

A portrait of Miomir Petrovic, a man with a beard and mustache, wearing a dark suit jacket over a light blue shirt and a patterned scarf. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a bookshelf.

# *Miomir Petrovic:*

## *“The writer is the one that is unusual”*

*interview by: Zainab Shaheen,  
a student from Fujairah Women’s College, UAE.*

*A Serbian writer, dramatist, and professor of literature. Professor Miomir Petrovic, who moved to UAE and became a part of HCT as a professor in Fujairah Women’s College.*

### **How and when did you first realize you wanted to become a writer?**

“I suppose that nobody can answer very punctually that question. because like any other things in life, sometimes it is happening and you are not aware of that, and then after many years you become aware of particular moment that something is changing you, That life resistance of the person is always in some changes. I became not as a reader of novels I became as a reader in very passionate fan of comic books. And in my generation before the digital technology, that was something for imagination that was enough for us, and I'm really sad that those times are over because I'm talking now as a parent and my 15 years older son doesn't have any opinion about the comic books but does have something about digital. So, when I was alone or with friends after reading some comic books I always think to myself what will be better? how this story can be improved? what will I do if I'm the storyteller of that story? and of course that is probably the beginning, you are not aware why do you want to change something in some other artificial work some other artifacts, but you have an urge to do it, and of course you don't do it but your practices that in your head. And later I decided to become a storyteller, because I believe that the life is interesting as the storytelling in the life is interesting. and if we are thinking about ourselves honestly, we're not remembering the acts from our past, We are remembering feelings from the past. So, then I realized that I'm for field personally with the stories and realize that I will go mad if I don't write those stories, and give those stories to somebody else, so maybe this was the beginning not the decision, but the beginning. Also, I'm from a creative family, my late father was a professor of painting of art generally and a painter, and I was oftenly in his studio and watch him doing some kind of stories on the canvas, and do it with a very organized model of working, and then probably unconsciously I realized that an art can be a profession if you are serious enough to feel the art like a professional not just like some aloneness or craziness, you are so creative and you must expose you. I believe in stories with the shape with the structure.”



### **How do you usually find your ideas?**

“Usually I don't find it, but I don't know if this is a proper answer, because I'm now after twenty-one published novel, I'm something like professional. So, I don't find any more inspiration, the inspiration finds me, and where; in the pictures, in the acting, in the average ordinary life, on the street. You see something which is in somehow peculiar and different to you, that could be a garbage man put the garbage in the garbage can, nothing special, but if something is with a fracture with something with a glance of your eye, you think is wrong or it's not ordinary that is the beginning of the story. because the storyteller, the writer always trying to give the motivation of the acts that his characters are doing, so you just imagine that the garbage man with the trash can is hypothetically your character something is wrong in that picture maybe he is in a very smooth uniform, maybe he's very clean and doing that job, and that is the difference, that is the Atom nucleus of the story in you. And of course you forget about it, and you're driving the car, and doing the ordinary things and going to the supermarket and from time to time you think about this picture, and that is the beginning of the story. The story is everywhere, the story is in the eye of a storyteller, of course there is no such a thing like people understood from a media then movies that the unusual stories is something that happens to a writer, no; the writer is the one that is unusual and the stories are like in your life and in my life, except I want to model the story from that .”

### **What are the major challenges that you have faced in your professional career?**

“I don't know, maybe the ending of the novel and that's a particular moment when you are finished the manuscript and you are sensing yourself that that manuscript doesn't longer belong to you. Like the child that now going to the college to some other country foreign country, and you did, for 6 months, 8 months, one year that during the writing everything that you could for that child and now everything is OK, but you are feeling a little bit sad because something is over and then the future of that your child -your novel- is in somebody else's hands, and then in a publishing house during the working with an editor and the designer of the cover page, and of course the production manager. You are just saying bye to those novels to those stories that they are part of your life. And then in that moment when the book is on the shelves and on the windows of the book shop all over the city, and you are walking around, and of course nobody knows that you are the author of that book. from time to time my publishing house Laguna in Belgrade, it's a biggest publishing house in Serbia, arranged all of the window of the shop were filled with that particular new book, so there is like hundreds of copies of that book, and I'm walking my dog, And I don't really recognize my book. that is maybe the most difficult thing and of course after that is fear, fear in a sense, do anybody like that story? it's when you're saying that it is the Democratic right for the reader. I don't like all the books that from other writers that I bought, and I read them, and it is my right. So, as in love you cannot made the other person to love you.”

### **You moved to UAE and chose Fujairah's women's college among all the colleges and Universities in UAE. why?**

“My former students were here for several years like lecturer, and they invited me here. I like working with female students, because that is my experience also for 22 years I'm working at the academies or universities in Europe, and because this is the profession creative writing or aesthetics or a drama playing or screen writing the most of them in very natural things are the female students. And I believe that I developed some field, because as I remember my father always said that the University teacher is a parent also and you don't treat other's children what you don't want to treat your children, that is a very big responsibility I like this job because of that responsibility. This is not a professional like you are becoming a driver or a pilot, maybe it's a wrong metaphor pilot has that kind of course responsibility, but I like that responsibility. never mind students let me honor myself, never in the past my students expressed some negligence about me, I'm liking this phenomenon that when I am walking on the street somebody's crossing the street with a smile and say Oh professor just to say “hi”, and of course I don't remember which generation, even which University was that. but sometimes I'm even not remembering the face, but when you sense that kind of happiness, like they are meeting the old friend. I think that is the success in a lecture business not the research points, amount of salary you know career developing, so for me professorship is very clean and I don't have a big ambition you know, to become a Dean of University I just want to work with younger people.”

### **What’s your opinion about Fujairah?**

“I don't really know I'm freshman here, it's a very strange city and I had experience with the Arab countries, but mostly on North Africa, from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt of course and then the Lebanon. I really like the Lebanon; I was creating one of the novels about my experience in Lebanon. And this is something very different this is my first visit to UAE, and it's interesting that every Emirates are different, not just by that you know touristic thing or color of the sand but in every sense”

### **“Persian mirror” & “Lebanese summer”, what inspired you for those two novels? Was it personal experience or is it the fiction?**

“It is a fiction of course, but I don't know where is the border between fiction and personal really, because you are always delivering your own personal thoughts and emotions in of course somebody else’s mind and that somebody else’s fictional character. maybe because I'm from the country which was traditionally East of the West and West of the East, my country Serbia is always beyond the border between Islamic; Turkish in particular case, Islamic civilization and Roman Catholic civilization in Austria, and we are something 3<sup>rd</sup>, Greek Orthodox and we are Christians, but for western Europeans very unusual Christians. And there is so much in cuisine, in a temperament, in a psychology, in mentality that we are having from the East, particularly my people that I want to emphasize that underlying that in those novels, to say something which is not pretty politically popular in my country, to say come on people we are so with the roots in the East also and of course in the roots with the European civilization. And particularly “Persian mirror” is actually one character, the main character wants to get away from the war atrocities in Yugoslavia in the 90s and goes to Iran, but also he wants to find the novelist that he is very fun of them, and heard that the novelist is also in some pilgrimage in Iran, but during that novel my main character called Milosh, that doesn't find that writing, but he find like a twin brother in Iran, somebody who is exactly look like him, like a brother that he lost, and then he realized how much Oriental roots is in us. So, of course this is the audio interview but the color of my skin and the color of my eyes and the color of my hair explains that in vision “

### **You’ve visited a lot of places and traveled to many countries. Where was your favorite place?**

“My favorite place is Greece, and that is the pilgrimage that I took once in the year or once in 2 years, because my mother is a Greek by origin, and I feel Greece is like my home really. And not just in that touristic aspect in a matter of fact in the ancient Greek culture, and this is my PhD is mythology of the ancient Greek culture in very contemporary medias and very contemporary movies and novels. So, like some kind of discovery of the root. So, the Greece is something that is like my really homeland.”

### **How much did help the cultures in Middle East to adjust to UAE culture?**

“I believe in Communications with the culture, and I don't believe in you know capsulizing some cultural tradition, and for that reason everything is very inspired. Because you know it's a little bit like archaeological research, you're eating in some restaurants of Indian dish for instance which you did not know of exist, but then you realize that your mother is preparing something very similar than that, and then when you see like the Americans that this dish is too hot for them and too spicy, you are like come on OK so I'm rationally I'm belonging to this culture not to this culture.”

### **Which book was the most difficult to start, which one was the hardest to finish?**

“The hardest to finish is my novel “Demands of foxes” and I stuck in a 75th page and before that I was thinking that you know that writers blocked, that turn of writers block is something that Hollywood developed, only in Hollywood movies you have the writer who doesn't know how to end the novel and it's so dramatic. But then I realize it does exist, and I was stuck to the page 75. And it is a novel of two antiheroes of the married couple with infidelity between themselves and very neat and very foxy and that's why the madness of Fox is both of them. But I'm representing the main character the husband like to very that guy and wife like polite and smooth woman but at the end everything changed because we realized that all of those crazy and very immoral things that he does actually that she is pulling the strings. So, I stuck in one position what to do next, and I leave that for a couple of days and I remember that I was going home from one theater festival in another city and I was driving and it was early in the morning and the sun was very unpleasant, and I was also driving my colleague and he was saying about some married couple also our colleagues, and he said just one sentence that was like a blast for me “Oh that is the line that i must use!” and this particular patch in the story will be the exact patch. So, this was the very difficult for me and of course like any novel you never ends and the novel like you hypothetically supposedly the end, it is always something slightly different because it's a natural thing the story and those imaginary characters are also the living beings and they push you in some direction.”

### **What did you learn from creating books, and inspiring others?**

“That life is an interesting thing, only if you’re analyzing detailing, that the patient is maybe one of the.., in my personal life my civil life I don't think that people see me as a patient man I'm very fast and very quick as you can see I'm talking fast and I am reacting fast, but during writing a book I'm very patient, like some fishermen every day on the same beach with the same stick and with the same hope and a lot of those days and nothing happens, and you're going home and somebody ask you but This is crazy you're wasting your time, and then tomorrow you came home with a bucket full of fish.”

### **What’s your advice for the beginners at writing?**

“don’t write the story because you know how to, it is not strong enough energy, write the story if you cannot live if you don't write that story. And that is my motto cradle I don't write about something that I could write, well for money I could write a novel about anything because I'm a professional, but I avoid it and I'm just writing about those things which became my little nightmares, some subject’s topics that I'm so much thinking of get of course, then I realized that is so much important if it's important for me must be it's important for everybody else and of course it is not important for everybody else, but when you recognize you know in the promotion with some of the books when some fan goes and who want the signature for you and then you have those fast 5 minutes or 2 minutes in some conversation, you are seeing the glow in the eyes of that person, never mind the age of that person and you then realized in that split seconds that who actually are doing the very good job, because you moved somebody else. I think in this world that we are living the world of egoism, the consumerism, the world that just thinking about yourself and put your face in the Instagram or in Facebook, is so super acoustic world, it is very important to have you know like a medicine like a doctor Who like an artist like you know a priest to have that kind of ability to move somebody sort of course in the in the good way immoral way I think it is a great opportunity.”

### **Do you think that books can change the world?**

“Books now a little bit maybe, because you know the pyramids in Egypt are made of a little stones and big stones, so every achievement no matter how small it is to bring light into people's mind, I think it's rather a very good thing, and of course in a generally speaking the books never had a chance to change the world. But if we stop trying to do this I think that is the major problem because you know maybe it's something from Europe, I'm used to defeat in a sense that maybe I will not, possibly I cannot prevail the evil in the world, but if I stop trying to do that, what will be; me, you, everybody, not me as a chosen one, But every image show us, just saying hello in the morning when you are tired when you are full of your problems, and be able to say to somebody else “Salam!” and smile, I think it's a great that I like when people that I don't know smile at me and I am obligated to smile to them, it's two seconds that maybe it will change the day of the person.”

### **Do you have other hobbies?**

“Cycling, I was very passionate and was a part of the national team and from the high school period I was a competitor in cycling, so yeah! And here I bought a bicycle and I'm driving through Fujairah, and mountain bike of course, Back home racing bikes and so I think that I ride the bike lots of mileage and a lot bigger amount of mileage than by car. So, that is my passion and dogs also.”

### **If you could tell your younger self anything, what would it be?**

“I will say be more patient, wait for the chances, not to run through it “