brought for the purposes of the exhibition, much attention in the house-museum was laid on keeping the house, furniture, and the lot in "the original state" – "original" being here synonymous with the depiction of the ambience of Tito's childhood.²⁴ That part of the atmosphere missing from the quiet empty house with wooden furniture was provided by literature. The existing literature is rich enough to paint a good picture of growing up in the Broz family. Stories about childhood can and usually do have two different types of audience: children and adults. Yugoslav authors mostly carefully distinguished between the two and targeted their recipients carefully. The childhood period in books about Tito that were written predominantly for somewhat older readers was portrayed either by Tito's own, direct reminiscences (direct quotes), through historical research as pioneered by Dedijer, or through a mostly dry retelling of the known episodes in the third person singular. Children's books sometimes adopted

partial direct quotations from Tito, but, more appropriately for the targeted audience, they often turned into what might be termed “historical fiction stories for children”. To give an example, Milivoj Matošec wrote his “Boy from Sutla” as a collection of short vignettes for children, in which he developed the story of Tito’s life from his birth to the age of fifteen. Being an experienced children’s writer whose books won several awards, he had the necessary literary equipment. He based the stories on the already known facts of Tito’s life, Tito’s published reminiscences, as well as personal experience. Matošec’s grandfather was also born in Zagorje, very close to Kumrovec, and even though he left the region early in his life, “he left his heart in Zagorje” (Matošec 1980: 143). In his old days, he told his grandson, Milivoj, numerous stories from his own childhood in Zagorje: they helped to animate in Matošec’s imagination what he knew about Tito’s life in Kumrovec.²⁵ As a result, the book reads like a colourful fiction story, filled with laughter and tears, smell of corn and green grass, boy’s dreams and mother’s fears, and it vividly displays aspects of childhood narrative that go missing in the literature targeting the adults. However, this does not mean that writers for children used *licentia poetica* all too freely. In fact, when one reads adult and children’s stories together, a very coherent image of life in Kumrovec arises: both bodies of literature feed on the joint repertoire of motifs and episodes. Content thus remained rather stable and constant. To gain a comprehensive picture of Tito’s childhood stories, I will retell only a few episodes, which with the frequency of repetition in literature and with their force formed a firm collection of topoi that were associated with Tito and considered useful in explaining the kind of man he was.

On many occasions in his mature life while discussing religion or when asked about his religious leanings, Tito declared himself, not surprisingly, an atheist. But given the time and place of his birth, this could not have been something he learned in the parental household, quite on the contrary. Zagorje in the late nineteenth century was a Catholic stronghold. Tito’s grandmother and Franjo Broz’s mother, Ana Broz, were not only religious but also superstitious, which was also characteristic of the folk religiosity of the time. Marija Broz, Tito’s mother, was a deeply religious woman. Since religion formed such an integral part of life in the countryside, it could not be omitted in Tito’s biographies either. Three “religious” episodes were particularly popular with writers: an annual blessing of the Broz house, Tito’s experience as an altar boy, and his trip during a religious holiday in the near-by town of Klanjec. The story of the annual house blessing – in the local dialect called *lukno* – had a message less related to Tito and more to the Church itself. At the time, ordinary people had to pay taxes not only to the state (and the feudal master, in case of peasants) but also to the Church, irrespective of their own desperate economic status. Priests were not inclined to adopt a merciful attitude even when they witnessed first-hand the depth of poverty of the people. This became particularly obvious, as the story demonstrates, in the time of *lukno*.

The price of annual house blessing was two forints. This equalled two days’s wages for Tito’s father, if there was work at all. In the story, a priest came to perform the blessing and realised that there was only one forint waiting on the kitchen table. He took the coin and placed it in his deep pocket, whence and upon the coin’s landing a sharp metallic sound was heard: Franjo’s coin was not alone in the pocket (Matošec 1980: 122). Then he asked the host about the second forint, and Franjo requested a delay of payment, to which the priest responded negatively. Instead, he took the remainder of the debt immediately in corn. He blessed the house and left, with the forint and the corn. As the priest from the following story, he was fat and wellrounded, and, as will soon become obvious, all church-related stories were also somehow connected to food.

The story of the altar boy involved Tito directly. The priest who served Sunday mass for religious holidays in Kumrovec, Vjekoslav Homotarić, noticed during Sunday school that Tito had a good memory, and he commanded the boy to learn the text of the Latin mass (still in use in Croatia at the time) by heart so that he could serve as an altar boy in the local church. Tito’s grandmother Ana was exceptionally proud, and she sat in the first row to witness her Josip assisting the priest. But Homotarić did not like to serve the mass in Kumrovec: it was a very small village, away from the seat of his parish in Tuhelj, and after the mass in Kumrovec he would always return home late for lunch, his throat filled with road dust (Matošec 1980: 133). When the service was over, the altar boy was required to help the priest take off the robe. On one occasion, Tito’s little fingers had particular difficulties untying a knot on the robe. The priest was in a hurry for lunch and lacked the patience to be still, while the boy struggled with the knot. When Tito asked him to stand still, Homotarić, already nervous, exploded. He slapped Tito on the face and screamed at him. Tito felt his pride was wounded more deeply than his face. He left the sacristy and the screaming priest, and he refused to “enter the church ever again” (Jevtović 1962: 60).

Before that event had taken place, one Sunday Marija Broz asked her son to go to the church in the near-by town of Klanjec in order to pray to the local saint and leave a banknote in the church. Tito was happy to go to Klanjec. He invited a cousin, and the two boys walked a couple of hours to reach their goal. Because the local saint was celebrated that Sunday, the area around the church was filled with small merchants, selling miniature gadgets, toys, but also food: sausages, hot cakes, and golden loafs of bread. When they saw all the beautiful food, the two boys felt how hungry they were, but out of fear of Tito’s mother, they resisted the temptation. She had warned them against spending the money, saying that thunder would strike them if they did not leave the banknote in the church. After the prayer in the crowded church, the boys came out to catch a breath of fresh air. Faced with the growing hunger, the temptation of the round loafs of bread proved to be louder than mother’s threatening words. They quickly ate the bread and hurried home. On the way back to Kumrovec, clouds started to cover the

previously clear blue sky. In order to escape from the rain, the boys took refuge under a tree in the field. The thunder was deafening. At first, Tito was able to fight his fear, but his cousin felt weak on his legs and thought he would die. His panic slowly spread on Tito. But soon the rain stopped, and the boys got back home safely (Bevk 1980: 22–4).

The motif of hunger that appeared here was probably the central topos of the early stories. In Tito's house, bread was not baked every day; it was a luxury. It was made out of corn flour and never eaten fresh, but, for purposes of economising, always only old and dry (Rodna kuća 1990: 6). Children, always half-hungry, used opportunities when guests arrived to the house to beg from the mother for more bread than they would normally have been given. They knew that their mother was too proud to show before the guests how poor they were. She would give them more bread. Punishment (beatings) came later, when the guests left (Bevk 1980: 9). The absolutely most popular childhood story also belongs to this body of topics. It is the story about a pig's head, and it can be encountered in each and every Tito's childhood recollections, his biographies, or fictionalised stories for children. It was hardly possible to be socialised in Tito's Yugoslavia without stumbling at some point in your life upon a pig's head. The story takes place during a holiday. The parents are gone, and they have left the children alone. Tito was at the time the oldest child in the house. The day went by, the evening came, and still there was no sign of the parents. The children were growing hungry and jumpy; they could no longer be stilled by storytelling. Tito searched out the house but found nothing: bread was kept locked in a closet, and the key was with the mother. Ever hungrier, the children were crying, and Tito decided to resolve the situation somehow. The resourceful little boy remembered that his parents had recently bought a smoked pig's head and placed it in the attic, saving it for Christmas dinner. He boiled water, added a little bit of flour and cooked the head. He and the children ate it with much delight; there were no leftovers. When the mother returned home, the sight in the room was not a happy one. Due to the extreme greasiness of the eaten food (which they did not sense immediately), all the children had awful stomach pains and were lying on the floor or in their beds, holding their stomachs. The mother was saddened and distressed by their pain and forgave them for the whole incident without punishment (e.g. Broz 1983 (I): 15; Bevk 1980: 10; Jevtović 1962: 33; Dedijer 1953: 22; Matošec 1982: 8; Krklec 1975; Popović 1980: 15; Štaubringer 1974: 20). A memorable and warm story offered on the plate a set of Tito's characteristics to be effortlessly recognised: responsibility, determination, resourcefulness.

Food was always scarce in Tito's house, we learn. This is how an average daily menu looked, provided the necessary groceries were available. For breakfast, cooked cabbage, beans or boiled potatoes were served. Around noon, one would get one slice of bread and one fresh onion. For dinner, the mother cooked polenta (Jevtović 1962: 30). All the stories that were somehow related to food had a strong bitter undertone.

A glimpse of a happy childhood could be gained mostly from stories that involved animals. The first and probably most important animal in Tito's childhood appears to have been a dog named Polak.²⁶ Polak was a cheerful dog, sometimes also called baby dog, as, according to story-tellers, he exhibited an extraordinary amount of patience with children, helping them to make their first baby-steps as they firmly held him by his fur (Matošec 1980: 17–8). Needless to say, the children adored the dog. The most famous story about Polak is bittersweet, as it again involves food. It was winter. Franjo Broz had no money to buy wood for heating, and the children were hungry. Left with no choice, he sold the dog to the local governor of the Windisch-Grätz estate. The children were devastated, but before the day was over, the dog returned home by himself. Feeling embarrassed, Franjo took the dog and delivered him to the governor again. But the clever dog returned home before Franjo. Only now, the children knew that they had to keep the dog's whereabouts secret, so they hid and fed him for a few days, until Franjo and the governor forgot about the whole deal. Polak then returned home as if nothing had happened.

This Polak story is an archetypal tale about the unbreakable relationship between a (usually poor) boy and his (faithful) dog. The most well-known example of this tale comes from the American children's novel by Eric Knight, "Lassie Comes Home". In Knight's novel, the Carracough family, pressed by money problems, has to sell the dog Lassie to the rich Duke of Rudling. The main character, the boy Joe Carracough, is broken hearted, but nothing he can do or say helps. Finally, after many ups and downs, the story has a happy ending, as Lassie finds his way home. Based on Knight's novel, film director Fred Wilcox made the movie "Lassie Comes Home" in 1943. The movie was an instant success. Since after 1948 Yugoslavia was open to many Western products, those of the American pop-culture in particular, the Yugoslav audience was very familiar with the story of Joe and Lassie. Pedagogical manuals ensured that the parallel with the American boy would not go unnoticed. Suggesting how teachers should steer the conversation after children had read the Polak story, manuals gave this question for discussion: "In which famous book was a similar story about a dog described, where the dog, after being sold to a new owner, also returns to his friend, boy Joe?" (Idrizović 1980: 98).

In the stories, another animal Tito built a strong relation to is a horse. Strangely enough, "horse stories" also have a bit of an American flavour. Tito grew up in close proximity to domestic animals. But while cows were an almost constant source of distress, spending time with horses was probably the preferred activity of his childhood. Out of this love, a special relationship emerged. At home, his father had a horse named Putko. Putko had a temper, and it was not easy to quell its insubordinate nature. But, as we read, Putko's temper yielded to one set of hands – Tito's (Jevtović 1962: 35; Dedijer 1953: 24). Related to this, there is a story that did not take place in Kumrovec but seems relevant in this context. During his stay in Soviet Russia, around mid-1918, Tito happened to work as a mechanic

in a mill in a Kyrgyz village some sixty-five kilometres from Omsk. One day, during the local fair, a local farmer brought from his stable a beautiful wild horse. The magnificent creature looked very violent and rather hostile to the people who quickly gathered to see the horse, and nobody dared to approach the horse. Having observed the scene, Tito courageously started narrowing the distance between himself and the horse. When he came close enough, he jumped on the horse's back, with no saddle. The horse took him like a wind in the direction of a small forest near-by. Branches of trees were hitting Tito's face, leaving blue marks. But the horse did not succeed, did not throw him off. After half an hour of a wild ride, Tito tamed the horse and brought it back to the village. Needless to say, this earned him a lot of respect among the Kyrgyz (Štaubringer 1974: 23). It is a strong image of fearlessness, determination, and resoluteness to prevail that we take from the story.

Finally, no childhood can be complete without the school experience. In this particular case, it is all the more important, as Tito had little formal education: a total of six years of primary school and three years of craft training for locksmiths. Biographers employed different strategies to counterbalance this painful deficit. For example, chronologies of his work liked to display seemingly unimportant, random little notes, scattered throughout the life-story, which suggested Tito's constant obsession with books. That is why, even when chronologies were edited by reputed historians, we find in them details such as this: in April 1915, captured by the Russian army, he spent thirteen months wounded in the hospital of the Uspensk monastery, where he learnt the Russian language and read works of the Russian classical writers (Broz 1983: 237). At that time, it should be remembered, he was twenty-three years old. The period of childhood, the only time when he regularly attended a formal educational facility, offered a solid basis to display Tito's attitude towards education and learning. And there, the first step, the first grade, was a sour one: Tito failed the first grade and had to repeat it.

To explain this, the ethnic background of the family was called upon, as well as the difficult economic situation. Marija Broz was Slovenian, and Tito spent, we are told, slightly over four years living with the grandfather of his mother's side, Martin Javoršek. He was a Slovenian peasant, living on the other bank of the river Sutla in the village of Podsreda, alone in a house with his aged wife. Tito was taken there between the ages of three and four, because his own family had tremendous difficulties coping with a growing number of children: there were too many mouths to feed for Franjo and Marija Broz (Matošec 1980: 54–6). His life with grandfather Martin was very happy: he was not hungry; he did not have to devote all of his time to the house chores, but, since the grandparents were Slovenes, he spoke only Slovenian with them. When he returned to Kumrovec and came to school, he could not speak Croatian. On top of the school materials, alphabet, algebra, and others, he had to learn the language. And that is why an otherwise "very bright boy" had to repeat the first grade (Matošec 1980: 96; Dedijer 1953: 26). But he caught up very quickly and became "one of the best pu-

pils of the school" (Dedijer 1953: 26). He would, we read, almost every year receive the first award for learning (Štaubringer 1974: 7), and this was a great achievement, since he never had enough time for studying: mostly because he had to tend the cows – which also finally explains why he liked horses but disliked cows. But when he left home and the town of Sisak, where he learned craftsmanship, there were no more household chores, and his access to the world of books was made easier. "He grabbed and read everything he would get his hands on: history books, various novels by domestic and foreign authors, travelogues", as well as mystery novels by A. C. Doyle (Dedijer 1953: 40). The eclectic taste stood for a multifaceted inquisitive personality, determined to learn and excel.

The verbalised and the silenced

Despite of the small occasional paradoxes, there is a certain harmony and distinctiveness to the presented picture of Tito's young age. Overwhelmingly, it is a positively attuned image of a difficult but rich and enlightening childhood, filled with details that would help determine the later course of Tito's life. He was quoted earlier as saying that he did not feel the time of his childhood to have been the crucial period in his life. Still, much of what he became famous for was inscribed by biographers into these tender years. Born in a region with a rich and heroic legacy of fighting for equal rights and against the oppression of the weak, he had early role models to learn from and ancient footmarks to follow. Tales of cruelty of Cesargrad's mistress, Barbara Erdödy, and of the struggle of Zagorje's abused serfs provided food for childhood dreams. Witnessing his own parents' hard efforts to simply endure and live from one day to another, we learn how the feeling of bitterness nurtured the arising sense of social justice in the little boy's heart and mind. This helps us understand why all priests in Kumrovec were such negative figures: fat and well-fed, they did not share any of the peasant hardships. On the contrary, they never hesitated to take their fee from the already meagre kitchen tables of the faithful. The reason for the positive image of the local teachers is found at the opposite end of the continuum. They performed a highly important job under the most difficult circumstances. Tito's first teacher had to leave Kumrovec because of a severe case of tuberculosis. Despite his own poverty, he often shared bread with pupils.²⁷ His time at school, even if brief, offered a peak for Tito's natural intelligence, his love of books and learning.

In his parental home, we discover that scarcity and poverty stimulated inventiveness and resoluteness: he would feed his hungry siblings even if this meant risking parental punishment. A close relationship with animals, a dog and horses, is testimony to character and nature: animals are supposed to distinguish good from bad people. He was hard-working: in school, but, most of all, at home. Grinding corn in a house-quern was awfully difficult and regularly gave him blisters. But he preferred this "honest male work" to the "female duties" he was sometimes asked to do, like rocking the

cradle with a newly born brother or sister (Jevtović 1962: 38; Bevk 1980: 11). Ironically enough, what his biographers did not know is that for all its physical difficulty, operating the house-queren in Zagorje was considered to be a female job (Rodna kuća 1990: 7). But most of all, the attribute that shines through the bulk of the stories is pride: he left the church because the priest slapped him for no reason; his smart and faithful dog made him proud; his mother was too proud to show her poverty; in Sišak, he left his craft-master because the master hit him. One day, Tito was reading the adventures of Sherlock Holmes aloud in the workshop, and his colleagues were so absorbed by the story that they failed to observe a machine: an expensive boring tool broke. The craft-master grew angry and slapped Tito. Again, his pride took a heavier blow than his face. It is a pattern that will be repeated years later in 1948, during the conflict with Stalin.

Surprisingly or not, this is a rather clean(ed) image of the childhood. While Dedijer mentions that Tito's father succumbed to alcohol, no other relative, cousin, or friend exhibited a spot on her/his shiny face. Regular portions of physical punishment may look, from the point of view of modern psychology, wrong, but provided there was "a just cause" for them, they did not seem to bother Tito. No other forms of domestic violence were mentioned. But another thing that is not much accounted for is emotional attachment, in the family and outside of it. With an occasional "lapse into emotionality" (Matošec) epitomised by a sporadic tear, the analysed narratives are remarkably free of assertions of or allusion to emotional closeness. The only figure that we could say with some certainty Tito cared for is his mother. His biographers had him displaying more affection for a dog and horses than his own family members. Moreover, the figure of the mother is the only important woman for Tito throughout the whole period. I have analysed different writings following Tito's life path all the way to the 1920s, when he was approaching his thirties, but there was not a single woman in sight. In 1919, he married in Soviet Russia a woman named Pelagija Belusova. We never learn anything about her. She lost their child returning with him to Zagreb, and, as the biographers had it, "they were disappointed", if the good writers mentioned her at all. Prior to her, no other female figure appeared. In Kumrovec, Tito always played games only with other boys. As far as we are told, he never even spoke to a female person who was not a member of his family.

And yet, what we are left with after reading stories of childhood is not a cold projection of a future leader. Despite hunger and the heavy workload, there was time for fishing with friends, swimming in the river, playing in the snow. It is an interesting detail that more than one author states that "Tito's childhood resembled the childhood of thousands of other boys from the villages of Zagorje" (Matošec 1982: 8). What are we to make of this assertion, especially when read in the context of the implications of the representation of Tito's early years? Perhaps the author only wanted to convey a *longue durée* perspective of the harsh living conditions, under which the local population had to suffer, thus

adding a grain of justification of the change that Tito stood for. But if this were true, the legitimate question is: if this childhood was so typical, why was not a person like him born earlier? Perhaps then Tito was right indeed, perhaps the key to understanding his story was not hidden in the hills and valleys of the hometown. But if the years lived there were indeed so insignificant in the context of his life's work, if it was only yet another childhood in Zagorje, how do we account for the seas of ink spilled across countless pages in an effort to date the arrival of the Broz family into the region or paint the childhood years of the boy in more bitter than sweet tones? Perhaps then the Yugoslav authors did believe after all that the secret was hidden in the green grass of Kumrovec, which they dug "under the golden moonlight", searching for the face of Gubec in the figure of a child. That could explain why all stories that were subject of this analysis often leave the taste of a didactical handbook. Tito's childhood and the area, where he grew up, were used as teaching ground for transmission of ideologically correct content: on the importance of education and learning from the past, value of honest work, poverty one should not be ashamed of, a very non-transcendental mission of the church, and on the proud human figure that will soon become a symbol and a participant of the historical change. Tito may have not cared much for the opposite sex, but, as his biographers tell us, he cared about animals, and he cared about the weak and the unprotected. He was in pain when listening to the terminal coughing of his underfed, overworked, and medically untreated teacher. And he hurt for "his fellow-men", peasants, who had been tortured centuries ago by their evil feudal masters. And it is for the weak and the oppressed that he would fight in the years to come. Women of Yugoslavia, after all, fought for themselves and on their own.

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Endnotes

- ¹ It is quite interesting to note that in socialism and post-socialism the discourse of the genesis of historical processes always delineates the past as “the dark age”. The difference is to be found only in the agents who produce the darkness, as well as in the hands which finally press the switcher on the wall, turn on the light and dispel the darkness.
- ² It was the French historian Philippe Ariès who introduced historical concepts in the research of childhood. As he demonstrated, we can speak about separation of the world of children from the world of adults only from the eighteenth century onwards. This is therefore the period, where we can locate “the discovery of childhood”. Cf. Ariès 1965. I am grateful to Ildiko Erdei for this reference.
- ³ When I use the noun “Yugoslavia” and the adjective “Yugoslav”, this denotes only and exclusively time and space of the socialist Yugoslavia, which ceased to exist at the moment when Slovenia and Croatia left the Yugoslav federation.
- ⁴ The American magazine *Life* published Tito’s autobiography in its issues from April to May 1952. The subtitle of that text spells that it was crafted “with the help of Vladimir Dedijer”. An identical text, translated from English, was published in the third edition of Dedijer’s “Contributions towards Biography” (1980). Already a superficial reading of the alleged “autobiography” quickly shows that while it was written in the first person singular, the text is characterised by more literary skill than any of Tito’s later speeches and articles. It is beyond any doubt that Dedijer authored the “autobiographical” narrative from *Life* – all the more so, as it was published in the Serbo-Croatian translation as a part of Dedijer’s publication in 1980.
- ⁵ At the time he worked in Moscow as a political advisor for Yugoslav questions in the Communist International. It is likely that he was asked to craft his biography for the purposes of this particular post.
- ⁶ Kumrovec belonged at the time to the parish Tuhelj. Parish documents are quoted as fully reliable by Matošec (Matošec 1982: 8), while Dedijer used school matriculation records.
- ⁷ As late as 1962, some journalists and writers quoted May 25 as the date of his birth (as exemplified by Jevtović 1962: 7). This is truly remarkable, given that Dedijer’s book had been available already for almost ten years, and Jevtović published his book with the well-known Belgrade publishing house Nolit.
- ⁸ This made it easier to excuse Tito’s mistake, and Dedijer performed the most thorough discreditation of historical sources: “Various documents list various dates of Tito’s birth. School matriculation records state he was born on May 7. Records for the second, third and fourth grade state he was born on May 1. A police document concerning Tito’s arrest in 1928 declares that he was born on March 12. A warrant for his arrest, issued on April 23, 1943 by the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs during the Second World, states that he was born on March 5, 1892. Matriculation records of the school in Sisak state that Tito was born on May 7, 1893. A military document of the Austro-Hungarian army, from the period Tito served in its ranks, states that Tito was born on May 25. (Dedijer 1953: 21–2).”
- ⁹ The Communist Party of Yugoslavia was officially banned in 1920.
- ¹⁰ Krleža was arguably the best Yugoslav writer and Tito’s close friend.
- ¹¹ Tito also turned, according to Štaubringer, the island of Vanga from a desert into an area covered with green plants, vineyards, peaches, apricots. (Štaubringer 1974: 11–2). One of the most famous motifs related to the plantations of fruits at Vanga is the annual ritual in December: when tangerines and lemons ripened, Tito sent them to children’s hospitals and clinics in Yugoslavia. It was a regular, physical reminder of his personal care for Yugoslav children.
- ¹² Lisa Kirschenbaum’s study, even if situated in a different locality, masterfully shows what the revolutionary concept of knowledge meant for growing-up under the red star (Kirschenbaum 2001).
- ¹³ Please note that Stubica is less than 30 kilometres away from Tito’s Kumrovec.
- ¹⁴ Dedijer is mistaken about the date: the Stubica battle took place on February 9, 1573.
- ¹⁵ The leader of the Hungarian peasants, György Dózsa, was punished in the same way in 1514. Historical records show that Gubec’s punishment, carried out on February 15, 1573, included first torturing his flesh with a pair of hot tongs. Then he was crowned with a heated iron crown, while his body was finally torn into four pieces.
- ¹⁶ As Nora noted, “[s]elf-consciousness emerges under the sign of that which has already happened, as the fulfilment of something always already begun.” (Nora 1989: 7).
- ¹⁷ In the continuation of his study, Žanić shows how the change of paradigms in Croatia after the fall of communism and the break-up of Yugoslavia negatively influenced Gubec’s position in the national Pantheon. The “peasant king” lost much of his appeal because of the declining popularity of the “revolutionary classes”, as the emphasis of the struggle moved away from the social and towards the national agenda. (Žanić 1998: 327–9). I would argue that the post-communist era opened a period when Croatia wanted to “return to Central Europe”. In this context, fighting the Hungarians, even if it was for the past national cause, was no longer a desirable image.
- ¹⁸ The noble families which ruled Cesargrad were Tahy and Erdödy.
- ¹⁹ The author claimed that the nephews stood under the great influence of their uncle. When Tito returned to Kumrovec for a short visit in 1934, his brother Dragutin was dead. He talked briefly (once) but “very intimately” with the four young men in that spring. And this was all it took for them to follow him. (Popović 1980: 22) Dedijer’s research shows that three sons, not four, were killed as partisans, all three in 1942. Two were shot to death (in the concentration camp Jasenovac and in Maksimir near Zagreb), whereas the third died in an armed battle (Dedijer 1953: 21).
- ²⁰ Quite curiously, Vladimir Dedijer thought it important to locate the first mentioning of the name “Broz” in written historical records, and he found it in “*Monumenta historico-iridica Slavorum Meridionalium I*”, vol. VI, where on p. 230 a document quotes that the aristocrat Martin Frankopan sold a house to a certain Broz. Dedijer also found a document that first mentioned the Broz family in Zagorje. It was “*Conscriptiones dicarum Comitatum Crisiensis, Varazdiensis et Zagrabiensis*” and placed the first Broz in Zagorje in 1554 (Dedijer 1953: 9–10). It is indeed remarkable that Dedijer undertook all that research to find the said documents. He invested three years into writing the biography, and it can be reasonably conjectured that most of that time was spent precisely in digging for documents such as these. That makes it all the more curious that he would think them so important. And while the second document opened the doors for speculations concerning the family’s involvement in the 1573 uprising, the purpose of the first one remains mysterious. Perhaps it was

there to demonstrate Dedijer's devotion to professional and honest research.

²¹ Dedijer again undertook a small investigation to calculate average infant mortality rates in Zagorje. In the period 1870–1910, sixty per cent of all children born in the Tuhelj parish (to which Kumrovec belonged) died before they reached two years of age. Around eighty per cent of them had died before they reached fifteen years. (Dedijer 1953: 21) This is the complete listing of the children in Tito's family, his brothers and sisters: Josipa (1881–1883), Martin (1884–1964), Dragutin (1885–1932), Anka (1887–1889), Marija (1889–1890), Jana (1890–1891), Josip (1892–1980), Stjepan (1893–1973), Matilda (1896–1953), Antonija (1897), Vjekoslav (1898–1973), male baby (1900), female baby (1901), Tereza (1902–1984), Franjica (1906–1907). Female babies obviously had considerably less chance to survive: out of eight dead infants, seven were girls. Only two girls reached mature age (Jokić 1984: 7–8).

²² The last descendant of the Broz family left the house in 1946 (Rodna kuća 1990: 4).

²³ Curators of the biographical exhibition in 1965 and 1974 were Dolores Ivanuša from The Museum of Revolution and Edo Kovačević.

²⁴ Two main "unoriginal" objects were added: the already mentioned statue by Augustinčić before the house and a very simple plaque with the "Comrade Tito was born here" on the left side from the entrance doors.

²⁵ Matošec's grandfather must have been considerably older than Tito (Matošec himself was born 1929), but given the snail's pace of economic and social development of Zagorje in the 18th and 19th centuries, Matošec could have well used his grandfather's stories for the backdrop to Tito's childhood.

²⁶ According to Matošec (1980), Polak was a German shepherd, but I was not able to confirm that in other sources (all of which mention Polak). But the fact remains that later in his life, Tito almost always had a dog, and up until his late years, the dog was always a German shepherd. In his late years, along with a German shepherd he also had puddles.

²⁷ (As in Matošec 1980: 116.) The second teacher was equally amicable and, perhaps more importantly, poor. The roof of his lodging was leaking rain, and the Broz family offered him a temporary accommodation in their house.