The countries of South-Eastern Europe – including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro – share a complex history in addition to their geographical location at an ethnic and cultural crossroads. Since the Eastern European revolutions of 1989 and the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, some former Yugoslavian countries (Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia) have been independent democracies, but each has had significant problems in the transition period toward a market-based economy.

In the countries of South-Eastern Europe the languages spoken are Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Macedonian, and Serbo-Croatian. The countries have experienced significant social and economic changes since the fall of communist rule, and these changes have had a profound impact on their literary landscape.

The countries of South-Eastern Europe have a rich tradition of children's literature that reflects the diverse cultural and historical influences of the region. The literature often explores themes of identity, belonging, and the challenges of transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-based system.

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The word communism is a term of ancient origin, meaning a society in which material goods were owned by the communists as citizens sharing in the common wealth. Communist rule was confined to the Soviet Union until after WW II; at that time the Soviet Red Army liberated the countries of South-Eastern Europe from Nazi Germany’s control. The educational function of physical labour after WW II was stressed in children’s literature. The theory of concord portrays ideal characters in children’s literature. Many children writers also contributed to the cult of the ‘hero of the country’. The popular genre was the novel in which the conflict was between the class collective and an individualistically minded pupil. Poetry was seen to serve topical purposes as is evident from politically oriented verses.

In the 1990s South-Eastern European countries encountered economic problems when they moved to a market economy. After years of Communist governments and collapse, many South-Eastern European countries were unable to compete in a free-market economy. Unemployment and inflation rose and the South-Eastern European countries did not have social security systems to deal with these problems.

Children's Literature in Albania in the 1990s and beyond

The process of modernization in the field of children’s literature is connected with the process of democratisation in 1991. Fantasy began as a major mode of children’s literature in such works as Sokol Jakova’s creative fairytale novels, with fictional subjects such as The Adventure of Brave Mirosh (1995) which has humorous elements. Mira Meksi Planetthi i ngrirë – The Little Icy Planet (1997) is science fiction in which human and animal inhabitants together fight to free their planet from ice. Jorgji Kodra writes collections of fairy tales and short stories such as The Boy who Ignored the Time and Vocabulary within One Week (1999). There are series books comprising ten novels for children by Thanas Pilafa, an inventive children’s author, for example, his Great Dreams (1999) and How I Became a Robinson (2001).
Everyday problems in the modern family, school, and issues of emigration are touched upon in realistic fiction by Viktor Canosinaj in *They were Looking for Happiness* (1997), and from a child’s narrative perspective in Ramadan Pasmačiu’s *Childhood Paths* (1998). Bedri Dedja reissued his novels *Revolution in a Flat in Tirana* (1995) and *A Dangerous Trip* (1999) cutting out the ideological elements. In *A Dangerous Trip* Dedja portrayed the turbulent aspects of the lives of three run-away children as they move toward maturity.

The classic author Gaqo Bushaka returned to a personified protagonist in a fairy-tale novel, *The Film of Cufa, the General* (1994), *Cufaja dhe Bubu Cacurrel – Cufo and Bubi the Curly* (1996) in which an Albanian child identifies with Cufo the Pig; an original character who is employed in the text to bring together positive characteristics. Danal Shaplo’s innovative fairy tales, *The Girl Who Knew the Language of Birds* (1995), cross the boundaries between prose and verse. Ferit Lamaj continued the creative fable tradition with *202 Fables* (1995). Stavari Pon’s *The Adventures of Queros and Eramil* (1996) renewed interest in folk hero Queroz. In Besiana Avdylī’s collection of poetry *Më më zgjoni* (Do not wake me) the poems deal with many aspects of life through the point of view of a child. Viktor Canosinaj’s *Meriyll* (2000) follows the trend in Europe toward problem-orientated realistic novels about contemporary society; here a teenager has to take care of a whole family, which is another exploration of the crisis in Albania. Chimter Xhuvani’s *Street Children* (2000) is another problem-orientated realistic novel.

Modern trends in Albanian children’s literature alternate between the traditional genres of the folkloric tradition via Socialist Realism to modern trends and searching for poetic forms, problem-orientated realism in novels and science fiction.

**Children's Literature in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s and beyond.**

After the Civil War (1992–1995) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, three separate literatures arose: Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian. The language that was used, known as Serbo-Croatian, split into Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian (Bošnjački), depending on the speaker or writer’s ethnic and political affiliation.

The characteristics of children’s literature at the crossroads of Bosnia and Herzegovina lie in the search for identity and polarization between nations. During the war, as in crisis periods everywhere in Europe, many children needed an imaginary friend and therefore authors wrote diaries, stories, journals, and poems. *Zlata’s Diary* by Zlata Filipović (1993) was one published example of this genre. The country, people, and children’s literature demonstrate clear distinctions between periods and associated problems, for example the difficulties which arose...
following the war. Alija Dubočanin’s *Pas pismonoša* (The Post Dog, 1998) is a photo-realistic picture book of the war horrors in Sarajevo as experienced by a young girl, Dina, and her dog, Jenny, who carried letters during the civil war. Ferida Duraković’s *Amilina abeceda* (Amilia’s Alphabet, 1999) is a book of thirty stories, each one connected to a letter from the Bosnian alphabet accompanied by an illustration. Her books include the earlier novels: *Jos jedna bajka o ruzi* (Another Fairy Tale about a Rose, 1989), *Mikijeva abeceda* (Mickey’s Alphabet, 1994), and *Najnovije vijesti iz Sarajevo* (The latest News from Sarajevo, 1999). Željko Ivanković’s novel was written as a dictionary *Tko je upalio mrak? Sarajevski pojmovnik* (Who Switched on Darkness? Sarajevo’s dictionary, 2000), *Advan Hozić’s* stories from the Civil War in Bosnia and Herzegovina *Na kraju placa* (In the End of Marketplace, 1997).

Around the turn of the century and in the period after 1995, the major trends were: the quest for identity; digging deeper in tradition; the search of the writer for Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian nationality and the preparation of national anthologies (e.g. *Bošnjačka književnost za djecu u 20 knjiga* – group of editors; 2700 pages, 1998). Children’s literature in Bosnia and Herzegovina is in a process of transition. National interests have strangled creativity. This trend led to the publishing of a rush of national authors based on national, not aesthetic criteria. Even the classical authors such as Bosnian Nasiha Kapidžić Hadžić, Irfan Horozović; Croatian Ivica Vanja Rorić, Šimo Ešić, Valerija

Children’s Literature in Bulgaria in the 1990s and Beyond

The trend in the 1990s is orientated towards present-day problems: Lilia Ratcheva, Tsvetan Peshev, Chavdar Shinov, and Anastas Stoyanov base their work on folklore or parodied folklore, and others use the fairy-tale form to examine present-day reality. Vladimir Zelengorov’s short stories *Strange Jobs* 1990; is a collection of tales ranging from an adventure story set in Tibet to humorous tales about everyday life. There are allegorical stories about animals and everyday life such as Kina Kadreva’s *Prikazka za nemaj*; Serbian Branko Čopić, etc.) are facing re-evaluation.

Ivan Tsanov wrote an interactive book, *Vesela misterija* (Funny Mystery, 1996), in which children became co-authors and co-illustrators. Liana Daskalova’s *Djadjovata gradina* (My Grandfather’s Garden, 1998) is about friendship be-
tween generations. Fantasy and ghosts constitute a new trend in Krasimir Mircev's Vampiri - Gunduraci - Zmej (Vampires - Centaurs - Dragons, 1998), which presents a great diversity of creatures in a typical tale about good and evil.

Bulgarian children's literature is rich in terms of thematic diversity and original authorial styles. It has expanded traditional ideas and developed new trends in fantasy, nonsense, parody, and an ironic view of the world.

Children's Literature in Croatia in the 1990s and Beyond

In the 1990s and beyond, Croatian children's literature changed considerably, because of independence and war (1992-1995). The political changes in Croatia influenced the motives and themes in children's literature regarding national patriotic and religious themes. War and post-war changes also influenced Croatian children's fiction. The complex changes and post-war syndrome resulted in a loss of aesthetic and human values in favour of popular national goals. Božidar Prosenjak's novel about Divji konj (Wild Horse) and the action story by Joža Horvat; Dupin Dirk i lijena kobila (Dolphin Dirk and the Lazy Mare) are allegories of modern times. Frka v Ščitarjevu's detective story (Chaos in Ščitarjevo) is about archaeological items. He also wrote a famous fantasy, Waitapu (1984), influenced by legends from Indonesia. Post-war childhood was portrayed in Želimir Ciglar's Dekameron za golobrde pustolove (Decameron for a Young Adventurer, 1999) about a father's role with refugees which utilized post-modern elements employing the form of a diary, an address book, and poems etc. Also worthy of mention are the quality novels of Anton Gardaš, Koliba u planini and Miron u škrpcu (House in the Mountain, Miron in Trouble, 1999).

Themes concerning modern children, unhappy families, and the urban child were represented by Sanja Pilić in O mami sve najbolje (About Mother Every Good, 1990), Mrovice iz dnevnog boravka (1995), E, baš mi je žal (Oh, I Am Really Sorry, 1998), Vidiš, da se moram zabavljati (See I Should Have Fun, 1999), Darko Macan in Knjige lažu (Books are Liars, 1997) and Maja Brajko Livaković in Kad pobjedi ljubav (When Love Wins, 1997).

Interesting texts for children and young adults were written by Zvjezdana Odobašić, an 18-year old student who wrote the fantasy Čudesna krljušt (Marvelous fishskin, 1995). Svjetlana Grković Janović wrote books with intertextual reminiscences of Croatian classics from children's literature by Ivana Brlić Mažuranic Priče iz davnine – Sterbovom stazama (Stories from the Past – On Stribor's Paths, 1997).

Unhappy childhood is a topic for Sunčana Škrinjarić in Čarobni prosjak (Magic Beggar, 1999). Božica Jelušić's Po
Children's Literature in Romania in the 1990s and Beyond

Monica Savulescu-Voudouris' *Un alt glob, va rog!* (A Different Globe, Please, 1992) is a book about emigration. This autobiographical story is told from a child’s point of view and is about a ten-year-old girl and her mother who live in a refugee-shelter in Holland. In *Ospatul lupilor* (The Wolves’ Banquet, 1996), Diana Irimescu writes about superstition among the Romanian people. Eugenia Doina Gemală’s *Legenede din pinuturi dobrogene* (Legends from Dobrudja, 1998) contains folk tales and legends from different parts of Dobrudja, a region of Romania, in a well-chosen mixture of literary folk tales and retellings. Romanian culture and people mirror the different influences which determined the development and characteristics of children’s literature.

An alternative textbook for elementary schools by Irina Nicolau, Carmen Huluta, Matei Cerkez and Ana Pascu, *Lectii cu povesti despre facere lumii* (Lessons with Stories about How the World was Made, 2000) combines myths and legends into didactic material which complements the scientific education offered by traditional textbooks. The emphasis here is on poetic, humorous, and imaginative content presented as free from religious influence. The classic poet Ana Blandiana’s work *Cartea albaa lui Arpagic* (Arpagic’s White Book, 1998) is an example of the problem-oriented new realism of children’s books in the 1990s. It is written as a postmodern metaphor of photographs, documents, anonymous letters, etc. in secret police files; the book traces the life of a tomcat.

After December 1989, forbidden books flooded the bookstores along with classic genres like folktales, popular literature, and classic adventure books as well as religious literature which was previously absent. *Ariel*, the leading children’s magazine, which was richly and beautifully illustrated, was a victim of the crisis and ceased to exist in 1996. National and multicultural concerns in the 1990s have become an important aspect of the new realism in children’s literature, which also brought young adult literature into a transition period beyond the 1990s.

Children's Literature in Serbia and Montenegro in the 1990s and Beyond

Children’s literature in Serbia and Montenegro (and the Kosovo autonomous province) faced similar trends to the rest of Europe. First came the commercialization of children’s book and then problem-novels about traumatic childhoods (war, refugees, orphans, disease, death, violence, etc.).

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1 In February 2003 the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was renamed as Serbia and Montenegro. The renaming reflects the two remaining Republics, Serbia and Montenegro.
In the 1990s progress was made from the passive dependence derived from socialist modes of thought through to a social realist tradition. A distinct class of professional authors for children arose with the growing level of sex, drugs, etc.), a situation which has become unfortunately common. These topics influenced both children’s literature and young adult books. New problem-orientated realism followed similar patterns of those in Europe. The revival of the folk tradition was started by Branko V. Radičević, and Grozdana Olujilć (Princ oblaka, Nebeska reka i druge bajke, Sedefna ruža – Prince of Clouds, Heaven’s River and other stories, Mother of Pearl Rose).

Despite the overwhelmingly traumatic experiences of the past years, children’s and young adult literature continues to be written and includes the cosmopolitan view of Mirjana Stefanović’s Sekino seoce (Seka’s Little Village, 1994), and the classic tale by Gordana Maletic-Vrhovac, Spasonosna odluka (A Saving Decision, 1999). Growing from childhood into adulthood in present-day Serbia is the problem-orientated topic in the novel by Vesna Aleksić, Marija Modigljan (1999). Children’s literature is in a state of transition and will need more time to reconstruct itself and achieve the flowering of outstanding writers like Jovan Jovanović Zmaj, Branislav Nušić, Desanka Maksimović, Dušan Radović, Miroslav Antić etc. It has high potential. Due to political changes only time will tell if it will become necessary to produce a separate account of children’s literature in Montenegro.

The Montenegrin author Voja Marjanović wrote a book which identified Montenegrin writers for children: Portreti crnogorskih pisaca za decu i mlade, (Portraits of Montenegrin children’s authors, 1990—>). In the 1990s the most fruitful writers such as Nikola Vulanović Sunčana zemlja (Sunny country, 2001), Sunčev pjevač (Sun’s singer, 2001) and Osmjeh za Mariju (Smile for Maria, 2003) and others began to produce original Montenegrin children’s literature.

Children’s Literature in Kosovo, an Autonomous Province in the Republic of Serbia

In the 1990s and beyond, a change occurred in the political and cultural life of Kosovo. The status of children’s literature declined. In the transition situation facing Kosovo, the role and content of children’s literature are once again being re-examined. A re-evaluation of the literary heritage has begun once again.

Conclusion

In the 1990s progress was made from the passive dependence derived from socialist modes of thought through to a social realist tradition. A distinct class of professional authors for children arose with the growing level of...
awareness of children and their identity. The degree of
dependence from authoritarian control decreased, espe-
cially in the case of the influence of eastern communist
ideology, concurrently there was a rise in the influence of
the philosophy of the western market economy. At the
same time children’s books started to become highly in-
ventive, however, they were not recognised by western
countries. Commercial concerns began to dominate with
the production of series books, teenage romance, and ani-
mal books.

Books designed for young adults with socially relevant
themes and subjects have appeared, employing modes of
writing in the new realist tradition. They deal with
matters such as urban crisis, social discrimination, aware-
ness of the environment, and women’s liberation plus the
more unpleasant aspects of maturation. Books in the 1990s
have shown concern with traumatic experiences derived
from dislocating events such as divorce, alcoholism, war,
disease, death, sex, violence, drugs and the impact of the
movement of refugees. At the same time, the South-Eas-
tern European authors developed new forms of genres and
exploited a variety of traditional ones, for example, folk
and fairy tales. Children’s literature in South-Eastern Euro-
pean countries is dependent upon translations and inter-
national meetings. There are a quantity of books written
for children annually plus literary criticism, works of
scholarship, and reviews. Institutionally there has been
development with regard to libraries, publishing houses,
and associations such as IBBY. There has been an influx of
a general imitation of western children’s book although
they are handicapped by language problems. However,
there is every good reason for a positive response from
western society towards children’s literature in South-
Eastern European countries, as this is a way of overcom-
ing the West-East stereotype and dismissing the sense of
an aesthetic curtain.

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