Since the beginning of his literary career with the publication of his short story “Sredba” (Meeting) in 1953, the short stories, plays, novels and monographs of Boris Višinski (b. 1929 in Skopje) have been translated into a dozen European languages. He also edits the periodicals Kultura i život (Cultural Life) and Macedonian Review, which publish articles on Macedonian language, literature, art and history.

Lavina (Avalanche) is a novel which makes unusual use of one of the most popular themes in Macedonian literature, viz. World War II. The work is narrated by its hero Martin, who was captured by the Fascist occupiers of Skopje while returning from caring for a group of wounded partisans, driven insane by torture and subsequently allowed to escape. In terms of objective reality, the novel is set in Skopje in 1942, just before a catastrophic flood, but since the narration is accomplished entirely through the stream of Martin’s consciousness, the story floats between past and present, fantasy and reality.

The novel begins in the midst of a hallucination in which the hero explains that he is unnaturally tall (we later learn that he had been tortured on a stretch rack) and tells of the partisans and the Inspector, smelling of rotten cherries, who is constantly seeking their hiding place. Gradually we realize that Martin is living in a masochistically hallucinatory world in which past and present fade in and out of one another. During the ten chapters comprising the novel Martin’s story is gradually revealed to us, but this is done so effectively via Martin’s mind that the reader is often unsure what is current reality, flashback or sheer imagining, since these distinctions do not exist for the hero. The end comes with the flood of Skopje, in which the hero commits suicide, a fate foreshadowed in the first chapter and one of the many interconnected elements of the novel. The author’s technique is so gripping that the reader becomes thoroughly involved in Martin’s world.

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