

The Image of *Angelus Novus* in the Poetry Book *Ictus* by Bojan Vasić

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In 2012, as part of the group gathered around the Caché samizdat edition (Tamara Šuškić, Goran Korunović, Vladimir Tabašević, Uroš Kotlajić), contemporary Serbian poet Bojan Vasić published his poetry book Ictus. At the center of this book is a reproduction of the watercolor Angelus Novus, painted by Paul Klee in 1920, which Walter Benjamin possessed, but also interpreted in multiple texts, providing its most famous description in his “Theses on the Philosophy of History.” This article demonstrates how the image of Angelus Novus is incorporated into the poetry book Ictus, and how, through the figure of the angel, the text communicates with Benjamin’s “Theses.” Based on the interpretation of the paratextual elements of the book (cover page, typography and the meaning of the title, epigraphs, etc.), as well as its composition around the painting and, finally, the different layers of meaning within the text itself, the article explores how Vasić poetically reinterprets Benjamin’s understanding of history and critique of progress.

Keywords: Serbian poetry / samizdat / *Caché* / Vasić, Bojan / Benjamin, Walter: *Theses on Philosophy of History* / *Angelus Novus*

Bojan Vasić published his first poetry collection, *Srča*, in 2009, as the winner of the Mladi Dis literary competition for young authors (Stojnić, “Kadrovi” 196). For the same collection, he subsequently received the Matičev Šal award (Andonovska, “Vasićev angelus” 55). Following this initial success, he collaborated with four other poets—Tamara Šuškić, Vladimir Tabašević, Uroš Kotlajić, and Goran Korunović—forming a collective around the *Caché* samizdat edition.¹ While the group was

¹ The group of poets associated with the *Caché* edition was formed in 2011 (Savić Ostojić 9; Čakarević, “Bez sigurnog mjesta”) and remained active until 2014. Their activities included live performances where they took turns reading aloud without a moderator, creating a collective act in which the audience could not distinguish who was reading whose poetry. Similarly, they self-published a group almanac featuring unsigned texts—essays and poetry—as well as samizdat publications, which could be obtained for free at live reading events (Čakarević, “Bez sigurnog mjesta”).

active, he wrote four poetry books: *Tomato* (2011), *Ictus* (2012), *13* (2013), and *Detroit* (2014). Since the dissolution of the group around *Caché* in 2014, he has published four poetry collections for different commercial publishing houses: *Volfram* (2017, Kontrast), *Toplo bilje* (2019, KCNS), *Udaljavanje* (2022 Arhipelag), and *Noć od ružinog drveta* (2024, Treći Trg), as well as two novels: *Vlastelinstva* (2022, Treći Trg) and *Tamna: Crne kćeri* (2024, Blum). For his poetry collection *Toplo bilje*, Vasić received both the Miroslav Antić and Vasko Popa awards, effectively becoming a laureate of nearly all major poetry awards in Serbia. In our paper, we will focus on the book *Ictus*, published as part of the *Caché* samizdat edition during Bojan Vasić's involvement with the group.

Ictus was released in 2012, a year that several literary critics (Savić Ostojić 9; Milinković and Stojnić 4; Andonovska, "Uzgred rečeno" 423; Lazić 9–11) have identified as pivotal for the final consolidation of a new generation of young poets, often referred to as "new poetry."² In critical texts that explored the formation of this generation—often published in the journal *Agon* (ed. Bojan Savić Ostojić), as well as in the prefaces of several anthologies of "new poetry" (*Restart*, *Van, tu: free*, *Prostori i figure*)—attention is drawn to the poor state of publishing, particularly in the context of the (non)publication of poetry, and to the publishing industry that fails to meet the needs of a large number of diffuse poetic voices. For instance, during this period, critics and poets wrote about the "exceptionally difficult social conditions of financial, cultural, and, more precisely, publishing crisis" (Milinković and Stojnić 6), with emphasis placed on the "limited range of the publishing market" (Savić Ostojić 8) and the so-called "major crisis" in publishing (Stojnić, "Nova srpska poezija" 307).

The publishing system can be illustrated as such: young poets most often publish their first books through "annual editions and competitive festivals dedicated to authors without a published book"

² The term "new poetry" refers to the generation of "poets born after 1975" (Lazić 9), i.e., "born in the mid-seventies and younger" (Stojnić, "Prostori" 9), or, as Andonovska stated: "They represent the demographic generation of the eighties, which appeared on the literary scene after 2000" (Andonovska, "Uzgred rečeno" 420). In 2012, the "transformation from *younger* to *new* Serbian poetry" (Milinković 2) had fully taken shape, and the term became widely used, e.g., as the subtitle of the anthology *Prostori i figure: izbor iz nove srpske poezije* (*Spaces and Figures: A Selection of New Serbian Poetry*), as well as the title of a series of poetry readings organized in DKSG, called "Nova poezija" ("New Poetry"), which had later resulted in another generational anthology *Restart: panorama nove poezije u Srbiji* (*Restart: A Panorama of New Poetry in Serbia*).

(Stojnić, “Nova srpska poezija” 306), with the most significant competitions being Mladi Dis, Prvenac in SKC, and Prva knjiga Matice srpske. Additionally, poetry is also published by smaller publishers and journals, such as Treći Trg, *Povelja* in Kraljevo, and others (Stojnić, “Nova srpska poezija” 307; Andonovska, “Uzgred rečeno” 423–424; Savić Ostojić). After the first collection had been published through these competitions, the “publishing crisis” became more evident, as many authors struggled to publish their second book and “failed to remain present through continuous writing and publishing” (Stojnić, “Nova srpska poezija” 307). The lack of opportunities was followed by the feeling that the few publishing houses that chose to publish poetry served “merely as a legal platform” which, “apart from that legal framework and the CIP cataloguing, offered the author almost nothing” (Savić Ostojić 15).

On the other hand, one of the defining characteristics of this generation of poets is that it was “predominantly comprised of individuals with philological backgrounds, who were also engaged as critics, editors, translators, young researchers, or program organizers” (Andonovska, “Uzgred rečeno” 421–422). These various professional roles also explain the institutional support the poets initially secured. Additionally, both the poets and critics of this generation were equipped with theoretical knowledge, which they applied not only in writings (both poetic and critical) but also in analyzing the context. For instance, when reading about the contemporary state of publishing, some of the critics refer to Bourdieu’s concepts of symbolic capital, and the literary field (Bourdieu 141–166, 216, 232). This is evident in Bojan Savić Ostojić’s assertion that “the consensus of certain authorities who possess symbolic capital, typically within a jury, with a privileged status within the literary field, is the only way a poetry book can attain a certain level of prestige” (Savić Ostojić 8). Similarly, Goran Lazić notes: “The negligible amount of symbolic and even less economic capital still in circulation within the field of contemporary poetry in Serbia remains firmly controlled by the older and middle generations” (Lazić 27). In this sense, poets and editors associated with “new poetry” were aware of the current state of affairs in the contemporary “publishing crisis,” and responded to it by establishing their own events and platforms, effectively creating a subfield within the broader literary field. In Bourdieusian terms: the emergence of “new poetry” brought about changes in the field, driven by “newcomers” (or the youngest members of the field), who initially possessed little to no specific capital, and whose identity was defined by their distinctiveness (Bourdieu 149–150).

However, the group around the *Caché* edition challenged it even more, and decided to cease participating in the reproduction of existing conditions of production (Althusser 232), signifying their choice of the position of the avant-garde—a stance that, as Bourdieu defines it, is characterized by negation and opposition to dominant positions within the field (Bourdieu 215–241). Their decision to independently create and print their books was not only an intervention in the market and production conditions—since their books were not catalogued in libraries, sold in bookstores, or protected by copyright—but also a space for exploring the boundaries of the book as a poetic medium (see Čakarević, “Sve samlji”). This approach enabled greater freedom for the experiments with poetic language, extending it to the paratextual level, which they actively utilized. This is evident in *Ictus*—a poetry book composed around Paul Klee’s painting *Angelus Novus*, through which it enters into a continuous dialogue with Walter Benjamin and his “Theses on the Philosophy of History.”

In this article, we will analyze how Klee’s painting is integrated into Vasić’s poetry book: the ways it shapes the book’s composition, while influencing the reception and (non-linear) reading of the text. Finally, we’ll look into how Vasić’s poetic thought, interwoven throughout the verses, positions itself in relation to Benjamin’s “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” to which *Angelus* guides us.

Poetic crossover: The composition of *Ictus* around the painting *Angelus Novus*

As previously suggested, the poets around *Caché* edition utilized the book format to extend the semantic layers of the text to the paratextual level—for example, through interventions on book covers, use of visual elements within the book, or by experimenting with the material properties of the book as an object. This allowed them the freedom to intervene in a space that—in commercial publishing—is typically reserved for the publisher’s policies or the design framework of a series/edition in which the book is published. For example, one member of the group, Uroš Kotlajić, progressively deconstructed the book format in his three works published in the samizdat edition, to the extent that his third book in *Caché* lacks both a title and cover page (see Kotlajić, untitled book). On the other hand, Vasić’s approach is somewhat different, showing a tendency toward carefully envisioned book composition, where all elements of the composition and paratext are aligned

with the sensibility and tendencies of the text itself (Andonovska, “Vasićev angelus” 55–56). In this sense, *Ictus* may represent the culmination of thoughtfulness in the composition of a poetry book in Vasić’s oeuvre—and perhaps even more broadly within the context of contemporary Serbian literature—which is why we will refer to it as the starting point of our approach to the book.

On the red cover of Vasić’s book, the word *Ictus* is printed in black and, as Biljana Andonovska suggests, arranged in the shape of a cross—already indicating the layers of meaning within the book (Andonovska, “Vasićev angelus” 58), while also visually introducing the Benjaminian tension between Marxist and Talmudic (Handelman 348; Beiner 424). According to Andonovska, the term *ictus* evokes three possible meanings: first, it can refer to “the versification concept of *rhythmic stress*”; second, in Latin, it denotes “a *physical blow*”; and finally, in the way it is written in the shape of a cross, it can also signify “the Ancient Greek word for fish, which *represents Christ*” (Andonovska, “Vasićev angelus” 58; our emphasis).

First, we agree with Andonovska that it is unlikely Vasić intended to activate the meaning of *ictus* as a rhythmic stress, given that the text is written in free verse and does not particularly rely on rhythm in the traditional versification sense (Andonovska, “Vasićev angelus” 58). The primary meaning of *ictus* in Latin—a blow—is supported, as Andonovska claims, through the “anarcho-leftist nodes of Vasić’s poetic world,” which could be interpreted as a blow to the “social, capital body of the (bourgeois) state” (58). However, the “blow” in the title could also signify the intervention made by the *Angelus* painting itself, which disturbs the linear flow of the book. This directly connects with Benjamin’s critique of the linear flow of history, which we’ll address in the following passages. The third possibility, which Andonovska appears to favor and which is motivated by the word’s arrangement in the shape of a cross, is probable but should still be approached with caution. Specifically, the Greek word *ichthys* would be transcribed into Serbian as *ihtis* or *ihtus*, which is not the term found in the title. However, it should be considered that Vasić may have intended to preserve an allusion to this concept through a calligraphic intervention, as well as the resemblance in pronunciation between the two terms. This, along with the color of the cover, alludes to the Benjaminian “synthesis of (Jewish) mysticism and (historical) materialism” (59).

The poetry book *Ictus* has two cycles: “Soneti iz oseke” (“Sonnets from the Ebb Tide”) and “Bele barikade” (“White Barricades”), which

surround the reproduction of Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus*. The painting is placed on a double-page spread between the two cycles and positioned horizontally, so the angel's gaze is directed toward the first cycle. The first cycle represents a reversed crown of sonnets, i.e., a crown in a mirror, which, if we read the book linearly, begins with its end—with the fifteenth, master sonnet. The crown of sonnets progressively unravels toward the first sonnet, followed by the page with the cycle's epigraphs—quotes from Benjamin's Thesis VI and Osip Mandelstam's poem "Vek" ("Century")—and the title. All of them are positioned in the middle of the book, at the angel's feet (Andonovska, "Vasičev angelus" 59–60).

Behind the angel's back we find the title of the second cycle, "Bele barikade," accompanied by two epigraphs. Similarly, another quote from Benjamin's "Theses"—this time the first one—as well as Alexander Blok's verse. In reference to Blok's famous poem "The Twelve," "Bele barikade" itself is a poem consisting of twelve parts, which progresses linearly toward the end of the book. Andonovska notes that this intervention directs the reader "simultaneously *to the left*, toward the beginning of the book as the end of its first cycle ("Soneti iz oseke"), and *to the right*, in accordance with the usual, progressive reading direction, toward the end of the book ("Bele barikade")" (Andonovska, "Vasičev angelus" 59). As she argues, in this way, the book has at least three beginnings and at least two endings: it can be read from cover to cover, from the middle onwards in both directions, or also cycle by cycle in any order. Andonovska further suggests that placing the angel in the middle of the book, but in a horizontal position, replicates the image of the cross from the cover page, interrupting the process of linear reading (horizontally), as the potential reader has to turn the book to properly observe the angel (vertically). In other words, in order to look the angel in the eyes, reading must be interrupted. The function of the angel is undoubtedly to disrupt the traditional approach to literary text—it certainly functions as "a commentary on the nature of time, history, and progress" (59)—but it is also necessary to consider the direction in which the angel's gaze is directed (to the left, i.e., the first cycle) and to interpret it directly within the context of Benjamin's Thesis IX.

Angle of the angel

Paul Klee's small watercolor *Angelus Novus*,³ which Walter Benjamin purchased from the artist in 1921 for a sum of 1,000 German marks (Dunn 1; Werckmeister 244),⁴ became a recurring motif in Benjamin's writings. It appears in his work as early as the 1920s, when he initially planned to found a journal named *Angelus Novus* (Handelman 345; Werckmeister 244). In his 1931 essay on Karl Kraus, Benjamin connected *Angelus Novus* to a Jewish tradition and conceptualization of angels brought into existence to momentarily praise God before vanishing, emphasizing its representation of transience (Werckmeister 244). His reflections on the angel deepened during his years of exile. On the island of Ibiza in 1933, he wrote "Agesilaus Santander," an autobiographical essay in which the angel seems to mirror Benjamin's own state of displacement and vulnerability, embodying the tensions of his existence as a refugee from Nazi Germany (Handelman 346; Werckmeister 245). Finally, in 1940, Benjamin wrote the "Theses on the Philosophy of History," his final major work before his death at the Franco-Spanish border later that year (Beiner 431; Handelman 348). The most famous description of the angel of history is presented in the Thesis IX:

A Klee painting named *Angelus Novus* shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (Benjamin 259–260)

³ The painting of the "new angel" is part of Klee's broader exploration of angelic figures, with *Angelus Novus* being one of fifty images of angels he painted, many of them produced in the final years of his life, coinciding with Benjamin's last years as well (Chrostowska 50). Visually, Klee's *Angelus Novus* stands out in its stylistic tension, suspended in a space that balances between early comic caricature and modernist abstraction, with disorienting features like askew eyes and asymmetrical ears (Dunn 1).

⁴ Allen Dunn writes that Benjamin acquired the painting shortly after its completion in 1920, while Otto Karl Werckmeister contends that the purchase occurred in 1921, which is more likely to be the case.

In the ninth thesis, Benjamin's angel of history is portrayed as being blown backward into the future, while gazing at the past—described as a catastrophe rather than a series of events—and unable to act or redeem, as the storm from paradise forces the angel in the opposite direction (Handelman 346). This storm is interpreted as a violent force symbolizing the destructive aspects of revolution (Mosès and Wiskind 24).

The gaze of the angel in *Ictus* is directed toward the first cycle, "Soneti iz oseke," which represents the past, while the future, depicted as a storm pulling the angel's back, is represented by the second cycle, "Bele barikade." This temporality is further supported by the quotes that function as epigraphs for both cycles. For example, a quote from Mandelstam's poem "Century" refers to the broken backbone of the previous, twentieth century: "The buds continue to swell, / the green leaves of crops will splash. / Hey, my terrible, splendid century, / your spine's now thoroughly smashed." Meanwhile, the second cycle begins with Blok's line "Ja hoću ono što će biti" ("I want that which will be"), which is a statement directed towards the future.

Since Benjamin critiques the historicist view of the past as a linear progression, arguing instead that the past should be understood through moments that disrupt this continuity (Beiner 428; Mosès and Wiskind 14), Vasić's choice to use the crown of sonnets—a linear and rigid poetic form—in order to articulate the past raises questions. Firstly, Vasić decided to keep the precise structure of the crown of sonnets, avoiding any experiments, unlike other poets around *Caché* edition, who also returned to sonnet form around the same time.⁵ In *Ictus*, each sonnet is constructed "following the model of the Petrarchan/Italian sonnet, consisting of two quatrains and two tercets" (Andonovska, "Vasićev angelus" 59), though Vasić does not preserve rhyme. In this sense, the crown of sonnets, as a linear form structured through the direct linking of verses and culminating in the master sonnet, appears to conflict with Benjamin's attitude towards the progress and continuance of the historical process. On the other hand, this crown of sonnets is reversed, and in this inversion, reading the book from its cover makes the reader run into "one single catastrophe" (Benjamin 259), which could be understood as the master sonnet, composed of all the first or the last lines of the preceding (in this case following) fourteen poems. In that sense, through the remaining sonnets, its dispersed verses are visually and rhythmically echoing

⁵ For example, Uroš Kotlajić played with the cult of form preserved in sonnet by progressively deconstructing it in his cycle "Soneti o rupama" (see Kotlajić, *Soneti*).

Benjamin's metaphor of relentless ruin, of wreckages. As Andonovska observes, "In contrast to the tide of the standard sonnet crown, ... Vasić constructs an inverse structure of retreating *sonnets from the ebb*" (Andonovska, "Vasićev angelus" 60). Furthermore, by upsetting the direction of the classical literary form, as well as by quoting Mandelstam's poem "Century" at the beginning of the cycle (middle of the book), it appears that Vasić crosses over Benjamin's thoughts on history with his own poetic re-conceptualization of the history of literature, specifically twentieth-century literature.

This claim can be supported by the subtle signals within the verses of the cycle "Soneti iz oseke," where Vasić—through intertextual dialogue—establishes a dynamic relationship between the present, i.e., his verses, and the past, i.e., twentieth century South Slavic literature. For example, Vasić directly incorporates allusions to titles of novels, such as in the verses "Hiperborejci / sa svojom savešću niniva" (Sonnet XI, "Jonin lament u dirizablu"), where he refers to the novel *Kod Hiperborejaca* by Miloš Crnjanski, or in the verses "naš koren bivšeg vida // još spava po idejama," in which he incorporates the syntagma "koren vida," which is also the title of Aleksandar Vučo's novel. In other cases, Vasić initiates a direct dialogue with specific poems that he seeks to recover from literary history. This is present in his poetic reinterpretation of Branko Miljković's poem "More, pre nego usnim" in the Sonnet IX ("More, pošto se probudim"), or in the way he reimagines Vasko Popa's poem "Mala kutija" in the Sonnet VI ("Crna kutija"), particularly through the verses "Izađi mala kutijo / iz sebe, ali ostani / unutra, / i uđi i izađi." Through such a relationship, as Benjamin suggested, the present can reactivate and restore certain overlooked or suppressed elements (Beiner 424; Mosès and Wiskind 14, 19), or in this case overlooked poetics that are central to Vasić's poetry. One year after writing *Ictus*, in the second, essayistic part of his book *I3*, Vasić writes:

It seems, however, that we were not mistaken—the century of manifestos is indeed far behind us. Yet, it is still worth reflecting on that passing today, gathering all our seismographic notes in order to decipher, with the greatest possible precision, the meaning of some new tremor. It is true not only that poetry reflects its epoch but also that it makes use of its *doxa*, its brightness or rage, and moves forward, finding in that very mass of unresolved, perplexing contradictions its driving force. But this is a movement that would be limited if it necessarily led "forward." (34)

After rethinking "the century of manifestos," Vasić reflects upon the direction towards which (contemporary) poetry is headed, recognizing

that merely moving “forward” is not enough. A similar critique of the narrative of progress that pulls the angel’s back (Handelman 348) unfolds in the second cycle of *Ictus*, “Bele barikade.”

In terms of composition, the second cycle “flows’ in the expected direction” (Andonovska, “Vasičev angelus” 61), from the middle toward the end of the book, with the twelve parts of the poem marked by Arabic numerals arranged in the usual order. While the poem relentlessly progresses in a formal sense, within the text itself, there is a nuanced interaction with Benjamin’s “Theses.” Specifically, the poem follows several lyrical characters—Etjen, Berni, Viktor, Markus, Nikolaj, Gubec—who are initially situated in a train, which carries the narration through eastern landscapes, such as the Baltics, Moscow, Novosibirsk, China, Basra, Kronstadt, etc.⁶ It is in the metaphor of the train that the connection to Benjamin’s “Theses,” and by extension, Marx, is revealed.

As shown earlier, Benjamin rejects the notion that history follows a straightforward or predictable trajectory, instead arguing that the idea of progress is an ideological construct shaped by technical advancements and falsely applied to humanity as a whole (Mosès and Wiskind 19–20). He specifically found inappropriate “the political use of the idea of progress by the forces of the left in their struggle against fascism and Nazism, first in Weimar Germany and later, after 1933, in the Western democracies” (19). Furthermore, Benjamin critically engages with Marx by referring to the locomotive metaphor in the sketches and notes to the “Theses on the Philosophy of History” (Richter 529). In these notes, he challenges Karl Marx’s statement that “revolutions are the locomotive of world history,” suggesting instead that revolutions should be seen as humanity’s attempt to “activate the emergency brake,” to stop the catastrophic course of history (Richter 529; Löwy 3; Lap Nguyen 350). The train, following its predetermined tracks, does not represent a controlled or beneficial ride toward a better future, i.e., classless society; instead, it leads toward catastrophe—unless interrupted (Löwy 3). So, the Benjaminian historian—or, in the case of *Ictus*, the Benjaminian poet—does not embrace the train’s direction but seeks to halt its movement, troubled by the unacknowledged wreckage left behind (Beiner 430). In this way, Benjamin moves beyond Marx’s framework, integrating a messianic sense of rupture rather than dialectical advancement (Zdravković 51).

⁶ Regardless of the recurrence of these characters, the lyrical subject shifts from “I” to “us,” also being a passenger on that train.

The emergency brake appears early in Vasić's poem, in the very first part:

He barely managed to jump in.

Gubec.

That name sparks like a brake
Within the throat of our heavy,
metal train. (our trans.)⁷

Matija Gubec is a historical figure—a revolutionary and leader of the Peasant's Uprising in Croatia (see Štefanec)—who, throughout the twentieth century, became a symbol of resistance, particularly within the context of the National Liberation Movement. Additionally, Gubec appears as a fictional character, for example, in the novel *Seljačka buna* written by Avgust Šenoa, but also in Vasić's work, in the poetry collection *Srča*, where he sometimes appears as the lyrical subject (Stojnić, "Kadrovi" 197). In *Ictus*, Gubec (as a lyrical character, but also as a motif) has two important functions. At first, Gubec represents the force that stops the train, disrupting linear progress and opening the possibility for messianic time (Benjamin 266; Caygill 216; Hamacher 67). As Werner Hamacher argues, the Messiah arrives only through a distortion of time and experience (Hamacher 67), and Gubec's intervention (and *Gubec as the intervention*) enacts precisely such a rupture. The second function attributed to Gubec is that of the Messiah himself. For example, Gubec disappears and reappears several times throughout the second cycle, and he is the only character closely tied to the lyrical subject: "Gubec je negde van grada," "privlačim nesmotrena tela, / i sam pomalo Gubec," "Čekamo ga, nervozni," "Dve senke / na užetu, Gubec i ja, / spuštene u čist i vašljiv, / ničiji a naš svet." Unlike Blok's poem, in which the figure of Jesus appears at the very end, the twelfth part of the cycle "Bele barikade" ends with the appearance of the Messiah—who emerges from within the lyrical subject: "Minuti i breze i sati, zavezani kopovi, / led u predvodnici kapilara, / opet minuti, i minuti, sad / pod mojom njegova koža, / pod mojim njegove oči." In this sense, as with Benjamin, weak messianic power that suddenly appears is not an active force but the lingering presence of unrealized past possibilities—the "missed possible" that calls for correction (Hamacher 41–42), which

⁷ The original: "Jedva je uspeo da uskoči. // Gubec. // To ime varniči kao kočnica / U grlu našeg teškog, / limenog voza."

Vasić especially addresses in the first cycle. His lyrical subject is thus entrusted with such power by past generations, and he recognizes and realizes it in the present. Finally, as Lana Zdravković writes, Benjamin's idea of weak messianic power, which she argues is rooted in the figure of Saint Paul,⁸ does not imply that a new Messiah is needed to lead us to abundance, but rather suggests that messianic power resides within us—or, in the case of *Ictus*, within the lyrical subject.

An introduction from the ebb

In conclusion, we must return to the initial question: What is the function of the reproduction of Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus* in Bojan Vasić's poetry book *Ictus*?

As we have demonstrated, *Angelus Novus* plays its most significant role in the very composition of Vasić's book. By placing the image horizontally at the center, so that the angel's gaze is directed toward the first cycle of poems, Vasić suggests which part of the collection relates to the past and which to the future—a distinction revealed through Benjamin's description of the angel of history in his "Theses." Secondly, the image itself disrupts the linear reading of the book, engaging with Benjamin's imperative against a linear conception of history and directing the reader's gaze toward multiple possible beginnings of the text. Such an intervention opens the possibility for the emergence of messianic time—not for the lyrical subject or the author to step out of the linear time, but for the reader who directly engages with the book. However, within the text itself, messianic time is not mediated through the figure of the angel, but through the revolutionary figure—Gubec—who emerges within the lyrical subject at the end of the book.

Finally, as Zdravković suggests, constructing a possible mode of persistence requires finding ways to break free from economic logic: "It

⁸ Even though Saint Paul has been an inspirational figure for thinkers such as Giorgio Agamben (*The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*), Jacob Taubes (*The Political Theology of Paul*), Alain Badiou (*Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalisms*) and Slavoj Žižek (*The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity*), to whom Zdravković also refers to in her paper (50), Brian Britt argues that starting from Agamben, a straight line driven from Paul to Benjamin should be reread: "Agamben's claim to discovering a one-to-one correspondence between Paul's text and Benjamin's oversimplifies the broad, complex strands of biblical tradition. ... Benjamin's messianism was mediated through his engagement with the works of Erich Gutkind, Bloch, Buber, and Scholem and was therefore a distinctly modern category" (Britt 282).

is crucial to find ways to construct life beyond the commodity-market logic, where everything is left to the individual's personal free choice within an endless array of possibilities" (Zdravković 55). As we showed at the beginning of this paper, through Vasić's engagement with the group around *Caché* samizdat edition, *Ictus* steps outside the prevailing conditions of literary production at the time. However, as noted in book 13, Vasić is aware that "one can continuously revolutionize the means of literary production while still remaining within bourgeois positions" (50). For this reason, he directly confronts the core issue on which both Marx and Benjamin agree (Lap Nguyen 350): the need to enact "radical changes in both content and form" (Vasić, 13 66) to transform the very institutional frameworks of artistic production. He attempts to do so by creating a rupture, a poetic "strait gate through which the Messiah might enter" (Benjamin 266).

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Podoba *Angelus Novus* v pesniški zbirki *Ictus* Bojana Vasića

Ključne besede: srbska poezija / samizdat / *Caché* / Vasić, Bojan / Benjamin, Walter: *Zgodovinsko-filozofske teze* / *Angelus Novus*

Leta 2012 je v okviru skupine, zbrane okoli samozaložniške edicije *Caché* (Tamara Šuškić, Goran Korunović, Vladimir Tabašević, Uroš Kotlajić), sodobni srbski pesnik Bojan Vasić objavil svojo pesniško knjigo *Ictus*. V središču te knjige je reprodukcija akvarela *Angelus Novus*, ki ga je leta 1920 naslikal Paul Klee. Slika je bila v lasti Walterja Benjamina, ki jo je večkrat interpretiral v svojih besedilih, pri čemer je njena najbolj znana interpretacija podana v njegovih »Zgodovinsko-filozofskih tezah«. Pričujoči članek analizira, na kakšen način je podoba *Angelus Novus* vključena v pesniško zbirko *Ictus* in kako skozi lik angela besedilo komunicira z Benjaminovimi tezami. Na podlagi interpretacije paratekstualnih elementov zbirke (naslovnica, tipografija in pomen naslova, epigrafi itd.), njene kompozicije okoli slike ter različnih pomenov, ki se vzpostavljajo v samem besedilu, razprava pokaže, kako Vasić pesniško reinterpreтира Benjaminovo razumevanje zgodovine in kritiko napredka.

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