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EVALUATION OF DALMATIA'S CULTURAL SPACE
AND THE YUGOSLAV DISCOURSE
OF THE 'THIRD WAY':
MIROSLAV KRLEŽA'S ESSAY
"THE GOLD AND SILVER OF ZADAR"

WARTOŚCIOWANIE PRZESTRZENI KULTUROWEJ DALMACJI
A JUGOSŁOWIAŃSKI DYSKURS *TRZECIEJ DROGI*.
ESEJ MIROSLAVA KRLEŽY "ZŁOTO I SREBRO ZADARU"

Abstract

The article discusses the role played in the early 1950s by M. Krleža's essay titled *The Gold and Silver of Zadar* (1951), as well as the circumstances of its emergence. In addition to the text itself, the analysis also encompasses Krleža's unpublished notes from his trip to Dalmatia, his scholarly production, journalism and political discourse of that time (in the light of Krleža's earlier literary works and essays). The aim of the paper is to indicate the ways in which cultural heritage was processed to semiotic space (Dalmatia within Yugoslavia) in the context of articulating certain political visions.

Streszczenie

W artykule omawia się rolę, jaką na początku lat 50. XX wieku odegrał esej M. Krleży pt. *Złoto i srebro Zadaru*, a także okoliczności jego powstania. Poza samym tekstem w analizie uwzględnia się również nieopublikowane notatki z wyjazdu do Dalmacji oraz ówczesną produkcję naukową, publicystykę i dyskurs polityczny (w świetle wcześniejszych dzieł



literackich i eseistycznych autora). Celem jest wskazanie sposobów przetwarzania dziedzictwa kulturowego i semiotyzacji przestrzeni (Dalmacja w obrębie Jugosławii) w kontekście artykulacji wizji politycznych.

Keywords: Dalmatia, Miroslav Krleža, semioticisation of space, cultural heritage, Third Way policy

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1.

The Gold and Silver of Zadar (Zlato i srebro Zadra, 1951), although widely considered as an important text, still occupies a marginal position in the scholarly discourse. Nevertheless, for at least two reasons, it is a special work in the output of Miroslav Krleža. First of all, this is the first text in which the writer deals with Dalmatia; secondly, it has played an extremely important role in the development of the official discourse in communist Yugoslavia in the Cold War period, including the country's positioning within the world dominated by the conflict between the East and the West. The present paper is going to focus on the evaluation of the national space and its constituents with regard to the dispute about multicultural Dalmatia and, further, in anticipating certain instances of axiological re-semanticisation of the official state discourses.

The ties linking literature and values are numerous, and it is no wonder that they have often been discussed by scholars,¹ but since the present paper deals with a relationship between literature and space, its interpretative frame of reference has mainly been determined by a domain of studies usually known as geocriticism, or spatial literary studies, in which the leading role is played by problems of multiculturalism and hybridity of cultural borderlands, including colonising and negotiating the heritage, also from the point of view of post-colonial criticism² and the semioticisation of space. Under such a paradigm, and in keeping with the theory of Yuri Lotman, 'geography becomes a kind of ethics'.³ Precisely because of that, it cannot be understood in purely geographical terms, but is perceived as imagined geography, that

¹ It is an extremely multifaceted problem, as demonstrated by the publication, *Problematyka aksjologiczna w nauce o literaturze*, ed. by S. Sawicki and A. Tyszczyk, Lublin, Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1992.

² See R. Tally (Ed.), *Spatial Literary Studies. Interdisciplinary Approaches to Space, Geography, and the Imagination*, New York & London 2021; B. Westphal, *Geocriticism. Real and Fictional Spaces*, trans. by R.T. Tally Jr., New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

³ Y. Lotman, *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*, trans. by Ann Shukman, intro. by Umberto Eco, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1990, p. 172.

is one that originated as a mental construct, yet 'not entirely cut off from reality'⁴. Thus, the evaluation of space by means of shaping a literary text – in this case, an essay – takes place in the context of already existing debates, namely, voices that are inevitably reflected in the essay's content. Westphal, clearly following the work of Bakhtin, calls such a research procedure *multifocalization*.⁵

2.

Miroslav Krleža was a poet, novelist, an author of biographical and autobiographical texts, a playwright, essayist, cultural activist, the editor of Yugoslavia's largest encyclopaedia and curator of exhibitions. In all of these fields he built a strong position, making a breakthrough or reformulating something. These breakthroughs pertain both to the way in which he addressed the subject matter and to how he changed the forms of expression. Neither Croatian poetry, its artistic prose, drama, biography and autobiography, the art of staging exhibitions, nor the process of publishing the encyclopaedia can be thoroughly analysed without the reference to Miroslav Krleža, regardless of how we assess the message they carry or their aesthetic value. He defined the foundations of Croatian national culture and its intrinsic tensions, including the country's attitude towards its neighbours. It is therefore not surprising that already during his life – and the situation deepened after his death – he had a group of followers, but also uncompromising critics.

Krleža played a leading role in Croatian and Yugoslav culture, although he performed it differently before and after the Second World War. Before the war he was a member of the opposition against the monarchy, closely associated with the illegal communist party. After the war, as a close collaborator of Josip Broz Tito, he expressed views that were in line with those of the government. His post-war career was not as obvious as it might seem to be. He had spent the war years in fascist Zagreb and not suffering the consequences of his communist involvement, which was the case with other left-wing writers who had joined the guerrilla during the war. It was perceived as an act of passivity, self-indulgence or even collaboration with the enemy. Additionally, a pre-war conflict within the leftist circles, namely, an argument about the principles of socially and politically engaged art (known as a dispute on the literary left⁶) still loomed in the background. In this dispute, Krleža would not spare his adversaries who opted for the Zhdanov Doctrine, or Zhdanovism (himself favouring a search for a golden mean that would enable to reconcile revolutionary

⁴ B. Westphal, *Geocriticism*, op. cit., p. 1.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 122.

⁶ See S. Lasić, *Sukob na književnoj ljevici 1928–1952*, Zagreb, Liber, 1970.

involvement with freedom of artistic expression⁷), and who, after the war – taking advantage of the circumstances – were eager to have their revenge on him. The fact that he was not eliminated or at least neutralised, must be seen as a result of someone’s protection. Although there is no evidence for this, it is not uncommon to point to Tito, which is all the more plausible that Krleža would become the major ideological ‘corrector’ of the eternal marshal and president of Yugoslavia, or one could even say, a chief philosopher of history in his service.

Yet, it took some time before he was back in grace after the war. The transition must have taken place between 1946 and 1948. While travelling along the Adriatic coast in the spring of 1948 – the fact of crucial importance for the present paper – he was already an important personality. The archaeologist Mate Suić, who accompanied him in Zadar, recollected in his memories of Krleža’s visit published several decades later that the writer was chauffeured in a luxury car, and when someone asked if he were a minister, the archaeologist answered that he was ‘someone much more important than a minister’.⁸

It is not known why Krleža undertook a three-month-long journey along the Adriatic coast, which must have been an exhausting task, especially if one realises that roads were poor and the entire infrastructure destroyed during the war. It may be assumed that it was his first visit to the seaside (apart from a trip to Dubrovnik he had made before the war). His earlier writings – in prose, poetry, essays and drama – dealt almost exclusively with themes related to northern Croatia (incidentally, Krleža is known as a writer of the Pannonian region, and a bard of Central-European civilisation). This trip resulted in notes enclosed in three notebooks and a few torn-out pages. They are hardly legible, not only because of the handwriting, but also because many thoughts have been recorded in the form of brief digressions, associations, single words and unfinished sentences. Yet, the first part of the notes, encompassing the route from Istria to Zadar, got typed out, and thus forms a more coherent whole. Many of these notes were later incorporated in the essay under discussion, but the extent and significance of some changes made to the manuscript should encourage a careful consideration.

3.

In his introductory essay to the monograph *The Gold and Silver of Zadar*⁹ Miroslav Krleža aimed to present the wealth of medieval art that had originated in Zadar

⁷ He expounded on this problem in his text entitled *Predgovor “Podravskim motivima” Krste Hegedušića*, written as an introduction to the exhibition catalogue of the painter Krsto Hegedušić (1933).

⁸ M. Suić, *S Krležom po sjevernoj Dalmaciji*, “Republika” 1993, no. 11–12, p. 153.

⁹ Since often unverified data has appeared in the scholarship, it would be worthwhile to set the bibliographic record straight here. Two works titled *The Gold and Silver of Zadar* were published in 1951:

between the ninth and the fifteenth centuries, that is, in a period before the territory was absorbed by the Republic of Venice. At that time, Dalmatian towns, as independent city communes, recognised the sovereignty of Byzantium, Kingdom of Hungary, Kingdom of Bosnia, and, during shorter periods, of Venice. However, an equally important role was played in these towns by Croatian magnates who resided on their outskirts, in their ancestral seats. By the twelfth century, all Dalmatian towns, including the capital city of Zadar, had been communes dominated by the Slav population, in which Slavic/Croatian vernacular languages – next to Romance languages – were in common use, also in writing, and in literature (a tendency that would culminate in the dynamic development of Croatian Renaissance literature in Dalmatia). Numerous splendid works of architecture, painting, textile art and goldsmith's work originated in Dalmatia at that time. All of them were discussed by Krleža in his essay, but apart from considering their artistic merit, he treated them as carriers of political message.

When Krleža arrived in Zadar in 1948, the town had already been completely destroyed by Anglo-American air raids. Apart from a few buildings, numerous religious cult objects in gold and silver got spared thanks to Benedictine nuns from the convent of the Virgin Mary in Zadar, who safeguarded them in a secure shelter. Although Krleža was an atheist, and a militant one at that (as attested also by the essay under discussion, radically critical of the institution of the Church), the determination of the nuns who had safeguarded the priceless objects gave him an impulse to delve deeper into the problem of the heritage of medieval art. Another reason was, undoubtedly, the official policy which strove to put Zadar – the most Italian of Dalmatian towns (and before the war located within the borders of the Kingdom of Italy) – on an imaginary map of the new Yugoslav state. It was precisely with this objective in mind that the monograph prefaced by Krleža was written and the two extremely important exhibitions of medieval art, presented within a period of two years (1950–1951): *L'art médiéval Yougoslave* [Yugoslav medieval art] at the Museum of French Monuments (Le Musée des Monuments Français) in Paris, and *Zlato i srebro Zadra* [The Gold and Silver of Zadar] in the Yugoslav Academy of Science and Art in Zagreb were put together. Both exhibitions were held under the auspices of the communist authorities, and were organised by Yugoslavia's leading public institutions, headed – precisely – by Krleža. The exhibition *The Gold and Silver of Zadar* reached the Dalmatian town in 1953, but it was not until 1976 that

one of them was a monograph, and the other was a catalogue of an exhibition staged in the atrium of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts. Both of these works contain the introductory essay signed by Miroslav Krleža. But, while the text in the monograph is very long, the one in the exhibition catalogue is much shorter and altered. Yet another version of Krleža's text, again shortened, was published in a book *Zlato i srebro Zadra i Nina* in 1972.

it was given its final appearance. Although officially titled ‘Permanent Exhibition of Church Art’, it is informally known by the title of Krleža’s essay.

At first sight it may seem surprising that medieval – that is, Christian – art was chosen as a means of proclaiming independence of a communist state, but the text of Krleža’s introductory essays in both of the exhibition catalogues clearly shows why this happened.

The introductory essay in the monograph (forty pages in print) is not an art-historical study, since Krleža was neither an art historian nor a medievalist. Yet, by referring to established historical facts – although sometimes twisted, distorted, or perhaps even fabricated – he creates an idea that there had been a separate ‘South Slavic civilisation’ which, although situated on the borderland between the Roman-Latin West and the Byzantine East, had always been ‘nonconformist’, that is, ‘negative’ or ‘antithetical’ (expressions set within quotation marks come from Krleža’s text) towards both of these cultural realms. They were, he claimed, a consistent ‘negation’ of both the East and the West. Krleža sees them not as fertile cultural and spiritual centres, but rather as forces aiming at colonising and destroying this distinct Slavic civilisation. The area inhabited by the South Slavs has been conceptualised as heretical in the narrow sense of the word, with no intellectual or moral force to support it. According to Krleža, all that this civilisation wanted to achieve was merely to survive and develop in keeping with its own internal cultural and political dynamics. The Bosnian Bogomil heresy¹⁰ becomes here an important point of reference, although it was in the introductory essay to the Paris exhibition, published a few months earlier, that its fullest image in the proposed vision of the world had been articulated. Here the most important roles are played by Dalmatia and Zadar.

These cultural phenomena from the past that Krleža chooses for his analysis may be considered the symbols of distinctiveness and of negation of the external cultural and political centres. In his opinion, this attitude was most fully expressed by the Old Church Slavonic language (later modified by Croatian influence, assuming elements of the Chakavian dialect), that had been used for centuries by a portion of Croatian Catholics on the entire area of northern Adriatic, up to Zadar or even further to the south. Slavonic liturgy, written in the Glagolitic script on the areas under the jurisdiction of Rome, was a unique phenomenon in the Western world. In spite of opposition from the ecclesiastical circles, often culminating in councils that decried this practice, as for instance in Split in the tenth century, this liturgy survived from

¹⁰ The Bogomils was a Manichaean sect that combined Christianity with eastern spirituality (Zoroastrianism), often identified with the Bosnian Church (although contemporary scholars call into question whether this Church could be identified with that of the Bogomils). Crusades were mounted against these Bosnian ‘heretics’ by the papacy, Hungarian kings and the local barons.

the tenth up until the beginning of the twentieth century, even though its role was significantly reduced by the appearance of humanism and even more so by the emergence of the Protestant Reformation, when the Croatian Church Slavonic became Ruthenised. Anyway, the presence of Church Slavonic liturgy cultivated by monks (nowadays known as Glagolitic monks) within the Roman Church, was for Krleža the most obvious manifestation of the distinctness and identity of the South Slavs. He called this church by the inadequate term of the 'Glagolitic church' which – next to the Bosnian (Bogomil) Church and the Serbian Church under the rule of the Nemanjić dynasty (perfectly Byzantine, but at the same time, thanks to its links with the West, highly original) – was supposed to be the fullest expression of the South Slavic spirit of negation.

Next to these three churches denounced by Krleža as 'heretical', an important role in articulating the spirit of negation was played by other components of culture, above all architecture, painting and the eponymous artworks in gold and silver (understood as objects mostly related to church liturgy). Because, according to Krleža, native cultural manifestations could not have originated in a vacuum.

That ancient Slavic language has its own intellectual, ethical, social and artistic nature, its own imagery, its original understanding of sculpture and architecture and painting, in a word, its own way of artistic expression, which is an eclectic variety of the literary and artistic models of the civilizations that surround ours, but that is at the same time an original interpretation of its own character in medieval space and time of European life of that period.

Ta pradavna slovjenština ima svoju vlastitu misaonu, etičku, socijalnu i svoju vlastitu likovnu boju, svoju grafiku, svoje originalno skulpturalno i arhitektonsko i slikarsko shvaćanje, u jednu riječ, svoj vlastiti način umjetničkog stvaranja, koje jeste eklektička varijanta književnih i likovnih modela civilizacije oko naše, ali koje je istodobno originalno tumačenje svog vlastitog lika u sredovječnom prostoru i vremenu tadanjeg evropskog života.¹¹

Thus, the highly original frescoes, dating from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in Serbian monasteries (which, as far as their forms were concerned, anticipated the art of Giotto, the linear perspective and psychological insight in representing human figures of the Renaissance), the churches in Dalmatia, the tombstones in Bosnia and eastern Dalmatia (known as *stećci*) – all of these were manifestations of a native 'South Slavic civilisation' ('južnoslovenska civilizacija'), of its own vision of the world, individual thinking and a distinctive way of conveying this experience by art. Krleža regarded all of these efforts as an 'organised moral resistance' ('organizirani

¹¹ M. Krleža, *Zlato i srebro Zadra*, Zagreb, JAZU, 1951, p. 11. [All translations from Croatian by the author of the article].

moralni otpor’) that had continued for almost five centuries, up until the Ottoman incursion, when the Slavic countries – carriers of that negation (Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia, the last-mentioned included within the Kingdom of Hungary) – collapsed. Thus, all works of art that survived to the present day are, in Krleža’s opinion, carriers of that negation.

Ornamental sculpture, frescoes, basilicas, sarcophagi – the forms of all of these artworks depart from the style of their period. It is clear that in the artistic orbit of the influences of Constantinople, Rome, and Carolingian or Venetian art, there develops an artistic civilization based on the principle of antagonism, meaning: I do not allow to be subordinated – neither in writing, nor in language, nor in sculpture, nor in painting, nor in the church, not even in politics.

Ornamentalna plastika, freske, bazilike, sarkofazi, sve to odudara od suvremenog stila svoga vremena. Vidi se, da se u umjetničkom krugu carigradskih, rimskih, karolinških ili mletačkih sugestija kod nas razvija jedna likovna civilizacija po principu antagonizma: ne dam se podrediti ni u pismu, ni u jeziku, ni u kipu, ni u slici, ni u crkvi, ni u politici.¹²

In his analysis of the objects of goldsmith’s work which, however, does not constitute the most important part of the essay, his attention was devoted predominantly to the Chest of St Simeon – a priceless work of goldsmith’s art produced by a certain Francesco di Milano on a commission from Queen Elizabeth of Bosnia, the consort of Louis of Hungary. The chest is decorated with fourteen images depicting scenes from the life of the saint and the images of the members of the Angevin dynasty in Zadar (probably the entry of Louis, and the presentation of the relics of St Simeon by Elizabeth and her three daughters). The narration unfolding along these images follows a sensational thread dominated by the gloomy backstage of the Middle Ages (murders, unyielding struggle for power, and superstitions), including re-enactments of the events related to the taking over of power by Queen Elizabeth. Krleža’s discourse, in accordance with his strategy of contrasting the native Slavs with the Western world, shows the queen as a woman who – unlike her husband (‘a noble member of the Angevin dynasty’ [‘uzvišeni Anžuvinač’]) – exists outside the feudal social order, beyond it, as ‘a poor Bogomil girl’ (‘siromašna bogomilska djevojka’) and ‘a diligent plebeian woman’ (‘vrijedna plebejka’). Krleža uses the metaphor of misalliance to articulate better the motives behind the actions of this ‘plebeian’ and ‘Manichaeian’ woman, and, consequently, to support his suggested interpretation of the original characteristics of South Slavic culture.

As a long-suffering daughter-in-law and a less worthy plebeian woman of dubious Manichaeian origin, she was moving in that royal Angevin environment where the parents and relatives of her blue-blooded husband were demigods dressed in the gold brocade robes

¹² M. Krleža, *Zlato...*, op. cit., p. 21.

of the imperial Pantocrators, obviously with some inner discomfort which she constantly tried to overcome with ingenious and decorative splendour of her gold of a convert and a penitent.

Kao trpljena snaha i manje vrijedna plebejka sumnjivog manihejskog podrijetla, kretala se u tom kraljevskom anžujuškom ambijentu, gdje su roditelji i rođaci njenog plavokrvnog supruga bili polubogovi u brokatnozlatnim odeždama carskih pantokratora, očito sa nekom unutarnjom nelagodnošću, koju je trajno uznastojala prevladati ingenioznim i dekorativnim sjajem svog konvertitskog i pokajničkog zlata.¹³

Such a representation was undoubtedly intended to identify the aristocracy with the West and the common people with the native Slavic tradition. Apart from the fact that evidence for such a statement was rather shaky, since Elizabeth was closely related to numerous European ruling houses, Krleža's role in putting forward such a scenario should be underlined. The writer, following Marxist ideology, models the native culture as a victim of class exploitation, with the West as the ruthless torturer, appearing under various guises of political entities – the Roman Church, the Frankish Kingdom, the Republic of Venice, and the fascist regime. Such a paradigm – whether consciously or not – is based on a broadly disseminated perception of the Slavs as a democratically-minded nation, in opposition to the warring, feudal and exploitative West. This pattern was used in Yugoslav discourse to assert the country's position in an international system dominated by a conflict between the East (Soviet Union) and the West (USA). Its semantic centre was formed by pacifism juxtaposed with militarism, and identified with the Cold War, its main actors included. Anyway, this motif was not new in Krleža's writings. It had already appeared in the characterisation of soldiers from the Zagorje region fighting on the fronts of Galicia during the First World War in his collection of short stories entitled *Croatian God Mars* (*Hrvatski bog Mars*, 1922). He staged them as fighting on behalf of their 'lords', re-enacted in these scenes as the former feudal rulers, as attested by the parodist use of their aristocratic surnames and titles.

In Krleža's inspired vision, Zadar appears as a centre of the native culture and art. His strategy is as follows: to clearly articulate the Slavic character of Zadar's art and to emphasise the external (foreign and oppressive) character of Frankish, Latin as well as Byzantine authorities which were present in the city as colonising powers for many centuries. One has an impression – which was the author's expressly stated intention – that the entire cultural wealth of Zadar is of purely Slavic origin.

As far as the donors and majority of craftsmen are concerned, it is above all the Zadar goldsmiths' work that demonstrates the city's Slavic character. From the early Middle Ages up until the fall of Bosnia, from Čika's copper cross to the shining coffin of the

¹³ Ibidem, p. 38.

Angevin queen Elizabeth Kotromanić, the name of Slavic Zadar glitters in the crimson of blood and flames, and in the smoke of fires, in the wailing of children and women under ruins, like a flag fluttering across the centuries.

Po donatorima i po većini majstora, zadarsko zlato dokaz je, prije svega, o Slavenstvu ovoga grada. Od ranog Srednjeg vijeka pa sve do pada Bosne, od Čikinog bakrenog krsta do blistavog kovčega anžuvinske kraljice Jelisavete Kotromanićeve, ime slavenskog Zadra vijori se u grimizu krvi i ognja, u dimu požara, uz jauk djece i žena pod ruševinama, kao barjak kroz stoljeća.¹⁴

A dichotomy between the indigenous Slavic population and the ruthless and cruel non-Slavic authorities (in this case, Venetians and the papacy), were presented as the main characteristics that enable to understand the social and political dynamics of the city and, in a way, to capture the tragic fate of the entire South Slavic region. It cannot go unnoticed that such a judgement is based on simplified logic, since the cultural heritage of Dalmatian towns, Zadar included, is the sum total of Romance and Slavic models, and thus it emerged, using Lotman's phrase, thanks to establishing a common language, *koine*, that is, as a result of 'creolized semiotic systems com[ing] into being'.¹⁵

4.

When, after a three-month-long journey along the Adriatic coast, Krleža returned to Zagreb at the beginning of June 1948 (the last entry from Dubrovnik bears a date in early June), a moment of political watershed was about to occur. On 28 June, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform (in spite of the fact that until then the country had been considered Stalin's most faithful pupil). Tito was presented as 'a watchdog of Imperialism', and the threat of war was looming. Fortunately, the conflict did not erupt, and Yugoslavia was able to pave its own way, as it was put, to socialism. And the essay *The Gold and Silver of Zadar* – just like the introduction to the catalogue of the Paris exhibition – set up the road signs along this way. Therefore it could not have been given a critical reception. It was a matter of state importance that it was, additionally, occurring at a moment when Tito carried out anti-Stalinist purges in order – as he claimed – to save Yugoslavia from the Soviets. Thus, Krleža's text may be considered as perfectly fitting in the contemporary political discourse. In 1948–1952, the problem of national cultural heritage and its defence against the foreigners featured quite prominently in the press, with the state institutions engaged in coordinating this strategy.¹⁶ It can be attested, for instance,

¹⁴ M. Krleža, *Zlato...*, op. cit., p. 29.

¹⁵ Y. Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, op. cit., p. 142.

¹⁶ See *Kulturna politika Jugoslavije 1945–1952. Zbornik dokumenata*, ed. by B. Doknić, M. Petrović, I. Hofman, Beograd 2009.

by a mere number of reviews of this problem that appeared in the four issues of the journal *Historijski zbornik* in the year 1948, or by texts written by art historians and archaeologists (Mate Suić, Cvito Fisković and Stjepan Gunjača) published in daily papers (*Vjesnik* and *Slobodna Dalmacija*). Fisković – referred to by Krleža in his essay – published a few fundamental works dealing with the cultural heritage of Dalmatia in 1948–1951. And in one of his journalistic texts about Zadar he wrote, among other things, ‘During the war Zadar was destroyed but it realised its desire. It was united [...] with its own matrix’.¹⁷ A more detailed analysis would surely reveal to what degree Krleža relied on the ideas of Fisković, only replacing the scholar’s measured tone with his own, emotional one. Anyway, this kinship demonstrates one thing: that Croatian elites were involved in the process of ‘absorbing’ Dalmatia, and Zadar in particular, into an imagined map of a new state. It may be said as well that they opened up brand new horizons for Yugoslavia, a country that searched for a new *modus vivendi* after 1948.

Obviously, the reading of *The Gold and Silver of Zadar* with the above circumstances in mind, that is, as if the text anticipated subsequent events (occurring in the 1960s), or even prophesied some of the future historical watersheds, would be rather risky. Nevertheless, a safe alternative might be to treat it as an expression of a message that captured certain cultural dynamics and articulates some intuitive feelings. Because what Krleža communicated was in a kind of a common sense, or general agreement, of the Croatian and Yugoslav elites. Formally situated outside the Soviet bloc, but still being a communist single-party dictatorship, Yugoslavia constructed a political model of its own, sometimes known as Titoism. One of its most characteristic features was a conviction that there existed a ‘third way’, and that the bipolar division of the world into the East and the West must be contested. Yugoslavia was supposed to exist and persist ‘in between’ the two main blocs, transforming its own universe to its liking. This position on the political and cultural map of Europe supposedly resulted from the centuries-old cultural tradition of the Yugoslav nations whose original form had been shaped in borderland regions. This is what Krleža asserted in his essay. This is what political leaders (while following his example?) expressed on various occasions.

Thus, Krleža believed that ‘our civilisation’ was not – as had conventionally been assumed – an area that absorbed stimuli from external centres considered as cultural models (Rome and Byzantium). He had already presented this vision as early as after the First World War. In his widely known essay, *Croatian Literary Lie* (*Hrvatska književna laž*, 1918) he wrote:

¹⁷ C. Fisković, *Buntovni Zadar*, “Slobodna Dalmacija” 1948, no. 911, p. 11.

The Saviour will surmount the antithesis of Byzantium and Rome [...]. He will surmount the gigantic conflict between Asia and Europe and thus resolve the cultural vocation of the Slavs.

Nadsvodiće Spasonosni antitezu Vizanta i Rima [...]. Nadsvodiće Spasonosni, gigantski sukob Azije i Europe i tako rešiti kulturni poziv Slavjanstva.¹⁸

And it was precisely this very belief that would later become an argument that warranted the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement, an international alliance that grouped countries struggling to gain independence from colonial powers and renounced the bipolar division of the world during the Cold War period. Yugoslavia, the only European country in the movement, would become its head. Apart from Yugoslavia, the group included also India, Indonesia, Iraq, Algeria, Bolivia, Singapore, Jordan, among others – over a hundred states in total.

The first conference of the organisation was convened in Belgrade in 1961, ten years after Krleža's essay was published. And the Yugoslav state authorities, up until the breakup of the state in 1990, would consistently champion the concept of the 'Third Way', which emphasised a moral superiority of the poorer part of humankind. Tito's statements leave no doubt as to the fact that the country's declared pacifism (yet only declared, since Yugoslavia had had a huge army and a system of political repression at its disposal) was related precisely to moral values. He once said: 'Indeed, we do not have a nuclear bomb! But we do have morality, moral strength, and we represent a huge part of humanity'.¹⁹

Obviously, such an approach did not leave any room for separate Croatian identity. In order to accomplish the intended goal, the 'us' had to have a broader scope. It may be conjectured that Krleža wanted, above all, to lay 'historiosophical' foundations for the understanding of Yugoslavia's location on the map of Europe and of the world. Rafo Bogišić, a scholar of the antiquities of Dubrovnik, noted that Krleža in his essays generally avoided using the word 'Croatian', preferring instead the adjectives 'Slavic' or 'our' and – let us add – 'South Slavic'. Meanwhile, in his notes from the trip to Dalmatia he wrote, for instance, that Zadar is 'the most Croatian city' ('najhrvatski grad').²⁰ One could imagine that it was his personal belief, one that he did not want to express publicly, but such an explanation seems to be implausible, since the use of the word 'Croatian' was not prohibited in communist Yugoslavia, as attested, for instance, by the evidence referred to above. Trying to reconcile both of these perspectives and to merge them into one whole, Sanja Knežević

¹⁸ M. Krleža, *Hrvatska književna laž*, "Plamen" 1918, no. 1, p. 40.

¹⁹ J.B. Tito, *Govori i članci*, vol. 17, Zagreb 1959, p. 138.

²⁰ M. Krleža, *Dnevnik*, 1948 (NSK, sygn. R – 7970), p. 26.

explains Krleža's presence in Zadar by his attempt at 'saving Croatian identity', and at the same time, legitimating 'Tito's policy on Yugoslavia as a buffer zone between the East and the West'.²¹

5.

As has been noted above, geocriticism, also known as spatial literary studies, deals with the space of dialogue or negotiations, so, at first glance, Krleža's text could hardly fit into this paradigm. Its polemical character is so self-evident that, perhaps, it should be treated instead as a discourse antagonistic to the Western discourses. Nevertheless, even a stance that fuels a dispute also contributes to the negotiation of meanings, a fact that can be easily demonstrated on the basis of voices that started to be heard after 1951. Outside the political discourse, which always has a tendency to adopt radical positions, literary reiterations of the dispute about Dalmatia's cultural heritage and space were far more toned down, and opened up real possibilities for mutual reconciliation. Thus, from the point of view of valuating the national realm – the fact is of greater importance for concepts of *longue durée* than for short-term alliances – the voice that opposes treating South Slavic culture as intermediate between the East and the West (precisely the opinion expressed by Krleža), is nowadays already on the periphery of Croatian culture. What is more, since this fact is also a consequence of political changes (the breakup of Yugoslavia), setting South Slavs against the West is nowadays anachronistic – if nothing else, then at least because the dispute has shifted from the juxtaposing of the Slavs and the Italians, to contrasting the Croats with the Serbs. Therefore, speaking about 'South Slavic' Zadar is nowadays inevitably risky within Croatian perspective because it is a notion that has been branded with the stigma of the recent military conflict.

²¹ S. Knežević, *Uloga Krležina eseja o zadarskom zlatarstvu u stvaranju kulturnog i nacionalnog identiteta Zadra nakon Drugoga svjetskog rata*, "Hum" 2014, vol. 9, no. 11–12, p. 174.

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