

Title: A Man with No Country?: Danilo Kiš at the Center and Periphery of Yugoslav Authorship
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Danilo Kiš is seemingly the most Yugoslav of Yugoslav authors. Unlike Krleža, who wrote before, during and after the transition from Kingdom to Tito's Yugoslavia, and Ugrešić, who wrote through the breakup of Yugoslavia, Kiš's entire literary career took place in socialist Yugoslavia. During his lifetime, however, Kiš was hardly a typical Yugoslav author, even though he achieved critical and popular acclaim and his works influenced subsequent generations of authors. In 1976, Kiš's collection of short stories, *A Tomb for Boris Davidovich*, came under attack from powerful members of the writer's union. The charge was plagiarism, but the ensuing literary/political scandal surrounding the publication made it clear that the real issue was Kiš's critique of communist totalitarianism—an unforgivable move for a prominent author in the Yugoslav political climate of the mid-1970s. Kiš confronted these accusations with his characteristic writerly prowess and, in the minds of most, thoroughly vindicated himself. However, the scandal continued for years, after which Kiš went into permanent exile in France.

This paper focuses on what was particularly controversial about *A Tomb for Boris Davidovich*: its affiliated notions of the irreducible individual as an ethical actor in a historical/political universe, on the one hand, and, on the other, the narrative possibilities that emerge from an unshakable conviction that persons are singular. It argues that while *A Tomb for Boris Davidovich* brought these two authorial preoccupations to the fore in a political context, these, in fact, function as the salient leitmotifs of Kiš's entire *oeuvre*.

Only in synthesizing Kiš's aesthetic and political commitments to the singular individual is it possible to trace out the way in which Kiš is both emblematic and problematic for notions of authorship in the Yugoslav context. Contextualizing his work in this way provides insight into the artistic climate of the last two decades of socialist Yugoslavia. It also explicates the grounds for Kiš's deep, pervasive and lasting influence on post-Yugoslav authors, readers and thinkers.