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On the Border of Worlds and on the Periphery of the Canon: The Place of the Dubrovnik Tradition in Serbian Literary History

Abstract

The article attempts to discuss the status of Dubrovnik and its literary and cultural tradition in 19th- and 20th-century discourses in the frame of Serbian literary history. The starting point for the presented considerations will be the opinion of Jovan Deretić, who, perceiving the Dubrovnik tradition as “borderline”, referred to it as “a tradition of secondary importance” for the Serbian culture and literature system. In his opinion, it could not have become for the Serbs what it had become for Croatian literature, that is, “the central national tradition”. The text will discuss different points of view (both “internal” and “external”) on the “location” and importance of the city and its traditions in the context of ongoing discussions on the identity of Dubrovnik. The texts of the nineteenth-century authors (Đ. Nikolajević, I. Stojanović, L. Vojnović) and twentieth-century authors (J. Škerlić, P. Popović, M. Pantić) will be analyzed. The framework of the article will be determined by contemporary reflection on this subject (Z. Bojović, I. Arsić, S. Stipčević).

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The South Slavic area is currently in a period of intensified cultural changes, which result in undermining, ordering and creating new national and regional traditions and canons. The mechanisms that lead to these processes, as well as the processes themselves, have their source in the cultural and political specificity of this territory and have occurred with varying intensity in its different areas also in the past. The political transformations that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s further deepened the intensity and forms of these interesting but also dangerous phenomena.

Against this background, the case of Dubrovnik, its literature and culture becomes particularly important. The Dubrovnik tradition, which today is a central part of the Croatian literary and cultural canon¹, is a rich and original heritage to which Serbian culture has consistently claimed since the 19th century. Dubrovnik's border location, its complicated history and specific political character, i.e. the factors that contributed to the creation of an original model of the city's culture, at the same time complicated the issue of its identity and eventually led to discussions, disputes and even open Croatian-Serbian conflicts about its national and ethnic affiliation.

Dubrovnik and its rich cultural and literary tradition entered the sphere of interest of both national cultures due to the convergence in language programs, being the basis for building modern national cultures of Serbs and Croats during the period of national revival. Both nations, linguistically close, but remaining together – due to belonging to different civilizations – “in an antipodal relationship”² (“u antipodnom odnosu”; Joković, 1997, p. 39) began to compete for Dubrovnik and its heritage, shaped on the foundations of Mediterranean culture.

The tradition of Dubrovnik literature, especially the Renaissance and Baroque ones – as the only one among South Slavic literatures that

¹ In the process of canonization of literatures it is determined by the so-called “territorial-projective model” (“teritorijalno-projektivni model”) which consists in projecting Dubrovnik's contemporary political and state affiliation into the past (Hodel, 2012, p. 94).

² This and all subsequent quotations have been translated into English by the author of this article.

can boast classics of European importance – is also becoming “nationally deattributed” („nacionalno deatribuirana”; Kovač, 2005, p. 89), although from the 19th century it was considered not only Croatian, but also Serbian or a common tradition. In its perception, therefore, which is characteristic of the entire South Slavic area, two fundamental tendencies closely intertwine, which Tihomir Brajović defined as “unitarist and partialist” („unitaristička i parcijalistička“; Brajović, 2012, p. 87).

The incorporation of the writings of old Dubrovnik into the system of Serbian literature and culture – as we will try to show in this outline, which is only a contribution to further research on this issue – happen not without significant obstacles and problems, as evidenced by the reflections of many Serbian researchers. Significant in this respect is a Jovan Deretić’s opinion based on a literary and historiographical construct, important for the considerations presented in the article, who, perceiving the Dubrovnik tradition as a “boundary” (“granični položaj”; Deretić, 1996, p. 153), referred to it as a “tradition of secondary importance” (“sporedna, drugostepena tradicija”; Deretić, 1996, p. 148) for the Serbian system of culture and literature. In his opinion, therefore, it could not become for the Serbs what it had become for Croatian literature, i.e. the “central national tradition” (“centralna nacionalna tradicija”; Deretić, 1996, p. 148). The position of this distinguished and important historian of literature met with critical reactions from many Serbian circles (because it undermined one of the most important Serbian cultural myths since the 19th century) and has been the subject of attacks by nationalist-oriented scholars in Serbia to this day.

In contemporary Serbian theoretical reflection on the history of national literature and the current Serbian canon prevails the awareness of the instability of literary borders and the dynamics of processes, which determines its present shape. The changing political situation, as well as changes in culture, force the writing of new versions of the history of literature. As noted by Nenad Nikolić the history of literature, which is constantly being found “between traditionalism and openness” (“između tradicionalnosti i otvorenosti”; Nikolić, 2015, p. 203) on the one hand, it contains a vision of tradition inherited from previous generations, on the other hand, it is associated with a sense of dissatisfaction with its current shape. The projection of the past, therefore, can never wait for the final and full articulation, because there are always places in the vision of literature that need to be supplemented. Over the last two centuries, Dubrovnik literature, first demanding its Serbian character to be clarified,



finally gained the status of a tradition in the Serbian scientific community that should be *restored* to its proper place in the national canon.

Not without significance in the context of the strategy of incorporating Dubrovnik literature into the system of Serbian literature is the specificity of Serbian literature, which emphasizes factors that can help justify not only clear historical relationships between them, but also their natural ideological and linguistic affinity. The observations of Mirosljub Joković – researcher specializing in the theory of literature and the history of Serbian literature of the 20th century – seem symptomatic in this respect. Taking up the issue of redefining Serbian literature in the new reality after the end of the war after the breakup of Yugoslavia, he emphasizes that:

Srpska književnost je stalno prelazila granice svog etnosa i koristila se iskustvima drugih književnosti i kultura, pa se za nju ne može reći da je isključivo etnocentrična kad je reč o duhovnim horizontima. Receptija iskustava drugih književnosti nikada nije bila mehaničke, već je uvek bila stvaralačke prirode. (Joković, 1997, p. 41)³

Thus, when explaining the tendency to expand the borders of Serbian culture, he sees in it a force attracting smaller neighboring cultures, and even a kind of center to which other cultures naturally gravitated, what establishes this way close relationships that benefit all parties.

On the other hand, it is impossible not to notice the clear conviction in many intellectual circles in Serbia that Serbian culture has been subject to constant attacks for a long time, striking at its meaning, range and key values. The scholar who most clearly expressed this tendency was Petar Milosavljević, one of the most important representatives of nationalist-oriented scholars of Serbian literature. In his best-known study, dealing with the issue of the theoretical framework of national literature, the researcher argues that “over the last century and a half, the volume of Serbian literature was constantly changing, or to be more precise, its literary corpus was constantly being reduced” (“obim srpske literature je tokom ovog veka i po stalno menjan, ili da budemo tačniji njen književni korpus je stalno smanjivan”; Milosavljević, 1996, p. 56). The process of what he calls “cutting off” (“prekranjanje”) is, of course, done for the benefit of other post-Yugoslav literatures, especially for the benefit of Croatian literature, and has been

³ „Serbian literature constantly crossed the borders of its ethnos and used the experiences of other literatures and cultures, so it cannot be said that it is exclusively ethnocentric when it comes to spiritual horizons. The reception of the experiences of other literatures was never mechanical, but always of a creative nature”.

going on since Vatroslav Jagić, gaining its apogee during the existence of socialist Yugoslavia.

Against the background of the preliminaries outlined here, an intensive development of Serbian studies on Dubrovnik, its history of literature and culture, as well as on the question of its belonging to the Serbian semiosphere, took place in this period. Research on the city's past, queries of the Dubrovnik archives or publishing ventures of local writers – being a modern version of the 19th-century interest in Dubrovnik, specified *dubrovčanisanje* or *raguzofilija* – allowed not only to express the opposition of part of the intellectual community to the reintegration of national culture, but also to popularize this issue in Serbian society and on the level of (otherwise difficult) Serbo-Croatian relations.

Dubrovnik Literature – Between Croatian and Serbian Tradition

As already mentioned, the sources of the Croatian-Serbian dispute over the Dubrovnik tradition, as well as many other old animosities between them, should be sought at least in the 19th century within the heated discussions on this subject conducted at that time by ideologues and Serbian and Croatian artists. In 1808, the official abolition of the Republic of Dubrovnik, preceded two years earlier by the capture of the city by French troops, and then besieging it by the Russian army, put an end to the existence of 450 years of political independence and freedom of one of the last Mediterranean merchant republics. The decline of Dubrovnik in the political sense occurred only slightly later than its degradation on the cultural, especially literary, level.

Dubrovnik and its literary and cultural tradition were in the orbit of interest of both integration processes: Croatian from the west and Serbian from the east – and initially mainly due to the linguistic criterion (because both in the Croatian and in the Serbian national revival the Shtokavian dialect, also spoken in Dubrovnik, was chosen as the standard of the literary language)⁴. Although Dubrovnik absorbed the attention of Serbian and Croatian revival ideologues – as an example of proper cultivation and mastering of the language based on the Shtokavian dialect – the reason for the interest in it was not the source of these visions, nor was their goal; it became only a consequence of specific linguistic decisions affecting

⁴ For more specific information on this issue, see Oczkowska (2006, pp. 130–135).

cultural issues. At this point, it is necessary to recall the key views of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić in this context, contained primarily in his text *Srbi svi i svuda* (1836), in which he laid out his views on language as a key factor in national identification. These views, later repeated in his article *Srbi i Hrvati* (1861), formed the basis of a linguistic model for defining the Serbian nation. Rejecting the confessional determinant of Serbianness, Vuk Karadžić circled it in reference to the range of the Shtokavian dialect. One of the most significant consequences of this assumption turned out to be the exclusion of the possibility of defining Dubrovnik as Croatian and recognizing Dubrovnik as Serbian only⁵.

Despite many examples of glorification of the Dubrovnik heritage from both the Croatian and Serbian sides, this has become somewhat troublesome. The main reason for such an attitude towards the achievements of Ivan Gundulić and other great writers and poets from Dubrovnik turned out to be too big a gap between the character of this tradition, stemming from the spirit of Mediterranean civilization, Western and cosmopolitan tradition, and the folk paradigm adopted by revival activists. It seemed particularly problematic in the context of Serbian culture, which at that time adopted the folk paradigm as the only and dominant one, therefore, as Reinhard Lauer puts it, the Dubrovnik literature that grew out of the urban socio-culture was simply too cosmopolitan and alien for the Serbs (cf. Lauer, 2002, pp. 35–38).

In the 19th-century Dubrovnik, a systematic, based on solid scientific foundations, historical and literary reflection has not yet developed, although the studies on the history of local literature, which were created at that time, sometimes supported by an archival research, but often accompanied by a poorly motivated commentary, are part of the rapidly developing interest in the city's literary tradition. One of the first Serbian activists who showed an interest in Dubrovnik literature in the context of Serbian literature was Đorđe Nikolajević, the Orthodox Metropolitan of Dubrovnik and editor of "The Serb-Dalmatian Magazine" ("Srpsko-Dalmatinski magazine"). In its pages, he published his historical and literary review of Dubrovnik writers and poets from the 16th to the 18th century, entitled *Spisatelji dubrovački koji su srpskim jezikom, a talijanskim slovima pisali* (1839–1842). Based on old and newer sources on Dubrovnik's literature,

⁵ For more on the views of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić presented in both texts, see Sotirović (2006) and Kubik (2015, pp. 139–144).

he presented, using the philological and historical methods, the profiles and works of the most important local authors, duplicating many unverified and inaccurate data. Out of all Dubrovnik artists, he devotes the most space to Ivan Gundulić, who opens the section entitled *Spisatelji dubrovački koji su 1600. cvetali*. Due to the diversity of content and ideas, as well as due to the high aesthetic value of his work, Gundulić was hailed as the central figure of the Dubrovnik canon, which was reflected in the fact of a wide campaign of publishing his works in Dubrovnik itself, as well as the city celebrations related to the anniversary of his death.

However, Nikolajević's primary goal was to express his deep conviction not only about the great importance and artistic quality of all Dubrovnik literature, but also about the need to publish its works. Being aware of the possibility of emphasizing the Serbian character of this literature, in the text *Spisatelji dubrovački koji su srpskim jezikom, a talijanskim slovima pisali*, he even appeals to the Serbs to publish any works they can find. He himself declares: "As far as I'm concerned, I wouldn't begrudge the effort to redeem them, rewrite them, and Serbianize them, only if some zealous patriot found himself willing to pay for the print, which wouldn't cost him dearly" ("Što se mene tiče, ja ne bi truda žalio, iskupiti ih, prepisati i posrbiti ih, samo kad bi se koji revnosni rodoljubac našao da za štampu plati, koja ga ne bi skupo stala"; Nikolajević, 2004, p. 92). The publishing plan outlined here, the important stage of which should be the Serbianization of published texts, i.e. writing them down in Cyrillic and interfering with the lexis, which – as Nikolajević notes – due to Italian influences may be incomprehensible to Serbs from other regions, should contribute to the eternal fame of the Serbian people. Significant merits of Nikolajević – an otherwise efficient organizer, thanks to whom the Orthodox community in Dubrovnik, small in number, gained importance in the public life of the city – should be seen in his efforts to "establishing continuity in our cultural and literary constantly uncertain spaces" („uspostavljanje kontinuiteta u našim kulturnim i književnim stalno neizvesnim prostorima"; Arsić, 2004, pp. 11–12).

In the development of the 19th-century historical and literary reflection in Dubrovnik, Catholic Serbs Medo Pučić and Matija Ban also contributed significantly. As noted by Jeremija D. Mitrović, during the turbulent years of 1848/1849 they turned local *slovinstvo* into *srpstvo*, thanks to which this idea in Dubrovnik regained its true name (Mitrović, 1992, p. 194).

First of them, one of the most important member of the Catholic Serb movement, as well as writer, ideologue and political activist, Medo Pučić, who called himself a "dubrovački slovinac" (Skrelić, 1953, p. 192) spared



no effort in searching for the Serbian character of the city of St. Blaise and his traditions. In 1858, Pucić published “by the decision of Prince Aleksandar Karagjorgjević and the Serbian Council, at the Serbian national expense” (“po odluci kneza Aleksandra Karagjorgjevića i srbskoga savjeta, o narodnom trošku srbskom”) the first part of his work *Spomenici srbski*, containing about three hundred letters written (mainly in Cyrillic, but also in Latin and Italian) by officials of the Republic of Dubrovnik to kings, despots, voivodes and princes of Serbia, Bosnia and Primorje (from 1395–1423). The second part of this book was published in 1862 with the addition *Zakoni o Srbima – što se nalaze u dubrovačkim zakonima*. It contains phrases according to which “in the chancellery of Dubrovnik Serbia itself was called *Sclavonia*, so in the laws Serbs are called *Sclavi*” („u dubrovačkoj kancelariji sama Srbija se nazivala Sclavonia, tako se u zakonima Srbli nazivlju Sclavi“; quoted after: Marković, 1883, p. 168). From Pucić’s own remarks and from the text, it is clear, however, that the scope of the name *sclavus* is wider than the name *srbski*, and therefore the title of his work turns out to be too narrow (cf. Marković, 1883, p. 168). The views of this writer, who old Dubrovnik referred to as “Serbian state” (“srbska država”), and old Dubrovnik literature as “Serbian literature” (“srbska književnost”), had a quite specific character, because despite the pro-Serbian orientation of the author “his Serbianness was not partisan, hostile to Croatianness, but had a more philological, ethnographic significance” (“njegovo srbstvo [nije] bilo strančarsko, neprijateljno hrvatstvu, nego je bilo značaja više filologičkoga, etnografičkoga“; Marković, 1883, p. 178). For Pucić, the greatest contribution of the Dubrovnik heritage to the culture and consciousness of the Serbs lay in his specific synthesis of Mediterranean (Western European) as well as indigenous (Slavic) elements:

Kao otok sred mletačkoga zemljišta na obali dalmatinskoj postojale od starine obrtna i trgovačka republika srbska Dubrovnik, koji je jedini, uzprkos Turkom, ostao do god. 1806 vjeran slobodi, narodu, i zapadnoj prosvjeti. U njem se sastadoše slavenština i talijanština i sklopiše duševan brak, koji će uvek ostati od najvećega zamašaja za Srbiju. (Pucić, 1867)⁶

⁶ The Serbian translation in the text above: *Dubrovnik, 1893* (51). “As an island in the middle of the Venetian land on the Dalmatian coast, there existed from ancient times the Serbian trade republic of Dubrovnik, which was the only one, despite the Turks, that remained until 1806 faithful to freedom, the nation, and Western civilization. In it, Slavic and Italian culture met and made a spiritual marriage, which will always remain one of the greatest achievements for Serbia”.

However, it should also be remembered that Pucić never opposed Serbs and Croats, Orthodox and Catholics, on the contrary – he considered them to be inseparable parts of one great South Slavic community (Milutinović, 1962, pp. 13–14).

Matija Ban, a writer, politician and one of the most important member of the Catholic Serb movement, also attributed Dubrovnik a central place not only to the Slavs, but also to the Serbian culture. In his statements, significant for the 19th-century discussions about the city's Serbian character, such as *Zèrcalo poviestnice dubrovačke. Razdielak književni* (1849) and a speech in honor of Ivan Gundulić and Dubrovnik literature delivered “in the ceremonial session of the Serbian Royal Academy” (“u svečanoj sjednici Srpske kraljevske akademije”) in 1887 significantly expanded the range of Serbian literature. Ban put forward the thesis that Serbian poetry was born in Dubrovnik in the 9th-10th century, “because it is written in the history that at that time the people of Dubrovnik sang the heroic deeds of the Serbian knights” (“jer stoi u poviestnici da su tada dubrovčani pievali junaštva sèrbskih vitezova”; Ban, 1849, p. 150). It was permeated during this period “with a purely folk spirit, similar to the one that wafts from the poetry saved by Vuk” (“čisto narodnim duhom, sličnim onomu koji veje iz pjesama Vukom iznesenih”; Ban, 1998, p. 325). He saw traces of that poetry in the works of the people of that time, as well as in the authors of the 14th century (Đoro Držić, Šiško Menčetić, Mavro Vetranović), whom he calls “fathers of written Serbian poetry” („oci pisane srpske poezije”; Ban, 1998, p. 325). The literature of the 15th and 16th centuries, despite the noticeable presence of the influence of the Greek and Roman classics in it during this period, is perceived as “the first era of Slavic-Serbian literature, which consists of the classic literature of almost the entire Serbian nation” (“pèrvo doba slavjano-sèrbskoga književstva, u kojemu se sastoi malo što ne klasično književstvo i svega sèrbskoga naroda”; Ban, 1849, p. 151). The literary works of Ivan Gundulić belongs to the golden age of “old Serb-Ragusan literature” (“stara srpsko-dubrovačka književnost”; Ban, 1998, p. 326), but his masterpiece *Osman* allows to count him among the greatest Serbian artists of all time and call him the “Serbian Homer”. “In *Osman*, we see – the author notes – the whole of Gundulić not only as a poet, but also as a moralist and statesman, and primarily as a Serb” (“U *Osmanu* vidimo cijeloga Gundulića ne samo kao pjesnika, nego kao i moralistu i državnika, a nada sve kao Srbina”; Ban, 1998, p. 332). This is to be determined, among other things, by the Serbian consciousness of this artist and his conviction, which even made him call Alexander the Great

a Serb, and perceive Serbia according to old legends “from the Marica River and the Aegean Sea” (“od Marice rijeke i od Egejskoga mora”; Ban, 1998, p. 345) and glorify Serbian rulers and folk heroes (including Miloš Obilić or Prince Mark).

Dubrovnik and its rich cultural heritage were referred to as Serbian by Matija Ban against the background of the broadly understood formula of Serbian culture, nurturing values and ideas typical of its eastern orientation, but also open to what is western. In the text of the speech, he presents the scope of the *srpstvo* and the place of the Dubrovnik heritage in it:

Dvije se prosvjetne struje odmah iz početka pojavljuju u srpskome narodu: jedna je crkvena, i dolazi mu s Egejskog mora, iz Soluna, sa svetim knjigama na staroslovenski jezik prevedenim; druga je svjetovna, i dolazi mu s Jadranskoga mora, iz Dubrovnika, sa umjetnom srpskom poezijom na jeziku čisto narodnom. U našem narodu već se onda ukrstiše Slovenstvo i Srpstvo, a za tim je u srpskom Dubrovniku ponikla i misao bratske zadruge svih slovenskih plemena; misao koja je vijekovima tinjala, i tek se u ovome razbukala. (Ban, 1998, p. 323)⁷

In this text – unambiguously emphasizing the Serbian nature of Dubrovnik – Matija Ban not only traces the history of Serbian literature in Dubrovnik, but also draws a parallel between Dubrovnik and Serbia, which takes over the leadership in the relay of South Slavic nations:

Književnost i srpska i latinska trajala je u Dubrovniku koliko i njegova sloboda. Ova se ugasila 1806 godine, a čudnom igrom sudbine te iste godine Srbija je razvijala zastavu slobode najprije u predgrađu pa na zidinama Beogradskoga grada. Njen prvi ministar prosvjete Dositej Obradović pokazivao je prstom Dubrovnik, gdje je srpska knjiga nikla, i svojim spisima polagao prvi osnov novoj srpskoj čisto narodnoj književnosti. Ja sam kao dječak gledao Vuka Karadžića, kad je u jednoj dubrovačkoj pivnici bilježio pjesme koje su mu tamošnji seljani njim čašćeni uz gusle pjevali. (Ban, 1998, p. 350)⁸

⁷ “Two educational tendencies appeared in the Serbian nation right from the beginning: first is ecclesiastical, and it comes to it from the Aegean Sea, from Thessaloniki, with holy books translated into the Old Slavonic language; the second one is secular, and comes to it from the Adriatic Sea, from Dubrovnik, with artistic Serbian poetry in a purely folk language. In our nation, Slavism and Serbianness intersected already then, and after that, the idea of a brotherly cooperative of all Slavic tribes arose in Serbian Dubrovnik; an idea that has been simmering for centuries, and only now flared up there.”

⁸ “Serbian and Latin literature lasted as long in Dubrovnik as its freedom. This was extinguished in 1806, and by a strange twist of fate that same year, Serbia raised the banner of freedom first in the suburbs and then on the walls of the city of Belgrade. Its first minister of education, Dositej Obradović, pointed to Dubrovnik, where the Serbian book originated, and with his writings

Ban used an effective juxtaposition, later often used by many Serbian intellectuals to show the continuity of Serbian literature, but he also made a significant connection between Dubrovnik literature and the central signs of Serbian culture of the time, marked by the activities and ideas of Obradović and Karadžić. Despite such a clear pro-Serbian orientation, noticeable throughout the text, its author – probably bearing in mind the unifying role that the Dubrovnik tradition can play – emphasizes its importance for Croatian statehood, as well as the central – as he seems to suggest – role in the linguistic rapprochement of Serbs and Croats:

Da, kao što je i u srednjem vijeku srpska državna misao došla sa Jadranskoga mora, iz Zete u Rašku, tako se u vijeku našem srpska književna misao preselila opet sa Jadranskoga mora na Dunav i Savu, iz Dubrovnika najprije u Beograd, pa u Zagreb. Preko dubrovačke knjige književnim se jezikom spojiše Hrvati sa Srbima. Ovaj Beograd, koji je po nekima osnovan dubrovačkom naseobinom, sad je Srbima središte i državno i književno. (Ban, 1998, p. 350)⁹

Dubrovnik literature is an integral part of the first complete history of Serbian literature. Stojan Novaković in his book *Istorija srpske književnosti* (1867) defined the scope of Serbian literature, choosing (as the most rational in this respect) the linguistic criterion proposed by Vuk Karadžić. Separating what is Croatian from what is Serbian was, in his opinion, devoid of any scientific basis, and besides, one could not forget that literature is the most important platform for propagating the idea of the unity of Serbs and Croats. Novaković created his vision of the history of Serbian literature (in which there was also a place for the writings of Dubrovnik) – as he himself points out – on the basis of lectures by Đura Daničić, who presented “the history of the literature of the whole world together with Serbian” (“istorija književnosti svega sveta zajedno sa srpskom”; Novaković, 1867, p. V), but also using Pavol Jozef Šafárik’s works, especially his books *Geschichte der*

laid the first foundation for a new purely folk literature in Serbia. As a boy, I watched Vuk Karadžić, when in a tavern in Dubrovnik he wrote down the poems that the local villagers sang to him on the fiddle in his honor”. See: Sotirović (2011, pp. 111–125) for more detail information about the relations between Vuk Stefanović Karadžić and the Croats in regards to the question of historical and cultural inheritance of Dubrovnik.

⁹ “Just as in the Middle Ages Serbian national thought came from the Adriatic Sea, from Zeta to Raška, so in our century Serbian literary thought moved again from the Adriatic Sea to the Danube and Sava, from Dubrovnik first to Belgrade, then to Zagreb. Through the Dubrovnik literary works, Croats and Serbs united with the literary language. This Belgrade, which according to some people was founded by the immigrants from Dubrovnik, is now the Serbian center of both their state and literature”.

slavischen Sprachen und Literatur nach allen Mundarten (1826), studies by Jovan Subotić, Jovan Ristić and Vatroslav Jagić.

The writings of old Dubrovnik occupy an important place in Novaković's book, constituting the central part of the chapter entitled *Stara književnost Srba zapadne crkve, ispisana glagoljskim i latinskim slovima, i dubrovačka poezija*. At the very beginning of this part of the study, Novaković, emphasizing the peripheral location of Dubrovnik and Dalmatia in relation to the Serbian nation ("na zapadnom kraju srpskoga naroda u Dubrovniku i Dalmaciji"; Novaković, 1867, p. 89), indicates the originality and independence of Dubrovnik literature, which does not show any significant connections with either old or new Serbian literature ("samoniklica, sa svim bez ikakve sveze sa starom srpskom književnošću a gotovo i sa novom"; Novaković, 1867, p. 89). Those that can be seen are considered "loose" ("labave") and result from different experiences of political history, social way of life and development of Dubrovnik and its Dalmatian hinterland, which was supposed to permanently separate it from the mainstream of socio-political life in Serbian lands (cf. Novaković, 1867, pp. 89–90). Close relations with Italy, as well as the huge influence of the Catholic Church with the Latin language used by it, were of fundamental importance for the character of the evolving Dubrovnik culture.

Despite the author emphasizing the significant factors that led to the separateness of both literary and cultural systems, Novaković sees Serbian merits in the development of writing in Dubrovnik, because Serbia, by trading with the city-republic, contributed to a significant increase in its wealth, which had an impact "on the direction of the intellectual activity of Dubrovnik" ("na pravac umne radnje dubrovačke"; Novaković, 1867, p. 92).

The location of Dubrovnik on the border of the Slavic and Latin world is conducive to a rather ambiguous and multi-level classification of the Dubrovnik tradition in the concept proposed by Novaković. The researcher presents this specificity, noticeable in the Dubrovnik literature, not only against the background of its relationship with Serbian culture, but also in the context of Dalmatia and Italy. On the basis of geographical aspects, he is inclined to perceive Dubrovnik literature more broadly as essentially Dalmatian literature: "Dubrovnik literature, which is so called because of all the Dalmatian cities, the most literary work was done in Dubrovnik and because Dubrovnik was the main representative of the Dalmatia in life, literature and trade, did not begin in Dubrovnik" ("Književnost dubrovačka, koja se zove tako što se od sve Dalmacije najviše u Dubrovniku radilo, i što je Dubrovnik u svemu bio glavni zamenik dalmatinskih gradova u životu,

književnosti i trgovini, nije se počela u Dubrovniku”; Novaković, 1867, p. 96). However, the nature and form of the literature created in Dubrovnik allows him to locate it this time within the then Italian literature: “Just as Dalmatian Glagolitic literature is part of the old Serbian-Slavic ecclesiastical literature due to its history, language, and development, the poetic literature of Dubrovnik and Dalmatia can be considered a part of contemporary Italian literature due to its form and development” (“Onako kao što je glagoljska književnost dalmatinska i po istoriji i po jeziku i po toku razvitka njegova deo stare srpsko-slovenske crkvene književnosti, i književnost poetska dubrovačka i dalmatinska i po formi i po postanju svome može se smatrati kao deo suvremene italijanske književnosti”; Novaković, 1867, p. 105).

The perception of Dubrovnik’s literary tradition in a network of various political and cultural aspects makes it impossible to unambiguously assign it a national affiliation. Depending on the factors and the degree of their presence, Dubrovnik literature could be considered Serbian, but also Dalmatian and Italian; however, according to Novaković, there is no possibility of classifying it to the system of Croatian literature in any case.

The Dawn of a new Century: in Search for a new Identity

The Croatian-Serbian dispute over the Dubrovnik tradition in the 20th century entered a new, no less difficult phase, determined by the completely different political situation of Croats and Serbs, and Dubrovnik itself. Both nations found themselves within one common state – first, after the end of the First World War, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later renamed Yugoslavia, and then (after the Second World War) within the borders of socialist Yugoslavia. The polemic around the national affiliation of Dubrovnik, although of course still ongoing, in connection with the promotion of the slogan of *brotherhood and unity* (*bratstvo i jedinstvo*) of the nations that make up the state (especially during the Second Yugoslavia) changed its face – all discussions on the exclusively Croatian or Serbian affiliation of the Dubrovnik heritage were marginalized (and consequently pushed into the circulation of emigrants) and even silenced, and the strategy of presenting this tradition as a common one was favored¹⁰.

¹⁰ Although – as evidenced by the opinions and positions cited in the text – in the Serbian perspective, it was rather about perceiving the Dubrovnik tradition as Croatian, making it impossible to discuss the Serbian heritage.



Already at the beginning of the 20th century, the term “Dubrovnik literature” (“dubrovačka književnost”) gained popularity, which did not indicate either the Serbian or Croatian character of the literary works created in Dubrovnik, but it suggested a regional specificity of its tradition¹¹. Such a formulation is used by the Serbian Catholic Ivan Stojanović in the title of his dissertation *Dubrovačka književnost* (1900). In the introduction to it, however, he announces that the subject of his interest will be “Slavic literature” (“slovenska književnost”) written by – as he describes them – “Italian-Latin” authors (“italijansko-latinski”), who nurtured the “Slavic spirit” (“duh slovinski”) and were of Dubrovnik origin (Stojanović, 1900, p. 7). In the same place, discussing the structure of the book, he emphasizes that in its third part, dealing with modern literature, Dubrovnik literature (“književnost upravo nazvana dubrovačka”) is replaced by “Serbo-Croatian or South Slavic literature” (“srpsko-hrvatska iliti južnoslavenska”) (Stojanović, 1900, p. 8). Even more: underestimating the possibilities and abilities of small state organisms in the Balkans (which was the Dubrovnik Republic) to create their own literature, Stojanović explicitly suggests that they must show the influence of the nation to which they belong ethnically or with which they are neighboring and related (Stojanović, 1900, p. 2). Dubrovnik literature, as he writes, is a literature shaped by foreign influences that Dubrovnik has been subjected to throughout history (“Dubrovnik literature is *sui generis* literature and corresponds to the influences of foreign elements, which Dubrovnik was subject to” / “Dubrovačka književnost je književnost *sui generis* i odgovara utjecajima tujijeh elemenata, kojijem Dubrovnik bijaše podložan”; Stojanović, 1900, p. 2). Although he does not say it directly, it is clear from his analysis that he is talking about influence and dependence on Serbia and Serbian culture.

The eminent historian Lujo Vojnović was also convinced of Dubrovnik’s Serbian character, despite its peripheral location in relation to Serbian lands. The history of the city, which can be considered the key topic of his historiographical work, shows in his vision of the history of this

¹¹ The phrase “Dubrovnik literature” – also used by Croats in the mid-twentieth century and present, for example, in the title of Albert Haler’s book *Novija dubrovačka književnost* (1944) – is currently undermined by the Croatian academic community and replaced with the term “Old Croatian literature” (“starohrvatska književnost”; Stipčević, 2004, p. 10), which is a more general term that also includes old literary traditions of other Croatian regions. However, the category of “Dubrovnik literature” / “literature of Dubrovnik” (“dubrovačka književnost” / “književnost Dubrovnika”) is still used by many Croatian researchers as a useful term that indicates the specificity of this literature (Fališevac, 2007; Foretić, 2007; Grčević, 2013).

part of the Balkans a fundamental and specific convergence with the fate of the Serbs. In his historical treatise *Dubrovnik i Osmansko carstvo* (1898), Vojnović treated Dubrovnik – as a city surrounded on all sides by Serbian political territories – as in fact a “Serbian enclave” (“enklave Srbije”) (Vojnović, 1898). A similar opinion was also repeated in his later study *Istorija Dubrovačke republike* (1948), in which he additionally noted that due to insufficient attention paid to Serbian sovereignty over Dubrovnik and its neighboring territories in the past, the entire Serbian history of the Middle Ages should be revised (Vojnović, 2018). Vojnović points out not only the historical ties between Dubrovnik and Serbia, but also the cultural relations, visible according to him in the compensation that occurs when the status of Dubrovnik and Serbia changes on the historical plane: “Just as Dubrovnik rose when Serbia fell in Kosovo, Serbia rose again when Dubrovnik handed over its keys to Napoleon” (“Kao što se Dubrovnik podigao kada je Srbija pala na Kosovu, tako je i Srbija uskrnula kada je Dubrovnik svoje ključeve predao Napoleonu”; Arsić, 2019, p. 411). It is true that the participation of Serbs and city’s inhabitants in the relay race of history did not make them equal on the political level (“Politički te dvije zemlje nijesu više ravne”), but Vojnović saw this symbolic relationship between them in the perspective of historiosophy (Vojnović, 2018).

Although Lujo Vojnović in his research did not take a deeper reflection on the literature of Dubrovnik, these issues were not alien to him and he often underlined them, especially if it could draw attention to the Serbian character of the city. In the book *Dubrovnik. Jedna istorijska šetnja* (1907) – written at the request of the management of the Serbian printing house in Dubrovnik, on the occasion of the unveiling of the monument to Ivan Gundulić in 1893 – Vojnović noted that after a period of apathy in the cultural life of the city in the 1860s, there was finally a revival at this level through the involvement of Dubrovnik authors in the national revival already taking place in Croatian and Serbian lands. In the literature of that time, he emphasizes the importance – as he puts it – of “Dubrovnik humanism”, which, referring to the tradition of Ivan Gundulić and Serbian folk poetry, enabled the emergence of such artists as Mato Vodopić, Antun Kazalić, Medo Pucić and Matija Ban, thus initiating a new – “*par excellance* dubrovački” – stage in the development of local literature, which is basically an extension of the “realistic tendency” (“realistično neko produženje”) present in the 18th century. He considered “the chords of that wider national unity on the Serbian-Croatian basis” („akordi onog šireg narodnog jedinstva na srpsko-hrvackoj osnovi“; Vojnović, 1907, p. 67) as the basis

of this development. Referring to the ideas proclaimed by Medo and Niko Pucić, Vojnović announced that the awakening of national consciousness in the neighboring lands, inhabited by peoples of one blood, is to gradually lead to the advent of not so much the idea of “centralist state law”, but the broader unity needed here, in which Dubrovnik – as “*corpus separatum*” – would have the role of restorer “of the famous agreements of Višegrad and Vienna” (“slavnih pakcija Višegrada i Beča”; Vojnović, 1907, p. 67). The specific border location of Dubrovnik was, in Vojnović’s opinion, decisive for its historical mission, which was best expressed in the 1920s in his letter to his friend Branimir Ćosić: “Nature has placed us right on the border of two worlds to defend common and, let’s say, Christian civilizations with Western weapons and Slavic sentiment and the vastness of the horizon” (“Nas je priroda postavila baš na granici dva sveta da sa zapadnjačkim oružjem a slovenskim osećanjem i prostranošću horizonta, branimo zajedničke i, recimo reč, hrišćanske civilizacije”; Andrić, 1987–1988, p. 14).

Later, Lujo Vojnović – radicalizing his views on the nationality of Dubrovnik and its traditions – in discussing this issue reaches for arguments going beyond the repertoire referring to exclusively Dubrovnik conditions. During the existence of the first Yugoslavia, in the face of Croatian aspirations for autonomy within a common state, he opposed the incorporation of Dubrovnik into the Croatian Banovina, and even wrote letters to the then Minister of the Army and Prince Pavle with proposal to consider Dubrovnik as an autonomous unit within the Kingdom. In the text *Refleksije o Hrvatima* (1939) attached to the letter, Vojnović criticized Croatian cultural policy, opposing the ideologically motivated Croatian tendency to include the Serbs in a number of “uncultural nations” (“u redove nekulturnih naroda”) and negating the Croatian thesis about the “thousand-year-old culture” (“hiljadugodišnja kultura”) of Croats. Assuming that the Serbs in the Middle Ages had a much more developed culture (while the Croats were – as he notes – on the level of Ethiopia), he firmly emphasized that the culture of Dalmatia (especially its old architecture) is not the work of Croatian artists, but the result of the influence of Romanesque culture. Old Croatian art, which in his opinion was a poor imitation or simply a reception of Byzantine art mixed with Frankish influences, he saw as the result of scholarly research (here he mentioned Józef Strzygowski¹²,

¹² See: Strzygowski (1927) for more specific information about the Old Croatian culture in the concept of this researcher.

a Polish art historian at the Universities of Graz and Vienna). In this context, he unequivocally rejected the possibility of referring to Dalmatian-Ragusan literature as Croatian, recalling the influence of Italian culture in its formation (cf. Ćosić & Grijak, 2012, p. 139)¹³.

While for Stojanović and Vojnović, who were associated with Dubrovnik, the need to emphasize the Serbian identity of his heritage in the early 20th century presented, if not a central, then certainly a significant problem in their views on this subject, this issue did not raise much interest of researchers from the other Serbian centers at roughly the same time. This is best evidenced by the vision proposed by Jovan Skerlić in his work *Istorija nove srpske književnosti* (1914), fundamental to the 20th-century concept of the history of Serbian literature, today a classic but also heavily criticized. This eminent literary critic, who – let us emphasize – deals in the study primarily with “newer Serbian literature”, distinguished literature, which he calls “Ragusan” (“dubrovačka”). The use of such an identification indicates the position he shares about the autonomous and independent place of this heritage in relation to both Croatian and Serbian literature. In literature understood in this way by Skerlić, there is a turning point and even a kind of exhaustion, important for its further fate, when Dubrovnik authors opt for belonging to Serbian or Croatian literature: “In the first half of the 19th century, Dubrovnik literature, as a whole, dies down, and local writers approach either Serbian or Croatian literature” (“U prvoj polovini XIX veka dubrovačka književnost, kao celina, gasi se, i dubrovački pisci prilaze ili srpskoj ili hrvatskoj književnosti”; Skerlić, 1953, p. 190). Therefore, in his monograph, he discusses only those authors who definitely and consciously consider themselves Serbian, i.e. Matija Ban and Medo Pucić (cf. Skerlić, 1953, p. 190), whom he calls “the last bard of Dubrovnik” (“poslednji bard dubrovački”) and values him for his commitment to promoting the Slavic and Serbian idea (“apostol slovenske i srpske ideje”) and for his efforts to revive old Dubrovnik literature and link it with new Serbian literature (“for the moment, he resurrected the old Dubrovnik literature from the past and connected it with the new Serbian literature” / “za trenut je vaskrsavao iz prošlosti staru dubrovačku književnost i vezivao je sa novom srpskom književnošću”; Skerlić, 1953, p. 193).

¹³ Also after World War II, he addressed the new authorities in Belgrade in the text *Politički status Dubrovnika*, again advocating autonomy for Dubrovnik and the territory of the former Republic. Dubrovnik itself called „the eternal center of common Yugoslav culture and a bridge between Latin and Greek civilizations” (“vazda žarište zajedničke jugoslavenske kulture i most između latinske i grčke civilizacije”; quoted after: Ćosić & Grijak, 2012, p. 158).



In the vision presented by Jovan Skerlić, Dubrovnik literature – seen against a broader background of Dalmatian literature – was of marginal importance for Serbian literature, which was determined by its poor knowledge among Serbs, as well as the lack of clear tendencies to consider it as Serbian: “Serbs hardly even knew about that literature (from Dubrovnik and Dalmatia), and even if some of the more educated Serbs knew it, they did not consider it their own” (“Za tu književnost (dubrovačku i dalmatinsku) u Srba se gotovo nije ni znalo, i ako je ko od obrazovanijeg Srba i poznao, nije je smatrao kao svoju“; Skerlić, 1953, p. 4). Skerlić attributes the central importance of Dubrovnik literature to the formation of new Croatian literature until the 1840s: “Dalmatian and especially Dubrovnik literature – writes Jovan Skerlić in the already mentioned book *Istorija nove srpske književnosti* – during the Illyrian movement had a great influence on the creation of new Croatian literature” (“Dalmatinska, a naročito dubrovačka književnost za vreme ilirskog pokreta bila je od velikog utjecaja za stvaranje nove hrvatske književnosti...”; Skerlić, 1953, p. 3).

from the Common Tradition to the Spirit of Particularism

However, for the 20th-century discussions on the national character of Dubrovnik literature, the views of Serbian scholars such as Milan Rešetar, Pavle Popović, Jovan Deretić or Miroslav Pantić were of decisive importance. A particularly important complex of arguments in these polemics was created by the eminent philologist and historian Milan Rešetar. Similarly to Serbian activists in the 19th century, he unambiguously defined the language used in Dubrovnik literature as Serbian. On the basis of his thorough research, he categorically stated that the language of prose and documents in Dubrovnik shows the characteristics of the Shtokavian dialect, which is the basis of the Serbian language. He also states that the Serbian language came to Dubrovnik in distant times, when it was still Roman (Latin), from Serbian linguistic and ethnic areas (Zahumlje and Travunje) (Rešetar, 1952, pp. 36–52). This argumentation, supported by the analysis of many important sources, was taken up by other researchers and then popularized in the scientific discourse, especially in the Serbian community. For Croatian scholars, Rešetar’s theory¹⁴ was for a long time one of the most

¹⁴ Admittedly, Rešetar allowed for yet another possibility. In the context of Yugoslav *unity and brotherhood*, he was inclined to claim that the language spoken in Dubrovnik was Serbo-Croatian. Nevertheless, the rejection of this ideological matrix means that the Dubrovnik

serious problems, making it difficult, and often simply impossible, to start a discussion in this area.

Despite this useful linguistic strategy in proving the Serbian nature of Dubrovnik's tradition, and even a certain advantage it gave in discussions with Croats¹⁵, the problem for Serbian researchers was to place this heritage, which is actually completely different in terms of its cultural orientation, on the map of Serbian culture. Such difficulties related to locating the Dubrovnik tradition in the system of Serbian literature and the planned Yugoslav literature are evidenced by the concept of Pavle Popović, which has undergone changes and shifts of gravity over the years. Initially convinced of the Serbian affiliation of the Dubrovnik heritage, over time – taking into account political and ideological factors – he developed views on Croatian-Serbian unity in culture and literature, and eventually at the end of his life he returned to the Serbocentric vision.

In the first edition of his book *Pregled srpske književnosti* (1909), he included Dubrovnik literature to Serbian literature. As “a very important sphere of Serbian literature” (“vrlo važna oblast srpske književnosti”; Popović, 1999a, p. 4) it could not – in his opinion – be part of Croatian literature at the same time. Only a few years later, in the second edition of the same monograph (1913), he treats Dubrovnik literature as a Croatian tradition, but also admits the Serbian right to it. In the introduction to this edition, responding to the accusations of alleged chauvinism found in the first edition in connection with the recognition of the Serbian character of the Dubrovnik literature, he compromised “that literature of Dubrovnik can be called Serbian at least as well as Croatian” (“da se dubrovačka književnost može nazvati srpskom bar onako isto kao i hrvatskom”; Popović, 1999a, p. 7). Popović's view of the mutual relations of both cultures de facto established new boundaries of Serbian literature,

language should be perceived only as Serbian. Interestingly, this opinion was expressed at the end of the text *Najstariji dubrovački govor*, which was published in 2004. See: Pantić (2004, pp. 21–33) for more detail information about this text.

¹⁵ This is suggested by the authors of the document entitled *Izjava Matice hrvatske o prisvajanju hrvatske književne baštine u izdanjima Matice srpske*: “Despite these scientific facts the Serbian literary and historical school which raised and professionally educated forces for research work in the State Archives in Dubrovnik, the Archive of the Little Brothers in Dubrovnik and the Scientific Library in Dubrovnik used the Serbian language as the main argument for appropriation” (“Mimo tih znanstvenih činjenica srpska književnopovijesna škola, koja je podizala i stručno educirala snage za istraživački rad u Državnom arhivu u Dubrovniku, Arhivu Male braće u Dubrovniku i Znanstvenoj knjižnici u Dubrovniku, koristila je srpski jezik kao glavni argument prisvajanja”; “Izjava”, 2010, p. 2).

defined by the linguistic factor, but also by the criterion of literariness (its effect was visible primarily in relation to old Serbian literature, from which, according to this aspect, works not having a strictly literary character were excluded, cf. Popović, 1999a, p. 2). As Nenad Nikolić comments on this concept, both national literatures are not deprived of the exclusive right to Dubrovnik literature, but the paradoxical exclusivity of both literatures to this tradition excludes the other part from the dispute over it (Nikolić, 2009, p. 276). As can be assumed, in this position of Popović the current cultural context was gaining dominance.

On the other hand, in Popović's book *Jugoslovenska književnost* (1918) – importantly, written by him during the First World War, when he was also active in the Yugoslav Committee in London – the title concept was presented primarily in reference to ideological and political factors, not scientific ones. Its overarching assumption is an attempt to present the literature of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes as a coherent whole (“mali pokušaj da se književnost Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca izloži kao jedna celina”; Popović, 1999b, p. xi). The concept presented in the earlier book, granting a separate identity to both Serbian and Croatian literature, underwent a fundamental change here, reducing individual national literatures to the role of regional traditions within one Yugoslav literature. However, the literary works of old Dubrovnik were given a central place in this context as the cradle of Yugoslav thought directed to the “wider Slavic hinterland” (“u šire slovenske okvire”; Nikolić, 2009, p. 287).

Popović also repeats these views in the book *Ogled o jugoslovenskoj književnosti* (1930), originally intended for a French audience, then translated into Serbian (1934), presenting in it a synthetic approach to the “great lines of development and the most important events” of this literature (“velike linije i glavne činjenice”; Popović, 1999d, p. 149). Popović's speech at the Royal Academy of Sciences in 1922, entitled *Jugoslovenska književnost kao celina*, was of great importance for the formation of this concept of Yugoslav literature. The specificity of Yugoslav literature, which developed in individual parts of the common homeland, resulted from the history of the nations that formed it and split between two different civilizations. Trying to see it in a holistic perspective in his concept, however, he considered the eastern and western orientation in literature to be “two literary branches of the same character” or “two comparative wholes, an apple cut in half” (“dve književne grane istoga karaktera”/ “dve uporedne celine, jabuka presečena na pola”; Popović, 1999c, p. 109). This parallel view of various Yugoslav literatures enabled him to introduce a regional

classification of literary phenomena, which, however, required the use of dubious levels enabling the comparison of often very different phenomena. This is best seen in the attempt to link Dubrovnik and Dalmatian literature during the Renaissance with the Serbian literature of the 16th century, which was done by Popović with the help of “one external sign” (“jednim spoljašnjim znakom”; Popović, 1999c, p. 109), i.e. print.

In the mid-1930s, so basically at the end of his life, Pavle Popović abandoned his views on the Yugoslav idea, which is most clearly evidenced by his monograph devoted to one of the works of Dositej Obradović, in which the position of this ideologist and writer (in the book *Jugoslovenska književnost* being an expression of his beliefs about Yugoslav unity) now he interpreted as a call for Serbian unity. In the contemporary reception of Popović’s concept, the prevailing view is that the researcher wrote his perception of Yugoslav literature from a position “that puts Serbian literature and culture in the background” (“koja srpsku književnost i kulturu stavlja u drugi plan”; Nikolić, 2015, p. 163). Its premise contained the condition of negating Serbian literature, because the integration of Serbian and Croatian literature required the rejection of those works by Serbian authors that brought conflict and dispute into their relationship, but in such a way that “works of Croatian literature marked by the spirit of Catholic proselytism enter Yugoslav literature, and works of Serbian literature opposed to them do not enter” (“u jugoslovensku književnost uđu dela hrvatske književnosti obeležena duhom katoličkog prozelitizma, a ne uđu dela srpske književnosti njima suprotstavljena”; Nikolić, 2015, pp. 163–164).

Pavle Popović’s concept, however, had sparked discussions before, and one of its loudest part was the polemic provoked by the introduction of his book *Pregled srpske književnosti* to the list of textbooks of the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade. Miodrag Popović joined it in 1967 in the pages of the Zagreb daily “Borba”, trying to settle the question of belonging to Dubrovnik literature by juxtaposing it with Croatian and Serbian literature of the 16th and 17th centuries. In presenting his position, he started by reminding that in the language of the oldest Dubrovnik authors, the influences of the Chakavian dialect are noticeable, and elements of them were introduced from the neighboring areas. Later, many works of Dubrovnik writers and poets were written in the Ijekavian variant of the Shtokavian dialect, while the Serbs at that time used the Slavic-Serbian language in their literature. As Popović further points out (referring to the general development of both literatures) “from a poetic and stylistic perspective, Dubrovnik literature forms a whole with Croatian

literature in Dalmatia and Primorje (“u pjesničkom i stilskom pogledu dubrovačka književnost čini cjelinu s hrvatskom književnosti u Dalmaciji i primorju”; quoted after: Grčević, 2013, p. 9), because Croatian literature is dominated by Renaissance and Baroque, and old Serbian literature, as well as the writings of the 16th and 17th centuries continue the Byzantine tradition, with completely different literary and ideological properties. Recalling the linguistic situation in the Serbian lands in the 18th century, he actually decentralized or marginalized Dubrovnik, as he directly noted that against this background “Serbian literature has become even more distant from Dubrovnik” („u jezičkom pogledu srpska književnost će se još više udaljiti od dubrovačke”; quoted after: Grčević, 2013, p. 9).

The researcher did not fail to mention specific examples from Serbian and Croatian literature, which were supposed to clearly indicate the fundamental differences between the Dubrovnik literature and the Serbian tradition. In his opinion, therefore, it is difficult to see similarities on the linguistic and stylistic level between the sensual poetry of Šiško Menčetić from Dinko Ranjinaš collection (1507) and *Služba sv. Maksimu Brankoviću*, of an anonymous author from Krušedol, written fifteen years later, just as a completely different convention in presenting historical events was used by Ivan Gundulić in his poem *Osman* (1628–1638) than Pajsije in his *Žitije Stevana Prvovenčanog* (1629). By finally asking the rhetorical question about the similarities between Marin Držić’s comedy and Orthodox Serbo-Slavic rhetoric, Popović seems to unambiguously move the Dubrovnik tradition away from the center of Serbian spiritual culture.

In conclusion, the Serbian researcher stated: “As we can see, the Dubrovnik literature of the 16th and 17th centuries, in perspective of its language, poetry and ideas, fits into Croatian literature and forms an integral part of it. That is why it is natural that new Croatian literature spontaneously followed it and that Serbian writers of the 18th century had not any ties with Dubrovnik literature” (“Kao što se vidi, dubrovačka književnost XVI i XVII vijeka po jezičkim, pjesničkim i idejnim svojstvenostima uklapa se u hrvatsku književnost i čini njen sastavni dio. Zato je prirodno što je nova hrvatska književnost spontano pošla za njom i što srpski pisci XVIII vijeka nisu imali nikakve veze s dubrovačkom književnošću”; quoted after: Grčević, 2013, p. 9). However, he admitted at the same time (thus indicating a permanent element of Croatian-Serbian polemics, and calming the emotional course of the discussion in this regard) that “the existence of Serbian element in Dubrovnik literature in no way calls into question its Croatian character, nor does it threaten the unity and national integrity



of Croatian literature” (“postojanje srpskog u dubrovačkoj književnosti ni u kom slučaju ne dovodi u pitanje njen hrvatski karakter, niti ugrožava jedinstvo i nacionalni integritet hrvatske književnosti“; quoted after: Grčević, 2013, p. 9).

The discussion that was initiated by the Pavle Popović's book transcended the framework of historical-literary disputes and became the subject of public interest throughout Yugoslavia, symbolically ended in the early 1970s with the posthumous publication of an article by Jorjo Tadić *Sablasi kruže Jugoslavijom* (1971). In this text, the distinguished researcher of the Dubrovnik past, defending Popović and his book, appealed for the fight against the phenomenon of “real spectre which is beginning to appear on our Croatian horizon” (“pravih sablasti, koje se počinju da javljaju na našem hrvatskom horizontu“; Tadić, 1971, p. 51). Since the death of Tadić, as well as Petar Kolendić, the issue of Dubrovnik in Serbian theoretical reflection has lost its importance, becoming an issue “not only unfounded, but also unscientific” (“nesamo neosnovanim, nego i nenaučnim“; Arsić, 2021, p. 108).

The complexity of the perception of Dubrovnik literature in the perspective of Serbian literature, including the importance of political conditions within this issue, is most clearly demonstrated by the case of Jovan Deretić, the most important and probably the most influential historian of Serbian literature in the second half of the 20th century. In his well-known and popular study *Istorija srpske književnosti* (1985), he omitted authors from Dubrovnik, which became one of the main reasons for its strong criticism (“due to omissions regarding Dubrovnik literature, which for political reasons was considered the basis of Croatian literature” / “zbog propusta oko dubrovačke književnosti koja je iz političkih razloga bila smatrana osnovom hrvatske književnosti“; Joković, 1997, p. 36). The views expressed in it – according to Petar Milosavljević – confirm that the author in the period of second Yugoslavia “favored projected solutions that were dictated from the Zagreb philological center” (“priklonio se projektovanim rešenjima koja su diktirana iz zagrebačkog filološkog centra“; Milosavljević, 2000, p. 403). A change in Deretić's position on the status and affiliation of the Dubrovnik tradition is brought only by his book *Put srpske književnosti – identitet, granice, težnje*, which can be considered the best complement to his *History*, but also a kind of reckoning with the compromises he made in it himself. This study, although it contributed to the consolidation of the tendency towards the reintegration of Serbian literature, its history and Serbian national consciousness, at the same time explains the influence of political

mechanisms on literature¹⁶ and problems that have preoccupied literary scholars for the last decades. It is primarily about the issue of demarcation between Serbian and Croatian literature, including the issue of the national identity of individual writers or the attitude towards great world cultures.

In Dubrovnik literature, which Deretić included in the complex of “Dalmatian-Pomeranian literature” (“dalmatinsko-primorska književnost”), he saw – constituting its ideological foundation – a manifestation of the Slavic character, which reveals in overcoming the “particularism of the Catholics and the Orthodox” and the “split between Christians and Muslims” (“U temelju ove književnosti nalazi se idea koja prevazilazi partikularizam katolika i pravoslavaca, podeljenost između hrišćana i islama”; Joković, 1997, p. 37). In this literature, almost entirely written in the Shtokavian dialect, Serbian history – according to the aforementioned Joković – played the most important role.

In the concept presented by Deretić, the genesis and characteristics of Dubrovnik literature are determined by two factors – linguistic and historical. On this basis, he perceives this literature as Serbian (“po svojim filološkim i istorjskim korenima srpska”), with a Slavic identity (“po svom identitetu slovinska”), belonging to the Dalmatian literature complex (“po formacijskoj pripadnosti dalmatinska”), and – considering the direction of its later development – it qualifies (but not exclusively) as Croatian (“po svom osnovnom pravcu kasnijeg delovanja, pretežno je, iako ne isključivo, hrvatska”). This complex picture of Dubrovnik literature, taking into account the participation in its specificity of diverse cultural elements accumulated over the centuries, leads the researcher to the position that there is no relevant factor that would allow for excluding Dubrovnik literature from the corpus of Serbian literature and considering it exclusively as a tradition belonging to Croatian culture (“Dakle, nema nijednog relevantnog elementa na osnovu kojeg bi se ova književnost mogla isključiti iz korpusa srpske književnosti i uzeti za isključivu osnovicu hrvatske”; Joković, 1997, p. 38). In this context, the activities of Croatian researchers who classify this legacy as Croatian literature – due to their identification of *slovinstvo* and *ilirstvo* with *Croatianness* (*hrvatstvo*) – he unequivocally called “Croatocentric interpretations of Dubrovnik-Pomeranian literature”. It is also worth noting that in Deretić’s concept, Serbian literature is a system

¹⁶ Deretić writes in this book that the question of the Dubrovnik Republic’s national affiliation, its culture and literature was, in fact, “one of the taboo topics” (“jedna od tabu tema”; Deretić, 1996, p. 151) in the second half of the 20th century.

with a clearly articulated national identity. However, since the second half of the 20th century, the framework of the system of literature understood in this way has been “systematically blurred”, although – as the researcher himself admits – its specificity lies precisely in unstable borders. Despite these special features of Serbian literature, “all methods of distortion or falsification or forced inclusion of literary phenomena in its corpus” (“metodologija iskrivljivanja ili falsifikovanja ili nasilnog uključivanja književnih pojava u njegov korpus”; Joković, 1997, p. 41) remain alien to it.

Serbian regionalology and restoring the Centrality of Dubrovnik Tradition in Serbian Literature

The disintegration of Yugoslavia and the war that broke out as a result of it brought an aggravation of the dispute over the nationality of Dubrovnik and its cultural tradition. Experiencing a devastating attack and an eight-month siege by Serbian and Montenegrin armies, the city also became the subject of many (pseudo)scientific trials intended to prove its Serbian character. One of the most important publications dealing with this issue after the taboo period during the existence of Yugoslavia is the book by Jeremije Mitrović *Srpstvo Dubrovnika* (1992), which, not only with its unambiguous title, but also with its interpretation of the city’s history set the Serbian course of approach to this important issue. Assuming that the previous research on the national affiliation of Dubrovnik did not meet the criteria of scientificity and objectivity (cf. Mitrović, 1992, p. 5) Mitrović negated the Croatian character of Dubrovnik and expressed the need for “against a new Croatization” (“protiv novog pohrvaćivanja”) and to show what is hidden “in the persistent Vatican-Croatian and Germanic propaganda against the alleged *Greater Serbian* danger” (“u upornoj vatikansko-hrvatskoj i germanskoj propagandi protiv tobožnje *velikosrpske* opasnosti”) (Mitrović, 1992, p. 202). Only – in his opinion – Serbian aid will allow for “defeating the Great Croatian attack on Serbian territory” (“slamanje velikohrvatskog naleta na srpskom prostoru”), the liberation of Dubrovnik from the “Greater Croatian shackles” (“velikohrvatskih okova”) and will enable the provincial stuffiness (“iz provincijske učmalosti”) (Mitrović, 1992, p. 203) to come out again and revive the culture that took place during the existence of the free Republic.

Dubrovnik and its literary heritage were also among the most important research topics of Miroslav Pantić, one of the most eminent historians of Serbian literature in recent decades, a representative of Belgrade

raguzeology. In addition to theoretical reflection, which significantly enriched contemporary studies on Dubrovnik literature, he conducted lively publishing activity, presenting new archival materials and reminiscent of old prints. He created the Cabinet for Dubrovnik studies (Kabinet za dubrovačke studije), consisting of a collection of documents, manuscripts, books (among which a part entitled *Građa o dubrovačkim piscima i drugim znamenitim Dubrovčanima* was separated), and together with Zlata Bojović, he initiated the edition of *Književna baština starog Dubrovnika* (1994–1999).

Among the many significant publications by the author on the old literature of Dubrovnik and Boka Kotorska, the small book *Dubrovačka književnost* (1960) is of particular importance. Dubrovnik – whose history Pantić perceives in the context of Serbian history – occupies “a narrow strip around the Adriatic Sea” (“uzak pojas oko Jadranskog mora”; Pantić, 1960, p. 3), or “a piece of our country” (“jedan komad naše zemlje”; Pantić, 1960, pp. 44–45), which saved it (unlike Serbia) from being taken over by the Turks, but also contributed to a departure from the traditional (typical for Serbian lands) model of literature and participation in the processes in which “other part of the cultural world of that time” and “enlightened Europe” (“ostali deo ondašnjeg kulturnog sveta”, “prosvjećena Evropa”) took part (Pantić, 1960, p. 45).

He expressed his opposition to the thesis appearing in the discussion on the affiliation of Dubrovnik literature, according to which “it was not accepted by Serbian, but it was accepted by Croatian writers” (“nije prihvaćena od srpskih, a jeste od hrvatskih pisaca”; Pantić & Ćirić, 1994, p. 41). For this reason, he was critical of the exclusion by Jovan Skerlić and Jovan Deretić authors from Dubrovnik and Dalmatia from the corpus of Serbian literature. Dubrovnik literature in Pantić’s concept was – as he directly declared – “at least equally Croatian and Serbian, if not completely Serbian” (“barem podjednako i hrvatska i srpska, ako ne posve srpska”; quoted after: Mrdeža Antonina, 2009, p. 181). However, the repertoire of arguments that would confirm such a statement was not developed by him too much, because – recognizing the presence of Croatian tradition in Dubrovnik or admitting that Croatian names were also used in the city – this researcher, like many other contemporary historians of literature (e.g. Svetlana Stipčević), saw the most convincing argument for the Serbianness of Dubrovnik in the self-identification of the most important intellectuals of the 19th century in this city (cf. Pantić & Ćirić, 1994, p. 40).

An important event in the context of the contemporary, consistent shift of paradigm and the borders of Serbian literature, and at the same time

another stage of sharpening the discussion on the affiliation of Dubrovnik literature, was the publication of the book – another representative of Belgrade raguzeology – Zlata Bojović under the title *Istorija dubrovačke književnosti* (2014)¹⁷. The work of this one of the most eminent contemporary experts in the literature of the Renaissance and Baroque periods in Dubrovnik is the first systematic study of a classification and periodization character within the Serbian literary history. Assuming that the term “Dubrovnik literature” (“dubrovačka književnost”) is a historical category, just like the term “Dubrovnik Republic” (“Dubrovačka republika”), the author discusses four great epochs throughout its history (from the 14th to the early 19th century): Humanism, Renaissance, Baroque and Enlightenment. The book, which had been reissued three times in Serbia until 2019, also met with strong reactions from the Croatian cultural elite, whose opposition was most emphatically expressed by Slobodan Prosperov Novak, calling it “blasphemous, ridiculous and dangerous” („blasfemična, smiješna i opasna”; Vulićević & Radisavljević, 2015). The author was defended by Milo Lompar, who, referring to the groundless criticism of her book, considered it “malicious, undemocratic and repressive” („zlonamerna, nedemokratska i represivna”; Radisavljević, 2015).

“The Imperialism of the Serbian experts in the Old Literature of Dubrovnik”¹⁸, That is, a Glance at the Croatian reactions

Approaching the end of our considerations, it should be noted that the phenomena and processes related to the legacy of Dubrovnik literature, largely initiated in the first half of the 19th century, turned out to be sufficiently durable and – from the perspective of the emerging modern Serbian and Croatian culture – necessary and justified, that the problem of Dubrovnik grew over time to one of the key contentious issues in mutual cultural and political relations between Croats and Serbs. Numerous activities in the field of historical, cultural and scientific policy (e.g.

¹⁷ Her earlier study which deals with the problem of the intertextual relations between Serbian literature and Dubrovnik tradition is the book *Stari Dubrovnik u srpskoj književnosti* (Bojović, 2010).

¹⁸ The words in the title of this subchapter (“imperializam srpskih stručnjaka za staru književnost Dubrovnika”) come from an article by Slobodan Prosperov Novak, an outstanding Croatian literary historian, known for his controversial statements but also original ideas (Prosperov Novak, 2020, pp. 9–13).



researchers who created raguzeology at the University of Belgrade), as well as many publishing initiatives of the most important cultural institutions in Serbia (including, in particular, Matica srpska, which is leading in these strategies) bring the Serbian public closer to the importance of the Dubrovnik tradition as one of the important matrices of national culture. These activities are accompanied by lively discussions, often not free of nationalist, pseudo-scientific and even martial rhetoric, which are subsequent stages of the dispute with the Croats and preclude the possibility of an agreement on many other mutual disputes.

The issue discussed in the article sometimes meets with surprising reactions even from Serbian researchers, as evidenced by the example of Miodrag Popović, who did not treat the Dubrovnik tradition as peripheral to Serbian culture, but also did not attribute to it a key meaning for the national canon. Unambiguously negative reactions to the inclusion of Dubrovnik literature in the system of Serbian culture appear primarily in Croatia, sparking heated discussions and polemics, as well as provoking specific, though rather symbolic, actions of the Croatian political and cultural elite. Let us recall that Croatian public opinion is still electrified by information about the “theft and appropriation” (usually by unequivocal imposition of Serbian national identification) of the central national tradition, which is the Dubrovnik heritage for Croats.

One of the recent events that caused quite a stir in Croatia was the publication by Matica srpska of Dubrovnik authors (Ivan Gundulić, Marin Držić, Medo Pucić) in the fifth cycle of the monumental anthology *Deset vekova srpske književnosti*. Particularly controversial for Croatian researchers was the inclusion of the works of Ivan Gundulić in the anthology of Serbian literature in book XII, to which, for example, Alojz Jembrih reacted sharply in a text under the significant title *Gundulić u srpskom zarobljeništvu (Gundulić in Serbian captivity)* in which the author stated that:

Možda na taj način u Beogradu žele pokazati da će ono što nisu uspjeli u ratu devedesetih godina 20. stoljeća postići na terenu osvajačkom taktikom u Hrvatskoj, sada ostvariti izdavačkom kompenzacijom na književnome polju. Držim – continued to write – da su i tu naprijed izgubili rat! (Jembrih, 2014, p. 7)¹⁹

¹⁹ “Perhaps in this way they want to show in Belgrade that what they failed to achieve in the war in the 90s of the 20th century on the ground with conquering tactics in Croatia, they will now achieve with publishing compensation in the literary field. I believe that they lost the war in advance!”

A similar situation repeated itself in 2020, when Matica srpska (regardless of earlier objections) in the next, eleventh cycle of the anthology *Deset vekova srpske književnosti* published all the dramas of the Dubrovnik playwright Marin Držić. This time, the authorities of the Matica hrvatska issued an official protest (entitled *Izjava Matice hrvatske o prisvajanju hrvatske književne baštine u izdanjima Matice srpske*), commented on in both Croatian and Serbian media space.

This very interesting document perfectly summarizes the Croatian point of view regarding the dispute over the Dubrovnik tradition. It presents the most important cultural, linguistic and political aspects of this conflict; it is also not free from attempts at an ironic approach to the whole matter, namely treating Serbian activities as an unintentional promotion of Croatian literature.

The authors of the statement argue that the release of the collection *Deset vekova srpske književnosti* (referred to as a “megalomaniacal or absurd project” / “megalomanski projekat ili apsurdna pojava”; “Izjava”, 2020, p. 2) should be treated as an attempt by the Serbian cultural elite to compensate for the lack of continuity in Serbian literature at the expense of Croatian literature. The appropriation of the Dubrovnik tradition, thanks to the strategy of treating the language spoken in Dubrovnik as Serbian, is considered evidence of the blindness of Serbian scholars, who appropriated – regardless of language – also the Dubrovnik humanist poets who wrote only in Latin²⁰. Those who steal, write the authors, are not interested in Gundulić or Držić, but in Croatian territory, which they have never conquered – neither militarily nor culturally. The aim is therefore to strike at the central tradition of Croatian consciousness and national identity, which is why representatives of the Matica hrvatska emphasize that it is in the national interest that native writers and poets take care of “exclusive interest in the Croatian lands, in the Croatian sea” („isključivi interes za hrvatskim prostorom, za hrvatskim morem”; “Izjava”, 2020, p. 2). They also point out that the Serbian cultural elite failed to harmonize its goals with the goals of the Serbian political elite, because in the war after the breakup of Yugoslavia, the latter attacked and destroyed what the former now wants to appropriate. The independent Croatian state, which defended itself against the Serbian army, will continue to defend its borders, but also its material and spiritual heritage.

²⁰ Specifically, we are talking about the prayer book of Dubrovnik merchants from 1520, in which the defense “of the priests of Raška and their Orthodoxy” (“od raških popova i njihova pravoslavlja”) was described – however, this did not prevent the Serbs, using the same logic, from referring to this monument as a Serbian prayer book.

* * *

Due to limited space and the assumed concept of the text, this article does not undertake an in-depth philological analysis of Dubrovnik literature and its intertekstual relations with Croatian and Serbian culture, therefore it does not pretend to provide a comprehensive and complete study of the presented issue. However, we tried to show that the discussion on the national and ethnic affiliation of the Dubrovnik tradition, which has been going on since the 19th century, determines one of the major axes of the Croatian-Serbian dispute. Various circles participate in the discussion conducted on many planes and levels, which use a rich repertoire of strategies to prove the right of one or the other side of the conflict to the literature created in this Dalmatian city. While for the Croats, the defense of this heritage represents in fact efforts aimed at preserving the decisive or even exclusive right to this central area of national tradition, for the Serbs it is primarily a struggle to expand – diminished in the context of departing from the concept of Serbianness developed in the 19th century by Vuk Karadžić – the borders of their culture to a tradition foreign to them, secondary and even peripheral from the point of view of the spiritual and ideological values of the entire Serbian semiosphere.

Recalled and constantly criticized by Serbian circles (e.g. the aforementioned Petar Milosavljević, Irena Arsić or Laza M. Kostić²¹), disastrous allegedly pro-Croatian cultural policy in the times of socialist Yugoslavia and the concept of Serbianness promoted by the Serbian Church based solely on the Orthodox faith missed Serbian chances of *taking over* the Dubrovnik literature, and also contributed to the severing of ties with the Serbs in Dalmatia and Dubrovnik, which is often perceived as a national betrayal. Milosavljević's opinion sounds symptomatic in this respect: "When you remove one pillar from the Serbian history, the pillar called Dubrovnik, you are making a false history of the Serbs. Serbian history, as well as Serbian culture, simply cannot exist without Dubrovnik" ("Kad izvadite iz srpske istorije jedan stub, stub koji se zove Dubrovnik, pravite lažnu istoriju Srba. Srpska istorija, kao ni srpska kultura, bez Dubrovnika jednostavno ne može"; Milosavljević, 2000, p. 45). In this context, some of Serbian intellectuals constantly appeal for the need to re-include the Dubrovnik

²¹ L. M. Kostić's views on the issue of Dubrovnik's affiliation to Serbian culture and literature are contained in his book *Nasilno prisvajanje dubrovačke kulture (kulturno-istorijska i etnopolitička studija)* (Kostić, 2000).

tradition “into the common Serbian cultural tradition” (“u našu zajedničku srpsku kulturnu tradiciju”; Stipčević, 2004, p. 11). All this allows us to assume that the discussion on this issue – apparently not free from political rhetoric and ethnic resentment – will continue to mark Serbo-Croatian relations as well as set the tone for much of Serbian reflection on literature and culture.

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Miejsce dubrownickiej tradycji w systemie serbskiej historii literatury. Na granicy światów i na peryferiach kanonu

Artykuł podejmuje próbę omówienia statusu Dubrownika i jego tradycji literackiej i kulturowej w XIX- i XX-wiecznych dyskursach w obrębie serbskiej historii literatury. Punktem wyjścia zaprezentowanych rozważań jest opinia Jovana Dereticia, który, postrzegając tradycję dubrownicką jako „graniczną”, określał ją mianem „tradycji o znaczeniu wtórnym i drugorzędnym” dla serbskiego systemu kultury i literatury. W jego opinii nie mogła więc stać się dla Serbów tym, czym stała się dla piśmiennictwa chorwackiego, czyli „centralną tradycją narodową”. W tekście omawiam różne punkty widzenia (zarówno wewnętrzne, dubrownickie, jak i zewnętrzne) w odniesieniu do „położenia” i znaczenie miasta oraz jego tradycji w kontekście prowadzonych dyskusji na temat tożsamości Dubrownika. Analizie zostały poddane teksty autorów XIX-wiecznych (Đ. Nikolajević, I. Stojanović, L. Vojnović) i XX-wiecznych (J. Skerlić, P. Popović, M. Pantić). Ramy artykułu wyznacza współczesna refleksja na ten temat (Z. Bojović, I. Arsić, S. Stipčević).

Słowa kluczowe: literatura i kultura Dubrownika, serbska historia literatury, tożsamość Dubrownika, serbsko-chorwackie dyskusje wokół narodowej przynależności tradycji dubrownickiej.

note

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