

The Presentation of the Book *Nicolaus Viti Gozzius: In primum librum Artis rhetoricorum Aristotelis commentaria* by Pavel Gregorić and Gorana Stepanić at the Dubrovnik Research Library

On 18 April 2024, Gorana Stepanić and Pavel Gregorić presented their scholarly tome on the Dubrovnik Renaissance philosopher Nikola Vitov Gučetić at the Dubrovnik Research Library. They titled their presentation “The two sides of rhetoric in the work of Nikola Vitov Gučetić (1549-1610).” Their book, published under the title *Nicolaus Viti Gozzius: In primum librum Artis rhetoricorum Aristotelis commentaria*, with the subtitle *Uses of Aristotle’s Rhetoric in the Late Renaissance*, was released by the prestigious international publisher Brill in December 2023. The work is the culmination of the project “Croatian Renaissance Aristotelianism: a new era in thinking history,” funded by the Croatian Science Foundation from 2018 to mid-2023.

The presentation commenced with an introduction by the Head of the Dubrovnik Research Library, Paula Raguž. The presentation was then divided between Gregorić and Stepanić, organized as follows: Initially, they briefly presented Gučetić’s life and oeuvre, meticulously detailed in their book. Gučetić, a prominent 16th-century figure in Dubrovnik’s political and intellectual life, held high offices and was known for retreating to his residence in Trsteno. There, he indulged in Aristotelian leisure, composing Platonic dialogues, Aristotelian treatises and theological commentaries. Gregorić briefly discussed the notorious Renaissance bifurcation between Platonists and Aristotelians, asserting that although Gučetić is most famous for his Platonic dialogues, he was more an Aristotelian than a Platonist. This assertion is bolstered by insights into both his published works and the manuscripts he left behind, including his commentaries on Aristotelian texts. Gučetić’s Aristotelianism is particularly evident in his five commentaries on Aristotle’s works: three in Italian, published during his lifetime (a dialogical commentary on the *Meteorology*, the pseudo-Aristotelian *Oeconomica*, and the *Politics*), and two in Latin that remained in manuscript form (on a portion of *De anima* and the present volume, the first book of the *Rhetoric*). Given the substantial energy and pages dedicated to studying Aristotle, coupled with the lack of any critical distance from Aristotle’s authority, Gučetić can safely be classified as an Aristotelian—or, at the very least, a syncretist.

Next, Gregorić introduced Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, particularly its first book, where Aristotle divided rhetoric into three parts: deliberative (suitable for political purposes), forensic, and epideictic (suitable for discussing private matters, such as virtues and vices, in various circumstances). Gregorić posited that, given his political interests and posts, Gučetić had both internal and external motivations for discussing this Aristotelian work. Internally, it might have served as an exercise to study Aristotle's rhetoric—and rhetoric in general—in depth by composing commentaries and compiling various sources useful for his public activities. Externally, it could have functioned as a self-presentation of his rhetorical, political, and ultimately, human stances: as a truth-loving and well-educated aristocrat who remained a Christian for all his appreciation of Plato, Aristotle and Averroes.

Gregorić also highlighted aspects of the book that modern readers might find intriguing, focusing on four notable features of Gučetić's text: innovative argumentative examples, depictions of the contemporary world, testimonies about Dubrovnik's political situation, and autobiographical elements.

Stepanić then delved into the intricacies of her meticulous philological work, focusing on the contextualization of Gučetić's books and their destinies, as well as the philological principles applied in working on his text and dealing with numerous quotations and sources. She traced the "fates" of Gučetić's books, noting that he left his rich library to the citizens of Dubrovnik under the condition it be made available for public use. However, after the devastating earthquake of 1667, which obliterated much of the library and the last of the Gučetić family, the remaining books were transferred to the Jesuit College library in Dubrovnik, eventually finding their current home in the Dubrovnik Research Library.

Stepanić further elucidated the philological solutions employed in managing Gučetić's numerous sources and quotations. She revealed that Gučetić's primary source was the luxurious edition with translation and commentary of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* by Marcantonio Maioragio: though he followed Maioragio's translation, he did not use his commentaries much. Instead, Gučetić was extensively quoting a plethora of ancient and contemporary authors: more than a hundred philosophers, poets, historians, jurists, and theologians found their place in his *Commentary*. Stepanić provided examples of how Gučetić handled these sources. The most intriguing discovery was that Gučetić likely cited almost all these authorities, except the jurists, based on three volumes of Bernardi's *Seminarium totius philosophiae* from the 1580s.

Gučetić's *Commentary* offers a valuable glimpse into the Renaissance transformation and adaptation of "ancient wisdom." It is particularly fascinating

to observe how lesser-known Renaissance figures engaged with ancient philosophers within their domains and for their purposes at the European periphery. The erudition in Gregorić's and Stepanić's coverage of Gučetić's text, as well as the Latin-only critical edition with no less than four apparatuses under the text—all carefully explained and justified—renders the book primarily of interest to a select scholarly audience in this and generations to come. Nevertheless, in their presentation, Gregorić and Stepanić managed to impart a broader significance to the project, transcending philological and philosophical minutiae. While this does not necessarily render the book more accessible to a general audience, it does provide the wider audience—whoever they may be—with a deeper appreciation of how excellent philological and philosophical exegesis should be conducted, as well as the cultural importance of such editions.

Luka Boršić

