

## From Dorćol to Paris and Back: Moša Pijade's Self-Portraits

Moša Pijade (1890–1957) had a very uneven artistic career. Although extending throughout his entire life, it suffered from long periods of inactivity and detachment from current artistic developments and the professional milieu. Moreover, almost from the very beginning his artistic drive had to compete with his equally forceful interests in art criticism, writing, translating, and—especially—journalism. Finally, his leftist political affiliations, subsequent imprisonment, the travails of World War II and his subsequent political career, left time for only a relatively small opus.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, somewhat surprisingly, Pijade never stopped seeing himself as an artist.

### 1 Coming of Age in Belgrade

Pijade's artistic development started early. When he in 1951 rejoined the Union of Visual Artists in Serbia and filled out the details of his biography and artistic development, he wrote:

My oldest brother David furthered in me a motivation to draw while I was still in elementary school. Already then I thought of being a painter. While I was in the first grade of high school that same brother sent me various art monographs from Vienna and Germany. I visited art galleries in Belgrade and often went to the Danube River where I drew fishermen's shacks and similar motifs in a sketchbook. In the third grade I bought pastels, but did not know how to do anything with them, so I continued to draw in pencil.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For recent concise biographies of Moša Pijade, see Milan Ristović's entry "Drvar" in *Enzyklopädie jüdischer Geschichte und Kultur*, ed. Dan Diner, vol. 2 (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2012), 161–62; Jelena Petaković, "Pijade, Moša," in *Znameniti Jevreji Srbije: biografski leksikon*, ed. Aleksandar Gaon (Belgrade: Savez jevrejskih opština Srbije, 2011), 182–85. The most comprehensive biography of Pijade was written by his stepson: Slobodan Nešović, *Moša Pijade i njegovo vreme* (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1968).

<sup>2</sup> *Moša Pijade, o umetnosti*, ed. Lazar Trifunović (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1963), 8; Zuko Džumhur, "Slikarev karton," *Politika*, 18 March 1957, 8. Unless otherwise indicated, all of the English translations of quotations in the book are the author's.

This short statement, written many years after, offers important information. It is possible to learn from it that the Pijade brothers' family invested significant effort in their children's education: David developed an interest in art, which he was able to learn about while abroad, in the central and western European cultural centers, and he shared this knowledge with his talented brother back home. Indeed, Moša Pijade had a privileged early childhood. He grew up as the youngest son in the Belgrade Sephardic family of Samuilo Pijade, a well-to-do merchant, enjoying attention and support. His father's social and financial success in many ways reflected the process of modernization, acculturation, and integration of the city's Sephardic Jews into Serbian, Yugoslav, and European societies.

Sephardic Jews, such as the Pijade family, had a long history in Belgrade. They arrived in large numbers in 1521, immediately after the Turkish conquest of the city. Expelled from Spain in 1492 and welcomed by the Ottoman Empire, they came to Belgrade in search of a home and business opportunities. Sephardim settled along the Danube, in the Turkish sector of the city called Dortjol (Turkish for "four ways") or Dorćol in Serbian pronunciation. Soon there was a Jewish quarter, called Jalija (from the Turkish word *yali*, waterside residence) (fig. 1.1).

Until the mid-nineteenth century, most of Belgrade's Sephardic Jews lived secluded lives in this modest neighborhood, guided by the patriarchal rules of their religious community. The large families maintained strong ties enriched by the memories of Spain and preservation of the Judeo-Spanish language. Jewish learning also flourished and in the seventeenth century the Belgrade *yeshivah* became an important center of religious study in the Balkans. However, this secluded life and growth of the community was interrupted on numerous occasions.<sup>3</sup>

The arrival of the Austrians in Belgrade in 1688 set off numerous wars and rebellions between the Ottoman and Habsburg empires. Often affected by the abrupt change of rulers, the Jewish community had to struggle to maintain its way of life. Serbs, who from the early nineteenth century began fighting for their independence, posed an even greater challenge to this seclusion. During the first Serbian Uprising against the Ottoman Empire (1804–1813) Jews were attacked, their property plundered, and they were killed along with Muslims,

3 About traditional Sephardic life in Belgrade's Jewish quarter see Aron Alkalaj, "Život i običaji u nekadašnjoj jevrejskoj mahali," *Jevrejski almanah* 4 (1961–62): 82–97; Divna Đurić-Zamolo, "Stara jevrejska četvrt i Jevrejska ulica u Beogradu," *Jevrejski Almanah*, 1965–67: 41–76; Hajim S. Davičo, *Sa Jalije* (Belgrade: Knjižara Đorića, 1898; republished as *Priče sa Jalije* [Belgrade: Centar za stvaralaštvo mladih, 2000]).





FIGURE 1.1 Paško Vučetić, *The Old Dorčol*, beginning of the 20th c., oil on cardboard, 16 × 23 cm. City Museum Belgrade

as infidels.<sup>4</sup> This situation changed during the Second Uprising (1815–1817) and during the subsequent reign of Prince Miloš Obrenović, Serbia's independent ruler, who guaranteed protection to all Jews. David Haim, known as Davičo (ca. 1780–1860), who became Obrenović's financier and business partner, played a role as a "court Jew" and significantly contributed to this change.<sup>5</sup> However, such developments were not favorably received by Serbia's merchants and wider population, who saw in the Jews competitors who remained more loyal to the Ottomans than to the new Serbian government. Thus, already during Obrenović's reign, and much more freely after his fall in 1839, their opponents used their political power to expel and keep the Jews out of the provincial cities and adopted various restrictions often bordering on open

4 Bogumil Hrabak, *Jevreji u Beogradu do sticanja ravnopravnosti (1878)* (Belgrade: Srpski genealoški centar, 2009), 225–47.

5 Milica Mihailović, "Dva veka porodice Hajim-Davičo u Beogradu," *Zbornik jevrejskog istorijskog muzeja* 6 (1992): 249–76; Bojan Mitrović, "From 'Court Jew' Origins to Civil-Servant Nationalism: Hajim S. Davičo (1854–1916)," *Quest: Issues in Contemporary Jewish History* 7 (July 2014), online, <http://www.quest-cdecjournal.it/focus.php?id=362> (last accessed 5 March 2018).

hostility.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the Jews of Belgrade, influenced by the nineteenth-century quest for modernity and equality, began their own acculturation and integration into the economic, political, and cultural life of the capital. During the Serbian-Turkish Wars (1876–77 and 1877–78), after being granted the right to serve in the army, Jews actively took part in fighting. The final push for acquisition of equal rights was the Berlin Congress in 1878, when Serbian representatives agreed, in exchange for international recognition of Serbia's independence, to recognize the full religious, political, and juridical equality of all members of different religions living in its territory. This commitment was finally implemented ten years later in a constitution passed in 1888.<sup>7</sup>

Uziel Pijade (ca. 1795–1875), Moša Pijade's grandfather, came to Serbia as a petty merchant from Vidin, Bulgaria, probably towards the end of the 1820s, with the influx of Jews to Serbia that was created by the more favorable conditions introduced by Prince Miloš Obrenović.<sup>8</sup> After passing through several smaller Serbian towns, he eventually moved to the more tolerant Belgrade and settled in Jaliya in the early 1830s. The family, which included five children, slowly established its economic and financial stability. The most successful among them were Moša Pijade's father, Samuel (also known as Sami or Samuilo) (1842–1927), and Samuel's brother David (1850–1913). They were first to leave Dorćol and the banks of the Danube, moving up the hill to an area called Zerek, a more prosperous residential quarter. Towards the end of the 1880s the two Pijade brothers established a wholesale textile firm named "Samuilo Pijade and Brother." The use of the Serbian-sounding name Samuilo in the firm's name, rather than Samuel, derived from the Hebrew or Sami as in Judeo-Spanish, clearly reflects acculturation into Serbian society.

Since the Pijade family's social ascent, like that of other wealthy Sephardic families in Belgrade, was closely connected to the political changes and the birth of independent Serbia, it is not surprising that the façade of their firm's

6 Nebojša Popović, *Jevreji u Srbiji, 1918–1941* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1997), 16–24.

7 For an up-to-date, concise history of Jews in Serbia, see Milan Koljanin, *Jevreji i antisemitizam u kraljevini Jugoslaviji, 1918–1941* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2008), 157–77. For the history of Belgrade's Jews, see Jennie Lebel, *Until "The Final Solution": The Jews in Belgrade 1521–1942* (Bergenfield, NJ: Avotaynu, 2007) [translated from Serbian original Ženi Lebl, *Do "konačnog rešenja": Jevreji u Beogradu 1521–1942* (Belgrade: Čigoja štampa, 2001)]; Ignjat Šlang, *Jevreji u Beogradu* (Belgrade: Štamparija M. Karić, 1926); *Zbornik jevrejskog istorijskog muzeja*, no. 6 (1992), a collection of articles about the Jews in Belgrade published by the Jewish Historical Museum, Belgrade; Harriet Pass Freidenreich, *The Jews of Yugoslavia*, 26–40.

8 Pijade's family roots were researched in depth in Nešović, *Moša Pijade*. As Moša Pijade's stepson, he was party to first-hand knowledge about the Pijade family and had access to family archival material and ties to the surviving family members whose memories he recorded.

building apparently bore a large colored image of Miloš Obrenović in his princely attire topped by the Serbian coat of arms.<sup>9</sup> This mural, painted as a token of gratitude to a ruler benevolent towards the Jews, was thus an early visual source for young Moša that taught him about his father's loyalty to Serbia.

Moša's mother, Sara Ruso (1854–1903) stemmed from a wealthy and cultured Sephardic family from the town of Ruse, in Bulgaria, a port on the Danube also known, especially among the Jews, by its Turkish name Rustchuk (small Ruse).<sup>10</sup> In the course of the nineteenth century, especially after Bulgaria gained independence in 1878, it became one of the major cultural and economic centers of the new state.

Samuilo Pijade married Sara in 1878 in what was probably an arranged marriage, as was customary at the time. Since Uziel Pijade came from Vidin in Bulgaria, it seems that the family maintained ties with this former part of the Ottoman Empire and the bride for his upwardly mobile son was chosen from the prosperous community of Rustchuk and its well-to-do and cultured Ruso family. A photograph preserved at the Jewish Historical Museum in Belgrade (fig. 1.2) shows Sara sitting on the left, being photographed in a French photographer's studio in Rustchuk together with her sisters. The refined, rich, traditional Turkish-Sephardic dresses and their long hair covered by small, decorated *tukadu* hats indicate that the sisters belonged to a well situated local Jewish family. The bride, aside from bearing Samuel six children—two girls and four boys—also brought a rich dowry. This helped the family to move from Dorćol to the more prestigious neighborhood of Zerek, and enabled her husband to establish the textile firm which soon gained local and international renown, securing a steady income and increasing wealth. Aside from Judeo-Spanish, her mother tongue, Sara also spoke German and chose a German-speaking nanny for her children. Moša thus grew up in a household with three spoken languages: Serbian (which his mother eventually learned to speak as well), Judeo-Spanish, and German. In addition, the children learned French. The father's Serbian patriotism was thus complemented by a multilingual and multicultural atmosphere at home. In many ways this duality marked Moša Pijade's later self-fashioning.<sup>11</sup>

9 For a drawing of the façade, including the firm's name and the image of Obrenović next to it, see *ibid.*, 29. The drawing was made from memory by the artist Živorad Nastasijević (1893–1966) in 1959.

10 Solomon Abraham Rosanes, *Istoria de la Komunidad Israelita de Rustchuk*, vol. 1 (Rustchuk: Istamparia Y. A. Levy, 1914) (Judeo-Spanish); Zvi Keren, *The Jews of Rusçuk* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2011).

11 Samuel Pijade's identity well fitted the definition supplied by David Koen, a lawyer and man of letters who as a passionate Serbian patriot in 1897 published a pamphlet entitled *Sermon to Serbian Youth of Mosaic Faith*. In this enthusiastic pamphlet, while



FIGURE 1.2  
Sara Pijade, b. Ruso, with her sisters  
(sitting on the left), n.d., photograph,  
K. Porodice-Beograd. Jewish Historical  
Museum, Belgrade

The main intellectual influence on Moša in these early years was his brother David S. Pijade (1881–1942), nine years older than him. David Pijade certainly deserves an in-depth study of his own, since much still remains unknown about this prolific and talented poet, writer, and translator. David’s impact on his brother’s career goes unrecognized in the “official” version known in post-WWII Socialist Yugoslavia which presents Moša primarily as a radical revolutionary and communist leader. David Pijade published two books of poetry in 1900 and 1912, and a short—for his time unusual—novel dealing with a tragic lesbian love, which was published in 1921. He also wrote for several literary newspapers. In 1907–8 David even briefly published his own monthly, entitled *Pregled*, with his friend, the Serbian poet Velimir Rajić. Even more important were his translations of Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Wilhelm Jerusalem’s *Introduction into Philosophy*, Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of*

---

basing himself on a series of lectures delivered during 1881–87 in a number of provincial Serbian-Jewish communities, Koen preached in favor of Serbian national identity while at the same time calling for preservation of the ties with the Jewish faith. He believed that the Serbian nation had an important historical mission in Europe and saw Serbia as a tolerant state characterized by “the spirit of freedom, equality, and brotherhood, without religious or national discrimination”; see Mihailo Milošević, *Jevreji za slobodu Srbije: 1912–1918* (Belgrade: F. Višnjić, 1995), 74–79.

*Dorian Gray*, and Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali*, all of which were printed by the firm of Geca Kon, a well-known Belgrade Jewish bookstore owner and publisher.<sup>12</sup> In his youth David closely followed Tolstoy's ideas, to the point of dressing like this famous *Narodnik* in a Russian peasant shirt, practicing vegetarianism, and throughout his life remaining a staunch supporter of liberal causes, including women's liberation. Despite his literary interests and talents, his family sent David to Karlsruhe, in Germany, to study mechanical engineering, a more "practical" profession. Though he completed his studies, he never worked as an engineer; rather, once back in Serbia he idealistically chose to be a teacher of the German language in state high schools in the provincial towns of Kruševac and Valjevo, a position he filled between 1909 and 1920. Fortunately, David began his sojourn abroad, before moving to Germany, by studying philosophy at Vienna University from 1900 to 1902. That period certainly opened new cultural horizons for him, which he lovingly shared with his youngest brother Moša, in whom he had discovered a talent for visual art from an early age.<sup>13</sup>

In his artistic biography Moša dated his early interest in art and his brother's support to when he was finishing elementary school and starting high school. This period was linked to two important events in his life. In January 1903 he celebrated his bar-mitzvah ceremony, a Jewish boy's rite of passage. In June of that same year he lost his mother; Sara Pijade died of cancer, leaving behind a bereaved family. Thus, it is possible that Moša, the youngest child in the family who was now suddenly orphaned, enjoyed more understanding and support in pursuing his talents than did his older brothers, who were sent abroad to acquire more "secure" professions.

The first known work of Moša Pijade, created during the 1904–5 school year, was a drawing *Moses Giving the Tablets of the Law to the Israelites*.<sup>14</sup> As noted,

<sup>12</sup> Nešović, *Moša Pijade*, 35–36, 856–57 and n. 4; Predrag Palavestra, *Jewish Writers in Serbian Literature* (London: ASWA; Belgrade: Serbian PEN Centre, 2003), 81–82. For Geca Kon (1873–1941) and the remarkable role he played in Serbian and Yugoslav book publishing and Belgrade's literary life, see Velimir Starčević, *Knjiga o Geci Konu*, 3rd rev. ed. (Belgrade: Prosveta/Admiral Books, 2009); Christian Köstner, "Das Schicksal des Belgrader Verlegers Geca Kon," *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Buchforschung in Österreich*, 1 (2005): 7–19, <http://www.buchforschung.at/pdf/MB2005-1.pdf> (last accessed 5 March 2018).

<sup>13</sup> Moša's other brother, Uziel-Velizar Pijade (1887–1943), who earned a medical degree in Vienna and practiced medicine, was passionately interested in classical music and was himself a violinist. The Pijade brothers' talents—in the fields of writing, visual arts, and music—and their strong drive to pursue them, attest to the cultural and supportive atmosphere of their home, primarily created by their mother.

<sup>14</sup> This work, now lost, was recalled by his school friend Dragoslav Ilić who, together with Moša and a number of other Belgrade boys, later to become well known intellectuals,



the celebration of his bar-mitzvah and the death of his mother both occurred in 1903, and his sudden acceptance of “adulthood,” both in relation to Jewish tradition and the new family situation, may have led him, once he decided to become an artist, to choose such a serious, responsible, and traditional subject relating to his Old Testament’s namesake. A direct model for such a drawing may have come from his brother David who, now that they remained motherless, possibly even more enthusiastically encouraged Moša to develop his artistic skills. Moša Pijade’s schoolmate Dragoslav Ilić, while referring to this drawing of Moses, recalls that at that time he and Pijade obtained a handbook in German with instructions how to draw “from initial lines until a portrait.”<sup>15</sup> While studying abroad, David sent Moša art books, so it is possible that the handbook came from him.

While in Vienna David Pijade would have learned about the Jewish national and cultural renaissance. A number of Sephardic Jewish students studying there were members of Balkan Jewish student societies. In 1896 a group of them, originally from Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Rustchuk, decided to form an academic society of Sephardic Jews (*Sociedad de los Judíos Sefardíes en Viena*) which they named *Esperanza* (“hope” in Judeo-Spanish).<sup>16</sup> The society served social and cultural aims, helping its members develop an awareness of their Sephardic heritage by studying its language, history, literature, and philosophy, as well as by discussing common problems. In addition, it offered an array of academic facilities and activities: a large, multilingual library and regular literary evenings and lectures.<sup>17</sup> Although it is uncertain whether David Pijade was

---

writers, and artists, attended Belgrade’s prestigious First Boy’s High School (*Gymnasia*) known for its strict demands and high level of teaching; see Nešović, Moša Pijade, 41–43.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>16</sup> On *Esperanza* see Avram Pinto, “Jevrejska društva u Sarajevu,” in *Spomenica 400 godina od dolaska Jevreja u Bosnu i Hercegovinu, 1566–1966*, ed. Samuel Kamhi et al. (Sarajevo: Oslobođenje, 1966), 185–86; id., *Jevreji Sarajeva i Bosne i Hercegovine*, (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1987), 149–52. See also Emil Kerenji, “Jewish Citizens of Socialist Yugoslavia: Politics of Jewish Identity in a Socialist State, 1944–1974” (Ph.D. diss., The University of Michigan, 2008), 48–49; Ayala Amor and Stephanie von Schmädell, “Identitätskurse und Politisierung der Sepharden in Wien am Beispiel des Studentenvereins *Esperanza* (1896–1924),” *Transversal: Zeitschrift für Jüdische Studien* 11, no. 2 (2010): 83–102; Ivana Vučina Simović, “Los sefardíes ante su lengua: los esperancistas de Sarajevo,” in *Sefarad an der Donau: Lengua y Literatura de los Sefardíes en Tierras de los Habsburgo*, ed. Michael Studemund-Halévy, Christian Liebl, Ivana Vučina Simović (Barcelona: Tirocinio, 2013), 341–60.

<sup>17</sup> Several testimonies and documents relating to early twentieth-century activities of the *Esperanza* society are to be found in The Association of Jewish Immigrants from Former Yugoslavia Archives named after Ethel and Yakir Eventov, The Central Archives for the

also a member of Esperanza, he most certainly knew its Belgrade members and probably took advantage of the cultural activities the society offered.

Aside from Esperanza there was also Bar Giora, a Balkan Jewish student organization in Vienna, which, in contrast to the former, had a clear Zionist orientation. Founded in 1902, five years after the first Zionist Congress in Basel, Bar Giora, named after Simeon Bar Giora, a Judean general in the war against the Romans in the first century CE, was open to both Sephardim and Ashkenazim. Still, the latter accounted for the majority of its members. Bar Giora's official name stated that it was a "Society of Jewish academics from Yugoslav lands." Thus, while supporting the Zionist movement which intended to unite Jews by forging a new national consciousness, Bar Giora's members also embraced the concept of "Yugoslavism"—the unification of southern Slavs and establishment of their country. Despite ideological differences, the ties between the two societies, Esperanza and Bar Giora, were strong and some Esperanza members were also ardent supporters of Herzlian Zionism.<sup>18</sup>

It was not surprising that student societies such as Esperanza and Bar Giora appeared on the scene in fin-de-siècle Vienna. The capital of the multi-national Austro-Hungarian Empire was at that time a natural place for seeking national identity, especially among the Jews, who in the second half of the nineteenth century had been arriving in the city from other regions of the Empire such as Galicia, Bukovina, Hungary, or Bosnia and Herzegovina. Serbian and Bulgarian Sephardic Jews naturally sensed an affinity to the latter group, with whom they shared not only common Sephardic origins and the Judeo-Spanish language, but also historical ties with the Ottoman Empire and a familiarity with southern Slav languages and cultures. Kadima, the first Jewish nationalist student organization, which served as a model for later ones, had been established in Vienna in 1882 by Nathan Birnbaum, a writer, philosopher, and one of the originators of pre-Herzlian Zionist ideology. Birnbaum put forward the idea that the Jews were an ethnic entity, a people, rather than—as commonly accepted then—Austrians (or Magyars, Germans, etc.) of the Mosaic faith.<sup>19</sup>

History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem, file B-221 (hereafter Eventov Archives). See also Freidenreich, *Jews of Yugoslavia*, 151; Kerenji, "Jewish Citizens of Socialist Yugoslavia," 49.

18 See Kerenji, "Jewish Citizens of Socialist Yugoslavia," 49–52. An unpublished article about Dr Isaac Alcalay includes a description of a Hanukkah ball organized by him in the winter of 1902 in Vienna, at the Esperanza society, which hosted Theodor Herzl himself (Eventov Archives, file B-221).

19 On Nathan Birnbaum and the Kadima student society, see Jess Olson, *Nathan Birnbaum and Jewish Modernity: Architect of Zionism, Yiddishism, and Orthodoxy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 24–66.



One of the important aspects of the Jewish cultural renaissance promoted by Jewish national movements emerging during the fin-de-siècle in central and eastern Europe was the revival of visual arts. *Ost und West*, the illustrated monthly for modern Jewry published between 1901 and 1923 in Berlin, very quickly became a popular source of information for all Jews interested in the revival of Jewish culture and arts, especially those who read German. One of the main aims of the journal was to bring the rich east European Jewish tradition to secular Western Jews, while introducing modern Western scholarship to Jews in the East. With its numerous reproductions of Jewish images and art works created by a growing number of artists of Jewish origin, *Ost und West* also served as an important trigger for imagining a new Jewish national identity which—along with history, literature, folklore, and music—would also include visual arts.<sup>20</sup>

Significantly for the Pijade brothers, throughout the 1902 issues of *Ost und West* one of the reoccurring subjects among both the reproduced images and the published articles was Moses. Among the reproduced images were such famous paintings as Rembrandt's *Moses Breaking the Tablets of the Law*, but also a study with the same title prepared by German-Jewish contemporary artist Lesser Ury.<sup>21</sup> In addition, a lengthy essay by Bernhard Münz, the Viennese author of numerous philosophical works, entitled "Moses in the Light of the Jewish National Soul" was published in the January 1902 issue of the journal.<sup>22</sup> Moses, the biblical prophet and leader of the Israelites whom, according to the Bible, he freed from slavery in Egypt and led towards the Promised Land, was a beloved Zionist icon. Herzl himself, with his vision of creating a Jewish state to which the exiled Jews of the Diaspora would return, was compared to a modern-day Moses—a comparison that may also explain the focus on this biblical persona in the 1902 issues of *Ost und West*.

It is quite possible then that David Pijade, who was at the time in Vienna, came across the 1902 issues of this journal. As a student of philosophy he would have read with interest Bernhard Münz's article, and sent the images of the renowned paintings of Moses reproduced in it to his artistically aspiring young brother. Perhaps it was this that inspired Moša to create his first

20 Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, "Defining 'Jewish Art' in 'Ost und West,' 1901–1908: A Study in the Nationalization of Jewish Culture," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 39 (1994): 83–110; Gilya Gerda Schmidt, *The Art and the Artists of the Fifth Zionist Congress, 1901: Heralds of a New Age* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003).

21 Lesser Ury, *Moses Breaking the Tablets of the Law*, (a study for a painting), *Ost und West*, 2, no. 12 (Dec. 1902): cols. 845–46.

22 Bernhard Münz, "Moses im Lichte der jüdischen Volksseele," *Ost und West*, 2, no. 1 (Jan. 1902): cols. 7–16.

artistic work—a drawing depicting Moses giving the Tablets of the Law to the Israelites.

When recalling these early school days, Dragoslav Ilić also mentions Moša's efforts to translate Nietzsche's writings, an ambitious project once again most probably influenced by David, who was, as noted above, himself interested in this modernist philosopher and involved in translating his work. David's interest in Nietzsche may have been encouraged by contemporary Jewish and Zionist writers, themselves inspired by his philosophy.<sup>23</sup> The third and fourth issues of *Ost und West* for 1902 included an article by Ahad Ha'am (Asher Ginsberg), one of the leading Hebrew essayists and the founder of cultural Zionism, entitled "Nietzscheanism and Jewishness."<sup>24</sup> It may have inspired both brothers to pursue their interest in the quest for a national identity and modernism. Thus, Moša's participation in his high school's literary society called "Hope," to whose events he contributed by reading his first prose essay, "What is Modern?" seemed to have been born out of such interests.<sup>25</sup>

Eager to devote all of his time and effort to becoming a modern artist, Moša soon left the high school and in the autumn of 1905, at the age of fifteen, registered at Belgrade's newly opened state-run Arts and Crafts School. But he soon left this school as well, rebelling against its conservative teaching methods which did not permit the use of a live model. Instead, he became a private student of the renowned Belgrade painter Paško Vučetić, a Dalmatian Serb who studied art in Venice, Florence, Munich, and Rome. At the time Vučetić was working on neo-baroque sketches for the ceiling decorations in the central hall of Belgrade's National Bank. While helping him with this project, Moša Pijade was encouraged by this Western-educated and more open-minded teacher to draw after a live model, to begin using color, and to paint landscapes.

Pijade's striving for more liberal and modern artistic expression paralleled developments on the local artistic and political scenes. A major event that combined both was the First Yugoslav Art Exhibition, which opened in Belgrade on 5 September 1904.<sup>26</sup> This important show exhibited almost five hundred works by about one hundred artists, was supported by the government and had great significance for the state. It celebrated the 100th anniversary of the

23 Jacob Golomb, *Nietzsche and Zion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

24 Ahad Ha'am, "Nietzscheanismus und Judentum," *Ost und West*, 2, no. 3 (March 1902): cols. 145–52; 2, no. 4 (April 1902): cols. 241–45.

25 Nešović, *Moša Pijade*, 43. The whereabouts of this essay are unknown. The "Nada" (Hope) Society provided the first platform for many future Serbian writers and poets from which they were able, through public readings, to share their creations and intellectual interests with their schoolmates and teachers.

26 Lazar Trifunović, *Srpsko slikarstvo 1900–1950* (Belgrade: Nolit, 1973), 449–51.

First Serbian Uprising and the coronation of King Peter I Karadjordjević. The king himself opened the exhibition, and art works by future leading Yugoslav artists were bought by the state to become the basis of the twentieth-century Yugoslav art collection of Belgrade's National Museum. It was an ambitious enterprise that not only promoted new trends in the local art scene, especially impressionism, but also by bringing together Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, and Bulgarian artists promoted the idea of Serbian-led south Slav cultural and political autonomy. Such an idea was in accordance with the pan-Slavic and Yugoslav movement ideology, which had been spreading throughout the region since the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>27</sup>

This ideology especially gained momentum after the 1903 assassination of Serbia's King Alexander Obrenović and the enthronement of King Peter and the new dynasty, which severed the Obrenovićs' political ties with the Austro-Hungarian Empire, turning instead towards Tsarist Russia as one of its major foreign supporters. The new political alliances ensured Serbia's striving for liberation of the southern Slavs from Ottoman and Austrian influences, and supported the new tendency toward unification of the region as an independent political entity under Serbian leadership. Not surprisingly, among those enthusiastically initiating cultural events to promote this new ideology, such as the First Yugoslav Art Exhibition, were high school and student youth organizations such as the Serbian and South Slav Group and Slavic South. In a youthful romantic and patriotic spirit, they promoted a new vision of the changed world for which they were prepared to struggle. In 1904 Moša Pijade, along with many of his high school friends, became a member of one such group.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, his interest in landscape painting during his period of study with Paško Vučetić may have been inspired by the works he saw at the exhibition, where the local landscape was shown as an expression of patriotism and "yearning for a liberated homeland."

<sup>27</sup> Andrew Baruch Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 5–9, 19–66. A strong connection between specifically Serbian nationalism and art was already evident in the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris, when first-generation Serbian artists exhibited in the Serbian pavilion large canvases depicting historical subjects which glorified their country's independent past in the Middle Ages, and its later suffering and heroic confrontation with the Turks; see Trifunović, *Srpsko slikarstvo 1900–1950*, 448–49. For a similar type of highly patriotic and nationalistic art which accompanied national movements emerging in the nineteenth century in central and east-central Europe, see Ezra Mendelsohn, *Painting a People: Maurycy Gottlieb and Jewish Art* (Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, 2002), 48.

<sup>28</sup> Nešović, *Moša Pijade*, 44.

Moša Pijade, who at the 1904 exhibition could have seen the latest works of prominent artists from Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia, was strongly impressed by the *plein air* and impressionist style present in their work.<sup>29</sup> This encounter encouraged him to follow in their footsteps by further pursuing his artistic training in Munich, then the center of modernism for numerous artists from eastern and central Europe, including the south Slav ones whose works he saw exhibited in Belgrade. His brother David's sojourn in Vienna and encouragement of his artistic vocation were crucial in Moša's decision, at the age of sixteen, to leave his home in Belgrade and come to Munich in the fall of 1906.

## 2 Fin-de-siècle Munich

In Munich Pijade first registered at the renowned art school of Prof. Heinrich Knirr. In the year prior to his arrival Anton Ažbe, the legendary teacher of most of the Slovenian and Serbian (along with many Russian and Polish) artists, had passed away,<sup>30</sup> a fact that probably explains Pijade's decision to study with Knirr, who was a more conservative artist, rigorously preparing his students for studies at Munich's Academy of Arts.<sup>31</sup> Both Knirr and Angelo Jank, Pijade's teacher at the Academy at which he registered in the second semester of the 1906/07 school year,<sup>32</sup> were at the time followers of the Munich Secession movement. Jank published illustrations in such famous Jugendstil art magazines as *Simplexissimuss* and *Jugend*.

No school projects or studies have survived from Pijade's Munich period. However, along with his art studies, he greatly enjoyed exploring the city's

29 The exhibited artists included: from Serbia—Djordje Krstić, Marko Murat, Miloš Predić, and Pavle-Paja Jovanović; from Croatia—Bela Čikoš Sesija and Celestin Medović; from Slovenia—Ivan Grohar, Matija Jama, and Rihard Jakopič; see Trifunović, *Srpsko slikarstvo 1900–1950*, 449–51.

30 On Anton Ažbe and his school, see Katarina Ambrozić, *Wege zur Moderne und die Ažbe-Schule in München* (Recklinghausen: Bongers, 1988); Marijan Tršar, *Anton Ažbe* (Ljubljana: Založba Park, 1991).

31 Prof. Heinrich Knirr (1862–1944) opened a private school for drawing and painting in Munich in 1888 which was attended by a number of young artists prior to continuing their studies at the Munich Art Academy. Among the best-known students of this school was Paul Klee who attended it between 1898 and 1901. During the Nazi period Knirr became Adolph Hitler's official painter and created several of his portraits; see Ernst Klee, *Das Kulturlexikon zum Dritten Reich: Wer war was vor und nach 1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2007), 317–18.

32 [http://matrikel.adbk.de/05ordner/mb\\_1884-1920/jahr\\_1907/matrikel-03313](http://matrikel.adbk.de/05ordner/mb_1884-1920/jahr_1907/matrikel-03313) (last accessed 20 April 2017).

cultural life and entertainment, and even published at that time his first piece of journalism, a review of dance performances that he and David had attended in Munich's theater. The review related to two then famous visiting female dancers—Cléo de Mérode, the beautiful French dancer of the Belle Époque, and the mysterious Saharet, whom Pijade misleadingly calls “a Spanish dancer.” Enchanted by the latter, Moša wrote about her in a letter to his brother that David Pijade later published in January 1908 in *Pregled*, the short-lived literary monthly published by Rajić and him. The young artist's description echoes in many ways his aesthetic and sexual imagination, and is worth quoting here at length:

Even as a perfect artist I would not be able to paint her, even less to describe her. Ah, she is amazing, joyful as a dawn and entirely *a woman*.... Yes, she is amazing, this sensuous Spanish woman.... Watching her from the last row of the gallery, perched up there, I appeared to myself as a drunken Bacchus on a throne ... and she dances for me.... I laugh loudly, intoxicated, wobbling on my throne, and ... burn with a divine fire, as did the Greek gods before beautiful earthly women....

When I stepped outside after her dance; the cold weather had little effect on me. And then I wished I had millions because they were needed for an adventure I wished to have. Imagine: in a richly decorated oriental room, with ornate Arabian columns and big golden hanging lamps, covered by rich Pirot *kilims*, I sit in the corner and recline on silk cushions, smoking a long pipe and sipping black coffee, while she—Saharet—dances before me her dance of woman and love. No, I am not any more Bacchus, now I am an Arabian prince, with big earrings, suntanned, who sprawls bare-chested on soft cushions embroidered with gold, while she dances before him, there only for him in order to enflame his manly feelings, to make him drunk with the gods' purest nectar, and to light up his soul with beauty and art.<sup>33</sup>

Two prominent aesthetic traditions emerge from this vivid essay written by the then seventeen-year-old Pijade: the Nietzschean one, celebrating the drunkenness of the senses in a Dionysian (Bacchus-like) fashion, and the oriental one stemming from nineteenth-century west-European Orientalism. In the same issue of *Pregled*, along with Moša's impressions of Saharet, appeared also David Pijade's translations of passages from Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*. Moša Pijade's Orientalist celebration of the senses

33 Moša Pijade, “Saharet,” *Pregled*, January 1908, 123–24.

thus went along well with the modernist tone of the literary choices made by *Pregled's* editors. Possibly aware of the famous art nouveau illustrations for Wilde's *Salomé* created in 1896 by Aubrey Beardsley, Moša, in aspiring to paint Saharet's image, allied himself with the decadent, erotic, "oriental" imagery that was part of the Jugendstil popular at that time in Munich.

Saharet (Clarissa Campbell, 1879–1942) was actually of Australian origin. She became popular towards the end of the nineteenth century in America as a variety star and only in 1897 set out on her European tour. She became especially fashionable in Munich, where such famous artists as Franz von Lenbach (1899) and Franz von Stuck (1902, 1906) painted her portraits. Like Pijade, the latter saw in her a sexually liberated, fin-de-siècle *femme fatale* of the kind then prominent in European art-nouveau culture. However, in contrast to the Western Orientalist artists who imagined the sensual Orient from the outside, often in a patronizing way,<sup>34</sup> in Pijade's fantasy of Saharet dancing in a richly decorated chamber, that included among other items famous *kilims* (rugs) from the southern Serbian town of Pirot, they are linked—she, the "Spanish" dancer and he, the Serbian-Sephardic (Spanish) painter—as equals. His imagining himself as a bare-chested Arabian prince with earrings, smoking a long pipe only further emphasized his willing acceptance of "otherness." The young Pijade, registered at Munich's Art Academy as a "Serb of the Mosaic Faith," thus managed with this erotic "oriental" fantasy to—consciously or unconsciously—connect the contemporary Western art and culture he was encountering in Germany with his own "non-European" Balkan, Serbian, and Sephardic worlds.<sup>35</sup> It is noteworthy that in 1907 a new Sephardic synagogue built in the Moorish style was inaugurated in Belgrade (fig. 1.3). Although this style had become popular all over Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century and was adopted mainly for Ashkenazic—usually Reform or Neolog—

34 As claimed by Edward Said, in his much discussed *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

35 Such an Orientalist tendency existed among enlightened German and Austro-Hungarian Jews who, since the second half of the nineteenth century deliberately aligned themselves with the Orient and Islam, finding them much closer to true Judaism than the Western-Christian societies which still refused to accept them as equals, or Jewish Orthodoxy holding them back from inclusion and modernity; see John M. Efron, "Orientalism and the Jewish Historical Gaze," in *Orientalism and the Jews*, ed. Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek J. Penslar (Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, 2005), 80–93. For Maurycy Gottlieb, a Polish artist of Jewish Ashkenazic origin, imagining himself as an Arab, see Mendelsohn, *Painting a People*, 108–10; Mirjam Rajner, "The Orient in Jewish Artistic Creativity: The Case of Maurycy Gottlieb's Self-Portrait in Arab Dress," in *Place in Modern Jewish Culture and Society*, ed. Richard I. Cohen, *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 30 (2018): 129–62.





FIGURE 1.3  
Bet Israel Sephardic synagogue,  
Belgrade, inaugurated 1907, photograph,  
K. Sinagoge-Srbija, Reg. No. 1771. Jewish  
Historical Museum, Belgrade

synagogues, in the case of Belgrade's Sephardic synagogue its Moorish style, recalling Islamic architecture in Spain, was actually much closer to that city's Sephardic community's oriental roots.<sup>36</sup>

While in Munich Moša Pijade had the opportunity to meet a number of painters from Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia, some of whose works he had seen prior to leaving Belgrade at the First Yugoslav Art Exhibition in 1904. He was especially impressed by the works of artists belonging to the Croat school in Munich—Miroslav Kraljević (1885–1913) and especially Vladimir Becić (1886–1954) and Josip Račić (1885–1908)—whom he met and befriended.<sup>37</sup> All of them were under the influence of Wilhelm Leibl who, himself initially influenced by the seventeenth-century Dutch masters, turned in the late 1860s towards the art of Gustave Courbet and, after a prolonged visit to Paris, towards that of Édouard Manet. Manet's art became an important catalyst of modernism also for south Slav artists who absorbed French influences via Munich. This often resulted in a tendency, once in Paris, to ignore contemporary French art, and instead to remain closer to more "secure" (and old-fashioned) choices. Like Manet, they often admired and learned from the great Spanish

36 Ivan Davidson Kalmar, "Moorish Style: Orientalism, the Jews and Synagogue Architecture," *Jewish Social Studies* 7, no. 3 (Spring/Summer 2001): 68–100.

37 Nešović, *Moša Pijade*, 45.



masters—Velasquez and Goya, artists who have also been noted as an important inspiration for the young Pijade.<sup>38</sup>

While studying in Munich, Pijade also gained an indirect knowledge of modern French art by reading Julius Meier-Graefe, the important German-Jewish art historian who, while also an admirer of Manet, “discovered” the French impressionists, Cézanne and Van Gogh for the German audience.<sup>39</sup> Pijade’s multifaceted artistic and intellectual path thus resulted from the multilingual and multicultural upbringing cultivated in his Serbian Jewish Sephardic home. Once in Munich he was able to avail himself of the rich variety of resources these new surroundings offered him.

Unfortunately, Pijade’s studies in Munich were prematurely cut short due to his father’s financial difficulties back in Belgrade. It is not entirely clear what was the nature of these difficulties, which apparently caused the liquidation of the Pijade brothers’ firm in 1909 and even gave rise to accusations of bankruptcy fraud. According to Nešović, the reasons were political. Economic sanctions imposed on Serbia by the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a means of pressuring it to acknowledge the 1908 annexation of Bosnia resulted in a crisis that affected, among others, the Pijade family business. Indeed, the entire period between 1906 and 1911 was marked by the so-called “Tariff War” between Serbia and Austro-Hungary. But, it actually resulted in economic progress for Serbia: independence from the Dual Monarchy, development of new trade ties with France, England, and Russia, and increased exports. The Pijade firm, possibly dependent on the import of textiles from Vienna and unable to find new partners, may have experienced severe financial hardships.<sup>40</sup>

38 Miodrag B. Protić, *Slikarstvo XX veka. Umetnost na tlu Jugoslavije* (Belgrade: Jugoslavija, 1982), 25–26. For Pijade’s admiration for these artists, see Nešović, *Moša Pijade*, 45.

39 Nešović, *Moša Pijade*, 45. See, for instance, Meier-Graefe’s *Manet und sein Kreis* (Berlin: J. Bard, 1902); *Impressionisten: Guys, Manet, Van Gogh, Pissarro, Cézanne: mit einer Einleitung über den Wert der französischen Kunst* (Munich: R. Piper, 1907); *Vincent van Gogh: mit vierzig Abbildungen und dem Faksimile eines Briefes* (Munich: R. Piper, 1910).

40 Nešović, *Moša Pijade*, 57. On the “Tariff War” and Serbian Jewish involvement, see Koljanin, *Jevreji i antisemitizam*, 174.

One of the clear indicators of such a decline is the significant difference between Sara and Samuilo Pijade’s gravestones in the Sephardic Cemetery in Belgrade. While Sara Pijade’s grave is marked by an obelisk-shaped monument of black marble with a lengthy epitaph in Hebrew and Serbian Cyrillic letters surrounded by an elegant iron-wrought fence, Samuilo’s is a simple horizontal stone slab with a few barely visible lines in Hebrew and Serbian. Moreover, this gravestone also bears the name of Uziel Pijade, his father. Since at the time of Samuilo’s death in 1927 the Old Jewish Cemetery in Belgrade’s Palilula district had been out of use for a long time and was soon to be sold, his father Uziel’s remains (he had died in 1875) seem to have been transferred to this so-called New Cemetery (still active today) and buried in the same grave with his recently deceased son;

### 3 The Bohemian Paris

Despite his father's financial difficulties, Moša did not yet return home; rather, in February 1909 he moved from Munich to Paris, following in the footsteps of many artists attracted by modernism. He settled in Boulevard Raspail, not far from Carrefour Vavin, in the heart of Montparnasse. By 1909 this had become the center of the *École de Paris*, the name applied to a large group of foreign artists who lived there and created a lively, highly creative, diverse, and open-minded artistic community comprised of painters, sculptors, gallery-owners, art dealers, and collectors. From the beginning of the twentieth century, and especially towards World War I and in the interwar period, Russian, Polish, American, Japanese, Scandinavian, Italian, and German artists, to name the main groups, lived and created there side by side. A number of them, especially from central and eastern Europe, were of Jewish descent. They all sought the freedom of artistic expression and life-style often denied to them in the more conservative societies from which they came. Among the best known names connected with Montparnasse in 1909 were Amedeo Modigliani, Konstantin Brancusi, Jules Pascin, Sonia Delaunay, Jacques Lipchitz, and the art collectors Gertrude and Leo Stein—to name but a few.<sup>41</sup>

Very little is known about the year Pijade spent there and one can only try to imagine his life during this short period. He studied at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, an alternative to the École des Beaux-Arts, Paris' famous and conservative Academy of Fine Arts. The Académie de la Grande Chaumière was similar to several other such establishments at Montparnasse, among them the Académie Colarossi and the Académie Matisse, where for a very low fee the artists could practice drawing or painting after a live, nude model, often learning from each other. The *maître* would come only once a week to correct the works. The Académie de la Grande Chaumière, offering studies both in sculpture and painting, was founded ca. 1902 by the Swiss artist Martha Stettler, who especially encouraged independent art, rejecting strict academic rules. Among the teachers of painting at the time Pijade studied there were

---

see Mirjam Rajner, "Jevrejska groblja u Beogradu," *Zbornik* (Belgrade: Jewish Historical Museum) 6 (1992): 208–11. I would like to thank Raka Levi for locating and photographing both graves and the relevant page from the Belgrade Jewish Community's death register.

41 *The Circle of Montparnasse: Jewish Artists in Paris 1905–1945*, [catalogue, The Jewish Museum, New York], ed. Kenneth E. Silver and Romy Golan (New York: Universe Books, 1985); Suzanne Pagé et al., *L'école de Paris, 1904–1929: la part de l'autre*, [exhibition catalogue], Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 30 novembre 2000–11 mars 2001 (Paris: Paris-Musées, 2000).

probably Jacques Emile Blanche, Lucien Simon, and Walter Sickert.<sup>42</sup> Though Nešović informs us that Pijade mainly enjoyed visiting the Louvre and found himself most attracted to Édouard Manet, the artist he had already admired in Munich,<sup>43</sup> his new teachers played a role in furthering his artistic formation as well. When Pijade later recalled this year in Paris, he remembered an adventure in which he, penniless like most of the young immigrant artists in his milieu, rode the metro one entire winter night with his friends in order to keep warm.<sup>44</sup> It is not clear who were his friends in Paris, but living and studying in the area of Carrefour Vavin he most probably frequented a number of cafés; furthermore, coming from Munich and fluent in German, he may have met there artists associated with the Café Le Dôme, among whom the best known were Rudolf Levy, Walter Bondy, Bela Czobel, Eugen Spiro, and Jules Pascin, who, like Pijade, stemmed from central and southeast European cities.<sup>45</sup>

The best known among them and closest in age to Pijade was Jules Pascin (1885–1930). Moreover, Pascin, whose real name was Julius Mordechai Pinchas, was of Sephardic origin, born in Vidin, Bulgaria, the city from which stemmed Pijade's grandfather. A native Ladino-speaker like Pijade, he grew up in Bucharest as the son of a rich grain merchant, received his early education in Vienna, and upon refusing to enter the family business turned to the arts. In early works such as his 1907 *Turkish Family*,<sup>46</sup> Pascin tried somewhat humorously to show the contrast between the west-European-looking women (some of them sporting a fur-trimmed coat, high-heeled boots, a coquettish hat with a feather, and holding a cat decorated with a bow tie) and two men belonging to different generations and cultures: a bespectacled, fez-wearing elderly man (standing to the far right) who seemed to be the artist's grandfather, and himself, in the background, in an elegant suit with a top hat on his head—a contrast certainly well known to Pijade from his own Belgrade family. Moreover, Pascin also imagined himself as an oriental prince when in 1908 he created a self-portrait with a pink turban, thus stressing his non-European, Balkan, and Sephardic origins, as did Pijade in his sensual imagining of himself as an Arabian prince enjoying Saharet's dancing.

42 <http://www.artbiogs.co.uk/2/schools/academie-de-la-grande-chaumiere>; <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/jacques-emile-blanche-765> (last accessed 20 September 2017).

43 Nešović, *Moša Pijade*, 58.

44 Ibid.; see also Aleš Bebler, "Moša u Parizu," *Borba* (Belgrade), March 18, 1957, 2.

45 *The Circle of Montparnasse*, 72–73.

46 [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jules\\_Pascin\\_-\\_The\\_Turkish\\_Family,\\_1907.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jules_Pascin_-_The_Turkish_Family,_1907.jpg) (last accessed 14 July 2019)

In addition to studying at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, Pijade also visited Bretagne and briefly stayed in Pont Réan. Although Nešović stressed that the move to a village was primarily an economic solution for the impoverished young artist, the decision to visit picturesque Bretagne certainly had a long tradition among Parisian artists. By doing so Moša Pijade followed in the footsteps of numerous modernists, notably Gauguin and the artists of the Pont-Aven school, who sought in Bretagne's local culture and customs a source for the renewal of their art. Pijade may have been directly inspired to go and paint in Bretagne by Lucien Simon, one of his teachers at Grande Chaumière. Simon belonged to the so-called "La bande noire" (also known as "The Nubians") who, inspired by the harsh life of Bretagne's peasants and fishermen, hoped to revive Gustave Courbet's realism and formed painterly compositions by using dark, often black, masses.<sup>47</sup> Such artistic choices must have even further encouraged Pijade's inclination towards realist form and dark colors.

The stay at Pont Réan, a picturesque village on the river Vilaine, left a lasting impression upon the young Pijade. He apparently used the paintings he created there to pay his rent to Chartie, the owner of the inn in which he lived. As he recalled later, one of the paintings was a large still life with eggs—a breakfast that Chartie brought him during his stay, which he used as a subject for his painting.<sup>48</sup> Many years later, in 1927, while imprisoned in Sremska Mitrovica due to his leftist political activities, Pijade painted once again an oil entitled *Still Life with Eggs* which, with its white cloth, pink jar with an oval tilted opening, apples, and cut brown boards in the background, seems to be a simplified version of early Cézanne still lifes, especially his 1883–87 *Still Life with a Commode*.<sup>49</sup> Thus, although the early Pont Réan work remains unknown, Pijade's choice of Cézanne as a model to depict a similar subject many years later may suggest the use of firm, solid form also in this early lost work. While the French work seems to have been inspired by the actual breakfast (which included eggs) brought to Pijade by the inn's owner, this later version, while preserving a memorable breakfast, may have had another resonance beside its homage to Cézanne. As noted, Moša's father Samuilo died in 1927, and the

47 See, for example, Simon's *Procession à Penmarc'h*, 1900, at the Musée d'Orsay or another follower's, Charles Cottet's turn-of-the-century *Mourning, Brittany* at the Cincinnati Art Museum.

48 Nešović, *Moša Pijade*, 60–61. None of those paintings created in Pont Réan were preserved.

49 Pijade's 1927 *Still Life with Eggs* is in the National Museum in Belgrade; for Cézanne's painting, since 1912 in the Neue Pinakothek in Munich, see <https://www.sammlung.pina.koethe.de/en/artist/paul-cezanne/stilleben-mit-kommode> (last accessed 14 July 2019)

choice of eggs may have been connected to the Jewish custom according to which the mourners' first meal after the funeral ("the meal of consolation") includes hard boiled eggs. Along with other rounded foods such as lentils or round bread eaten on such occasions, the eggs symbolize the cycle of life which never stops and also includes suffering and dying.<sup>50</sup> Then in prison due to his political activities as a member of the outlawed Communist Party, and far from home, Pijade probably remembered such a meal that his family may have eaten after the death of his mother. While unable to perform and uninterested in observing any traditional Jewish mourning custom, his decision to paint this still life, which—like the one painted in Bretagne—included hard boiled eggs, may have been not only a creative outlet of a painter but also motivated by Pijade's wish and need to express his sadness upon his father's death.

During his life Samuilo Pijade had supported his youngest son's choice of an artistic profession, and had tried to help him complete his art studies abroad. In September 1909 he applied in Moša's name for a scholarship from the Serbian Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. Claiming that he could not support his son by himself, Samuilo asked for a stipend to enable Moša to complete his studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich. He also wrote that his son, being unable to pay the tuition fee, was nevertheless living in Paris and studying art on his own.<sup>51</sup> As mentioned, Moša Pijade was studying in Paris at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, a private school more advanced in its teaching methods than the conservative Munich Academy. The stipend for which his father had applied would have returned Moša to more traditional art than what he practiced in bohemian Montparnasse. The question is whether Samuilo applied to the ministry because of financial need, or because he hoped that a state stipend would secure for his son a more stable education and future. In any case, the ministry did not approve the application for the stipend, but decided to give to "Moša Pijade, an art student in Munich, in order to finish his studies" five hundred gold dinars as a one-time grant.<sup>52</sup> But, instead of returning to Munich, Pijade decided to come home, to Belgrade.

50 <http://www.jewish-funeral-guide.com/tradition/condolence-meal.htm> (last accessed 18 November 2017).

51 Arhiv Jugoslavije, Fond br. 513; Fasc. br. 38. My thanks to Milan Koljanin for providing this information.

52 Ibid.

#### 4 Pijade's Self-Portraits: In Search of an Identity

Upon his return to Belgrade it seems that Pijade at first hoped to hold on to the bohemian atmosphere of Munich and Paris. "Amorous as he was," Nešović writes, he did not forget "to bring along his favored postcards with pictures of his youthful flames, spectacular Saharet and charming Cléo, and with many other half-dressed bar beauties that he had admired in Parisian cabarets on Montmartre and in the Moulin Rouge."<sup>53</sup>

In his first known painting, created in 1910—a striking half naked self-portrait (fig. 1.4), the then twenty-year-old artist provocatively exposed his muscular torso while preserving a fashionably intellectual look provided by



FIGURE 1.4 Moša Pijade, *Self-portrait*, 1910, oil on canvas, 77 × 55 cm, Inv. No. 032\_116. National Museum in Belgrade

53 Nešović, *Moša Pijade*, 59.



his pince-nez, thin moustache, and a modish haircut. His artist's palette, while creating a parallel to the shape of his torso, bears Pijade's signature written *à la* French—Piyadé, and not in Serbian Cyrillic. In contrast, the view through the window is of a courtyard with a row of wooden sheds typical of Belgrade's Čubura quarter, where Pijade rented his first studio. In the first decade of the twentieth century Čubura was made up of small one-storey houses with gardens, scattered on the banks of a then still existing brook. Aside from various craftsmen, the quarter and its taverns attracted bohemians, poets, and painters.<sup>54</sup>

At first glance it seems possible that Pijade used himself as a nude model simply due to the lack of live models. In conservative, provincial, pre-World War I Belgrade modeling was considered immoral. Nešović writes that when Pijade and his friend, the young Serbian painter Živorad Nastasijević, set out to paint a portrait of a pretty young girl commissioned by her family (they did such portraits in order to earn some money), her parents allowed her to stay alone and model for them only for a very short time, since it was then thought "shameful to model for someone, even when dressed."<sup>55</sup> Pre-World War I puritanism was, as shown by Predrag J. Marković, especially prevalent in Serbian society until attitudes towards sexuality changed after the Great War.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, when compared to the rare female nude as painted for instance by the well-known artist Nadežda Petrović (1873–1915), Pijade's self-portrait appears strikingly different: he is much more interested in form, modeling, and dark hues than in the expressive brushstrokes and bright colors that mark Petrović's art.<sup>57</sup> In this self-portrait Pijade was paying tribute to the artists and art he had learned from and admired—from Wilhelm Leibl and Édouard Manet whom he had already encountered in Munich to the art of his French teachers at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière. As we have seen, in Munich Pijade also befriended Croat artists Miroslav Kraljević, Vladimir Becić, and Josip Račić, who showed esthetic preferences similar to his.<sup>58</sup> Even now, back home, it seems that he was closer to this Croatian "Munich circle" than to the works of the fellow Belgrade artists

54 Ibid., 66; Đorđe Bobić, "Čubura u tranziciji a tek Čuburci ...!" [http://blog.b92.net/text/21474/Cubura-u-tranziciji-a-tek-Cuburci—/](http://blog.b92.net/text/21474/Cubura-u-tranziciji-a-tek-Cuburci/) (last accessed 5 March 2018)

55 Nešović, *Moša Pijade*, 67.

56 See his chapter "Seksualnost između privatnog i javnog u 20. veku" and especially "Otkrivanje tela" in the outstanding collection of articles, *Privatni život kod Srba u dvadesetom veku*, ed. Milan Ristović (Belgrade: Clio, 2007), 117–21.

57 For Nadežda Petrović's paintings see Lidija Merenik, *Nadežda Petrović: projekat i sudbina*, (Belgrade: Topy—Vojnoizdavački zavod, 2006).

58 See Božidar Gagro, *Slikarstvo minhenskog kruga: Račić, Becić, Herman, Kraljević*, [catalogue] (Zagreb: Umjetnički paviljon, 1973).





FIGURE 1.5  
Vladimir Becić, *Female Nude*, 1906, oil on  
canvas, 76 × 52 cm, Inv. No. MLU-S-132.  
Museum of Fine Arts, Osijek

with whom he began to associate. These artists, including Borivoje Stevanović, Kosta Miličević, and Živorad Nastasijević, painted mainly outdoor scenes in an impressionist manner, quite differently from Pijade. In 1910 he also became associated with the Yugoslav art association Lada, which brought together former Munich students and inclined towards traditionalism in art.<sup>59</sup>

The firmness of the body's forms and the dark colors in Pijade's work actually recall Vladimir Becić's *Nude* painted in Munich in 1906 (fig. 1.5). The framed reflection in the mirror in Becić's work corresponds to Pijade's window framing the view of the courtyard. Similarly, the only patch of bright color appearing as a reflection in the window pane in Pijade's painting is reminiscent of impressionism and corresponds to the colorful Japanese fan tucked above the mirror in Becić's interior. Such a fan can also be understood as alluding to their mutual acknowledgment of impressionists' manner in French painting, but also a disinclination to follow it. This visual dialogue seems to be based upon their similar artistic development. Both Pijade and Becić had studied in Munich,

59 Ristović, "Drvar," 161. Originally founded after the First Yugoslav Art Exhibition in 1904 by Croatian, Slovenian, Serbian, and Bulgarian artists, Lada, whose Serbian section was at its most active by 1910, was committed to "preservation of fine arts" and hoped to secure the means to do so by mounting exhibitions at home and abroad; see Trifunović, *Srpsko slikarstvo 1900–1950*, 451–52.

first at Knirr's school followed by the Art Academy, and both had enrolled in 1909 at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris.<sup>60</sup>

In choosing to portray himself partially nude Pijade signaled his early embrace of modernity. The brothers Moša and David, living in Munich and Vienna at the outset of the twentieth century, were surrounded by the Jugendstil and Secession cultures. Erotic images and overt, provocative sexuality were common characteristics of the new art created in both cities, from Franz von Stuck's *femme fatale* to Egon Schiele's nude self-portraits.<sup>61</sup> Such stimulants powerfully challenged the chastity and morals of the provincial, patriarchal milieu from which the Pijade brothers stemmed. While trying to preserve at least something of the sensuality and eroticism he had encountered during his studies abroad, once Pijade was back in provincial Belgrade with a middle-class family steeped in bourgeois respectability, he opted for a much more modest celebration of the senses, painting himself sitting in the seclusion of his bohemian studio—not as the Arabian prince he had once imagined himself to be, but still half-naked and manly.

However, in the course of the next year such youthful fantasies seem to have disappeared from the young artist's canvases; in the 1911 *Self-portrait* Pijade appears already entirely changed (fig. 1.6). Fully dressed in fashionable contemporary clothes, a crisp white shirt, and a green vest with a cravat, the artist turns towards the spectator as if in passing. This absence of a more firm, frontal presence in the painting along with the image of a carefully dressed young man looking at us sideways, through his pince-nez, seems to allude to a new stage—and a new identity—in his life. The absence of his professional tools, palette and brushes, indicates a distancing from creating art, as is clear when Pijade's self-portrait is compared to that of Frédéric Bazille, the impressionist painter whose work he may have known from Paris (fig. 1.7).

Indeed, at that time Pijade had already begun working as an art critic and a journalist. Unable to make a living by painting, from 1911 on he began to write for Belgrade papers: *Pravda*, *Mali Žurnal*, *Pijemont*, and *Novo vreme*.<sup>62</sup> Despite his love for painting, Pijade quickly discovered that the dynamic journalistic profession was also well suited to his temperament. He may have been encouraged to try writing by his brother David, who served him as a role model.

60 Zdenko Rus, "Becić, Vladimir," (1983), *Hrvatski biografski leksikon* (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, online, 2009–2017) <http://hbl.lzmk.hr/clanak.aspx?id=1546> (last accessed 5 March 2018).

61 For Egon Schiele's 1910 half nude self-portrait see [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Self-Portrait\\_with\\_Arm\\_Twisted\\_above\\_Head\\_by\\_Egon\\_Schiele.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Self-Portrait_with_Arm_Twisted_above_Head_by_Egon_Schiele.jpg) (last accessed 5 March 2018).

62 Ristović, "Drvar," 161.

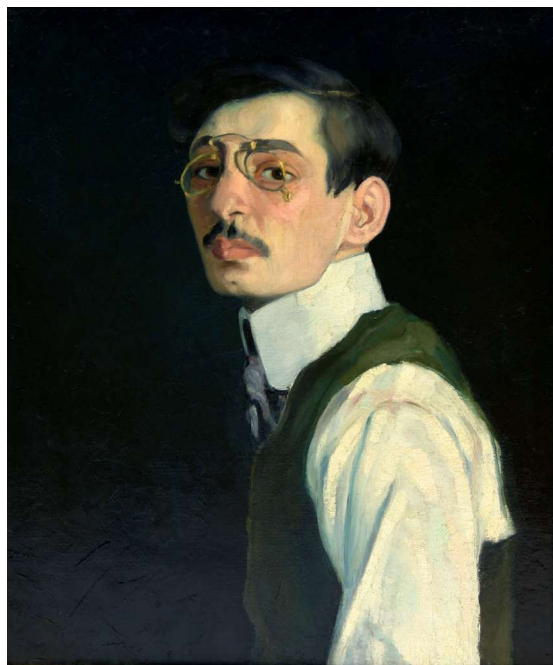


FIGURE 1.6 Moša Pijade, *Self-portrait*, 1911, oil on canvas, 58 × 48 cm, Inv. No. 032\_2369. National Museum in Belgrade



FIGURE 1.7 Frédéric Bazille, *Self-portrait*, 1865–1866, oil on canvas, 108.9 × 71.1 cm, restricted gift of Mr. and Mrs. Frank H. Woods in memory of Mrs. Edward Harris Brewer, 1962.336.  
© THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO / ART RESOURCE, NY

As early as 1907, in his short-lived literary journal *Pregled*, David expressed a daring criticism of current Serbian cultural achievements, complaining about provincialism and false intellectualism, while calling for recognition of the true merits of folk poetry and folk heritage preserved since the Middle Ages: “We Serbs are very careless. The best proof is a poor taste towards the beautiful which reigns among us.... The fault lies with our city’s *intelligentsia*, with those whose words the folk listens to—‘our learned educated people.’ The spiritual elite, which we actually do not have....” While complaining that “our arts are still in swaddling clothes and developing, but very slowly when compared to our spiritual abilities, even less so [when compared] to the inherited treasure of our forefathers,” David Pijade calls for a Serbian renaissance, for a local Michelangelo who will revive the wealth of Serbian “antiquity,” i.e. the arts and heritage of the Middle Ages, the folk treasure which lies in folk poetry, but can also offer motifs for music, painting, and architecture.<sup>63</sup> Although colored by a fiery Serbian patriotism, David’s proposal echoes similar nation-building programs in search of identity that were characteristic of the fin-de-siècle central and east European national movements: Hungarian, Russian, Polish, Bulgarian—and also Jewish.<sup>64</sup> Thus, when he decided to write art criticism Moša Pijade was following in his brother’s footsteps. In 1912, a year after he created a self-portrait showing himself without the artist’s tools, he wrote a lengthy review of the Fourth Yugoslav Art Exhibition held in Belgrade and published it in *Mali Žurnal*, the opposition newspaper known for its radical and democratic stand.<sup>65</sup> This review, written as a collection of essays critically referring to various art groups and individual artists, clearly set forth Moša Pijade’s artistic and political views supporting Yugoslavism and leftist liberalism, while opposing provincialism and chauvinistic nationalism.

Though perhaps discouraged by the difficulty of earning a living as an artist, but also aware of the power of the printed word, Pijade continued to write, hoping—through sharp criticism and suggestions for new directions, primarily those open towards art coming from Paris—to change the local art scene. His opinions were new and radical, and it was only after World War II that the art establishment fully realized their value. For instance, while calling upon young artists to fully recognize the importance of Cézanne (whom he himself deeply admired), he also warned them against falling under his influence and losing

63 David Pijade, “Srpski Renesans,” *Pregled*, September 1907, 1–6.

64 The German-Jewish journal *Ost und West*, most probably known to David Pijade, projected such a cultural program aimed at creating a Jewish national identity at the very onset of the twentieth century; see note 20 above.

65 Moša Pijade, “Kroz jugoslovensku izložbu,” reprinted in *Moša Pijade, o umetnosti*, 42–86.

their own originality. While referring to the hotly debated Serbian “national style” as the expression of national identity, he sharply criticised contemporary eclectic creations, and called for the recognition of mediaeval folk poetry and the autochthone Byzantine and Romanesque style characteristic of icons and fresco painting (as had his brother David, in his 1907 article). Simultaneously, he advocated the acceptance of modernism as a universal artistic language.<sup>66</sup> In addition, the young Pijade increasingly became involved with criticism of public monuments as an unnecessary expenditure of public funds and questioned the nationalistic motifs they embodied.<sup>67</sup> Although often experiencing criticism and rejection of his ideas and often creating enemies, by employing his wide resources Pijade acted as a forerunner of new ideas. He became one of those non-Jewish Jews, to use Isaac Deutscher’s definition, who make use of their Jewish background and “otherness” to preach open-mindedness and expand boundaries.<sup>68</sup>

In 1913 Pijade applied to the Ministry of Education for a stipend in order to continue his art studies in Paris, promising to repay it by teaching art in the underprivileged newly annexed areas following the Balkan Wars.<sup>69</sup> Although he was not awarded the stipend, he nevertheless volunteered to teach art in Ohrid, Macedonia.<sup>70</sup> Though it had recently become part of the Serbian Kingdom after the confrontation with the Ottoman Empire during the Balkan Wars of

66 Moša Pijade’s most famous study dealing with national style was published in 1919, but written during World War I, dealt with the artistic style of the famous Croatian sculptor Ivan Meštrović and his never-executed, grandiose project of the Kosovo temple, planned to glorify the Serbian past. Pijade boldly criticized it as a political and ideological construction and pointed out that its roots were not Serbian, but (when compared to modern French art) rather in the conservative central-European Viennese Secessionist and Art Nouveau movements; *ibid.*, 16–18, 117–46. Such criticism written at the height of the war when national sentiments were high and the much discussed Kosovo temple presented a symbol of national integrity, was courageous and gained the support of only a few, among them Miroslav Krleža, a leftist Croatian writer later famous as one of the leading Yugoslav literati; for Krleža’s articles supporting Pijade’s criticism of Meštrović and national style in *Plamen*, no. 12, 1919 and *Obzor*, February 26, 1926, see *ibid.*, 147–49. It is noteworthy that Ephraim Moses Lilien, the “first Zionist artist,” in 1901 in Munich used Jugendstil and Art-Nouveau styles, as would Meštrović a decade later, to create Jewish national art, as elaborated on the pages of *Ost und West*; see note 20 above.

67 Pijade also wrote about the scenery created for theatrical productions calling for raising its artistic level and the introduction of professionally trained artists into the world of theater. For Pijade’s articles on public monuments, see *ibid.*, 99–112; on his theater criticism, see *ibid.*, 35–38.

68 Isaac Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 25–41.

69 Arhiv Jugoslavije, Fond br. 513, fasc. br. k. 38.

70 *Ibid.*

1912–13, Macedonia was considered by Serbs as underdeveloped and “in need of help.” Thus, from the Serbian point of view Pijade’s decision was both idealistic and patriotic. Moreover, the large Sephardic communities of Monastir (Bitola) and Skopje in the new territories had now become part of the Serbian Jewish community, and it was expected that they would accommodate themselves to the Serbian national ideology, identity, and culture. Although nothing is known of Pijade’s possible involvement with the Belgrade Jewish community, several of its prominent leaders were active among the largely traditional Macedonian Jews, encouraging their acculturation.<sup>71</sup>

Privately, Pijade hoped that moving to the picturesque old lakeside town of Ohrid would make him take up his brush and palette again. Unfortunately, while traveling to Macedonia he lost most of his artwork. In the local school in Ohrid Pijade taught drawing and penmanship, French, and German. But this idyll did not last long. He left the position in the turmoil of World War I, when he—rejected for military service on medical grounds—turned once again to journalism and traveled through occupied Serbia, publishing articles that raised morale and brought hope.<sup>72</sup> Among the essays he published in 1915 is one devoted to Ohrid’s eleventh-century Byzantine church, St Sophia, which he could have until recently seen from the window of his rented room in the town. He now described it poetically, stressing the neglect and damage it had endured during the period of Ottoman rule, especially the “suffering” and mutilated frescoes of Christian saints, “stabbed” and demolished by iconoclastic Turks.<sup>73</sup> Although acknowledging that the church had been built by using an ancient “centaur” and slabs of stone from a pagan temple that had stood on the same site in antiquity, and that had been destroyed by the Christian newcomers (as were the Christian frescoes by the Islamic conqueror) to build a church, Pijade expressed hope for its rebirth: “This is the soul of our past greatness,” he wrote in the midst of the war, “our old art that now wants to be resurrected. And it moves towards its resurrection.”<sup>74</sup> Due to the stark poverty, hunger, and danger reigning in Serbia’s capital, during the first two years of the war, Pijade,

71 Jennie Lebel, *Tide and Wreck: History of the Jews of Vardar Macedonia* (Bergenfield, NJ: Avotaynu, 2008), 160–64. Koljanin, *Jevreji i antisemitizam*, 174–75.

72 Such patriotism was characteristic not only of acculturated Jews like Pijade, but also of the entire Serbian Jewish community which eagerly participated in the Great War contributing to their country’s struggle. See *Spomenica poginulih i umrlih srpskih Jevreja u balkanskom i svetskom ratu 1912–1918* (Belgrade: Štamparija M. Karića, 1927); Milošević, *Jevreji za slobodu Srbije*; Koljanin, *Jevreji i antisemitizam*, 176.

73 Moša Pijade, “Sveta Sofija Ohridska,” *Delo*, 1915, reprinted in *Moša Pijade, o umetnosti*, 115–18.

74 *Ibid.*, 118.





FIGURE 1.8 Moša Pijade, *Self-portrait with Japanese Dolls*, 1916, oil on cardboard, 66 × 75 cm, Inv. No. 032\_258. National Museum in Belgrade

together with his father and siblings, moved between the provincial towns of Čuprija and Valjevo, working at odd jobs as a waiter or a sign and house painter.<sup>75</sup>

In 1916, living in Belgrade that had been occupied and destroyed by the Austrian army, Pijade once again picked up the brush in a strange limbo of time marked by the war and the misery around him, feeling intense inspiration and creativity. His *Self-Portrait with Japanese Dolls* (fig. 1.8) was created while he was simultaneously engaged in translating Rabelais, Molière, and Baudelaire's *Flowers of Evil*. The lines of the poem "Spleen" befitted the atmosphere of occupied and war-torn Belgrade: "When the cold heavy sky weighs like a lid / On spirits whom eternal boredom grips / And the wide ring of the

<sup>75</sup> Nešović, *Moša Pijade*, 119–22.



horizon's hid / In daytime darker than the night's eclipse."<sup>76</sup> This renewed connection with French literature possibly also brought to mind Édouard Manet's famous portrait of Émile Zola, which clearly became an inspiration for Pijade's self-portrait.<sup>77</sup> The Japanese prints in Manet's painting were here replaced by Japanese dolls, and the attributes of a writer with that of a painter. The Japanese dolls Pijade used in the painting are known as *Ichimatsu* dolls, which during the heyday of impressionism were a collectors' item in Paris. It is possible that Pijade had brought them with him, and now used them as a prop in his painting. Alfred Stevens, a Belgian painter living in Paris during the second half of the nineteenth century and known for his numerous paintings of Parisian society women surrounded by Japanese objects, occasionally included such dolls in his works.<sup>78</sup> Stevens was a good friend of Manet, Bazille, and Baudelaire, who were, as noted, part of Pijade's aesthetic world, and it is possible that Stevens' work was known to him. He seems to have recalled it now in Belgrade, in 1916, while translating Baudelaire's poetry and creating a self-portrait in Manet's style. The addition of such dolls typical of the fashionable *japonisme* taste helped him create an imaginary artistic atmosphere far removed from his immediate, war-ridden surroundings. Moreover, the use of different viewpoints and the tension between the two- and three-dimensionality in the painting remind one of Cézanne's art and further add to the "French experience" and Pijade's "escape" to the memories of Paris to which, as we have seen, he had unsuccessfully tried to return a year before the outbreak of the war.

Pijade's palette, in contrast to the one in his 1910 self-portrait, now bears a signature in Cyrillic, signaling both his firm connection to Serbian culture and his awareness of the current situation. In addition, the turpentine bottles, a broad cleaning brush, and Pijade's rolled-up sleeves and open shirt seem also to recall his status as a manual laborer—one who, as noted, uses his artistic skills to earn money as a sign and house painter, and who identifies with the people and their struggle by becoming one of them. The sensuous exposure of

76 See Nenad Radić, "Povratak kući—tri autoportreta sa paletom," *3ri + 4etiri* n.s. 6 (Autumn/Winter 2001): 24–25, n. 11; the English translation of Baudelaire's poem is by Roy Campbell, *Poems of Baudelaire: a Translation of Fleurs du mal* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1952). Pijade published his translation in 1920 (*Misao* 2, 11/12). See also, Nešović, *Moša Pijade*, 122–24.

77 For Manet's 1868 portrait of Zola see [http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/works-in-focus/search/commentaire\\_id/emile-zola-313.html?no\\_cache=1](http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/works-in-focus/search/commentaire_id/emile-zola-313.html?no_cache=1) (last accessed 5 March 2018).

78 See, for example, his *Lady with a Japanese Doll*, 1894, presently in a private collection (<http://www.wikipaintings.org/es/alfred-stevens/woman-with-a-japanese-doll-1894>) (last accessed 15 September 2017).



FIGURE 1.9 Moša Pijade in front of his two self-portraits, ca. 1920–1922, photograph, whereabouts unknown, reproduced in Slobodan Nešović, *Moša Pijade i njegovo vreme* (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1968), 116

his body in 1910 was replaced here by the physical presence of a new Pijade, a common man.

An unusual photograph of him, possibly taken during the early 1920s, clearly shows this ambivalence (fig. 1.9). Pijade looks somewhat puzzled, sitting in front of two of his portraits. The one on the left is the *Self-Portrait with Japanese Dolls* discussed above; the other, on the right, now lost and known only from this photograph, shows Pijade dressed in a contemporary suit, cigarette in hand, holding a cap—truly reflecting his appearance as a radical Belgrade journalist. The here-and-now atmosphere stripped of impressionist references and the symbolism of the portrait with the Japanese dolls is possibly more akin to the contemporary German “*Neue Sachlichkeit*” movement.<sup>79</sup> Positioned between his two different images, Pijade seems to express in this photograph an

79 For Serbian artists’ interest in form during the early 1920s, see Trifunović, *Srpsko slikarstvo 1900–1950*, 109–29. Trifunović stresses the general lack of influence of the German socially-aware “*Neue Sachlichkeit*” movement upon post-war Serbian art. The closest work to such art (and Pijade’s self-portrait in the photograph) would be Milo Milunović’s *Bistro (Family Bordija)*, 1922, Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade (ibid., 302). Pijade’s portrait in a suit, with a cigarette and cap, recalls portraits of contemporary men created by Otto Dix (see, for instance, his *Portrait of Dr. Paul Ferdinand Schmidt*, 1921, oil and collages, 83 × 63 cm, Staatgalerie Stuttgart).

inner split between his imagined identities, that of an artist and that of a socially involved intellectual.

It is possible to discern an additional duality in Pijade's artwork as an illustrator and caricaturist, created at about the same time. Following his criticism of Meštrović's "national style" (1919), which he presented as eclectic and disconnected from the Serbian national heritage, he now tried his own hand at creating such a style. In 1920, under the pseudonym M. S. Plavšić, he illustrated the Serbian folk poem *Uroš i Mrnjavčevići*, published by the Jewish Belgrade publisher Armin Schwarz.<sup>80</sup> Pijade provided it with black-and-white (occasionally accentuated by red) pen drawings that accompany the Cyrillic text, which imitates the old-Slavic script and was probably also designed by the artist (fig. 1.10). While still recalling the graphic Jugendstil art that Pijade encountered in his youthful Munich days, the use of this style for creating a modern work of national Serbian art has other sources as well.

The combination of modern design and national themes, rooted in this case in Serbian folk poetry,<sup>81</sup> was characteristic of the fin-de-siècle creations

80 *Uroš i Mrnjavčevići*, pesme iz zbirke Vuka Karadžića (ilustracije M. S. Plavšić) (Belgrade: Napredak, 1920). Although little is known about Schwarz, his Napredak publication house, and their role in Belgrade's literary life, it seems that in the first post-World War I years and the early 1920s he was actively supporting Moša Pijade. Schwarz's bookstore and publication house (active between 1913 and 1935?) was situated in the very center of Belgrade, in Knez Mihajlova St., apparently competing with the better known establishment of Geca Kon where, as noted, David Pijade had published some of his work. Aside from illustrations for *Uroš i Mrnjavčevići*, Moša Pijade apparently also created other illustrations and book covers for Schwarz's publications. Schwarz also published Pijade's own translations and in general served for a while as his benefactor; see Nešović, *Moša Pijade*, 154, 201. For example, Moša Pijade translated for Napredak the then greatly popular German science-fiction female horror version of the Frankenstein myth, Hanns Heinz Ewers, *Abraune* (first published in 1911), considered by some critics to be the most extreme of all *femme fatale* stories. Pijade's translation of this novel appeared in 1923 with a foreword by Stanisław Przybyszewski, a Polish decadent and symbolist novelist, dramatist, and poet influenced by Nietzsche's philosophy [Hans Hajnc Ewers, *Abrauna: roman jednog živog bića*, preveo s dopuštenjem pisca M. S. Pijade; predgovor napisao St. Pšibiševski (Belgrade: Napredak, 1923)]. Schwarz's Napredak, which seemed to specialize among other things in books dealing with a modern approach to sexuality and physical love, also published translations into Serbian from the German by David Pijade: Ivan Bloch's *Free Love* (1924) and *Prostitution* (1925). For brief biographical data on Schwarz see <https://www.geni.com/people/Armin-Schwarz/600000058425471051> (last accessed 15 September 2017).

81 *Uroš i Mrnjavčevići* belongs to the cycle of folk poetry dedicated to Kraljević Marko, the fourteenth-century Serbian prince whose memory was preserved in Serbian, Macedonian, and Bulgarian oral folk tradition as a noble protector of the weak, and a fearless fighter against the Turks. Such poems were collected in the first half of the nineteenth century by the Serbian philologist and language reformer Vuk Karadžić (1787–1864) who, with his collection of folk tales, poems, and riddles, created a basis for the study of Serbian folklore.

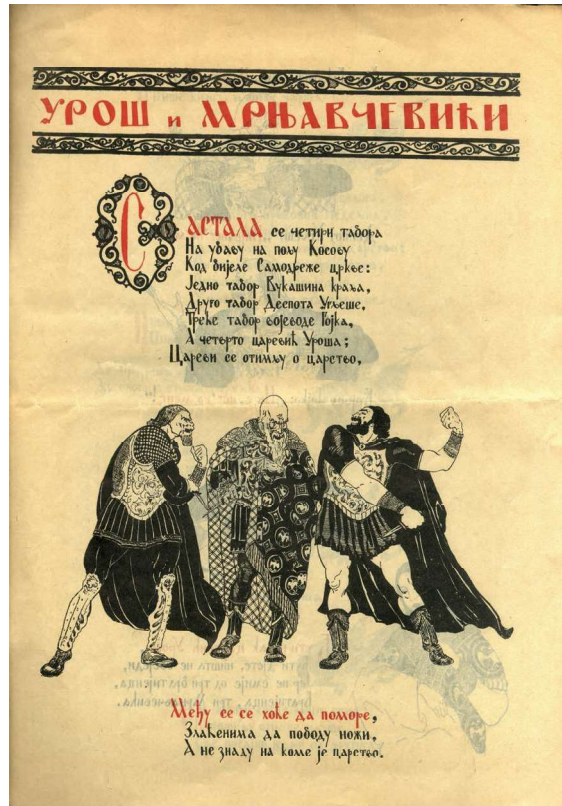


FIGURE 1.10  
 M. S. Plavšić (aka Moša  
 Pijade), *Uroš i Mrnjavčevići*  
 (Belgrade: Napredak, 1920),  
 frontispiece

of central and east-central European national schools of art. While searching for a model in the Slavic realm, closer to Serbia's tradition and political affiliation, Pijade may have been thinking here of the Russian art he had probably seen while abroad. During his 1909–10 stay in Paris, Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes theater presented its first season.<sup>82</sup> Wildly popular with Parisian audiences, the colorful, “oriental” performances staged in the Chatellet Theater may have caught the young Pijade's fancy. His interest in the theater, vaudeville performances, and exotic female dancers had already been kindled in Munich, and he probably attended some of the shows.<sup>83</sup> The dynamism of the

82 Lynn Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Charles S. Mayer, “The Impact of the Ballets Russes on Design in the West, 1909–1914,” in *The Avant-Garde Frontier: Russia Meets the West, 1910–1930*, ed. Gail Harrison Roman and Virginia Hagelstein Marquardt (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1992), 15–44.

83 While in Paris in 1912, Miroslav Kraljević, one of Pijade's Munich friends, created several drawings based upon performances of the *Ballets Russes*; see Gagro, *Slikarstvo minhen-skog kruga*, 37 fig. 108, 88 fig. 107.



movements, rich patterns, and exaggerated gestures of his characters in the *Uroš i Mrnjavčevići* illustrations do recall creations of Ballets Russes' legendary costume and scenery creator Leon Bakst. They are especially close to the ones Bakst, the fin-de-siècle Russian-Jewish artist, created for the famous performance of Igor Stravinsky's *Firebird* (1910), for which—as befitting a ballet based upon a Russian folktale—he turned to Russian folk and church art.<sup>84</sup> In a like manner, while illustrating the Serbian traditional folk poem, Pijade, like Bakst and other Russian artists who were involved in creating modern Russian art rooted in folk and traditional creations,<sup>85</sup> turned to local medieval art for inspiration. Thus, his sojourn in Ohrid had not only inspired him to write about the glory of the town's St. Sophia Church, but it seems that he had also visited other Macedonian monasteries in order to closely study their frescoes. Pijade's illustrations for *Uroš i Mrnjavčevići* are thus strikingly akin to frescoes in the Nerezi (12th c.) and Psača (14th c.) monasteries (figs. 1.11–1.12).<sup>86</sup> By combining art from the glorious Serbian past with the modern designs created by a Russian-Jewish artist in Paris, it seems that Pijade tried to present his version of a modern Serbian national art.<sup>87</sup> It was possibly for this reason that he chose to appear in the book under a Serbian-sounding pseudonym—“illustrator M. S. Plavšić”.

In contrast to Pijade's illustrations for *Uroš i Mrnjavčevići* inspired by medieval Serbian art, his socially-aware caricatures and political commentary were created in an expressionist style, influenced by the art of the contemporary German artist Käthe Kollwitz (figs. 1.13–1.14). Kollwitz was very popular among Soviet and leftist European artists, and her highly humanist, socially critical, and pacifist graphic art was well known.<sup>88</sup> Reacting to the horrors of the civil

84 For Bakst's costumes for *Firebird's* Tsarevich (prince) Ivan and the princess see: <https://www.gettyimages.co.uk/detail/news-photo/ivan-tsarevich-costume-design-for-the-ballet-the-firebird-news-photo/> and <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/345792077625251929/> (last accessed 11 May 2018).

85 For instance, Ivan Bilibin (1876–1942); see Sergei Golynets, *Ivan Bilibin* (London: Pan Books, 1981).

86 I would like to thank to Prof. Miodrag Marković and Prof. Svetlana Smolčić Makuljević for their help in obtaining a photograph of the Psača monastery's fresco painting.

87 Such modern Serbian national art inspired by its medieval artistic heritage was developed later by the “Zograf” group, founded in 1927 after the Second International Conference of Byzantine Studies that was convened in Belgrade and which led to an active cultural interest and reuse of the Serbian Byzantine artistic legacy; Trifunović, *Srpsko slikarstvo 1900–1950*, 129–30.

88 See Yakov A. Tugenkhold, *Iz istorii zapadnoevropeiskogo, ruskogo i sovetkogo iskusstva*, (Moscow: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1987), 124–27.





FIGURE 1.11  
The fresco of King Vukašin Mrnjavčević,  
Psača monastery, Macedonia, 14th c.  
© PHOTO ARCHIVE IVAN DJORDJEVIĆ,  
UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE

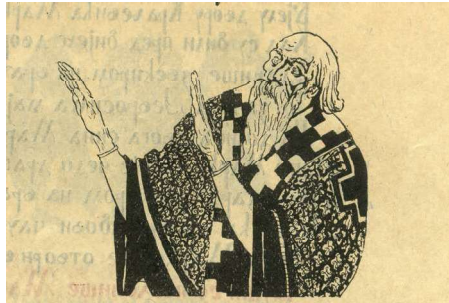


FIGURE 1.12  
M. S. Plavšić (aka Moša Pijade), *Uroš i  
Mrnjavčevići* (Belgrade: Napredak, 1920),  
n.p., detail



FIGURE 1.13  
Moša Pijade, "Russian Mothers  
Ask: Aren't there Mothers in  
other Parts of the World?"  
poster, 1921, whereabouts  
unknown, reproduced in  
Slobodan Nešović, *Moša Pijade  
i njegovo vreme* (Belgrade:  
Prosveta, 1968), 189



FIGURE 1.14  
Käthe Kollwitz, *Woman with a  
Dead Child*, 1903, etching, 41.5 ×  
48 cm, Mus. No. 1949, 0411.3928  
© THE TRUSTEES OF THE  
BRITISH MUSEUM, LONDON

war and hunger in the Soviet Union by depicting a starving mother and child, Pijade turned to Kollwitz's art as a source of inspiration.

By 1920, Pijade's ambivalence about his choices—to be a painter or a journalist; to create art that would be universal and symbolic, Serbian national or socially-aware and expressionistic—was played out against the background of the tremendous changes that swept the region. The end of World War I saw the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, the unification of southern Slavs for which he had hoped, and fought for with his pen. However, increasingly unsatisfied with the political, economic, and social situation in a brand-new country that was soon riven by unrest and strikes, Pijade felt the need to step up his criticism and express it primarily through his journalistic activities. He initially wrote for the daily *Pravda* (Justice), but in March 1919 established his own paper, *Slobodna reč* (Free Word), in which he severely criticized the situation and the regime in the newly created Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes which had proved to be a disappointment to him. He warned of the autocratic tendencies of King Alexander I and the three founding nations' self-interested policies which undermined the idea of Yugoslav unity. Furthermore, he drew attention to the extremely precarious situation of the workers and peasants.<sup>89</sup> Such open criticism of the regime brought him into contact with the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, whose ranks he joined in January 1920. As a result of the October Revolution in Russia, the Yugoslav

<sup>89</sup> Ristović, "Drvar," 161–62.

Communist Party's influence on the political life of the Kingdom grew rapidly and Pijade grew more and more involved.<sup>90</sup>

Gaining in popularity, the communists became the third largest party in parliament in the 1920 elections. However, increasingly anxious about the growing strength of the communists and fearing destabilization of the Kingdom, (and encouraged by the fall of the neighboring Hungarian Soviet Republic), the government exploited the assassination of Milorad Drašković, the Yugoslav minister of the interior, by a young communist to declare the Yugoslav Communist Party illegal. Nevertheless, Pijade's activity only increased; in 1921 he was elected a member of the new, now underground, Executive Committee. He hoped to establish an Independent Workers' Party to replace the prohibited Communist Party, edited a paper, *Radnik* (Worker), and after it was banned another one, *Okovani radnik* (Worker in Shackles). After the Independent Workers' Party, too, was outlawed, Pijade set up an underground printing shop in Belgrade, where he printed a newspaper, *Komunist* and Party leaflets.<sup>91</sup>

The self-portrait Pijade created in 1922, during this turbulent time primarily marked by his illegal political activity, is known only from a poor reproduction (fig. 1.15). Now thirty-two, he portrays himself as a cynic observing



FIGURE 1.15  
Moša Pijade, *Self-portrait*, 1922, oil on canvas, 60 × 81 cm. Private collection

90 Ibid. He now wrote for the communist papers *Radničke novine* (Workers' Newspaper) and *Crveni smeh* (Red Laughter) and was soon elected to the Belgrade city council on the Yugoslav Communist Party ticket.

91 Ibid.

the spectator through half-closed eyes, cigarette in his mouth, his head arrogantly tilted back—an image strikingly different from the idealistic intellectual appearing in the 1911 work. The rolled-up shirtsleeves again emphasize the physical presence of a muscular manual laborer. An artist's palette is lacking, and it is unclear whether with the broad brush he holds he is working on a painting—or painting a wall.

In 1925 Pijade's clandestine printing shop was discovered; he was arrested and in a showcase trial sentenced to twenty years in prison. His brother David and a number of friends fought within the legal system, hoping to free him, but only managed to reduce the sentence to twelve years, however, his propaganda activity among the prisoners earned him an additional two years in prison. Pijade served the sentence in prisons in Sremska Mitrovica (Serbia) and Lepoglava (Croatia). While in prison he organized strikes, hunger strikes, and protests by political prisoners, thus exerting pressure on the prison administration. This resulted in improved living conditions for prisoners, enabling them to receive books and newspapers, and the organization of courses in which Pijade was the most active lecturer. During his incarceration, together with Rodoljub Čolaković, Pijade translated Karl Marx's *Capital*, the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, and the *Critique of Political Economy*. The time he spent in prison with Josip Broz Tito (the Yugoslav Communist Party's Secretary General since 1937) was to be of great importance for Pijade's later political career. Released in February 1939, Pijade was arrested again in January 1940 and committed to a political prison camp in Bileća (eastern Herzegovina, near the border with Montenegro) in which he spent several months and was then released. In that same year he was elected a member of the Communist Party Central Committee. Arrested once more in February 1941, Pijade was released on 4 April 1941, two days before the Axis powers invaded the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

Cut off from the outer world and now entirely imbued with the communist ideology that he shared with his prison comrades, Pijade managed only occasionally to paint, primarily portraits of fellow prisoners. His extant self-portraits now show stark realism (fig. 1.16), or later even socialist-realist idealization. Still, his dedication to art inspired some of his fellow prisoners, especially Bora Baruh, a Belgrade artist of Sephardic Jewish origin and a pre-war communist like Pijade, who will be discussed in a later chapter. Baruh's portrait of Pijade in a drawing created in 1940 shows him as a prisoner in Bileća, where they both served their sentence (fig. 1.17). Depicted in the act of writing, concentrating and detached from his immediate surroundings, Pijade appears now as a prematurely aged intellectual.

While his brother Moša was spending his prime years in prison, David, now married and a father of three, seemed to draw nearer to the Sephardic





FIGURE 1.16 Moša Pijade, *Self-portrait*, Sremska Mitrovica Prison, 1926, oil on cardboard, 29 × 37 cm. Private collection



FIGURE 1.17  
Bora Baruh, *Moša Pijade*, Bileća Prison, 1940, ink on paper, 21 × 17.6 cm, Inv. No. 1584.II.5/9. Museum of Yugoslavia, Belgrade



Jewish community. In 1930 he appeared among the speakers at the international Conference of Balkan Sephardim held in Belgrade, as secretary of that city's Sephardic organization. While calling upon his coreligionists convened in Belgrade from Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia to fully participate in the national renaissance of their respective countries, David stressed the need for Sephardim to "wake up from their Oriental slumber" and, like their Western Ashkenazic brothers, participate more actively in their own renaissance. At the same time he urged them to support the rebirth of the Jewish national homeland in Palestine. The three identities—that of an integrationist, Sephardi nationalist, and Zionist—harmoniously coexisted in David Pijade's views, in many ways reflecting the Belgrade Sephardic community's stand in general. When pointing to the contribution of great Sephardim to the cultural heritage, alongside Judah Halevi, Maimonides, and Baruch Spinoza, he also mentioned the Serbian Sephardic painter Leon Koen (1859–1934), the well-known nineteenth-century Belgrade artist.<sup>92</sup> The fact that David added a painter to the great Sephardic names of learning was certainly inspired by his brother Moša, whom he still considered an artist despite his political activities and imprisonment.<sup>93</sup>

Four years later, when writing an article entitled "Our Painters" for the yearbook issued by the Jewish welfare societies of Sarajevo and Belgrade, David Pijade mentioned his brother Moša.<sup>94</sup> In this short essay, written with passion and deep knowledge of the subject he discussed, David exposed all the hardships but also admired the achievements of three Belgrade painters of Sephardic Jewish origin. Although mainly devoted to the memory of Leon Koen who had just passed away, Pijade also referred to Moša's artistic achievements and mentioned the noted presence of Marko Čelebonović (1902–86),

92 On Leon Koen see Zora Simić- Milovanović, "Slikar Leon Koen," *Godišnjak grada Beograda* 2 (1955): 377–428; Nikola Šuica, *Leon Koen: 1859–1934* (Beograd: Jugoslovenska galerija umetničkih dela, 2001); Vesna Adić, "The Tragic Story of Leon Koen, the First Sephardi Painter from Belgrade: a Symbolist and Admirer of Nietzsche," *Ars Judaica* 5 (2009): 67–84; Nenad Makuljević, "Leon Kojen: 'Son of the Serbian Nation,'" *Serbian Studies: Journal of the North American Society for Serbian Studies* 28 (2017): 117–26.

93 "Discours de M. David Piyade," in *Conférence des Juifs Sépharadim des pays Balcaniques, tenue à Belgrade les 28–29 Mai 1930: Compte-rendu des travaux* (Paris: N. Lusgart, 1930), 81–86.

94 David S. Pijade, "Naši slikari," in *Godišnjak* (Sarajevo: Jevrejsko kulturno-prosvetno društvo "La Benevolencia"; Belgrade: Dobrotvorno društvo "Potpora," 1933/34), 106–9.

the youngest painter among the three.<sup>95</sup> While he saw the artistic paths of Koen and of his brother as tragic—the first dying unrecognized and suffering from mental illness and poverty, the other serving a fourteen-year sentence in prison, Čelebonović's artistic career, freed of financial difficulties of his predecessors, offered a glimpse of hope. Pijade believed that in the future Čelebonović would be able to produce works of art that would serve as a source of pride for the entire community. By presenting three Belgrade painters of three different generations David Pijade also pointed to what was, by 1934, already a clearly established phenomenon. By replacing the religion of their forefathers which, as he pointed out, due to the Second Commandment discouraged artistic expression and the profession of an artist, with a “new religion of Beauty,” the three artists had embraced modernity as Serbs of the Mosaic faith, as citizens and patriots, and as universal humanists. In David's eyes this definition certainly befitted his brother Moša.

We have seen that multiple identities were characteristic of the young Moša Pijade and that he displayed them in numerous self-portraits that trace his transformation from a painter of Serbian Sephardic origin, to a Serbian art critic and journalist, to a leading Yugoslav communist and politician—a role to which I will return at the end of this book. In contrast to the Pijade brothers' deep sense of belonging to the Serbian heritage and to universal modernist culture, the conditions in Bosnia and Herzegovina had quite a different effect on the identity and self-fashioning of the artist Daniel Kabiljo, the subject of the next chapter.

---

95 Ibid., 106. Marko Čelebonović was the son of Jakov Čelebonović, an affluent Belgrade lawyer and Jewish community activist. He was trained in Paris and mainly lived in France. Influenced among others by Bonnard, Čelebonović belonged to the *École de Paris* but regularly exhibited in Belgrade and is considered one of the leading Serbian artists; Trifunović, *Srpsko slikarstvo 1900–1950*, 215–19.