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TOMMASEO IN DUBROVNIK

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ABSTRACT: Niccolò Tommaseo visited Dubrovnik while voyaging along the Croatian coast in the autumn of 1839. This paper is concerned with his experience of the idea of revival within the Illyrian movement that flourished in Dubrovnik, and Tommaseo's creative contacts with a number of distinguished Ragusans.

In November of 1839, upon his return to his native Šibenik after many years of exile, and almost a month following a visit to Dubrovnik, Niccolò Tommaseo, thirty-eight, wrote his first work in Croatian, or - as he called it himself - Illyrian language. This was his very first encounter with Croatian and its vernacular literature, save his mother's whispered prayers and the monotonous tunes of Šibenik folk songs that softly engraved in his early childhood memories.

The colourful voyage aboard the steamer "Barun Stürmer", upon which he met the literary couple Markantun and Ana Vidović, who crooned her Croatian verses to the sound of a zither, excited Tommaseo.

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But most of all, it was Dubrovnik that imbued him with admiration. This was a town of artistic and philosophical tradition, a milieu which cultured Croatian vernacular literature, or Illyrian, as the followers of the Illyrian movement preferred to call it, for the national renaissance was most prominent in this very city.

Tommaseo's knowledge of the outstanding figures of Ragusa's cultural past had been confined to the names of renowned Latinists and professors at Italian university centres. In Dubrovnik, however, he learned that the Ragusans gave as much credit (if not more) to their poets and scholars who wrote in the vernacular, as to those who failed to do so. Amazed and enthusiastic over the fact that three languages existed side by side in Dubrovnik, Tommaseo wrote: "Dubrovnik may well be a singular town in which three languages are fostered; the Italian spoken here is far more pure than in a great many Italian towns; literary works couched in Slavic are just as successful, while Dubrovnik's Latinists are far more famous than all the Italian ones put together."¹

Another Italian writer, Tommaseo's colleague Urbano Lampredi, upon visiting Dubrovnik ten years before, had expressed a similar thought in the preface of Toma Krša's book on the life and work of Didacus Pyrrhus: "The Ragusans, although nursed by Illyrian women, have an excellent command of the Italian language, as if they grew up in Lombardy or Tuscany!"

Tommaseo was more than simply an anonymous visitor to Dubrovnik, as his arrival was expected. The recipient of Tommaseo's recommendation was none other than Antun Kaznačić, a distinguished lawyer and man of letters, student of the eminent classical scholar and lecturer at the University of Genoa, Faustin Galjuf. Kaznačić's social circle included a number of Ragusan literati and leading intellectuals of his day, such as the brothers Urbano and Francesco Maria Appendini, both of whom were writers and Piarists, Đuro Ferić, poet and diplomat Marc Bruère. Antun Kaznačić was the prototype of the sophisticated Ragusan, vigorous and open-minded. He witnessed the most painful moments of the Republic's fall, which he described in the essay *Ragusa - Quadro storico dei miei tempi*. More of a poet than a lawyer, Kaznačić's poetry was written under the potent influence of traditional literature.

¹ Stefano Skurla, *Ragusa - Cenni storici*. Zagreb, 1876: p. 59.

He wrote occasional poetry, satires and masques, but was most admired for his *kolende*, witty poems sung at parties during the Christmas season and St. Martin's Day, which lampoon the members of the host's household. Croatian cultural history credits him for being the first from Dubrovnik, and all of Dalmatia, to endorse the ideas of the Illyrian movement, to understand the significance of a common literary language and the Croatian literary tradition for the development of literature in general.²

At the time of Tommaseo's visit to Dubrovnik, Antun Kaznačić was an important contributor to *Danica ilirska*, collaborating with Gaj, Vraz, Trnski, and other Illyrians.³ A quotation of Ivan Trnski is most illustrative of how lively and enterprising this sixty-year-old was: "In Dubrovnik, with respect to literature, Antun Kaznačić is by far a man of foremost excellence, for he has absorbed the poetic spirit of the old Ragusan bards, not to speak of his other merits". Young writers are advised to model themselves on this celebrated and praiseworthy man of letters, and to pursue the lavish wealth, verbal artifice, and beauty of the old Ragusan and other writers: "let us turn to our origins, to grasp and delight in the excellence and purity of our language..."⁴

Stanko Vraz also described Kaznačić as the standard-bearer of the famous Dubrovnik tradition. "Illyrian are you, whose works are worthy of every praise, rarely to be found among the rest".⁵

This was the man who welcomed Tommaseo, showed him round Dubrovnik and its remarkable historical and artistic treasures, and introduced him to the Ragusan literary tradition, Illyrianist ideas proposing the concept of a common language, and the endeavours made to publish the manuscripts of old Dubrovnik poets. Kaznačić was a man haunted by the dream of found-

² Josip Horvath, *Ljudevit Gaj*. Zagreb, 1975, p. 89; Horvath mentions here that Antun Kaznačić sent his article for Gaj's newspaper as early as in 1834, when the newspaper did not exist yet, in this way he became the first associate of *Danica ilirska*; Josip Horvath and Jakša Ravlić, »Pisma Ljudevitu Gaju«, *Grada za povijest književnosti hrvatske* 26 (1956): pp. 244-246.

³ Ivan Trnski, *Putne uspomene*. Zagreb, 1899, p. 3; I. Broz, »Pisma Stanka Vraza Antunu Kaznačiću«, *Vijenac* 22 (1890): pp. 593-594.

⁴ Ivan Trnski, »Dopis iz Trsta« *Danica ilirska* 5 (1839): p. 48.

⁵ Antun Kaznačić's letter to Ljudevit Gaj, Collection of Manuscripts and Rare Books of the National and University Library in Zagreb (Nacionalna i sveučilišna knjižnica, hereafter cited as NSB), R 4702 b.

ing of an Academy in Dubrovnik which was to bring together the ablest minds of Dalmatia, and coordinate its activities with Matica hrvatska (Matrix Croatica) in Zagreb. Kaznačić also proposed the gathering of the first literary committee of the South Slavs to be held in Dubrovnik to "honour the birthplace of Gundulić and Palmotić".⁶

During his fleeting visit to Dubrovnik Tommaseo made the acquaintance of the poet Baro Bettera, who versified equally in Latin and Italian, in all likelihood met the Ragusan printer Petar Frano Martecchini as well. Kaznačić and Martecchini worked together on publishing nearly ten volumes of early Dubrovnik poets, notably Gundulić's poetic works. Embarking at the time upon the project *Galleria dei Ragusei illustri*, Martecchini needed the assistance of Kaznačić, for his familiarity with literature was rather poor. Apart from the efforts of these two enthusiasts, Dubrovnik was, in terms of cultural activities, a most uneventful place, lethargic and barren of literary achievements, interrupted by occasional laments over glorious bygone days when Ragusa had been "an oasis midst the wilderness". Ivan August, the son of Antun Kaznačić, designated this period as "lamentable", whereas "nothingness" was the term Orsat Pucić chose to describe its literary circle.⁷

"Dubrovnik is devoid of literary life", remarked Sreznjevski, the renowned Slavist, in a letter from Dubrovnik, adding that "No one takes interest in literature..."⁸ Still, he did not fail to point out two devotees, Đorđe Nikolajević and Antun Kaznačić. However, he writes further that "Dubrovnik needs an outstanding figure to breathe the lifeback into its literature", a fact that Kaznačić was quite aware of. With the deaths of the last Dubrovnik Latinists, Zamanja, Ferić and Hidža, who, although having composed in Latin, never lost touch with the vernacular, Dubrovnik craved for a noteworthy man of letters to stir it up. Kaznačić realized that with the aid of Tommaseo, who was already being established as an outstanding writer notably within Venetian literary circles, Dubrovnik's cultural aspirations could be promoted. This re-

⁶ Ivan August Kaznačić, »Poslanica Lovru Kukuljici (Epistle to Lovro Kukuljica).«, *Dubrovnik, zabavnik narodne štionicice* 1 (1868): p. 95; Orsat Pucić, *Antologija slavljanska iz rukopisah dubrovačkih pjesnikah*. Vienna, 1844.

⁷ »Ulomak još jednoga Sreznjevskova dopisa g. Hanki.«, *Danica* 22 (1842): pp. 85-86.

⁸ E. Verga, *Primo esilio di N. Tommaseo 1834-1839*. Milano, 1904: p. 321. "Il Martheccini mi prega di pregarmi della vita del Boskovich, la quale gli preme."

sulted in a proposal put before Tommaseo whilst in Dubrovnik to collaborate on the *Galleria dei Ragusei illustri* project, which he willingly accepted. A number of young Dubrovnik poets cooperated on this project of great value to literary history: Ivan August Kaznačić, Antun Pasko Kazali, Orsat Pucić and Ivo Galjuf. Thanks to Tommaseo, Italian writers such as Carer, Ambrosoli, Cantù, Prati, Parolaro, and Dall'Ongaro were also invited to write biographies of famous Ragusans.⁹

Tommaseo decided to write about Rajmund Kunić, Benedikt Stojković, Bernard Zamanja, and Junije Rastić.¹⁰ He cast light on Stojković's artifice versification, and the modesty and poetic greatness of Zamanja, who, although a Latinist, endorsed and recommended the use of the Illyrian language. Rastić was limned in the light of his love for the Illyrian language, and his contempt for those who patterned after foreign models. Despite his having identified with Rajmund Kunić in many ways, Tommaseo severely criticized the former, describing him as a poet of little merit, a remark which Ragusans looked upon with resentment.¹¹

Tommaseo seemed to be pleased with the work accomplished in Dubrovnik, and put forward his own suggestions for the possible continuation of the project on famous Ragusans, as he mentioned in a letter to his colleague and friend, German writer H. Stieglitz.¹²

In addition, there were other plans and proposals, some of which Tommaseo accepted and took part in. Thus, using his influence, *Gazetta di Zara* published an article by Antun Kaznačić in which he responded to the most bitter criticism of a journalist of Milan's *La Moda*. The Italian critic had commented on Kaznačić's translation of Manzoni's ode *The Fifth of May* published in the above journal in 1835, as being unworthy and barbaric. Kaznačić took this opportunity to elaborate a comprehensive survey of Croatian literature, referring to Francesco Maria Appendini and his *Notizie*,

⁹ Two letters written by N.Tommaseo to Antun Kaznačić dated 29 November 1839 and 1 September 1840, published in *L'Epidauritano, lunario Raguseo* in 1896: p. 44.

¹⁰ Josip Bersa, *Dubrovačke slike i prilike*. Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1941: p. 174.

¹¹ Niccolò Tommaseo, *Studi critici*, 2. Venezia, 1843: pp. 302-303.

¹² Marko Kažotić's letter to Antun Kaznačić dated 30 November 1839, published in *L'Epidauritano lunario Raguseo* in 1899: p. 52.

which illustrate the Dubrovnik literary life. Kaznačić had long before sent this article to Marko Kažotić, contributor and assistant to the editor of *Gazetta di Zara*, who failed to forward it to A. Brambilli, the editor. Kaznačić's article was subsequently published in the 85th issue of the journal in 1839 with Tommaseo's help, for, upon Brambilli's death, Kažotić took over the editor's post. Kažotić, however, did inform Kaznačić that Tommaseo, a Manzoni scholar, had expressed his doubts about the aforementioned translation of Manzoni's ode.¹³

With Tommaseo's assistance, two young Dubrovnik students, Ivan August Kaznačić and Orsat Pucić, started contributing to the Trieste paper *La Favilla* in the 1840s, which, in Tommaseo's opinion, was the leading paper in the Venice region. Its editors were Tommaseo's colleagues and friends, Valussi and Dall'Ongaro. Shortly before the two Dubrovnik writers were to begin their series of fifteen articles on Slavic themes, Tommaseo had contributed repeatedly with inaugural articles on the same subject matter.

La Favilla also printed Tommaseo's previously mentioned letter to H. Stieglitz, concerned with the Illyrian movement and its exponents Gaj, Vraz, and Kukuljević. He further referred to Dubrovnik and its ladies in particular, who felt no shame at speaking their own language.¹⁴ This record on "Ragusan ladies" about whom Tommaseo would also write in a text devoted to his friend Antun Marinović, should not, however, be correlated with his fanatic adoration of the fair sex.¹⁵

In the course of his brief stay in Dubrovnik, Tommaseo most likely met also with a few of Dubrovnik's ladies, who would have conversed with the distinguished guest and great poet in Italian, since his Croatian was far from fluent. Whether a few brief and conventional encounters could have been

¹³ N. Tommaseo, *Studi critici*: p. 323.

¹⁴ N. Tommaseo, *Studi critici*: p. 417; Ivan Katušić, *Vječno progonstvo Nikole Tommasea*. Zagreb, 1975: p. 46.

¹⁵ S. Messi's letter to nephew Miho in Split dated 30 November 1839, Collection *Ragusina* of the Scientific Library in Dubrovnik (Znanstvena knjižnica u Dubrovniku), n. 118/2; "Sign. Tommaseo è stato contentissimo perche gli piace Ragusa; esso fu da Casnacich con una lettera raccomandata. La si trova Baro Bettera e diversi altri. Si dice che Casnacich l'abbia regalato di due libri quando verrai da sue Casnacich vi dirò che diavolo di libri potesse Casnacich dare a Tommaseo se sapesse Illirico mi figuro che gli poteva dare Jeguipka e Marunko da lui fatta ultimamente stampare."

enough for Tommaseo to establish such a passionate feeling for Dubrovnik ladies is yet to be examined.

Upon Tommaseo's departure from Dubrovnik, Antun Kaznačić presented him with two books: *Jeđupka*, published in 1838, and *Marunko*, published shortly before Tommaseo's arrival in Durovnik.¹⁶

Both of these volumes of classical Dubrovnik poetry in Croatian were edited and prefaced by Antun Kaznačić. *Marunko* was devoted to "Dubrovnik ladies who were not ashamed to speak their own language". This collection of jocular poems included *Marunko*, *Dervišijada* and *Čupe i spravljенице* by Ignjat Đurđević, Stjepan Đurđević, and Marko Bruerević (Marc Bruère). Kaznačić had more than one reason for devoting it to the ladies of Dubrovnik, for "what more can a woman be embellished with but the eloquence of her mother tongue, leaning upon a foreign language in so far as necessity or company require."

The second reason is that they were the successors of Dubrovnik's women writers and poets, among whom the following should be singled out: Cvijeta Zuzorić, Marija Bettera, Kata Bassegli-Sorgo, Nika Resti, Marija Facenda, Lukrecija Bogašinović and Anica Bošković.

Lastly, this small volume that Kaznačić had entitled *Marunko*, after the introductory Đurđević's poem is composed of humorous poems, selected not only to prove that "days of leisure were also to bear literary fruits", but also to amuse and entertain Dubrovnik ladies. In a jocose manner, the poems depict wooing matters and vain love, motives favoured by women's hearts.

Kaznačić's words can easily be recognized in Tommaseo's letter to H. Stieglitz, as his preface was quoted almost completely. Tommaseo, however, was to give them a broader meaning: "Illyrian is spoken in Croatia by learned men and women, those who were once embarrassed to utter its words. All the accomplished people in Dalmatia should emulate the ladies of Dubrovnik, and speak Illyrian at home."¹⁷

Almost at the same time, the Illyrianist Ivan Trnski was guided by an idea similar to that of Kaznačić as he addressed the ladies of Šibenik in his poem *Jednoj Šibenčanki*.

¹⁶ N. Tommaseo, *Studi critici*: p. 323 (translated by I. Katušić).

¹⁷ S. Skurla, *Ragusa - Cenni storici*: p. 60.

Jeđupka had been published in Martecchini's printing-house a year before, and Kaznačić dedicated it to Ljudevit Gaj. It is with great admiration and passion that Kaznačić speaks of Gaj's endeavours in the domain of language and cultural heritage, and his adherents in this noble work, among whom Kaznačić included himself: "Herein I shall count myself, a patriot inflamed with passion, save with your principles and air not perchance crowned...".

Tommaseo did witness Kaznačić, if elderly, overwhelmed by enthusiasm, passion, and patriotic feeling. He further wrote to H. Stieglitz of "the stream of noble feelings" flowing across Croatia, the promotion of the language and culture by the Slavic patriots, Gaj, Vraz, Kukuljević, and their fine collaborators.

There is no doubt that Dubrovnik delighted Niccolò Tommaseo with a force of revelation, having learnt that his native coast could also pride itself upon having such scholarly centres comparable to those of Italy. "A Ragusan in quest of knowledge and scholarship should not abandon his native place, but is to follow the steps of its great men."

These words may well be interpreted as Tommaseo's attempt to justify his remorse for having deserted Šibenik, his hometown, and replaced it with Italy. In Dubrovnik he learned that Ragusans composed just as magnificent works in his mother tongue, the language he once looked upon as crude and unrefined. Tommaseo supported the Ragusans in their efforts to maintain their literary tradition, and promote it beyond its borders. Finding himself in a city permeated by a strong spirit of revival, and among men whose enthusiasm he was bound to share, Tommaseo realized that "there can be no great literature if love and knowledge of one's own language are not to be found".¹⁸

The vague memory of his mother's words warmed up by his encounter with Kaznačić, an exceptionally lively sixty-year-old, spurred Tommaseo to absorb the ideas of the national and cultural revival that thrived along his native coast. A blending of different feelings - passionate desire for the Italian "light that guides the spirit", remorse for having suppressed his feelings for his native language, the open-heartedness of Kaznačić, who submitted his local patriotism to the ideals of the Croatian National Revival, and the sooth-

¹⁸ A. Kaznačić's letter to Father Luka Vušković, NSB, R 4101.

ing melody heard aboard the steamer - encouraged Tommaseo, a prodigal son, to experience the beauty of his mother tongue at the fully mature age of 38. He embarked upon studying it, intending to shape his patriotic thought in a piece of work dedicated to the Croats. A month after his return from Dubrovnik he was to write his first work in Croatian.

Never again did Tommaseo experience such patriotic enthusiasm as aroused in him by Antun Kaznačić. Futile were Pulić's attempts, and arguments put forward by Kosta Vojnović twenty years later. No one could wake the memories of his youth and patriotic feelings, faded and overshadowed by the strength and dominance of foreign cultures.