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## **A CROATIAN CONTROVERSY: MEDITERRANEAN - DANUBE - BALKANS**

The author offers a collage of attitudes towards the sea in some Croatian regions. She discusses the mentality of people living beside the sea, from the beginning of the 1900s up until the middle of the century and considers the opposing conceptions about the sea among coastal-dwelling and continental inhabitants of Croatia. The author studies the role of the so-called *Adriatic orientation* in the economic policy of the former Yugoslavia. Further, she draws attention to the mythic treatment of the sea in a part of Croatian literature. Finally, the conception of the Adriatic Sea as a possible mediator between its western coast and the eastern coast hinterland is confronted with the symbolics of the Danube.

Keywords: mentality, anthropology, the Mediterranean

My initial idea was to write a paper similar to those I had published — in 1997 and 1998 — about Croatian representations of the Balkans. I had tried, namely, to interpret representations of the Balkans which had been present in Croatia since the beginning of the 20th century, right up until the present day. I established how they changed, from the enthusiasm with the Balkans at the beginning of the century to treatment of the Balkans as a dirty word in contemporary political discourse. Thus, I realised that representation of the Balkans was, in fact, some sort of internal dividing line. I was helped in my research by the fact that Croatian writers and politicians have written and spoken relatively at length and often about the Balkans from various aspects, and continue to do so.

However, the situation differs with the Mediterranean. Firstly, the Mediterranean is a much broader, diverse and complex region than one single peninsula, even if that peninsula is the Balkans. It is much more difficult to define what and who belongs to the Mediterranean. In any case, I completely accept Christian Giordano's idea that it is not possible to arrive at a "reasonable synthesis" of the Mediterranean on the basis of the paradigm of cultural region (*Kulturraumparadigm*), but rather that one has

to seek and interpret analogies and equivalents or employ metaphors (Giordano 1992:19).

Between the phenomena such as banditism, rebellism, specific ethnic movements, clientelism, Giordano established comparability and offered a convincing interpretation of strategies that have been used in mastering somewhat similar issues. I touched on these questions in an article on heroes and clients in contemporary Croatia (1996). Still, I shall not dwell on it here, although I would like to mention that one Croatian author, a fellow townsman of mine writing at the beginning of the century, found an analogy in a very similar field.

His name was Janko Polić Kamov (1886-1910) and during his short life he travelled extensively through Italy and Spain. One of his essays from a journey, dated Naples 1907, was entitled *Camorra* (1914). He described the Camorra in detail, with none of the *honourable society* packaging common to the approaches at that time to similar institutions.<sup>1</sup> Kamov wrote that this was "a group of people whose guiding principle was: *why work when others can work instead and make you money*" (J. P. K.'s italics, p. 14). He pointed out that Camorra "is not just a society of thieves, even though they live from theft from time to time; they simply *collect their own taxes* (J. P. K.'s italics), and that is what defines its quality" (ibid.:16). So he gave a very precise definition of the very essence of Camorra and of similar associations.

Further on, Janko Polić Kamov of course found an analogy with a Croatian phenomenon:

But Camorra, for in the city it has ceased to be a horde similar to cut-throats of Rome, Calabrian brigands, Emilian *tepisti*, Sicilian Mafia and Croatian brigands (*hajduks*), has become an organised society, a state within a state (ibid.:18).

Kamov's entire article about the Camorra is very interesting and I am tempted to quote from it at length, but I shall probably do that in some other place.

Therefore, if the Adriatic Sea is the Mediterranean *in micro*, as Fernand Braudel affirms, I shall offer a collage here of ethno-anthropological observations about that sea. I shall set out from a completely subjective and *ad hoc* assumption that the Mediterranean commences in the Gulf of Quarnero, in my native region. And that belonging to the Mediterranean, in that region, means to belong to the sea. I shall then ask what the sea means to the Croats. Does the stamp of belonging to the sea and the Mediterranean perhaps offer one more possibility for our internal divisions? Do those divisions have any influence on important political decisions? Finally, I shall try to consider

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<sup>1</sup> Eighteen years before Kamov's text, the eminent G. Pitrè (1889), the father of Italian folkloristics, had written about the Mafia as a society of honour (cf. Pezzino 1994:6).

whether our representations of the sea offer a potential for creating a myth.

### **Belonging to the Mediterranean: stories about people**

As I am increasingly *unfond* of ethnography that omits the story, I will start with a story which is autobiographic in character. Recently I listened to George Marcus who referred to similar views held today, as he said, by the older generation of anthropologists as being mere nostalgia, because of *the loss of fact and transparent thickness* in ethnography.<sup>2</sup> He linked that with the lack of theory in the approaches of the classic ethnography. None the less, theorising has been a part of Croatian ethnology for nearly thirty years. It would not be correct to say that its presence did not influence the retreat of the story, just as it would not be correct to say that the classical cultural and historical ethnology with which we were familiar in this part of the world, allowed the story to enter into texts. For that very reason I will continue to support the idea of ethno-anthropology, or, in other words, that variant of ethnology which does not reject its beginnings, is aware of the populist stimulus of Croatian ethnology, but bases its research on anthropological theories.

Recently I was leafing through *Mare nostrum* (1971), a collection of poetry about the sea, in which 138 Croatian poets are represented with poems of differing quality and differing conceptions about the sea. I paused at a poem by Drago Gervais, *Nonići stari* [Old Grandpapas], known to me from childhood. In a chakavian dialect variant familiar to me, Gervais told the melancholic story of the aged seafarers who came together every Sunday in the first third of the 20th century in front of the local church. Approaching the end of their lives, they recounted their memories about ships and journeys, about shipwrecks *when a hundred devils danced in the Bay of Biscay; when the tempest first broke the mast and then carried away the rudder; when the ship suddenly filled with water and this acquaintance and that one disappeared*, and when the narrator himself *could still not explain how it was that he was alive at all...*

The poem ends nostalgically with the verse: *And the old grandpapas are no more...* for they are slowly dying and taking with them the world of the sea which was dominated by sailing-ships.

I heard many similar stories in Bakar, an old seafaring town. In my childhood at the beginning of the 1930s, Bakar was living through a serious crisis which had been initiated as early as the previous century when the economically more efficient steamships had started to oust the sailing-ships, while the railway line which connected Rijeka with Budapest

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<sup>2</sup> "This concern arises partly from nostalgia for the loss of facts in ethnography, for the loss of the transparent thickness of description — theoretically unself-conscious — that had been distinctive of the classic tradition of ethnographic writing" (Marcus 1997:9).

and Central Europe attracted traffic away from the Bakar harbour. My great-grandfather on my mother's side, the *principal* i.e. the owner, of a sailing-ship died in a shipwreck near Port Elisabeth in South Africa. In an old prayer book, I found a newspaper cutting dated October 10, 1888 giving details about his last days and his death. A year previously, his oldest son, too, had died at sea, and like the families of many principals in the northern Adriatic, his family had fallen upon hard times. The women then swallowed their pride<sup>3</sup> as members of the upper middle class and supported their families by working at the post office, or as seamstresses. My grandfather was hardly more fortunate; having graduated from nautical school he was employed as a captain on overseas trading ships. However, similarly to numerous other local seafarers, he *went ashore* i.e. left this job, probably after the major strike (in 1908) by sea captains and engineers employed by "Ungaro-Croata", a Rijeka steamship company which promoted Hungarian interests and flew under the Hungarian flag (see Stulli 1976; Tintić 1985).

Seafaring themes were always present in the house of my grandparents. Their house was filled with various objects which were associated with the sea as a profession, such as a curious telescope or my grandfather's captain's cap, or dishes and other utensils, largely from the Mediterranean but also from overseas countries. Talk about the sea was part of everyday life, and I would even say part of the identity of the whole family. My uncle, later a surgeon, had worked on ships as a cabin boy during the school holidays and thus sailed all around the world. The men spoke about the sea and ships in the most minute detail, just as men today speak about cars and engines.

The sea defined the life and/or the two lives of the women: the first, the independent life they led while their husbands were at sea, and the second, the completely dependent life they led when their menfolk came home on brief shore leave. According to my grandmother, the first life was at the same time strenuous but emancipated. It was not without difficulties because the husbands left behind very little money for the support of their families. With quiet pride, my grandmother talked of how she and other seamens' wives had finally joined forces and successfully negotiated with the "Ungaro-Croata Steamship Company" that a good part of their husbands' salaries would be placed at their direct disposal. Again, this part of their lives meant female independence and this included free participation in leisure and entertainment. My grandmother spoke gladly and often about events and fun during the Bakar Carnival. In the second part of their lives, when their husbands were at home, the women had to intercede between the head of the household and the children to soften his patriarchal reign of terror. It was also necessary to wash, iron and mend all

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<sup>3</sup> The topics of honour and shame have been omitted completely from Croatian ethnological research.

the clothing for the coming journey. This could include as many as some forty shirts, not to mention other items.

The story which I have tried to outline here from my own — no doubt, faulty — memory has been dealt with a number of times in the works by writers from the Gulf of Quarnero region and Istria. Vjenceslav Novak (1859-1905) in his book *Posljednji Stipančići* [The Last of the Stipančić Family], described the ruin of a ship-owning principal's family from Senj. The disappearance of the sailing ships and the social consequences of this economic phenomenon on the Liburnian coast of Istria was dealt with in a nostalgic fashion by Viktor Car Emin (1870-1963) in his novel *Pusto ognjište* [The Empty Hearth]. When it was no longer economically feasible for the sailing-ships to ply the oceans, life seems to have withered in the small, previously prosperous townships beside the Adriatic Sea. The new times demanded not only different ships, but also quite different business people able to adjust to the new circumstances.<sup>4</sup> However, the entire process in both its economic and social, and even cultural and anthropological aspects was designated by the sea. The sea was here, beside the people and within the people.

Did these people with the sea in their everyday lives differ from those "upper", Pannonian and Dinaric Croats, as my grandmother and her contemporaries continued to call them, even then in the second half of this century. I thought that this was some local or personal categorisation in tales told by the elderly about the sea, but it would seem that this was not so. I shall show why later.

### **The second story: the sea in Croatian politics**

The eastern coast of the Adriatic never belonged to only one state. Here the power of Venice met and struggled with the power of the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires, while it is known that the Dubrovnik Republic had a long and successful history of balancing between all these powers.

And in the modern era, too, the eastern coast has been powerfully awash with the cultural, economic and political influences and interests of the western coast. Italian irredentism with its great appetites towards Dalmatia as an Italian province met and came into conflict with the emerging South Slavic and/or Croatian nationalism. But during the 20th

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<sup>4</sup> If I wanted to expand on the autobiographical story about the sea I would mention my father who came — by descent and profession — from a different type of family, but was still oriented towards the sea right throughout his life. On his first sea voyage, he travelled to Marseille and to Thessaloniki. As a banker in pre-war Sušak (today part of Rijeka), he did business with partners on the western Adriatic coast. After serving with the Partisans, when he moved to Zagreb after the World War II, as a judge of the economic court specialised in maritime economy, he became a member of international maritime law society. He liked to spend his leisure time fishing from his boat. And he encouraged me to read Viktor Car Emin's books about the sea and the fate of ordinary folk who lived beside it.

century, the first and second Yugoslavia<sup>5</sup> managed by their political actions to suppress — and, in essence, eliminate — the Italian ethnic and cultural community on the eastern Adriatic coast.<sup>6</sup>

The story I want to tell about the sea in Croatian politics is only somewhat more than a quarter of a century old.

In 1971, the national movement often referred to as the *Croatian Spring* was blooming in Croatia. The movement was led by Communists, but it had a very broad basis of support among the general population. The *Croatian Spring* programme did not include Croatia's secession from Yugoslavia, nor even the bringing down of the ruling regime. Its objectives were still within the bounds of Communist Utopia with efforts to build *socialism with a human face* — but without breaking down the existing power structure in Yugoslavia and the state itself.

Still, the programme was not lacking in the standard components of Croatian nationalism: memories of Croatian mediaeval statehood, the demand for the autonomy of the Croatian language and its name, the demand for recognition of the historical cultural values of the Croatian people and their nation-building myth. However, the focal issue of that programme was the economic one: there were calls for Croatia's income revenue as one of the most developed and economically strong republic of the Yugoslavia of that time no longer to be siphoned off to the state centre — Belgrade — and to the so-called less-developed republics. It was sought that funds not be spent or invested without the compliance of Croatian economic entities. The clearly economic programme of the *Croatian Spring* was aimed at modernisation of industry and agriculture. Above all, it aspired to drawing closer economically to Europe and western economies, naturally, as far as that was possible in the framework of a socialist system and the corresponding ideology.

One of the most important roles in the *Croatian Spring*, both in the shaping of its political programme and in compiling its economic programme, was played by Dr. Savka Dabčević-Kučar, a highly respected professor at the Faculty of Economics at Zagreb University. During those years she first served as the prime minister of the government of the Socialist Republic of Croatia, and later as chairperson of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Croatia.

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<sup>5</sup> The reference is to Yugoslavia between two world wars, the so-called "first Yugoslavia", and to the "second Yugoslavia" after 1945.

<sup>6</sup> The Italian journalist and politician, Enzo Bettiza (1996), who was born in Split, remembers the city at the beginning of the century when his family was one of the richest in Dalmatia. His descriptions testify more to a *Mittel*-European rather than a Romanic atmosphere among the Italian community living on the eastern side of the Adriatic. And that leads on to the thought that an objective assessment of Italian-Croatian relations and/or Italian-Yugoslav relations by the sea is still waiting for better days.

As could have been expected, the *Croatian Spring* movement was crushed by force; many intellectuals, students, directors of companies and other were arrested. Savka — as she was affectionately called by the rank and file — lost her position, as did other members of the *Croatian Spring* leadership, and was dismissed from her professional post as professor at the Zagreb Faculty of Economics. In addition, all doors were closed forever to her and her supporters as regards public communications i.e. while the former state existed.

Why have I spent so much space on introducing the *Croatian Spring* in this text which is intended to examine questions on the ethnology, folklore, culture and anthropology of Mediterranean from the Croatian perspective? The point is that the economic programme of the *Croatian Spring* movement foresaw a very important role for the so-called *Adriatic Orientation*.

Quite recently, Savka Dabčević-Kučar published a book of her exceptionally interesting memoirs, and gave a documentary survey of the controversy surrounding the *Adriatic Orientation*. Although it is hard to understand today, in a country which had such a significant coastal belt with a highly indented and proportionally lengthy coast, the economic orientation towards the Adriatic Sea and the economic possibilities offered by the sea were regarded as treasonable by the central Yugoslav authorities. In Croatia itself — then as now — the coastal belt encompassed one third of its territory and provided a home for 27 percent of its population. The length of the highly indented coastline of Croatia reaches almost 1 000 kilometres (959.7 km to be exact, see Dabčević-Kučar 1997:197).

In her memoirs, Savka Dabčević also emphasises that Croatia is the sole European country which is both Danubian and Mediterranean, and points out the significance of such a position on the development of economic activity. She sees Croatia as an intermediary — in the transportation sense — between western and/or central Europe and the Adriatic. In her political efforts, she wanted to take advantage of this geographic position. However, the central Yugoslav authorities constantly opposed the *Adriatic Orientation* with the *Danubian Orientation*, thus excluding Croatian economic interests. The Adriatic political and economic orientation, put forward and supported by Croatia, foresaw links with Italy, Greece, France, Spain and other Mediterranean countries. Even later in the 1970s, economic and geographic projects were being drawn up in Croatia planning better and faster connections between the eastern part of Yugoslavia and Rijeka. This would not have benefited only Croatia, because it would have linked the eastern part of Yugoslavia with western Europe and the Mediterranean. The state centre, however, chose to invest a considerable amount of money on the construction of a new, much more expensive railway line from Belgrade to Bar, a harbour on the Montenegrin coast which made the transport to the sea in economic terms less favourable.

Apart from links with the world, the *Adriatic Orientation* offered Croatia exceptional possibilities for the development of tourism, ship-building, shipping, the construction industry, trade and exports (Dabčević-Kučar 1997). All this, however, was inconsistent with the views and interests of the centre of power, far from the sea.

During those years I was working at the Economics Institute in Zagreb, where a great deal of research was being carried out on economic inequalities in the former Yugoslavia. The controversies about the *Adriatic Orientation* have been discussed. I had already decided to take up a position at the Institute of Folk Art, today's Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research. In the mixed climate of those days, I was preparing an article on *the position of traditional culture in contemporary society* (Rihtman-Auguštin 1971) to be published in *Narodna umjetnost*. At that time, as ethnologists, we were still quite strictly dividing contemporary culture from traditional culture. We did not yet theorise the multiple interweaving between the past and the present, and the symbolic level of cultural interaction. My starting-points rested on the theory of values and value orientations as promoted by C. Kluckhohn (1954), and I made the following contribution in the article mentioned to the discussion about the *Adriatic Orientation*:

An analysis of maritime themes in our popular literature, which was carried out in great detail by Maja Bošković-Stulli, demonstrated the existence of two completely differentiated attitudes towards the sea. "In continental folk poetry and prose the sea is experienced in an abstract manner, as a primordial image of that world, an unreal region in which the adventures of heroes take place, or at least separate this world from that one." Folk poetry and prose in coastal regions have a much more realistic concept of the sea in all its aspects, pervaded with maritime experience (relations on board ship, the way in which cargo is unloaded, shipping equipment, and the like) and sketch a social situation which is real (the woman whose husband is at sea or dies at sea, and the like). And this testifies to there having existed two value orientations with deep and distant roots. These value orientations, however, continue to motivate actions. It is well known that the maritime orientation of the country and its economy, thus the orientation to development of the maritime and tourism industries, found it difficult to gain credence both in the old Yugoslavia (the reference is to the first Yugoslavia, comment by D. R.-A.), and in the more recent one, and this has continued to the present day. In the decision-making centres — political and bureaucratic — this second maritime value orientation made little progress, so that even a *Vardar Orientation* (transport directed towards Thessaloniki) was spoken of prior to World War II, with no comprehension of the overall advantages to be had in a markedly maritime country from the development of a maritime industry. Contemporary economic development has definitively demanded abandonment of the continental value orientation. Knowing how obstinate culture can be, it is easy to understand why this is coming about so slowly; in other words, one



feels once more the influence of traditional value orientation in the field of decision-making (Rihtman-Auguštin 1971:5).

Now, at the end of the 1990s, I see this explanation to have been somewhat naive. I do not know whether I should attribute this to the inadequate definitions of culture, including that of Kluckhohn, in essence a very static theory on value orientations as the most powerful stimuli that incite action, or to the author i.e. to me personally, and my insufficient familiarity with the economic relations and power relations of that time which are so extensively described by Savka Dabčević-Kučar in her book. Be that as it may, in our ethnological environment then, the time was still not ripe for an interpretation from the point of view of political anthropology.

Anyhow it seems that the ambivalence of conceptions about the sea endures: in some way they are built upon the mentioned concept of "those up there" i.e. people from the "upper" regions who are different and have different interests, so that they do not, in fact, understand people from the sea nor their interests.

### More about "those up there"

Planning the writing of this article, I recalled my frequent journeys from Zagreb to my native place in Sušak and Rijeka, in the first years after World War II, journeys undertaken in indescribably crowded trains because the *proletarians* from the Pannonian and Dinaric regions of the former state were finally able to travel cheaply, and to take summer holidays in not particularly comfortable, but, none the less, accessible worker holiday resorts. Many of those adults then saw the sea for the first time. I listened on numerous occasions to their comments which did not so much refer to the sea itself as to the Karst countryside. "What do these people live off, what do they eat!?" There was no end to their astonishment, and it was difficult to explain things to them.

The Croatian poet, critic and feuilletonist, Antun Gustav Matoš (1873-1914), a Slavonian by birth,<sup>7</sup> recalled his first journey to Rijeka sometime in 1909, and seems to have shared the astonishment of my contemporary fellow-travellers from the middle of this century. Matoš writes:

Otherwise, beside the sea, there is little about the Karst Littoral to impress an *upper* (emphasis by D. R.-A.) continental Croat. A tree, a lovely tall tree, is nowhere to be seen. Wizenen bushes are forests to those hardy people who do not have any shade. And that famous smell of the sea was not so very pleasant to me, reminding me of the odour of an empty sardine tin and everything else which smells — like an empty sardine tin. I feel cramped in those Littoral cliffs, I cannot move, just as though I am on board ship which, admittedly, crosses over half the world but its passengers are like a man who cannot go out of his own house (Matoš 1973:110).

A feeling of belonging to the Adriatic and the Mediterranean, a close familiarity with the culture on the other Adriatic coast, despite all the conflicts between Croatian — or, more precisely, Slavic nationalism and Italian irredentism — pervades Istria, the Quarnero littoral and Dalmatia even today. This feeling of belonging entails ups and downs: economic, cultural and national. The sea and all the avenues it opens up towards the Mediterranean and towards the world is the focus of vital interest to the people of these regions.

I believe that it can be said right up until the present day, as Matoš and my late grandma would have said, that for the people from the *upper* regions, particularly when those *upper* regions comprise centres of power, the sea and the coastal area beside the sea are little more than the periphery. A foreign and unfamiliar region like the one in folk poetry and stories, and its particular connection with other nations and cultures *across the sea* and/or independence from its neighbouring hinterland, is somehow — suspicious.

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<sup>7</sup> Slavonia is a region in north-eastern Croatia.

## A dividing line — or a myth

Regions beside the sea were once again pushed out onto the periphery of national politics during the recent war in Croatia. Cities by the sea, places rich in culture and history like Zadar and Dubrovnik, were almost cut off from the rest of the country during the war, while their economic position has improved little since the war ended. There were frequent reproaches from the state centre directed at both Istria and Rijeka because they were not damaged by the war, as if they did not suffer enough to be real Croats. At the same time, it is forgotten that these regions regularly mobilised troops for the defence of Croatia. It seems that the sea once again denotes the periphery of the new and independent state...

Still, the sea was not merely a dividing line because efforts had been made since the 19th century to re-interpret its significance in the destiny of the nation.

In 1971, the year of the *Croatian Spring* referred to above, *Mare Nostrum*, an anthology of Croatian poetry about the sea, was published in Zagreb, as has been mentioned. There is an inkling of the re-interpretation in the very first sentence written by the author of the collection, Marijan Grakalić:

The sense of and possession of the sea is the basis for the existence of the Croatian nation in the murderous Balkan whirlwind. A great and significant part of the history of the Croats took place at sea. On its blue shores and in the often far from peaceful coves, in contacts with other people or without them, Croatian culture was born (Grakalić 1971:VIII).

The sea was thus the cradle of national culture, but also the defence against the Balkans! And the latter is also the slogan of contemporary Croatian political rhetoric.

Further on, the compiler of the anthology presents texts and verses which speak of the sea, dating from the 15th century onwards. He proudly emphasises the fact that the mediaeval Croatian king, Petar Krešimir IV, had called the sea *mare nostrum* nine hundred years ago in a charter (1069) by which he made a gift of the Island of Maun to the Monastery of St. Chrysogono in Zadar. That sea, as Grakalić reminds us, had been under the authority of the Croatian crown since the time of Prince Domagoj (864-876)... By calling the collection of poems *Mare Nostrum* says the editor, he wanted also to emphasise "our current support for the Adriatic Orientation" (Grakalić 1971:VIII).

The Croatian poet, Vladimir Nazor (1876-1949),<sup>8</sup> showed his inclination many years ago towards the Adriatic myth. Although a

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<sup>8</sup> Nazor's stock is not highly rated in today's Croatia because he joined the Partisans, and was the first president of the Croatian parliament constituted during the World War II.

Dalmatian, he did not write very much about the way ordinary people experienced the sea nor about their conception of it, but rather about something more *elevated*, about the 7th century arrival at the sea-shore of the migrating Croats.

Branimir Donat, the literary critic, commented it as follows:

From the apocryphal call The Sea! The Sea! from the first Croatian settlers who, according to Nator, looked down from the cliffs at the Big Blue, through the Crusaders' conquests which set out from its shores, on to the historical struggle with the Venetians, and then the appetites of the Irredentists, the Adriatic was a symbol which Croatian literature utilised to express the fate of individuals and of a people who were always obliged, to prove their right to it and to search for the hidden reasons behind such a destiny (Donat 1981:483).

Donat emphasised that Croatian writers from the Adriatic shore, along with those from the continent, tried to find in the sea and in everything which surrounded it "symbols of a fateful view of national history", and did not see the sea so much as a natural phenomenon as much as an "identifiable incarnation of their own fate" (*ibid.*).

Donat concludes his reflection about the sea in Croatian literature with a comment which fits well into this examination of the Mediterranean and our place in the Mediterranean circle:

So when we encounter an image of the sea painted in the gloomy colours of fate on the majority of pages in Croatian literature dealing with it, and when we discover that writers most frequently insist on some sort of fatalistic connection between its inaccessibility and the idea of national destiny, then we can say that this tragic feeling of fate was more impressive [to them] than Mediterranean playfulness, clarity and attractiveness, found in that very same sea by writers from other times and cultures (Donat 1981:484).

I have merely touched on the theme of the sea as a composite part of the Croatian myth. One day, when we venture as ethnologists into research of the Croatian state-building myth, it should be studied in more detail.

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Among other texts he wrote a poem which has not been forgotten called *Titov naprijed* [Tito's *Forward*].

### **The Adriatic as a mediator between its eastern and western coasts**

Neither this text nor those mentioned in the introduction in which I considered our conceptions and representations of the Balkans can be rounded out without my referring to Miroslav Krleža (1893-1982), the most significant 20th century Croatian author, who almost anthropologically interpreted historical and political events in the countries of the former Yugoslavia. He was not interested in the Adriatic and the attitude of ordinary people towards the sea, as has been referred to above. Of course, it did not occur to this sworn warrior against national myths to allocate the sea national mythic value. However, he did retain an unflinching interest in the relationship between the two Adriatic coasts.

He almost boasted that here on the eastern coast, in what had once been Illyricum, the Slavic Barbarians were the only people on the territory of the former Roman Empire who were successful in de-Romanising the area in which they settled. It was as though the 19th century — in which the Southern Slavs had tried every means possible to establish their identity and to uncover and canonise *their ancient* cultural values — spoke out through this leftist writer and philosopher. However, Krleža fought this battle for identity on two in essence political levels.

Firstly, he was always preoccupied with the Italian Irredentists who, prior to 1918 and subsequent to the foundation of Yugoslavia, regarded Dalmatia as an Italian province, and the Italian culture in Dalmatia as eternal and far superior to the culture of the poor natives, the ignorant and primitive Slavs (*Schiavoni*). So he tried to prove the values of the culture and art on the eastern coast of the Adriatic. But authoritative rebuttals of those values were heard from the eastern part of the former Yugoslavia. They extolled the Byzantine influences, and Krleža spoke of authors and critics as *bisantineggianti*. Those same critics questioned the influences which came from the European west, from the western coast of the Adriatic. Radical criticism from the eastern part of the former state questioned these influences and called them epigonism, inferior imitation of great civilisations. In his plea on behalf of the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia*, which he started up during the 1950s, Krleža supported the idea of just such a re-evaluation of the Mediterranean values of Croatian culture.

In fact, this was a question of the confrontations and divisions which accompanied the former Yugoslavia from its very foundation. If one accepted that Serbia was the Yugoslav Piemonte, as was promoted by the power centres of the first and the second Yugoslavia, then the values of the Serbian people and Serbian culture must have been superior to the cultures of the other Yugoslav peoples, thus reducing them to a peripheral position. Still, the way from Rome to Byzantium, as Krleža reminded his readers, had always led through Dalmatia (1966a:66), while the Adriatic Sea was

the mediator between its western Apennine coast and the Balkan land mass (1966b:164), as far as the Pannonian plains and the banks of the Danube.

### **And what about the Danube?**

Why did I include the Danube in the title of this text? Claudio Magris wrote a famous book about the Danube. The Danube is mentioned in the folk poetry of south-eastern Europe. Anthropologists interpret its cultural region and its mythic significance (see *Ethnologia Balcanica I*, 1997).

However, what prompted me was Savka's concept of the *Adriatic Orientation* which placed the development of Croatia in the triangle between Rijeka (the sea), the Danube and the Balkans.

This concept actually carries on the old idea about the Rijeka harbour as the most favourable exit to the sea, and as a place where the two great trans-European thoroughfares intersect: the transcontinental and the one which flows along the Danube-Sava-Kupa waterway (see Barbalić 1962:1535). To this extent, the Danube takes me back to the introductory story from my home about the people and the sea in the northern Adriatic, where the sea means life and is not merely a myth.

Perhaps I included the Danube because it is mentioned in Antun Mihanović's (1796-1861) poem, *Horvatska domovina* [Croatian Homeland]. That poem, put to music in 1846 by a cadet based at the garrison in Glina, an ethnic Serbian called Josip Runjanin, was performed for the first time during the Croato-Slavonian Business Association exhibition in 1891, and has since then fulfilled the function of the Croatian anthem. This anthem (only the first and sometimes the last verse are sung) has often been disputed, but it was part of the anthem of the first Yugoslavia. From 1941-1945 it was the anthem of the Independent State of Croatia (the *NDH*) and became tainted with the stigma of that Quisling state. For that reason, in the second Yugoslavia it was treated for years — actually until 1971 — as an almost subversive song. The song really does describe the homeland, the rivers which gird it: the Una and the Sava and the Danube,<sup>9</sup> but there is no mention of the sea. It was only in the 1990s when Croatia was being constituted as an independent state, that a friend at that time of the current President of Croatia, the poet Milivoj Slaviček, offered an innovation. He wrote namely a verse which would bring the sea into the company of the leading symbols of Croatia, and into the national myth of the new state.

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<sup>9</sup> Klaus Roth shows how : "Both the large multinational empires and the modern nation states tend to define rivers as national boundaries and political frontiers" (Roth 1997:21).

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The anthropology of the Mediterranean is packed with numerous, mainly monographic, research projects in almost all the corners of that part of the world, from Greece and Italy to the Arabian lands and Spain. Leading names in cultural, political and social anthropology established themselves with their research in the Mediterranean field. A large part of Croatia and of the former Yugoslavia belongs to the Mediterranean area by virtue of its culture, but never managed to attract the attention of experts of Mediterranean anthropology from abroad. Cultural and political anthropology outside of the borders of the former Yugoslavia was more interested in the folklore exotica of the mountainous regions of the inner Balkans or in the Utopian *socialism with a human face* in which they wanted to believe, so research done in the former state was concentrated within those frameworks.

For various reasons, ethnologists at home did not approach Mediterranean themes in their own field starting from anthropological premises. I would hope that readers of this text would accept it as stimulus — perhaps a belated one — for anthropology of the eastern Adriatic coast.

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## HRVATSKI PRIJEPOR: SREDOZEMLJE - DUNAV - BALKAN

### SAŽETAK

Polazeći od Braudelove pretpostavke da je Jadran Mediteran *in micro*, autorica nudi kolaž etnoantropoloških interpretacija stavova prema moru u pojedinim hrvatskim regijama. Prikazuje mentalitet ljudi uz more od početka do sredine stoljeća. Bavi se oprečnim shvaćanjima mora primorskih i kontinentalnih stanovnika Hrvatske: prvima je more u središtu životnih interesa, drugima na periferiji. U tom okviru istražuje ulogu takozvane "jadranske orijentacije" u ekonomskoj politici bivše Jugoslavije. Nadalje upozorava na mitski tretman mora u dijelu hrvatske književnosti. Na kraju predodžbu Jadranskoga mora kao mogućeg posrednika između njegove zapadne obale i kopna u zaleđu istočne obale sučeljava sa simbolikom Dunava.

Ključne riječi: mentalitet, antropologija, Mediteran