
INTERPRETATIONS

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A SOUND TALE ABOUT THE SYMBOLIC CONFLICT BETWEEN TWO HUMAN BEINGS. MEANINGS AND SOUNDINGS OF LANGUAGE IN *VELIKI KAMEN*, A RADIOPHONIC POEM BY IVANA STEFANOVIĆ¹

Abstract: The subject of this paper is an exploration of the treatment, status, and use of language – more precisely, its meaning/sounding/sound, in the context of *Veliki kamen* (*Велики камен*, A Large Stone, 2017, Op. 55), a radiophonic poem by the composer, radiophonic artist, and author Ivana Stefanović (Ивана Стефановић, b.

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1948). *A Large Stone* is a partial setting of *Hasanaginica* (Хасанагиница, 1974), a play by Ljubomir Simović (Љубомир Симовић), itself inspired by motives from the eponymous folk ballad. Researching this paper, I set out from a view of language as a means of communication and system based on sounds and sounding, predicated on auditivity. Language/the sound of language and radiophony/ radiophonic sound are brought together by the notion of meaning and sounding and it is precisely these parameters that I attempted to survey in *A Large Stone*.

Keywords: radiophony, language, speech, voice, Ivana Stefanović

The radiophonic poem *Veliki kamen* (Велики камен, *A Large Stone*; 21'18", 2017), based on fragments selected from *Hasanaginica* (Хасанагиница, 1974), a play by Ljubomir Simović (Љубомир Симовић)² is the latest radiophonic work by Ivana Stefanović. In October 2017, at the *Prix Italia*, the prestigious international competition for top quality media programmes, *A Large Stone* won the first prize in the category of radio music. In addition, in 2018, the work earned its author won Serbia's most prestigious composition prize – the Stevan Mokranjac Award.

The ballad of *Hasanaginica* simultaneously belongs to the Serbian, Croatian, and Bosniak literary traditions.³ Thanks to the Venetian writer and ethnographer Alberto Fortis, who was the first to write down and then publish the ballad in his travelogue *Viaggio in Dalmazia* (1774), the ballad gained familiarity in Europe, intriguing several major poets, including Johann Wolf-

² *A Large Stone* is Ivana Stefanović's third work in which she sought to examine the question of motives from the folk ballad *Hasanaginica*. The motives from this folk ballad first appeared in *Ona* (She), a piece written in 2008; then, in 2017, in *U mraku* (У мраку, In the Dark), a work for mezzo-soprano and strings, the composer returned to the motives from this folk ballad, that is, to Simović's dramatic interpretation of *Hasanaginica*. 'Each one of these works, always from a new perspective, treats fragments from the dramatic text, explores the registers of speech and voice, and tests, that is, composes its powers of transformation in different contexts' (Ana Kotevska [Ана Котевска], "Нарација која не прича приче" (*Naracija koja ne priča priče*, A Narration That Tells No Tales), *Мокрањац* (Mokranjac), 20, 2018, 68. This essay by Kotevska, focusing on *A Large Stone*, won the Pavle Stefanović Award for music criticism.

³ Concerning the relationship between the Serbian, Croatian, and Bosniak national heritage, what brings them together is certainly their 'common' language. This 'common' language is likewise examined in Stefanović's radiophonic piece *Lingua/Phonia/Patria* (1989) where she examines the lack of understanding between individuals speaking the same language or languages that are very similar; on the contrary, speaking the same language only serves to drive them further apart.

gang von Goethe and Alexander Sergejevich Pushkin.⁴ Even today, this folk ballad continues to intrigue artists, who find in it inspiration for various readings of the tragic fate of a woman deprived of all that makes her an individual – her identity, pride, right to choose and be a mother – because of her husband’s capricious decision to banish her from their home.

The underlying dramatic concept of the folk ballad *Hasanaginica* is a conflict between a husband and wife, with tragic consequences. At no point in the ballad do the two of them get a chance to speak, except in the final scene, where words are no longer needed. Both Simović and Stefanović were intrigued by this tragedy of the lack of understanding between two human beings and their inability to find a common language.

Simović reshapes the character of *Hasanaginica* as depicted in the folk ballad – her passive stance, based on a feeling of shame and guilt for no justified reason, rooted in the patriarchal treatment of women – into a woman who rises against such a state of affairs.

Simović’s play is written in verse, comprising eight scenes grouped in two segments, with special attention paid to lyric parallelisms and figures of speech, such as assonance and alliteration. The language he used is a mixture of contemporary lexis and a peripheral idiom with the language of folk poetry. The language closest to the folk ballad is that of *Hasanaginica* herself. Her language retains the melodiousness of speech, which was an additional source of inspiration for Stefanović, on account of her particular interest in the sound of language, speech, and its melodic quality. In the context of *A Large Stone*, I understand language as literary speech or citation that the author transforms so as to emphasise its meaning as well as sounding. I understand radiophony as a type of sound art and base my interpretation of the term on that of Biljana Leković. She interprets sound art as “an artistic practice based on sound existing both as material for artistic creativity and an object of examination and perception, focusing on the acoustic as well as semantic qualities of sound”⁵ With that in mind, one might say that language/

⁴ Љиљана Пешикан-Љуштановић (Ljiljana Pešikan Ljuštanović): “Транспозиција усмене баладе у Симовићевој Хасанагиници” (*Transpozicija usmene balade u Simovićevoj Hasanaginici*, The Transposition of an Oral Ballad in Simović’s *Hasanaginica*), *Зборник Мајнице српске за сценску уметност и музику (Zbornik Matice srpske za scensku umetnost i muziku)*, 20/21, 1987, 86.

⁵ Biljana Leković: *Kritička muzikološka istraživanja umetnosti zvuka: muzika i sound art* (Critical Musicological Research of *The Arts of Sound: Music and Sound Art*), doctoral dissertation, Belgrade, Faculty of Music, 2015, 329.

the sound of language and radiophony/radiophonic sound (which denotes both the language of and language in radiophony) are brought together by the notion of sounding and meaning. Concerning the relation between the sounding and semantics of language, we may borrow Stefanović's interpretation of her radiophonic piece *Lingua/Phonia/Patria*. She asserts that one must "begin from the very sound of words, the phonicity and melody of language, the musical fluidity of sentences, the aggregate of those sentences as a sonic cascade", which then "flow together to form a river and then bifurcate into a delta".⁶ Nonetheless, in *A Large Stone*, Stefanović attaches as much importance to the meaning as to the sounding of words, which enhances the emotional charge of the piece itself. The author also highlights the problematic relationship between two principles, the masculine and the feminine, and their separate ways in the world of monologue, with both of them craving love and acceptance. Stefanović defines *A Large Stone* as a radiophonic poem and in selecting her dramatic materials produces a radiophonic work based on the relationship between its epic and lyric elements. It includes a plot (which is given in fragments), the relationship between its characters, and one may also note lyrical elements that are reflected primarily in the speech of the main female character (She, in the radiophonic poem). The title of the radiophonic poem itself comes from the final line spoken by Hasanaginica in Simović's play: "A large stone... move it away... *Kadi!*"⁷

For the purposes of the *Prix Italia* competition, Stefanović complemented the text of her radiophonic poem with a short accompanying text about *A Large Stone*, where she lays out the central ideas and motives of the work, her treatment of Simović's play, as well as an explanation of the two principles guiding her work's dramatic course. These are the masculine and feminine principle, labelled by the author as She and He, locked in symbolic conflict. By naming her characters in this depersonalised way, Stefanović raises the subject of her radiophonic work, rooted in South Slavic folk tradition, to a universal degree – that of conflict between good and evil and the status of women in society. The conflict that Stefanović mediates through sound was defined by Srđan Hofman (Срђан Хофман) as one of "force, cruelty, con-

⁶ Ivana Stefanović, *Muzika od ma čega* (Music Made of Anything), Belgrade, Arhipelag, 2010, 69.

⁷ Љубомир Симовић (Ljubomir Simović): *Хасанајиница* (Hasanaginica), Novi Sad: Sterijino pozorje, 1976, 72. The man to whom Hasanaginica's brother wanted to remarry her was the *kadi* of Imotski – her posthumous bridegroom.

demnation, on the one hand, and helplessness, tragic guilt, shame, loneliness, futility, and death, on the other”; these two conflicts “represent the eternal conflict between good and evil, and semantically take the work’s dramatic content to a new and considerably more general level”.⁸ The feminine principle is represented by the voice of Ana Sofrenović (Ана Софреновић – She), while the masculine principle is carried by the voice of Slobodan Beštić (Слободан Бештић – He). Stefanović chose two experienced actors, endowed with well-developed and versed vocal apparatuses, capable of artless transformation and free acting intervention, which is noticeable in the frequent and striking shifts in their vocal timbre and intensity, in their differentiation between various modes of articulation, and quick and deft alternation between these situations. The author asserts that the sound of her piece “describes two divided worlds, the masculine and the feminine world”, framed by ambiental sound, which positions the protagonists in space. Simović’s play begins with the scene in Hasan-aga’s encampment in the mountains, where he is recovering from his wounds. *A Large Stone* begins with the sound of spades and shovels digging up earth and then shovelling it back into the dug-up hole. The radiophonic poem’s opening sounds may be associated with those of digging a grave, lowering the body into it, and then burying it. Thus already in the first ten seconds of her radiophonic piece Stefanović manages to absorb the listener in her tragic story, hinting at its outcome. It is as if she sought to relay in sound, right at the beginning of the piece, what would happen to Hasanaginica at the very end. The sounds coming from the outside world (digging, walking, marching) are associated with the masculine principle, which is represented by the militaristic code, while the feminine principle (the female voice) is distanced from those worldly sounds to symbolise Her confinement within the bounds of patriarchal laws. Ana Kotevska divides the work into 12 “acoustic moving tableaux”,⁹ without exactly naming or differentiating them. Listening to the piece, I was guided by this notion of 12 tableaux, which I managed to recognise and will analyse here individually. Each one of them is characterised by a certain type of motivic material and treatment of sound and language, in line with Stefanović’s stated focus in the piece.

⁸ The entire text of the Stevan Mokranjac Award jury’s justification of their selection of Stefanović’s piece, written by Hofman, may be found at <http://composers.rs/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Mokranjceva-nagrada-2017-obrazlozenje.pdf> (accessed 30 October 2018).

⁹ Ana Kotevska, op. cit., 69.

The First Tableau (from the beginning of the piece to 2'53")

Stefanović begins and ends her piece, as I already noted above, with sounds of digging earth and shovelling it back in, which, in the context of Hasanaginica's story and fate, points to her demise, as well as the tragic destiny of women. The feminine principle is contrasted by the masculine principle, which is associated with warfare, battles, armies, and which, guided by the will of the powerful, suffers, defending its country, family, and life.¹⁰ In the context of the folk ballad and Simović's play, the sound of spades digging a hole in the ground carries the symbolism of the suffering of war, men perishing en masse, and families ravaged, which leaves permanent consequences not only on the generation that has to live through this experience, but also on generations that are yet to come. The third interpretative possibility regarding the beginning and ending of *A Large Stone* may be linked to the interpretation of earth as the principle of constant rebirth, a never-ending cycle from the budding seed growing into a plant, which then withers and dies, only to give rise to another plant.¹¹ Upon hearing the sounds of digging and the piercing call of a bird, at 25" we hear a female voice; it is She who speaks first.

She: You're waiting in vain... There's no light. / You don't know, you can't see, you can't hear.

Она: Узалуд чекаш... Не светли ништа. / Не знаш, не видиш, не чујеш.

Following each word, She (Ana Sofrenović) pauses for an instant, stressing the sound *š* (*ш*) and thereby generating the effect of shushing or silencing, multiplying the sound *š* (*šššš*). She finds herself in darkness, her voice silenced, waiting to hear her verdict. The sound of spades digging up earth forms the sonic backdrop to her monologue and the softer her voice grows, the louder the sounds of digging and shovelling become. At 1'20' we hear

¹⁰ For the relationship between the masculine and feminine principle, a woman's inability to understand a man who has just returned from war, which changed him permanently and in which he developed a special relationship with other men, one must also mention the poetics of Miloš Crnjanski (Милош Црњански). Crnjanski based his novels *Seobe* (*Сеобе*, Migrations) and *Dnevnik o Čarnojeviću* (*Дневник о Чарнојевићу*, The Journal of Čarnojević) precisely on this painful rift between a man and a woman rent asunder by their divergent experiences of war.

¹¹ In various national mythologies, earth or soil is associated with the feminine principle and women are entrusted with protecting it, because it is in their nature to give birth, just as earth gives birth to new plants and enables life on the planet.

Him for the first time as well, only to hear Her voice once again immediately afterwards. They take turns reciting the same lines, but their dialogue is a fiction. Their speaking resembles whispering in fear. They recite a monologue that is spoken in the play by Ahmed, one of Hasan-aga's soldiers, who, in a conversation with his fellow soldiers at the beginning of the play, expresses his thoughts on the cause of Hasan-aga's violent behaviour, the cause of his anger, which then guides his decision to drive Hasanaginica from their home.

He and She: Don't let the beech tree hear you, / Don't let the stone hear you, /
Don't let the frog hear you, / Don't let the bats hear you, / Don't let the cobwebs
hear you, //

Он и Она: Немој да ће чује буква, / Да ће чује камен, / Да ће чује жаба, / Да
ће чују слепи мишеви, / Да ће чује њаучина. //

Stefanović chooses Ahmed's words to let Her and Him, that is, two principles, two Solitudes, speak through them, because Ahmed is the one who is lonely and misunderstood by the male community, as well as the only one who empathises with Hasanaginica's tragedy.¹² Stefanović omits the lines that would tell us that Hasan-aga's real problem is impotence, but the way She (Ana Sofrenović) delivers Ahmed's words betrays an underlying tension and repression of feelings. In her exploration, Stefanović focuses not on individual dramas, but on the universal problem of estrangement. The emphasis is on the word *čuje* (*чује*, "hear"), combined with the word *немој* (*немој*, "don't"), again pointing to silencing, not only of the masculine, but also of the feminine principle, or perhaps the silencing of the female voice by its male counterpart. Each one in its own right, these two voices pronounce the same words, echoing each other and thereby generating unease. They repeat the words *камен* (*камен*, "stone"), *жаба* (*жаба*, "frog"), *буква* (*буква*, "beech tree"), *слепи мишеви* (*слепи мишеви*, "bats"), and *њаучина* (*њаучина*, "cobweb"), which engenders an atmosphere of darkness, the absence of a voice, a desolate place whose silence is disturbed only by the sounds of animals. Hasan-aga's army is encamped in the mountains and the entire atmosphere dominating

¹² In Simović's play, Ahmed is a character ridiculed by everyone else; he is unseen on-stage, but only heard from the darkness, from the background. He is the one who, seven years earlier, buried the *kadi* whom Hasanaginica is supposed to marry. Ahmed is like an omniscient narrator; in a Greek tragedy, his voice would belong to the choir, which invariably tells the truth and resolves the intrigue. Ahmed was the first who mastered the courage to say that the real cause of Hasan-aga's anger is his impotence, brought on by the wound he suffered in combat.

his camp is rather tense, with his soldiers in palpable frustration; even the surrounding nature turns hostile, because it is populated by people ruled by hatred. Whilst listening to Her and Him reciting Ahmed's lines, in the background we can also hear Her voice, which is electronically processed and, due to a rather swift tempo of enunciation, resembles the incantations of Vlach women – it is as if She were trying to protect herself from evil powers.¹³

He and She speak the same words, but not to each other; they are two Solitudes that remain trapped within their own confines. In the folk ballad, Hasanaginica dies without uttering a single word to her husband; in the play, Hasanaginica cries out trying to understand why her husband is banishing her from their home, but never gets to talk to him, whereas in the radiophonic work there are two principles, the masculine and the feminine, speaking in parallel, but without achieving a dialogue. When She and He finally stop speaking, the background digging sounds return to the foreground, as well as the bird's call, resounding through the space right until 2'50", when both sounds come to an abrupt end.

The Second Tableau (2'54"–4'26")

The second tableau begins with dark percussion sounds at a fast tempo and their echo, which announces Her, Her words full of fear and panic, sampled, repeated, and spoken as though in a delirium, while the echoing of the words she has already uttered intrudes from the background. The sound of drums comes to form the sonic backdrop to her monologue and it is one of the main sound motives that serve to announce anxiety, fear, and Her as well as His disturbed psychological condition.

She: Folded, packed the dresses, / Wrapped the handkerchiefs, earrings, necklaces, / Counted the rings.

Она: Савила, сложила хаљине, / Увила руйце, минђуше, ојрлице, / Избројала ирсјење.

Her words are gradually silenced, only to yield to an extremely swift delivery of sounds and parts of words entirely bereft of meaning but gushing like a flood, before gradually fading. While she speaks those words, we have the impression as if she was losing her breath, suffocating, on the verge of tears. One senses a high degree of anxiety in her voice, which grows ever soft-

¹³ Incantations may also be heard in *Linga/Phonia/Patria*, another radiophonic piece by Stefanović, combined with the muezzin's prayer.

er, letting the sound of drums return to the foreground and, with the tense atmosphere it generates, round off her monologue.

The Third Tableau (4'26"–5'45")

Following her anxiety-ridden monologue, we hear Her onomatopoeically mimicking the sound of stones rolling in her mouth. The sound she produces (mumbling) pervades the entire third segment of Stefanović's radiophonic poem. We also hear sounds of walking across a stony surface, occasionally interrupted by the percussion sounds we heard in her preceding monologue. Then, from afar, one hears the sound of bells, muffled, as if coming from a far-off domain, or the sort of sound we hear when we are waking up, momentarily unsure whether we are fully awake or still sleeping. The bells are linked with the Christian religion and they serve to announce Him, the monologue of Hasan-aga in the play, replete with big words, self-adulation and self-affirmation of his military victories, but in reality hiding the fears and internal struggles manifested in his relationship with Hasanaginica – the mirror of his weakness. Hasan-aga's cruel act, that is, ordering Hasanaginica to leave their home and children, makes him "both the judge and executioner". He appoints himself as the supreme power, allowed to act outside of every law and violate the laws prescribed by the Quran. Acting in a rather arbitrary and capricious way, Hasan-aga dissolves their marriage and prohibits his wife from taking their son with her. Stefanović employs the sound of bells, whereby she additionally problematises the voice of Hasan-aga, i.e. His voice, by linking it to Christian discourse. While church bells keep tolling in the background, with Her voice echoing in multiple layers, He speaks like a politician from a lectern, trying to convince his audience about the greatness of the sacrifice he made for his people, which they have failed to appreciate (4'55").

He: Robberies, pillages, and burnings, / Plunder, rape, and killing / Revolts, poverty, / Treacherous roads, beds soaked in blood, / Unsafe borders, epidemics, floods, Whoring, syphilis... / Until I took command of the army, / Tell me, how awful were these parts? /

Он: Раздојништва, њачке и њавине, / Ошмачина, силовање, убијање / Побуне, сиромаштина, / Пушеви ојасни, кревети њуни крви, / Несиурне границе, епидемије, њојлаве, Курвање, сифилис... / Док ја нисам узео војску у руке, / На шта је, кажи, ова крајина личина?

These subtle messages that Stefanović writes in sound hint at problematic cultural and political relations, including family relations, which are charac-

teristic of the Balkans, as well as those between different faiths, especially between Islam and Christianity, a topic that Stefanović problematises in most of her radiophonic works.

The Fourth Tableau (5'40"–7'20")

Following His rather loud monologue, there is silence, penetrated by a wailing sound generated by Her,¹⁴ She starts speaking again at 5'47", quite quickly, mechanically, so that her words start resemble tongue twister. While she is speaking, her words sound as though they are bouncing off the walls of an earthen vessel, or as if she were speaking into an *ocarina* modifying her voice. This sound and sounding are in a tautological relation with the words she speaks, because in uttering the word *okarina* (*окарина*), her voice approximates the sound of the instrument. Stefanović doubles and triples the exposition of her voice and thus produces a sound effect of her mental breakdown.

She: You put me here, you put me there, you move me around. / You unwrap me, / You wrap me up, / You take me, you leave me. / You begin something, then you take it apart, then you begin again... / Is it going to be a glass, or a piece of clay, or a flower pot/ Or an ocarina, / Or a pot? / Clay, at least, has no tongue...

Она: Сџавиши ме овде, сџавиши онде, ѓремесџиши. / Одмоџаиш, / Замоџаиш, / Узмеш, осџавиши. / Заџочнеш ѓа оџараш, ѓа ѓреџочнеш... / Или ћемо чашу, иловачу, или саксију, / Или окарину, / Или лонац? / Иловача бар нема језика...

In this excerpt, too, we see that the sound *ш* (*š*) is one of the most prominent sounds present, emphasised in the first segment of her monologue. Repeating the sound *š*, that is, piling up words that are sonically dominated by it, evokes silence, ending speech, while, on the other hand, this accumulation of *š* (*ššššš*) may also evoke the way we try to sooth someone who is in distress, the way a mother seeks to sooth her crying child. In the second segment of the monologue, the emphasis is on words where the most prominent sounds are *ц*, *ч*, and *ћ* (*c*, *č*, *ć*), which are more piercing and coarse, and which render her speech dynamic. In her interpretation, Sofrenović generates an atmosphere full of tension, trepidation, and anger, and this endless string of repetitions, word combinations, splitting lines into fragments only exacerbates the tension, highlighting Her (the feminine principle's) position in the vicious

¹⁴ This sound becomes the sonic backdrop to the fourth segment and, at times, resembles weeping.

cycle of other people's decisions that shape her life. She perceives herself as a piece of clay at the hands of her husband, brother, mother, and society as a whole, moulding her as they see fit.¹⁵ She is mute, her voice silenced, and she is left to the will of others, who will decide her fate. Her voice disappears and the wailing sound returns to the foreground. In his book on the symbolism of water, Gaston Bachelard devotes a chapter to the symbolism of 'mixture', a type of matter made by combining earth and water. Bachelard also identifies clay with this type of material. He highlights its "androgynous nature", that is, mixture of the masculine and feminine in its unique structure, combining water and earth.¹⁶ The resulting blend of a hard substance, such as earth, and water is a reflection of human nature. In *A Large Stone*, She and He constitute two principles (feminine and masculine), two Solitudes, and two pieces of clay shaped according to patriarchal principles. Hasan-aga struggles to show his emotions, expressing his impotence through rage; he sheds no tears and therefore, to borrow Bachelard's terms, He is "arid, impoverished, cursed". She manifests her haplessness, striving for an answer, and when she realises that there is no answer regarding her unjust fate, She pursues her own truth. She does not yield to pain, nor does she allow the clay to soften so much that it cannot resist. Her resistance is her pride.

The Fifth Tableau (7'12"–9'07")

The fifth image begins with the sound of a wheel from the Hama,¹⁷ which in the past was part of the aqueduct and the wheel was used to start the turbine.

¹⁵ This sound becomes the sonic backdrop to the fourth segment and, at times, resembles weeping.

¹⁶ Clay is a type of soil suitable for planting and has healing powers; it is also used for building houses (albeit more typically in the past than now), for coating walls, insulating them from heat and cold. On the other hand, coffins with dead bodies are also interred in clay and its symbolism links birth with death.

¹⁷ The sound of the wooden wheel from Hama was used in the work, which the author informs us in the text written for Prix Italia. This interesting information, which is revealed to us as a secret by the author, connects us with the radiophonic work *Prvi istočni san* (*Први источни сан*, *The First Eastern Dream* 1998, op. 40), which is based on the sound impressions of Syria and, above all, Damascus. This sound reference is heard within the radiophonic poem *A Large Stone* (19'00"–21'18") and, without the author's attention the sound would be interpreted as one of the ambient noises. However, when we know where this sound originates, it acquires semantic depth and symbolic meanings.

However, the sound that this wheel produces and which the author has recorded is a blistering sound, and because of the lack of water the wood is dry. The lack of water needed to start the wheel is also related to Bachelard's interpretation of clay and the absence of water from its structure, which symbolises 'dry and poor soul'. In the context of the radiophonic poem *A Large Stone*, the sound of a wheel from the Hama symbolises the fate of an individual who is moving within a closed circle, limited and impeded by social, political and moral norms. The sound of the wheel moves to the second plane and accompanies His monologue, which is already declared (4'55" for the first time). He enumerates his own ventures (7'11"). Unlike the first monologue, He speaks every word through his teeth and he is full of anger. He tries to intimidate the one who listens to Him, He snarls more than He speaks, and His power is not heard from His words, but the weakness is heard. He speaks full of hate, and we have the impression that he is speaking to himself, that nobody hears him anymore, in fact, his sacrifice in fighting and leading the army fruitless. After His monologue, we hear the music (08'13"–09'07") that resembles glissando and symbolises tension, distress, a difficult psychological state, and this sound achieves the gradation of the work.

The Sixth Tableau (9'07"–9'55")

From the culmination of His monologue, Her monologue arises (9'07"). She speaks in a quiet voice, merely listing the words, and we hear it in the main character's voice, accepting destiny. Her words are followed by an electronic echo; silence is around Her, the silence brought on by darkness. The author uses echoes to limit the volume of space in which her voice floats and thus creates the effect of a 'box'.

She: There are no lights – not in the house, or in the alley. / Someone is deciding your destiny in the dark... / You are clueless of what's going on, that is not your world; / but it is your head among theirs, sitting at their table.

Она: Не светили ништа, ни у кући, не светили ни на сокаку. / Неко се с неким о твојој судбини разговара у мраку... / Немаш појма шта се дешава, ти ниси у њом колу; / а што је твоја глава међу њима на столу.

These words are spoken in a voice in which we can recognise the inquirer but not fear. She is aware of how powerless she is in relation to the entire patriarchal system. She knows what is true. She knows that she is not guilty, and She lives according to her truth.

The Seventh Tableau (9'55" – 12'09")

As they were at the beginning of the radiophonic poem (1'20"), He and She spoke the same verses, and now, at the end of the nine minutes (9'55"), again the two of them are in a fictitious dialogue (it is a different text in relation to the first one we heard, but the principle of speech is the same). Both speak for themselves, as if alone, there is no dialogue, her voice is conciliatory, his voice is rude, and the words they speak relate not only to her tragic fate but also to Him, to His social role, the role of a man, which he has to fulfil in order to be accepted by the community. Simović makes the character of Hasan-aga complex. His hasty moves relate to the unresolved conflicts that exist in Hasan-aga, as well as the conflicts that exist between him and Hasanaginica's family. The conflicts are spread evenly in the relationship between Hasan-aga and his wife, who becomes anxious. In the common monologue of Him and Her, the most frequent verse is: "You don't know, you don't see, you don't hear". His voice is getting deeper, and her voice becomes more tender, quieter. During that part, Her voice moves from silent to unheard, while His voice evolves from loud to even louder. During their dialogue, the sound we hear in the background reminds one of wailing, sobbing, and singing and creates a gloomy atmosphere full of foreboding.

The Eight Tableau (12'09"–12'34")

At the beginning of the twelfth minute, Ana Sofrenovic starts cheerfully, singing the children's folk song *Kolariću, Paniću* (12'00").

Kolarić, Panić, / we weave ourselves on our own. / We interweave ourselves alone, / we undo ourselves alone!

Коларићу, Панићу, / њлећемо се самићу. / Сами седе зајлићемо, / сами седе ојјићемо!

The song from the beginning of this segment is the background for a verse about the clay.

Она: Иловачу искојаш, њквасиш, не њићаш шѡа ћеш од ње да месиш. / Почнеш једно, ња се ѡредомислиш, ња ѡреће, / А иловача на све ѡрисијаје.

Her: You dig up the clay, wet it, and do not question what to make out of it. / You begin one thing, then change your mind, three times, / Yet the clay submits to everything.

The making of the figures and the appearance of the clay is connected with the verses of the poem *Kolariću, Paniću*. She sings the lyrics of the song with a soft and cheerful voice and it points to her innocence, like that of a child. *Kolariću, Paniću* is a game in which the point is that as long as the circular elastic band remains tangled between the fingers of one of the two players, in the context of the radiophonic poem *A Large Stone* it has an additional symbolism. They play a game where the point is that the player remains bound, intertwined in his own self. While the song is being sung innocently, figures are being formed from the loam, and one's fate is tailored. Two principles, two Solitudes, made in the will of the Other, remain in their own worlds, bound as an elastic band around their fingers. If the band is broken, the game is lost. Because as long as you are tied up, you are in someone's authority, and when it exists no longer, then death comes. Here, Death is a symbol of the inability of a woman to be free of patriarchal ties; more precisely, death in this context is the only freedom that a woman can attain.

The Ninth Tableau (12'34"–15'28")

After the carefree singing of the children's folk song ends, we again hear the sound of shoveling, the sound of walking on stones, leaves and the soil (12'34"). The sound of walking turns into the sound of marching and from the background (13'22"), we hear the sound of a rotating wheel, and we hear the creaking of the wheel. This sound is simultaneously heard with the sound of marching on stones. However, the sound of the steps becomes louder, and the sound of the wheel is lost. From the distance, we hear glissando-like music. The music follows the emotional state of the characters, especially in His monologues. At the beginning of the fifteenth minute (15'02"), He speaks in a voice full of hate.

He: I don't want you to understand me. / All I want now is for you to listen.

Он: Нећу да ме разумеш / Саг хоћу да ме слушаиш.

This sentence is repeated three times and each time in a more dynamic and expressive gradation compared to the previous one. In the drama, Hasan-aga speaks these words to Jusuf, his first servant, who is surprised at Aga's wishes. He does not understand why Hasanaginica must leave their home. Hasan-aga does not want anyone to understand him. He demands that others merely submit because he is afraid to confess the reason for his behavior. The accent is on his voice, on the emphasis of each word, on the

imperious attitude with which he intimidates others. The radiophonic poem is evolving and Her voice is becoming more submissive, while His voice is becoming stronger, accompanied by cannons from afar.

The Tenth Tableau (15'28"–18'02")

In the first quarter of fifteen minutes (15'17") She quietly and conciliatorily speaks the verses of the play:

She: What am I to do now? / Nothing else? / It's done? / It's an accusation, judgement and the law at the same time. / How has everything turned around? / Where is the wheel? / I look at the hand that rests on my lap...

Она: Шта сад да радим? / Зар само толико? / И то је све? / То је и оштра жба и пресуда и закон. / Како се то све окренуло? / Којим точком? / Држим руку у крилу, ледам је...

The symbolism of the wheel is associated with the reversal of fortune, which in the case of Hasanaginica's fate is negative. It is interesting that when we compare the original drama text and the text that Ivan Stefanović uses, we note that this is not about transposing the original passage because the author omitted specific verses. It is in this omission, that one recognises the second layer of the semantics of the text pronounced by Hasanaginica. In the second tableau of the drama that takes place in Hasan-aga's house, Hasanaginica tries to understand Hasan-aga's actions and the reason why she is being forced out of her home, and why he does not allow her to take a child with her. The author omits the verses that describe her psychological state – she feels anxiety, fear, and at times it seems as though she is hallucinating.¹⁸ Still, the sound of the text in the radiophonic poem, and the way the sound is interpreted (ambiental and electronic), which alternates with silence, recalls and supersedes the meaning.¹⁹ Her monologue (15') is accompanied by the sound of the flute and the glissando on Pan's flute, which resembles the sound of the wind.²⁰ In the poetics of Ivana Stefanović, the flute represents "the lyrical principle, the principle of breath, breathing, life, which does not necessarily always have to

¹⁸ For the verses that Ivana Stefanović omitted, see: Ljubomir Simović, op. cit., 24.

¹⁹ The combination of music, ambiental (concrete) sounds and words in the radiophonic work leads me to believe it is a hybrid art form.

²⁰ It is a quote from the author's composition *Mimikrija* (Мимикрија, Mimicry, 1981) for 14 flutes.

be a female principle”.²¹ The female principle is always somewhat coloured and illuminated by the male principle. Like “Jin and Yang”. The flute does not only accompany the female voice, it is heard on the other plane when He pronounces his next monologue:

He: All the ropes on my arms have been untied by the darkness. / We take rest from our faces in the pitch-black.

Он: Све ми је конојце с руку одрешио мрак. / Одмарамо се од својих лица у мраку.

These words in Simović’s drama are pronounced by Pintorović, Hasanaginica’s brother, after he has decided to marry his sister off to a dead kadi. He hides in the dark, aware of the evil steps he must take because of political demands and his ability to maintain a good political and military standing. Between these two verses, in the sixteenth minute, She appears with the words:

She: There’s nothing more dangerous than success. / Especially where no one succeeded.

Она: Ништа није ојасно као усјех. / Појојово њамо где нико није усјео.

She, He and the sound of the flute are now in a ‘counterpoint’ relationship. She pronounces the words uttered by Jusuf (Hasan-aga’s servant) in the drama, who tries to reason with Hasan-aga not to treat Hasanaginica unjustly. Ana Sofrenović utters these verses almost inaudibly, like whispering to someone, like trying to wake someone from sleep. After her monologue, we hear the sound of heavy breathing, as though someone is having a nightmare. The dream and reality are interwoven in the sound (heralded by His words “All my ropes ...”, i.e. as if arising from them). The oneiric moments contribute to the effect of floating sound, which is in a kind of interaction between dream and reality. He speaks slowly and with difficulty. The last verses He pronounces are “We rest from our faces in the dark” (17’40”), and each word He pronounces is much slower than is characteristic in everyday speech.²²

²¹ Ivana Stefanović, op. cit., 12.

²² His last monologue can be compared with the condition of Boris Godunov in the opera of the same name by Modest Mussorgsky, that is, with the culminating scene of imperial madness, which happens due to a guilty conscience, “A strong sense of responsibility for the political death of two children”. Dragana Jeremić-Molnar, *Svesni i nesvesni pokretači stvaralaštva Modesta Musorgskog*, 1 [Conscious and unconscious creators of the creativity of Modest Mussorgsky], Belgrade, Faculty of Music, 2008, 82.

The Eleventh Tableau (18'02"–19'00")

During the eleventh picture, we listen to electronic music, samples of percussion instruments – a mass of sounds that so powerfully charge the radiophonic work that, at one moment it becomes too arduous to listen to. The eleventh picture is a minute of pure music commentary.

The Twelfth Tableau (19'00"–21'18")

In the nineteenth minute of the composition, we again hear the sound of the wooden wheel from Hama. The last words we hear in *A Large Stone* are the verses uttered in the drama by Jusuf, which in the radiophonic part are spoken by Her (19'45"), softly, in a sad, trembling voice.

She: Calm yourself. / If misfortune cannot be avoided, at least it will pass. / Whatever comes, may it come soon.

Она: Сад се њридеру. / Ако несрећа не може да се избејне, Барем њролази. / Што мора да сѣијне, нека сѣијне што њре.

After her monologue, we hear the echo of her words, which are gradually transformed into a 'purely' electronic sound, modified to a degree that they resemble a robot's voice. The robotized voice of a woman, achieved with voice modification software opens up further possibilities for interpreting the work – for analysing the position and role of women in the modern age. The entire work deals with the status of women, their status in the past, the role of the patriarchal model of education, and the re-examination of this model in contemporary society. The author introduces a robotised female voice, and actually leads listeners to consider whether a modern society in which we advocate emancipation, gender equality, the equal presence of both men and women in public life is actually twisted.

The words in the radiophonic work slowly fade, and sound is what remains. We hear the sound again from the beginning, of work, digging and then shovelling back the earth. The circle closes or the wheel of life starts turning round again, only the question is: Will the new life that grows from the soil live in freedom?

In the conversation I had with Ivana Stefanović, the composer told me that to translate the text of the radiophonic poem into English had been a great challenge because of the intricacies of the language of the folk poem that Simović brilliantly connected with colloquial speech and the parody of political speech. After the announcement of the winner of the *Prix Italia*, one

of the jury members came to Ivana Stefanović and told her that a translation into English was not necessary because the emotions the work radiates with were so powerful that the message was understood without knowledge of the language. Ana Kotevska, in the final segment of the text written about the *A Large Stone*, points out that “as time passes, Ivana Stefanović is increasingly refining the sounds in her radiophonic works. She makes the material more personal and she works with microparticles of speech and music, and the result is ‘a narrative that does not tell the story’”.²³ If we refer to the experience of Ivana Stefanović in Italy at the award ceremony and if we know that the author’s idea was to tell the story by sound, by using “particles of language”, then we can still conclude that this narrative speaks a lot. Through the sound, Ivana Stefanović told a story about the social position of a woman, the relationship between woman and man, the social roles that an individual must fulfil to be accepted in the community. The sound has expanded the boundaries of the ballad about Hasanaginica and, thanks to the sound dimension of the work, the motifs characteristic of the folklore of the South Slavic people reached universal meanings that are achieved directly in the artistic language.

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²³ It is a quote from the author’s composition *Mimikrija* (*Мимикрија*, Mimicry, 1981) for 14 flutes.

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Summary

The radiophonic work, *A Large Stone*, due to the synergy of various acoustic elements, calls for an imaginary play of listening and stimulates the further artistic development of interdisciplinarity. The focus is on listening, on the perception of sound, and unlike the musical part, the radiophonic effect is reduced to the auditory aspect, since there is no (note) record that we can use. On the one hand, the sound is the one that is elusive, on the other hand, words, i.e. language, tends to ‘root’ and define. Ivana Stefanović through the drama text of Ljubomir Simović enters into a dialogue with a significant and semantically very rich topic in which the focus is on the patriarchal system and the oppression of the woman. Ivana Stefanović extends the boundaries of this subject and transmits it to the relationship between a man and a woman, both in the past and today and in the treatment of the text, guided by the laws of radiophony, points to the symbolic conflict of two human beings. *A Large Stone* is a work of eclectic structure that consists of the most diverse sounds and sounding – speech, non-verbal treatment, musical and literary quotes, originally composed music segments, sounds of a certain and unspecified pitch from an acoustic source, or electronically generated, or concrete, ambient sounds. The listener in contact with the *A Large Stone*, part of the hybrid structure, becomes an active receiver, who (re)creates the work and writes a new meaning to it. Ivana Stefanović through the sound tells her vision of today’s Hasanaginica. Hasanaginica becomes She, and Hasan-aga becomes He, two principles and two lonelinesses. There are two subjects of the modern age lost in the demands that society permanently imposes on all of us. In my opinion, radiophony is a very intense artistic expression that requires the listener to stand, to concentrate on the sound, to only one source of sensory stimulus, which in the modern age is almost unimaginable. Sound that tells stories, if we listen carefully, can say a great deal, and the radiophonic works by Ivana Stefanović are always topical stories that tell a great deal through the sound and sounding.

