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Crossing Borders in Mediterranean Travel Writing

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Nataša Urošević, guest editor

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Horizons and Limes of Travelogue with a Thesis – Rumiz's Journey Along the Adriatic and Ionian Coasts Through History

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This work tries to answer the question of whether the thesis about the clash of civilizations which is based on the essentialization of differences can be deconstructed by the counter-theses that also rely on the essentialist views supported by the author of *The Route to Lepanto*, Paolo Rumiz. Rumiz does not travel in order to become aware. He is aware, therefore he travels. He is a travel writer who does not feed himself with the political energy of the concrete travelling experience, but rather associates his experience with the fullness of his anti-globalization ideas. The analytical approach applied by the authors in this paper does not have at the forefront the historical-cultural and theoretical context through which they would, among other things, deal with Rumiz. Rather, it is strongly focused on Rumiz's text, through which, inductively, they seek to highlight some important coordinates of this broader context.Supplementary themes of his travel writings are elaborations of ideas about the preference of one side in a register of a few Rumiz's central dichotomies: East vs. West, mountains vs. sea, good multinational empires vs. bad nationalism, Mediterraneanism vs. Atlanticism, etc. Collective states of mind are the forces that rule over the individuals. Venice is an absolute measure of such interpretation of the world; it is understood as a zero criterion of utopian way of valuing all the things he encounters during his travel which attempts to reconstruct all the memories and traces of erased cultural heritage of the former empires. Instead of a clash of cultures, Rumiz promotes the idea of ignorance, separation of Western Europeans from their own roots and the need to re-essentialize, to return to Lepanto, like salmon do – to the spring of peoples,

monotheistic religions, cultures and civilizations. Rumiz's choice of facts from history, or those from the experience of his fellow travellers, often shows "the syndrome of self-service", an arbitrary arrangement of facts that support his thesis freely, but at the same time not mentioning those that could refute it. The Battle of Lepanto is seen as the starting point, the cause of the situation nowadays. This work has shown that, despite the irrefutable elements of the literary, his travelogue compromises its literary status, as it serves only to exemplify the treatise; it does not reveal anything new but merely confirms his starting agenda and therefore compromises its literal status.

Key words: Travelogue with Thesis, Literariness, Clash of Cultures, Essentialism, Deconstruction, Venice, the Adriatic, Lepanto

INTRODUCTION

Why have all the empires from the east Mediterranean sunk? Why does the West not understand the East anymore? These questions have urged Rumiz to set out on a journey to Lepanto, the place of the great sea battle between the Holy League, led by the Spaniards and Venetians on one side and the Ottoman fleet on the other. He sailed across the Croatian, Montenegrin, Albanian and Greek coast to reach his final destination. Lepanto is an ordinary Greek town called Nafpaktos today, but in October 1571 it was a place with the largest number of casualties in one day. Forty thousand people died during a battle that lasted only a few hours. Christians won. But they had lost Cyprus previously. So, was not it somehow a draw?

The travel story was published in twenty-two sequences in the Roman left-wing daily paper *La Repubblica* in August 2004. Bilić translated it into Croatian and it was published in 2005. At first sight, his story could be put in the context of the modern matrix of cultural mobility. One of its features is the reconstruction of pre-modern itineraries, as well as the problem of so-called cultural making of space known as 'upheaval towards space'. Some recent theories consider this to be a thorough attempt to develop a more creative and efficient balance between the

spatial/geographical and temporal/historic, which is considered one of the most important roles of humanistic science in the third millennium (Duda 2012, 15), leaving behind the modern paradigm of travelling as a metaphor of human restlessness and free will, as autonomous activity which causes pleasure or glorifies escapism. The motives of Rumiz's supplementary thematisation[48] correspond with the main sphere of interest of today's travel writing which usually covers the following topics: identities, alterities and imagology, colonial, postcolonial and globalization issues, the questions of enlightenment, modernity and post-modernity... (Duda 2012, 22).

Rumiz does not travel in order to become aware. He is aware, therefore he travels. His journey from Venice to Lepanto is a travel with a thesis. It is formatted within the postcolonial discourse; the main premise about the lost memory of history and the price that Europe as well as the West generally, which is still paying, is sublimed in the preface to the Croatian edition of the book. It starts: "They are shouting 'Lepanto! Lepanto!' and waving the flag of 1571 victory over the Turks, serving as a warning to Islam after 9/11 but in reality they know very little or nothing about the war back then. They know nothing about Venice, Byzantine or the Mediterranean. They know nothing about the peoples living on the coasts of the Adriatic or Ionian seas, let alone the Ottoman Empire" (Rumiz 2005, 7). His main thought is concisely stated in the text a number of times, such as: "All the great Mediterranean civilizations were able to make peace between different religions. All except ours. It takes time to make an amalgam, and time is what we lack. We are ruined by the speed, our thoughts are vanishing and meditation is being destroyed. The complexity is lost" (Rumiz 2005, 151). The main thesis was divided into twelve operative and auxiliary sub-theses in the Croatian preface:

48 Supplementary thematization includes all forms of knowledge and announcements that build upon on the essential expose of the travelogue. There are two modes to supplementary thematization, the first one being speculative enhancement, while the second entails figurative procedures (Duda 1998, 134).

1. The clash of civilizations is of historical continuity;
2. This clash is not religious or cultural;
3. The clash exists between the East and the West, theocracy and democracy;
4. The identity of Europe is inclusively connective (Europe is not only the West; it is the bridge between the East and West);
5. The line of division goes through the Balkan peninsula, more precisely through Mostar and its Old Bridge as a symbol;
6. There is an opposition between the Mediterranean complexity and the Atlantic lack of criticism;
7. Mild European/Bosnian Islam serves as a buffer zone and a prophylaxis in this clash of civilizations;
8. The historical factography stands opposed to the nonchalant perceptions influenced by mass media;
9. Venice became the leading Mediterranean navy due to the concept of knowledge as power, knowing the enemy;
10. This concept has made it possible that, despite the wars, the Mediterranean had continuity in the field of culture and communication up until 19th century;
11. Nationalisms, which are hydrophobic by nature, have ruined the Mediterranean complexity;
12. The only true winners of Lepanto are the Atlantic countries with a colonial mentality.

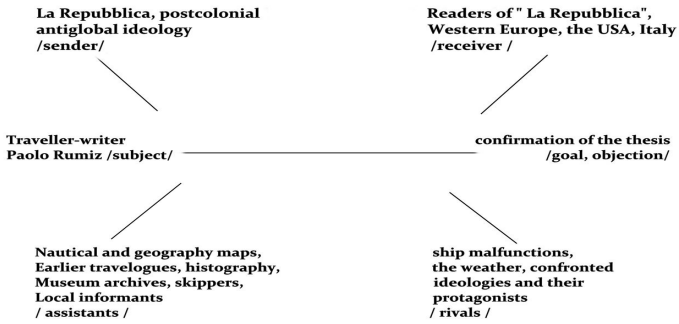
ACTANTIAL STRUCTURE OF TRAVELOGUE WITH A THESIS

Rumiz claims there is no winner of the Battle at Lepanto. The Mediterranean lost. Venice and Constantinople have slid into decadence, while the Atlantic countries have become the bright future. European nationalists are not aware of what they are saying about famous historic battles against Islam. This is because they do not know anything about it, and they do not know either Islam or anything about the Christians living in the Mediterranean. Therefore, they do not know their own past. Inner otherness is amputated. This line of thought brings us to the problem of the inner disruption of a good part of Europe which has a long history of wanting to liberate itself from Marx's idea that "those who cannot represent themselves must

be represented". Europe has never distanced itself from colonial stereotypes; it tried to be politically correct for too long, it hid the skeletons in the closet for too long, stuffed things under the carpet, went silent over many 'hot topics' which left enough space for aggressive extremists to act, "which made Lepanto become the right wing's toy. They simply allowed it to become a toy. For goodness' sake, talking about Lepanto is not politically correct. One never knows when it will provoke another conflict of civilizations, which is always present" (Rumiz 2005, 156).

Rumiz's travel writing is not nurtured by the political energy of travel experience, but rather he associates it with his anti-globalization ideas. In this context the actantial scheme, in relation to the theoretical standard of literary-oriented travelogue, shows significant differences. The most prominent difference refers to the object/goal of his journey, and the actantial position of the opponent who does not have a status of pseudo-opponent but that of concrete enemy. He explains this in a situation: "On the boat next to ours are 'the Lombardi' who have lion on the mast, just like ours. When I tell them we are sailing to Lepanto, they answer: 'Bravo, those Muslim dogs should all be killed.' I patiently try to explain that our symbol of lion has nothing in common with theirs, this is not *Lega Nord* lion, it is a Venetian lion" (Rumiz 2005, 156).

Figure 1: The actantial scheme of "The Route to Lepanto"



Source: Author's own analysis.

By sailing across the Adriatic coast, the author tries to reveal the long-forgotten stories to the present Mediterranean

world. He writes down the things his senses experience, but he is consciously avoiding the realities that do not fit his ideology (this will be discussed further in the work). He also passionately writes about the things that cannot be clearly seen in the real world, that is, the traces of former empires. The Venetian Republic, the Ottoman Empire, Austro-Hungarians, even Tito's Yugoslavia have all disappeared under the influence of consumerism, tourism and hedonism which prevail in the present. Rumiz differentiates between the terms 'traveller' and 'tourist'. The traveller is a curious searcher for the sunken civilizations, he is ready to understand and interpret them, whereas the tourist is forgetful, he is sunbathing, and the peak of his journey is taking an interesting photo of the scenery. The emotions are also dichotomic – on one side is the affection towards 'our sea' and the lost empires on its coast, and on the other side there is dourness towards the present which is not able to establish continuity with its Mediterranean past.

LITERARINESS IN PROCRUST'S BED OF IDEOLOGY

However, examples of double supplementary thematisation (substantial and metaphorical-metonymical), which are more literally potent, are the most successful when they are beyond appelativeness and proved elaboration of starting theses, and when they more closely correspond to modernistic travelogue tradition which "prefers an individual, melancholy, self-indulgence, experiment with the unknown world ... transferring events from the world into the narrator's consciousness. They speak the very best through the selected authorized motives" (Duda 2012, 212). At such intervals, the eastern Adriatic coast appears as a kind of *locus amoenus* to Rumiz. Fascination of the seen and the inference of its literarization remain irreplaceable guarantees of literature travelogue authenticity: "From Marco Polo to the Belgian t' Serstevens, travelogue as literature genre had to transform itself by keeping its core of pedestrian experience of the world, seeing and hearing it in close" (Begić 197, 549).

However, Rumiz's intention was not to oppose the new splits on the map of the Mediterranean, but to point to the old

fracture that divided Europe into the Orient and the Occident from Poland to Sicily. According to Rumiz, as pointed out in the introduction, the clash of civilizations has always existed, and it is not that only the Islamic and Christian world fought each other, but also geopolitical blocks – East and West, Constantinople and Rome. This war is older than the religions and ideologies. This is the reason why Rumiz wants to avoid the main postulate of Samuel P. Huntington, an American political scientist, who, in his theory of 'the clash of civilizations' stated that conflicts in the future would be led between the blocks in which cultures would gather, not on the basis of ideologies or geopolitical interests. However, Rumiz's view of 'space' of the Occident and the Orient is very similar to Huntington's theory about cultural blocks. The only difference is that Rumiz feels sorry for the lost ability to understand the potential enemy, because the Mediterranean is a place of conflict as well as the sea of interaction.

Complexity is always structured as a unity of diversity, and hence the sympathy for Sarajevo as the embodiment of cohabitation, symbiosis and amalgamation, those values that post-modern "Atlantism" ruthlessly devalues, transforming 'the clash of civilizations' into a culture conflict, in the conflict of reduced identities: "But above all, is Sarajevo. The Western emancipation and delicacy of the East, plum brandy and cevapi (grilled minced meat fingers), minarets and mini-skirts, wine with soda and yoghurt, sweet honey and Sacher cake" (Rumiz 2005, 99). This almost perfect measure of precise metonymically focused perception and empirical facts (in stylistic manuals labelled as a figure of synatresm), which means sequencing of words, phrases or sentences in order to give the most exhaustive depiction, as opposed to accumulation in which linguistic elements are amassed of similar meaning while in sinatrism different details are amassed (Bagić 2012, 291). Their distribution is often made complex by anti-theses which are by principle *pars pro toto* signified as one symbolical conjuncture of cultural space, and that distribution is always disrupted when there is not enough factographical evidence to illustrate an a priori thesis i.e. the one about the debacle of multiculturalism where Bosnia and Herzegovina is an experimental country in

this world of hostile civilizations. This idea of Rumiz, which is based on some premeditated views, leaves little space for shades and differences, and also for all the facts that do not fit his ideology. For example, after the war, in Mostar no new mosques were built, and some of the old ones have still not been rebuilt. But, Rumiz wrote: "Mujahedeen came from the Arabic countries. They had the reason to wage a war. Milošević generated a new enemy, which had not existed before. And today when there are so many mosques in Mostar, the whole world is afraid" (Rumiz 2005, 100). The American military leaders did not know that they bombarded "the first tower of human kind, the archetype of Babylon tower – Zigurat" (Rumiz 2005, 137). According to the travelogue discourse "the noticed objectivity is another term for the knowledge that needs to be directed" (Duda 1998, 64). For the travelogue with a thesis, this objectivity is an instrument of the ideas that need to be directed. Everything that cannot serve that purpose, even when it is seen, seems to be suppressed.

THE ESSENTIALIZATION OF SPACE

By insisting on the conflict between democracy and theocracy, Rumiz discovers perhaps his biggest weakness. By using attractive publicist links and simplifications, he makes the spaces more essential and attaches immortal ideological attributes to them. Europe is a place of conflict but also of encounters, and the demolition of the Old Bridge in Mostar meant "the rejection of the East contained in the European Space". In another part it is said: "Even in 1991, it all started on the Neretva river, and then Europe also committed suicide" (Rumiz 2005, 98). If he refers to the demolition of the Bridge, it happened in 1993! But it is more important that he puts a world-historical meaning in that event: "The fall of the skyscrapers in New York was already contained in the ritual murder of this symbol of the encounter of the East and the West" (Rumiz 2005, 100). In spite of everything in the "seismic line of the Battle of the West and the East" it is clear that this line is full of "points of encounter of the two worlds" (Rumiz 2005, 99). Although he is on the side of the 'Mediterranean complexity' which incorporates otherness as a

component of its own identity, and knowing that he respects the fact that identities are shaped through the definition of boundaries between actors involved in conflict, his motivation is basically not a multi-cultural projection, but a reminder of possible allies in the clash of democracy and theocracy – a reminder of a mild Bosnian Islam or a post-Byzantium Christianity, with a prominent calling on Venetians, who understood their East and perceived its complexity much better than the present Atlantic Pact understands Islam.

Rumiz's persistence on restitution of complexity, and taking into consideration his professional status, is in line with the idea of French new Marxism on interpellation as a producer of identity. Writing about the ideological function of literature, Althusser sees it as one of the mechanisms that shape the subject as 'a slave deceived by freedom'. Subjectivization is done by submission to the ideological devices such as church, school, family, the media, etc. which invite individuals to recognize themselves in their discourse (Altiser 2015, 48). However, in times of rapid change and diversity in spreading sources and ideas, when the traditional sources of authority (politicians, religious leaders, teachers, reporters) are questionable, the question of ideological function of literature and its social involvement has an entirely another dimension. As a result of the aforementioned social trends, identity has become increasingly multiplied, broken, centrifugal, transitive, idiosyncratic, and, what is particularly valuable in this case, and authors like Rumiz would have to consider, identities today possess more polycentric than hierarchical structure.

One of the more seductive of Rumiz's arguments, that nationalist claims are 'naturally hydrophobic' and that the Adriatic Sea has always been a bridge of connectivity and continuity, and that twentieth century nationalisms are responsible for destroying this continuity, would hardly pass the factual test. Switzerland never had an exit to the sea, the Spaniards of the fifteenth century, as Rumiz noticed, "invented the Inquisition and expelled the Jews". After all, fascism firstly won in maritime Italy. So, one had to deal with hydrophilic fascisms and inquisitions, as well as with 'hydrophobic' democracies. It cannot be overlooked that

this choice of facts from history invokes 'self-service syndrome' – you enter the past as in a self-service store in order to take only what and how much you need at the moment. Besides, the entire book is based on questioning one historical event and the time that passed from back then, and also on cultural measuring of space that separates contemporaries from that point. This approach, known as the 'zero-year syndrome', is interpreted from the moment the author deems most appropriate to justify his or her own views. What happened before that, if it does not go in favor of the intention of the text, is simply ignored. Within such a concept, the historical fact in historiographic discourse is no longer a breakthrough of an important event that breaks the silence of the time, but rather a chosen and constituted phenomenon. This intellectual arbitrariness is most likely based on the basic author's choice – in impressionist portraying of blunt moves on a large canvas, without checking the credibility and consistency of his own analytical model. It is undoubtedly, a genre contamination of the elements of feuilletonist discourse based on simple solutions, conjectures and passages with which a travel writer moves towards receptionist horizons of a definite audience profile – in this case, the presumed majority of the readers of a daily newspaper.

Rumiz is angry with "the tumour that kills identity" and this tumour is triggered by globalization and small nationalisms. His Venetian nostalgia has the same urge as a grievance for Habsburg, the idealization of the Ottoman Empire or nostalgia for Yugoslavia: it is a sorrow for the past magnitude within which the opposites pervaded. Venice is a better West that understands its East. Rumiz says that the Mediterranean amalgamates the conflicts, but also the nations. Love for the sunken Venetian power and love of the Mediterranean for the author mean the same: "Blood flows out from the Adriatic Sea, religious wars, ethnic cleansings, battles, prosecution, yet all is absorbed by the Adriatic and it remained a bridge between nations" (Rumiz 2005, 53). Anxiety about revealing immutable essences (identity cores) and their appearing paradigms does not fade from the first to the last page, and it is sealed by the common content of all essentialisms – the salmonid passion with roots/

sources, which is explicitly labelled as the profound impulse of Rumiz's journeys: "I feel that we are going to the battle, to the place of slaughter but also to the source of our lives. We return as salmon to the Lepanto, the source of all the nations, the monotheism, the civilizations. Everything originates from there, even the word Europe. It happened in Baghdad, thousands of years before our time, when someone looking towards the West said to 'Ereb', The Land of the Falling Sun" (Rumiz 2005, 139) ... "The more you go to the battle of all battles, the more you will find the place where the Gods talk to each other" (Rumiz 2005, 150).

GOOD SEA, BAD OUTBACK

Which attributes are ascribed to the interior and which to the maritime civilization? "Sea eats you, clings on to you and absorbs you. The Mountain throws you, tears you, rejects you" (Rumiz 2005, 61). "In Sicily, in Greece, Albania or Dalmatia, people from the interior have an atavistic fear of the sea", claims Rumiz and, by using his multilinguism, he attempts to create an etymologically proven chain for his thesis: "Lučica is a harbor (mandrać) derived from the Greek 'mandra', a herd that gathers in the closed area, where it is safe" (Rumiz 2005, 84). Through the dichotomy of the bad land and the good sea, the author debates the belonging/non-belonging to Venice as the embodiment of complexity. Having this in mind, the stylistically rhetorical contribution to the exemplification of the fundamental thesis is significant; in this case, it is the hydrophilic/terraphobic idiosyncrasy of the travel writer: "One needs to understand that the region Veneto is not Venice. It is a different planet altogether: 'A Land State', villages with parsons, the followers of the Northern League and mosquitoes. However, Venice is, very much like Istria and Dalmatia a 'Sea State' consisting of captains and traders-warriors, Treviso is as far away from the Adriatic as is the Moon or Zagreb". The crucial semantic effect is achieved by the crafty use of zeugma, a figure that "connects that what would otherwise be left apart ('state', parsons, Northern League, mosquitoes, AN.) by developing unexpected associations, making ironic and satirical displays and opening space towards critical

opinion and verbal distancing in relation to the topic" (Bagić 2012, 316). This and many other such examples enable those contextually oriented analyses of discourse to be seen not only as aesthetical but also ideological, social-cultural by connotative designations of style, and therefore confirm that literary values of travelogues are generated dually: "from one side, from its informative and referential function because travelogues cannot be separated from the reality without losing their genre identity, and from the other side, out of transferring aesthetical/poetical experience from travelling" (Puriš 2013, 11).

The schematic divide between the good sea and evil hills is one of the more constant dichotomies upon which Rumiz builds the dramaturgy of his manuscript. Out of this quite provocative and interesting formulations often emerge: "Culturally, Zadar is closer to Istanbul than to its own wild outback" (Rumiz 2005, 60). On the same trail as a significant example of essentialized dichotomies is, according to the above, that what we shall denote as dinarophobia and it operates as a coin word of the traditional complex of euro- and latino-centric stereotypes about the Slavs and the Balkans (here veiled by virtual postcolonial critical-analytical optics, which, in Rumiz's case, irritates with its superficiality by uncovering its ostensibly unbiased intellectual ethics; it is also manifested organically because in the end it could not have been veiled, which can be seen in the fragment quoted below, full of disgust with digestion symptoms). Truth be told, there is its obverse in the South Slavic imaginary – almost equally expressed Venetophobia (which is, symbolically, not to be found on the horizon of the travel writer's interest as it contradicts the thesis of the Adriatic as a sea "that absorbs and remains a bridge between the nations") and this term remains to be found in literature in *longue durée* to continuity from Njegoš to Kamov, Selimović, Horozović, or Aralica. "Even nowadays", writes Rumiz, "these Mountains of the Moon are mother of all the robberies disguised as crusades. When the Turks vanished, the Muslims of Balkans were the next target; the Ottoman bridge in Mostar was destroyed. Serbs or Croats, a majority of the instigators of the recent Balkan war are Dinaric people. Milošević, Arkan, Karadžić, associates of President

Tuđman. Even the conflict with the coast is still difficult. This is almost an altitude clash, considering the steepness of the mountains ... To go there, even today is a bit horrible. The horror I have witnessed in places such as Gospić even today makes my stomach twirl" (Rumiz 2005, 60).

Beyond being self-impressed by heuristics of his own remarks and analogies, in which Rumiz is persistent even under penalty of digression or being silent of certain facts, there is ample self-revelation of these in the subtext and between the lines of the travel writings. After the uttered claim on "the Adriatic as the sea of closeness", there is a comment "Precisely on the sea does the Balkans display its mindlessness. The sea belongs to everyone; you cannot make ethnical cantons on it. And the fish do not need passports" (Rumiz 2005, 63), which even to the most average of readers presents a queue of unsaid reminders on the many naval-territorial claims from Prevlaka, The Bay of Neum, the industrial fishing belt, the Savudrian wave, all of which cannot fit in the author's idyllic maritime amalgam. On the same note is the Procrustean form of interpretation of the Dubrovnik aggression: "It was not a war but hillbillies' envy of the coast that was in the possession of the gentlemen" (Rumiz 2005, 106).

At times the text leaves an impression of a poetic love statement towards the Mediterranean civilization, sometimes it is a fierce critique of cultural one-sidedness and sometimes one-sidedness by itself. Generalizations that serve the populist communication in the greatest of measures hail from the assurance by the author that the collective mentalities are the forces of destiny which govern individuals. In Istria he recognizes "the Slavic turmoil that peers out in the Mediterranean" (Rumiz 2005, 46). The morlaic continuity, wild mountain outlaws *versus* Mediterranean sophistication. These kinds of simplifications as always contain triaged factual undertones and as such are located quite arbitrarily in an interpretation that is too far-fetched. Rumiz's model of supplementary thematization is constantly based on the associative mechanism of metaphoric-metonymic connection of objects, appearances and meanings in time and space, by which he always remains within the gravitational field

of fundamental thesis on historical amnesia and its acute consequences, which in turn makes far-fetched or banal the recognized link by compromising the intention of heuristic actualization of the cultural memory matrix. For example, on arrival at a small Lošinj market, the occasion is such, typical Rumiz-like, *concetto*: "Small Square with benches in wonderful shade, and this is already Greece. On such a place a man can sit and meditate. When I think that today in Veneto there are people who cut benches to prevent strangers and immigrants from sitting, while, perhaps in Athens Democracy was born on such a bench, where in the shade conversations could be held" (Rumiz 2005, 52). By watching Rumiz's perception using comparative approach, it can be seen an interesting counterpoint in Croatian 'insular prose' which shows this space filled with symbolic dialogue openness and Mediterranean complexity totally differently as "a self-satisfied micro cosmos, a universe for itself in which, because of spatial disconnection with the land, existential problems and human drama are sharper and often lead to paroxysm with mostly fatal consequences" (Nemec 2006, 294).

THE AMBIVALENT EAST, THE ATLANTIC AMNESIA OF THE WEST AND CRAFTMEN'S 'OVERSIGHTS'

The global framework for this image is the conflict between East and West, which in itself is not geopolitical, religious or economic. The only conflict of civilization, according to Rumiz, is the conflict between mentalities/identities. In such a way the East gets the unchanging role; only the historical agents are replaceable: "Call him emperor, Saddam, Stalin or Bin Laden. The story is the same. A clash of mentalities. And that's it." (Rumiz 2005, 106). Rumiz, however, contradicts himself when abolishing cultures and religions that format mentalities and identities. One should not overlook the fact that even the critics of Huntington's thesis condition described by Rumiz connotes as a clash of cultures. According to Alain Touraine: "The world is permeated by clashes that are far more radical than clashes in the classical industrial age, because it is now a conflict of cultures and identities that are fundamentally non-negotiable" (Vrcan 1999, 17). Vrcan also

varies the same notion: "When social conflicts become conflicts between cultures, then there is no longer a possibility of mediation, there are no common beliefs and practices which are replaced by the assertion of absolute differences and the total rejection of others, and the world becomes more pervaded by crusades and struggles to life and death rather than politically negotiable conflicts" (ibid.). However, one deems the term 'clash of cultures' to be inappropriate given the openness, depth and complexity of each individual culture, but also given the marginalized negotiable potentials within the context that solely and exclusively manipulates and radicalizes cultural differences.

The East is ambivalent. Rumiz glorifies the Ottoman tolerant policy towards the exiles that becomes clearer when considered in contrast to fifteenth-century Catholic anti-Semitism and anti-Islamic extremism: "Spain is a country that exiled the Jews in the same year Columbus discovered the Atlantic. The idea of 'purity' of race begins here; Hitler did not discover anything new. As well as the massacre of the American Indians, even the horror of the Inquisition began then. The matching of numbers is creepy: 1492 as 1942 the year of the Wansee conference which will decide on the annihilation of the Jews. At the time of Lepanto many of them – people from the Mediterranean, the Sephardic – have hidden away and made themselves rich in Venice, Corfu, Solun, Dubrovnik, Istanbul, Sarajevo. A Turk is more tolerant that the Catholic king" (Rumiz 2005, 153). This kind of interpretation of contemporary conflicts leads to the general conclusions about entire nations: "I think that Croatians are hyper-Catholics because they, along with the Serbs along the border, suppressed the Orient – the orthodox potential – which is within them" (Rumiz 2005, 88).

Rumiz, as mentioned, often has neither the time nor the will for fact checking. Finally, he is on a ship. So, in his culinary-cultural observations he reveals to us that "'the kebab', the largest Turkish industry in the United Europe, had disembarked in Germany" (Rumiz 2005, 48). A neat note with one singular flaw being that it is completely wrong. The European 'doner kebab' was invented by post-Ottoman Turks in Berlin when they put the usually horizontal spit on a vertical axis and rotated it and

offered this as a fast food alternative to the hamburger. From this point 'the kebab' had won Europe. However, for this region the oversights are more important and they must irritate any educated reader who travels across "the sea of history" with Rumiz. This way, among Matvejević, Adorno, Habermas and other critically oriented praxis philosophers, the travel writer has arcanley placed Krleža on Korčula, the intellectual close to the top state authorities.

A completely laconic attempt to explain today's indifference of Croats towards the Battle of Lepanto ensues. Without any remorse, Rumiz deprives himself of the very complexity that he had been ascribed to Venice, by journalistically and laconically going for the first viable, one-dimensional interpretation: "In Zagreb, the battles Croats have won for strangers are not counted. And it is not an issue if the word is about Catholic Venice" (Rumiz 2005, 91). For Venice, the Croats, among others, have triumphed over the Turks who mark the event today as *Sinjska alka* and the average familiarity with the history of these places is sufficient to understand that if the victory of the Sacred League on Lepanto had not been won, the map of Croatia would have been completely different. The Ottoman fleet would have, by all accounts, without any major resistance sailed into the Adriatic and subjugated its eastern shore which had already been observed by the Sultan's land forces from the surrounding mountains. For explication of the Croatian deafness towards the Lepanto, if it indeed exists, it obviously takes a bit more – complexity.

VENETIAN PROJECTION – A JOURNEY AS A READING OF A PALIMPSEST

Rumiz never forgets that he sails under the Venetian flag – so much so that he finally put it on the mast. His Venice is a kind of absolute criterion for questioning the unsteady coasts, states, people, cultures, identities. The Venetian Republic is, according to this travelogue, a utopian measure of things. Non-critical venetophilia also gives an indirect answer to why the South Slavic venetophobic heteroimagology is not spoken of, which is

certainly not unknown to a travel writer of Rumiz's erudition capacity. It is simply incompatible with the idealized personal images, such as those that support the myth of a good conqueror, and are counterpoints to self-referential passages. They can even be cunningly 'provoked' in the environment whose intimate and meditative content is adapted to the scene. And in such an environment 'in the middle of nowhere', through the traces of discrete signs (reading the landscape as a text), lives the emancipatory spirit of Saint Mark: "The Kornati infatuates you, it makes you forget everything. Even Venice. And yet its signs never leave you, even in this deserted island without docks, monuments, cathedrals. White stone bitts put everywhere, even in the middle of nothing, allow docking. A symbol of a discreet presence that lived together with others' customs and did not want to change anyone. The factory sign of an empire that fought, but also traded with Turkey" (Rumiz 2005, 76).

Since Venice is a paradigm, any critical re-examination of its historical role is excluded from the basic intent. "Venice was the only empire capable of ruling without the need for territory" (Rumiz 2005, 76), quoting Anastasia Stouariti, a Greek scientist. At this point in the travelogue appeared a golden opportunity to demonstrate the distinctive characteristics of Venetian colonialism, which, in the words of Simmel, always preferred to retain the role of a stranger rather than accepting the role of the master, since the interest in trade was always ahead of that of exploitation. In his ever-relevant vision of the figure of a stranger, Georg Simmel points out that he "is by nature not a landowner. [...] Awareness of trade and purely monetary affairs gives the stranger the specific character of mobility. Trade lives on in the synthesis of distance and proximity that forms the formal position of the stranger. [...] He comes into contact with everything, but he is not related to anything related to relative, local, professional fixedness" (Simmel 2001, 155). And, indeed, such a Venetian position has found an expression in the more abstract attitude towards the territory and colonization of the eastern Adriatic coast and, in this sense, with all the 'claims' of territorial rights and partial expansion towards the interior, the need to create a safe passage for navigation and trading activities can

be understood. All this, of course, does not exclude them from governance, it is only moving it to – in the global context – a strategically important maritime space, for which the Venetians are more similar to the neocolonial masters of maritime trading routes than the classical colonial powers. They provide military and diplomatic routes as well as the conditions under which goods, money and people can move. For such a role in the past, the key issue was inclusiveness based on knowledge of the other and communication skills, which, after all, essentially determined the character of Venetian Balkanism/Orientalism.

In general, linguistic material is something which Rumiz gladly brings up no matter how (in)effective that sort of evidence might be in an argumentation of merits – the political-historical parallels encircled by the identity narrative of the sea of complexity. "Mad words mock the nations", he concludes, but it should not be ignored that this is no privilege of the Mediterranean but rather a nightmare of linguistic purists around the world, a word, a universal diagram of linguistic and cultural geminations about which Predrag Matvejević wrote, with a similar reason but literally more convincing, in his *Mediterranean brewery* (Matvejević 1990, 35–36).

Navigation becomes a register of lost cultural memory, the measurement of the obscured cultural space. Venetian printing houses in Montenegro print the first Serbian books. Venetian printing houses in Venice print the first Croatian books ... Croats of Italian descent, Italians with Croatian roots. *Trilingvism*. "Fascism destroyed all of it", Rumiz says, concluding, "That was Europe, not like it is today" (Rumiz 2005, 80). But, as it has been said, Rumiz does not question the historic Venice, so this additional work must be briefly done here, at least in the form of indications and some open questions. When did the Venetian sophisticated colonialism fall apart? When another form of colonialism emerged that, in addition to the acquired technological primacy, cultivated a new relationship towards the other – "racial" superiority, cruelty and greed (one without the other would not guarantee "success"). The Venetian model of complexity remained at the door of the 'dialectic of enlightenment'. Neither one was in a balanced relationship with

the modernization of technology or modernization by emancipation, although Venetian inflicted less damage on humanity. Rumiz's equally losing nostalgic lamentation sinks like the rusted anchor of the Venetian galleon to the muddy bottom, to the unnecessary rhetorical question: "Why did Venice persistently look at the East instead of investing in the West?" (Rumiz 2005, 170). It had to first invest in itself, in the reconstruction of identity to which this book is dedicated. And it was already too late for that! A changed world measure was not followed by alignment, aspectual filling of gaps, capturing of a new direction and conquering a new horizon.

THE EASTERN ADRIATIC IDENTITY BETWEEN THE ESSENCE AND CONSTRUCTION

Rumiz tries to refresh his view of the Montenegrin coast and refresh it with the simplifications that, in the close observation, turn out to be romantic resonances, in the supposed proof of the one-way essentialized connection of nature – the mentality: "Montenegro, a name that disturbs, and not without reason. The Turks reluctantly came to these harsh mountains. Tough residents. Steeped Mountains" (Rumiz 2005, 115). All this fits with what theorists of the culture of travel call the "pre-arranged look", despite the authors' efforts to achieve the effect of seduction by using nominative sentences, ellipses and subdivisions that create the impression of film framing. Geocritique as a domain of cultural studies dealing with "poetics of interactions of human spaces and literature" (Juvan 2011, 245) would, beyond any doubt, categorize Rumiz in the class of writers of distinctively intertextually superfluous perception of reality.

However, Rumiz does not need to hide the back. In other words, if the name of one country brings disturbance, while its inhabitants are welcoming and cruel, then it may have been a compliment two centuries ago. Today it is a warning. The book also reveals some historical details that do not correspond to the local nationalist narrative, but perhaps only to some Venetian sentiment. He also recalls that those Montenegrins in Boka, who were Venetian subjects for hundreds of years, remained

faithful to Venice. Alviž Visković, the patriarch of Bokelj and Prince of Perak, in 1797, after the fall of the Venetian Republic, made a searing speech: "During these 377 years, our blood, our lives, have always been given to you St. Marko; and we are delighted to keep it, you with us, we with you [...] Let our heart be your honored tomb, and may our tears be the most vibrant posthumous speech for you" (Rumiz 2005, 119). "Skjavoni" loved us. Everything but an 'inferior race', as Mussolini said in Pula", Rumiz concluded. It is a pity that travel sources have not quoted sources to confirm that this love was mutual.

Albania was beyond Venetian power. Rumiz floats along its shores to confirm his thesis about mountain people who fear the absorbing sea: "The dazzling sky, the sea is as empty as never before. There are not any tourists. No Albanians go to sea. They are shepherds, and for shepherds the sea is fear, sickness and pain" (Rumiz 2005, 129). Albania does not participate in Mediterranean civilization, but the bridge has been built over the Atlantic: "Albania is Pakistan which becomes Far West without passing through Europe and the Mediterranean. It looks like it's close to Italy, and it's actually too far away. It's already the Atlantic Ocean. You can see this when you see the pictures of Bill Clinton, hung by the newsstands as if it is Madame Carmen. Big Bill who bombarded the historic enemy of the Squiptars, Serbia" (Rumiz 2005, 133). This is about "historical enemies". This takes over stereotypes and nationalistic constructions as the true truth. This episode may most clearly indicate that Rumiz's narrative absorbs facts based on already adopted/explicit thesis. On the metonymy contrast, with the figure of synetresm, there is also a description of those environments characterized by the absence of complexity and organic contrasting. An example is Albania with its instant modernization, where the cohabitation of tradition and novelty occurs in pejorative forms: "Ten kilometers of the last Mercedes model and a rig with hooded asses, high-heeled girls with lowered eyes, accompanied by mothers and brothers always ready for the fight and quarrel, shops with loud oriental music, peasants with a bear on the aisle, are singled out in full voice. And yet, newsstands with horns of moufl on and video-telephones, the latest house and bilge, the smell

of jasmine and stench of burnt plastic, loose dogs and sellers of the best yoghurt on the planet. [...] a country in an uncertain situation between the middle ages and post-modern" (Rumiz 2005, 132). How much the essentializing image of Albania was (un)sustainable can be seen in the image of the Albanian coast (construction and tourism boom) only fifteen years after the creation of Rumiz's travelogue.

Greece, on the other hand, is framed by positive clichés. Rumiz thus quotes an example of Saint Spiridon whose relics were respected by Orthodox and Catholic priests and Jews and Muslims at Corfu: "Strange, the more you go to battle over battles, the more you find places where Gods talk to each other" (Rumiz 2005, 150). Rumiz's Helenophilia is "platonic"; moreover, he does not feel the need to conceal its vigor with Greek 'complexity', in which, it must be recognized, he invested a lot of effort writing about Venice or Dalmatia. Is this Greece abolished for an indefinite time by the status of the European cultural heritage? A fierce altercation between two Greek men about the cost of the Athenian Olympic Games, which ends with laughter, is a trivial argument for such a generalized generalization (and in today's Greece, there would surely be foundations for completely opposite contradictions). Well, after several pages he denied himself and pointed out the back of Greek 'complexity': "In the century of nationalism [...] the Greeks will do as well as the Serbs, they will swear that they have never served in Ottoman troops – and they did serve – totally" (Rumiz 2005, 165).

Coming to the place of the naval battle, Rumiz does not feel historical vibrancy. Everything has changed. "It does not make sense to make trigonometry from history", the travel writer concludes. "We do not have competitive rivals who have fought for primacy, but they were complex and dialogic: We do not have the Byzantines, we miss Venice " (Rumiz 2005, 172). He cites an example of Christian fighters in the Ottoman fleet who served the Sultan in a natural way: "They feel as Byzantines, and for them the Sultan is nothing but the successor to Byzantine, eastern Rome" (Rumiz 2005, 165). Right after comes a detail that somewhat contradicts this statement. In the Battle of Lepanto, galleys on Ottoman ships, "mostly Christian slaves", rebelled

and thus contributed to the defeat of the Ottoman fleet. Rumiz remains consistent in the dichotomic interpretations of the world: East/West, mountains/the sea, good multinational empires/bad nationalisms, Mediterraneanism/Atlanticism. Where European civilization started, in the Mediterranean, Europe lost itself: "While we were still shouting 'My mother, here are the Turks', others took us off the sea. They took Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, the Suez Canal. Then the Cold War missiles came. Terrorism, too." (Rumiz 2005, 170). The so-defined Europe, the one that is not only the West but also contains the East, is Rumiz's bridge. The bridge was ruined: "We did not understand Sarajevo, which is behind the house threshold, so how can we understand Baghdad?" (Rumiz 2005, 172).

INSTEAD OF THE CONCLUSION: "THE SEA OF COMPLEXITY" AS A SIMPLIFICATION METHOD

This travelogue moves us away from a comfortable national-historical environment. Even his unilateralities and exaggerations, if we want so, can be used to understand that there was really one center of the complex world in our "sea". True Mid-Earth. In addition, Rumiz is a writer who can make the travelogue a literature that does not depend only on the interestingness of itineraries, but is often based on the subtle literary performance of the attitude, style and narration. However, the weaknesses of the text are multiple, and the greatest is the selective treatment, both because of the experiences and the sources. A travel writer with a thesis never counts in advance with a variety of resistance outside of a homogeneous, but, inside, a distinctively different corpus of different materials and practices that he intends to make a theme of. To travel in order to prove something narrows the passage of the exemplification of belief; the knowledge is limited by the goal. And it should be remembered: the travel writer is an author, writer and hero of the travelogue. The narrative is always based on the classical principle of imbalance or change. The assumption of each narration is that something must happen, the balance must change. The traveller/storyteller returns differently to how he has gone. According to Lotman,

the literary hero is a kid of change, it can only be the one who crosses the border and passes from one semantic field to another (Lotman 1976, 109). In spite of the unquestionable elements of literacy, a travelogue that serves as an exemplification of the thesis, which does not disclose a new one but already confirms the starting point, compromises its literary status, especially when others appear as actors in a crafted show. In addition, the conceptual scope of this book is absolutely not at the forefront of the introduction of the aforementioned recent spatial theories – the perception of space and place – which interprets them as dynamic structures, as something that constantly arises and which is inextricably intertwined in power relations. Local dynamics always produce new meanings, and this is, of course, incompatible with essentialism. Rumiz's travelogue accordingly missed the chance: it is the Adriatic and the Mediterranean in their habitus that are the optimal space for the travelogue creation of a multiperspectivity cultural image in which the appearance of otherness comes across as well as the changeability of identity and the possibility of self-reflexive attention to the narrative process of the construction of the self.

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