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(Radovi s ove konferencije posvećeni su profesoru emeritusu **Ivanu Mimici**
u povodu desete obljetnice studija hrvatskog jezika i književnosti na
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I

Nazor: Literature and History

Nazor: Književnost i povijest

The Perception of Croatian Medieval History by Vladimir Nazor in *Hrvatski kraljevi* (*The Kings of the Croats*)

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Summary

This paper is focusing on the use of motifs from Croatian early medieval history in Nazor's topical collection of poetry entitled *Hrvatski kraljevi* (*The Kings of the Croats*). *Hrvatski kraljevi* functions perfectly within its Zeitgeist, as Nazor's way to *re-create* Croatian historical memory and distribute it as 'poetical knowledge' to the readers. The metaphor of *blut und boden*, strongly showing throughout this topical collection of poetry, constructs and embodies continuity with the past, and boosts the sense of national unity in Nazor's present(s). For Nazor's generation of Croatians, medieval Croats were tremendously important symbols used to draw and develop a Croatian historical 'genealogy' in order to position the Croatians amongst European nations of the time.

Key words: Vladimir Nazor, medieval, *The Kings of the Croats*/
Hrvatski kraljevi

Historical and mythological topics take a significant place in the opus of Vladimir Nazor, in both his prose and poetry. He used motifs and personalities from medieval Croatian history, and widely exploited a literary and ethnological discourse developing in the 19th century, known as 'Slav mythology'.¹ Working within the intellectual framework of romantic nationalism, and influential ideologies of his time, such as panslavism and yugoslavism, Nazor looked into the past to find inspiration for his art, but also to address his present. This paper will focus on the use of motifs from Croatian early medieval history in Nazor's topical collection of poetry entitled *Hrvatski kraljevi* (*The Kings of the Croats*).²

Hrvatski kraljevi had a long and complex evolution, and Nazor worked on them for more than thirty years. Originally, this collection of poems was completed in

1 We have no evidence that the Slavenophone population had elaborate mythology before conversion to Christianity. What is today known as 'Slav mythology' is a combination of 19th century collecting of folk-legends, the writings of Arab travellers and Christian missionaries from 10th and 11th century Northern Europe, and data from early sources such as Procopius, Džino (2010): 165-68. The work of N. Nodilo, *Stara vjera Srba i Hrvata na glavnoj osnovi pjesama, priča i govora narodnog* published in nine parts in *Radovi JAZU* (1885-1890) was the first important synthesis of this kind, which probably significantly influenced Nazor's early poetry.

2 As far as I am aware, Nazor's perception of history in *Hrvatski kraljevi* was discussed only in Šicel (1997), with a focus on his representation of king Zvonimir. See also Bratulić (1998b) on king Tomislav in art and literature until 1925.

1903 and published in 1904, under the title *Knjiga o kraljevima hrvatskijem* (*The Book about Croat Kings*) by Hrvatska knjižarnica in Zadar. It was a reprint of poems published by the same publisher earlier that same year in the first volume of the literary annual *Koledar Svačić*.³ *Knjiga o kraljevima hrvatskijem* is chronologically the last book from his ‘Zadar cycle’, while Nazor was teaching in Zadar secondary school. It comes after his earlier works *Slavenske legende* (*The Slav Legends*) and *Živana*, which were both influenced by topics from the ‘Slav mythology’, and the patriotic *Pjesma o hrvatskom narodu* (*The Poem about the Croatian People*).⁴ The work was republished with changes under the new title *Hrvatski kraljevi* (*The Kings of the Croats*) by Matica Hrvatska in Zagreb, 1912. The new title was used as Nazor had sold all authorial rights of *Knjiga o kraljevima hrvatskijem* to his old publisher in Zadar.⁵ The collection appears under a new name in 1918 in the fifth volume of the *Collected Works of Nazor* edited by Branko Vodnik, with new changes. The final version was published in Zagreb in 1931 in what Nazor himself regarded as the definite and final version.⁶

Nazor originally intended this collection to focus on Croatian naval feats throughout history, under the working title *Mare Nostrum*. However, he changed his mind and decided to expand the field of his poetical ‘enquiry’ on Croatian medieval history up to death of Petar Svačić, traditionally represented as ‘the last king of the Croats’ at the battle on Mt. Gvozd in 1097. (Nazor, 1931: 119). The whole collection has several underlying torrents and recurrent motives. The most dominating are, in the fashion of the times, the romantic ideals of *blut und boden*, the idealised connection between past and present through the notion of ‘shared blood’ and the historical inheritance of nations. The *Prologue* to the third edition opens with a strong statement: *They told us: ‘You have always been slaves/And like a graveyard your history is/Without even a decent tombstone cross to be found’*. Nazor establishes the outsider perception that the Croats are a ‘people without history’, in order to give himself the role of the poet-restorer who reconstructs the past through his body, through the power and weight of his heritage:

*Even if there are no graves, monuments/Walls, plaques, parchments,
paintings/I know what and how things have been./Not dispersed
through all four corners of the world/but inside my body buried they
are/The flesh of my fathers and all their bones!.... I am the monument
of them dead” (Prologue)*

3 Nazor (1904), cf. Nazor (1931): 119. On Nazor in Zadar see Žeželj (1973): 117-37. Zadar was the second largest centre for publishing in the Croatian language in the period of Croatian modernism (after Zagreb), and his publisher was quite fond of publishing in Croatian, Maštrović (2005): 291-92, 295.

4 Nazor (1900); (1902a); (1902b).

5 Nazor (1912); Žeželj (1973): 179-81 – Nazor’s letters to his new publisher Branko Drechler-Vodnik.

6 Nazor (1918); (1931); (1931): 120.

corresponding with the statement from the *Epilogue* (which Nazor originally used as prologue to the first edition from 1904):

*What had happened once, is now inside us/Ancient strength still holds
fist firm/to build the walls of destroyed temple.*

As Gjurgjan, pointed out (Gjurgjan 1995: 57-66, 91-97, 118-21), Nazor is not interested in recreation or interpretation of the facts, but he rather works on their *re-creation* in poetry. Similar to the Irish poet W. B. Yeats, Nazor with his poetry tries to *re-construct* and *re-present* Croatian history rooted in myth, thus making his verses fulfil the task of collective memory. His Croatian kings are symbols, cultural emblems which are intended to serve as the depositories of collective memory.⁷ Nazor connects past and present in order to restore safety and project to his reader a sense of continuity and belonging to the long-lasting tradition. However, it should be said that *Hrvatski kraljevi* reflects different presents of the poet himself. They were rewritten in several instances, projecting different general moods: from the initial nostalgia for the 'glorious' past to the more militant versions of the second and third editions, where he let loose his fighting spirit (Žeželj, 1973: 136).

Nazor's poetry functions within a much wider context of the nationalisation and mythologisation of history in the 18th and 19th centuries, drawing upon similar attempts occurring in other western countries. History came to be used in that time as a tool in order to help *re-construct* existing national identities by establishing continuity between the early medieval states and identities and the modern nations.⁸ Nazor in the *Prologue* rebels against two discursive stereotypes – the Slavs as servile nations (*They told us: 'You have always been slaves'*) but also an idealised vision of the Slavic past: *And the others say: 'More than humans/we're all. Lambs. Of pigeon nature/Slavs! The Bees that take honey from the flower'*. Both of these stereotypes arose from different interpretations of Johann Gottfried Herder, especially his 'Slavic chapter' in the *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784-1791). Herder constructed the Slavs in his work as a generous peace-loving rural people, who are 'by nature' submissive and obedient and therefore incapable of ruling themselves.⁹

Another important overarching motif Nazor exploits in this collection is the civilisation-barbarism model. He takes and reappropriates for his Croats the model of the 'healthy barbarians' as a counterpart to 'cultural decadence', probably as a reaction to his perception of the exclusivity of the Croatian political elite in Zadar.¹⁰

7 For collective memory see in particular Assman (1992), but also Ben-Amos and Weissberg (1999); Hobsbawm and Ranger (1992); Connerton (1989) etc.

8 Geary (2002). See also (Ančić 2008a), especially 32-51 for Croatians, and Štih (2010): 9-37, in a comparative perspective for the Slovenians.

9 See Wolff (1994): 310-15 on Herder, and Gombocz (1997) on Herder's reception in Central Europe. Cf. also Štih (2010): 24-37 on the 'servility myth' and its impact on Slovenian historiography.

10 Nazor (1950): 9-13. He also wrote a satirical collection *Medvjed Brundo (Brundo the Bear)* published in 1915, but directly inspired by the Croatian politics of the *fin de siècle* Nazor (1950): 9-20.

The book is dominated by the images of barbarism: *No, it is not true – We are barbarians too!* (Prologue), *healthy barbarian blood*, and *youthful barbarians* (Sepont), or *Look! The barbarian took the flag* (*The First Battle*), and animal-like behaviours and wilderness such as:

*From darkness of the jungle we came too!... /And now, still dreams
the animal in us/that gave our grandfathers paws/and teeth and horns
for fights and quarrels!... and we too were greasing our hands in
slaughter. (Prologue)*

In this context we can see a recurrent motif of ‘Croatian wolves’ used in both positive and negative contexts.¹¹ The ‘Croatian wolves’ motif becomes very important in Nazor’s inner poetical dialogue with the Italian poet Gabrielle D’Annunzio, who also used the image of ‘Croatian wolves’ (*I lupi di Croazia*) as negative stereotyping of ‘Croat barbarians’ in the poem *La Nave*, published a few years after Nazor’s *Ladislav*. The fact that he used this motif before D’Annunzio highly amused Nazor, as he admitted later.¹²

The collection of poems in its final version from 1931 has a new Prologue and two thematic and chronological parts: *The Bans*¹³ and *The Kings*. The prologue from the earlier edition has been moved to the end as the *Epilogue* of the third edition. As space is limited here, the analysis will be limited only on a few selected features.

The arrival of the Slavs in *The Arrival*, the poem opening *The Bans*, reflects a few political ideas of his time. The most obvious are yugoslavism and panslavism, but also political aims to unify northern Croatia and Dalmatia, administratively divided between Hungary and Austria under the Habsburg rule. Nazor was an open sympathiser of Yugoslav ideology radiating from the intellectual and political circle around Josip Juraj Strossmayer, the archbishop of Đakovo, Bosnia and Syrmia. This circle supported a loosely defined political program which focused on the union of all Southern Slavs, the separation of Croats from the Habsburg Austro-Hungarian Empire and their unification with Serbia.¹⁴ One of the key 19th century Croatian medievalists was Franjo Rački (1828-1894), himself a member of Strossmayer’s inner circle. Rački tried to lay the blueprints for a narrative social biography of the

11 “*Human packs*” (*Ljutovit Posavski: Torch*); “*Venetian lionet and Croatian wolf*” (*Ladislav*); the motive of the werewolf (*Branimir: Werewolf*); (early bans and kings) “*wild as wolfs, mad as lions*” (*Svetoslav Surinja*); “*the offspring of the wolf and lion*” (*Epilogue*). Nazor used the Turkish word *arслан*, which means *lion* but also used to have Croatian meanings: hero, mad, angry, and violent.

12 Nazor (1950): 116-18, cf. also 125-74 for his translation and thinking of D’Annunzio’s poetry and life.

13 *Ban* was the title the Croat officials used as early as the 10th century. However, most of the *bans* Nazor mentions referred to themselves, or were referred to, as the dukes (*dux Croatorum, dux Dalmatiae*).

14 Strossmayer’s political views were extensively studied, see more recently Koščak (1990); Padovan (1997); Brooks-Tomljanovich (2001); Šanjek (2006), etc. Nazor was a keen follower of Strossmayer’s ideas and even dedicated to him a few verses from *Pjesma o hrvatskom narodu*, see Žeželj (1973): 133-34, but also Gjurgjan (1995): 61-64 on Nazor and yugoslavism.

Croatians as part of the larger historical meta-narrative, which constructed the joint history for the South Slavs. He incorporated the early medieval history of the Croats within discourses of yugoslavism and panslavism, viewing the Croats and Serbs as joint arrivals from the Pripet marshes in modern Ukraine, arriving in south-eastern Europe in the 7th century. This interpretation, based on the 10th century Byzantine tractate *De Administrando Imperio*, at the same time provided joint ‘historical origins’ for the Croats and Serbs, but also connected them with the other Slavs.¹⁵

In *Arrival* amorphous, unidentified people come in masses across Mt. Velebit to the Adriatic. It is revealed that they are the Croats, coming from behind the Carpathians only in the second poem, *The First Court*. Frequent mention of Slav mythological figures (Vid-Svantovit, Bijes, the priests of Svantovit) in both opening poems establishes strong links of these arrivals with the other Slavs, through a shared ‘religion’. It also corresponds with Nator’s neo-pagan fantasies from the earlier works *Živana* and *Slavenske legende*. The demand of the human sacrifice by the priest of Svantovit before the building of the ruler’s residence in *The First Court* establishes the arriving Croats as the ‘barbarians’. However, the voluntary sacrifice of the Croat leader Kloukas for his people and the image of his blood dying the stone of the new court connects Nator’s Croats with the new land they just conquered. The historical monuments and bodies, both acting as depositories of historical memories are from there inextricably connected. This scene in a way justifies what Nator says in the *Prologue* that his body reconstructs the past, as after the sacrifice of Kloukas, the monuments began symbolically to preserve the bodies of Nator’s forefathers.¹⁶

Nator’s version of the Croats coming to the Adriatic Sea reproduces familiar images from Croatian literature and art. The popularity of the motif of the arrival of the Croats at the (Adriatic) sea was particularly clear in the contemporary 19th and early 20th century Croatian political context. The establishment of the personal union and the 1868 division of the Austro-Hungarian Empire into the Austrian empire and Hungarian kingdom, under a joint government and the ruler from the house of Habsburg, separated the Croats between these two. Thus, the Croats in continental Croatia, which was part of the Hungarian kingdom, (without success) demanded from the imperial government to be joined with the Croats in Dalmatia, under the same administration. Ferdo Quiquerez, in his painting *Arrival of the Croats at the Sea* (1870), implanted this political message and depicted the brothers and sisters as almost semi-divine creatures from Graeco-Roman mythology, standing on the rocks whipped by bubbling white waves, inspiring the poet Franjo Ciraki to write a short poem „Dolazak Hrvata na obalu sinjega mora” („Arrival of the Croats on the coast of a blue sea”), published in the journal *Vienac* no. 41 (1870).

15 Ančić (2008b), cf. Džino (2010): 18-19. On Strossmayer’s panslavism see Karaula (2006/07), and on Rački and Strossmayer recently Strčić (2006).

16 The name of Kloukas (Κλουκάς) is taken from the story told in the 30th book of *De Administrando Imperio*. Kloukas is there mentioned as one of the mythological five brothers, who led the Croats into a new homeland.

Nazor's visualisation of the Croats arriving from the darkness of Mt. Velebit to the sea in the first dawn: *Heavenly doors were opened by the Dawn/The docs shined, the mountains burned/Like a silver was gleaming that blue sea* is very similar to the images from the contemporary paintings of Oton Iveković, *Arrival of the Croats at the Adriatic sea*, from 1905, and Celestin Mato Medović, *Arrival of the Croats*, from 1903. Both paintings also show the arrival of the Croats in the early dawn (Medović) and dawn (Iveković), depicting the sea in silvery colours. Iveković's depiction of wild, ecstatic celebrations by shaven-head warriors, the fiery morning sky and gleaming sea is closer to Nazor's poem (although it is impossible to tell who influenced whom) from Iveković's rational and noble Croats and sfumato-like landscape behind them. Nazor's audial imaging of the Croat arrival at the sea in this poem: *Down by mountain crowds as torrents they came/And their hands they raise; and shouted: 'Sea, Sea!'*, reminds the reader strongly of the shouts of Xenophon's 10,000 Greek mercenaries who, not unlike the Croats of Nazor, cried *Thalassa, Thalassa (Sea, Sea)* after finally reaching the coast in the *Anabasis*. A very similar motif is used in Ksaver Šandor Gjalski's later novel, *Arrival of the Croats* from 1925: *And then, from hundreds, from thousands of mouths came merry, glorious, celebratory shout: 'Sea – sea – here is the sea, down here!'*

It is interesting to look into the use of space in this work. Nazor focuses his poems on the Dalmatian coast and Adriatic Sea. Very rarely he sets the stage in continental Croatia, and never in Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁷ There are only two poems set in Slavonia and Syrmia (*Ljutovit Posavski, Ban Sermo*). Two battles against the Magyars are placed on Mt. Gvozd, at the beginning and the end of *The Kings (Tomislav: First battle; Petar Svačić)*. Petar Svačić died fighting the Magyars in 1097, while the battle and victory of Tomislav in the first decades of the 10th century is quite possible although existing evidence is very bleak (see below). For Nazor Mt. Gvozd plays an important symbolic role, enabling him to balance *The Kings* between the victory of the first king and defeat of the last king. The victory of Tomislav also connects *Kings* with *Bans*, which he ended with the death of the Pannonian duke Braslav from the Magyars (*Braslav*). Nazor places the court of his Croat *bans* in Bijaći, the place above Trogir, near Split. There he locates the scenes of the self-sacrifice of Kloukas in *First Castle*, the death of Borna in *Borna*, etc. Early Croat dukes (but not Borna) once had residence in Bijaći, although it is today disputable whether the complex around the church of St. Martha was their main residence.¹⁸ The transition from the initial barbarity of Nazor's Croats to civilisation is symbolically marked through the transfer of the court to Biograd in *Stjepan Surinja*, although we can trace it at the

17 For Nazor, Bosnia and Herzegovina was a foreign space, which attracted him with its wilderness. He was discouraged to go there by the older colleague Silvije Strahimir Kranjčević, who lived in Sarajevo. Kranjčević himself disliked Habsburg-ruled Bosnia and Herzegovina and told Nazor that he would not like it there, and to look rather for poetic inspiration in Dalmatia: "You forgot on our pirates and frontier-ambushers (*uskoks*), and the cathedrals, Roman temples and aqueducts, the monuments of ancient Croat rulers." Nazor (1950): 405-06.

18 Ančić (1999), cf. Džino (2010): 188-89.

beginning of *The Kings*, when Tomislav addressed Magyar leader as: *you barbarian!* (Tomislav: First battle). The images of the grandiose new court are juxtaposed with spooky phantoms at the end of the poem, after everyone goes to sleep, terrifying the king as a dark predicament of the future of his successors.¹⁹

Foreigners are constantly present throughout the book. The conflicts with the Venetians, Magyars or Franks are projected political battles with Italians, Hungarians or Germans in Nator's times. They are there to confirm the Croatianness of the poet's ban and king. The Venetians and Magyars are projected as the worst enemies of Nator's Croats. Nator was born in Dalmatia (the island of Brač), the contact and conflict zone with the Italian 'Other', and it is no surprise to notice that he places the conflicts with the Venetians in the most prominent position (*Ladislav, Inoslav, First battle, Mika, The Campaign of Dodge Orseolo, King Zvonimir: The Duke of the Sea*). As said above, the Magyars are present only in *Braslav, Tomislav: First battle* and *Petar Svačić*. The Franks, who in fact had the most important influence on the development of the Croat duchy in Dalmatia in the 9th century,²⁰ make only a modest appearance, as uneasy allies of the Croats against the Avars in *Istrian ban*, and as the enemies in *Ljutovit Posavski*.

Apart from loosely following the historiographical interpretations of his time, Nator makes several historical inconsistencies. There is no mention of the duke Trpimir (c. 842?-864?), who is first known to be called the duke of the Croats and was known in Croatian historiography before Nator's times through the Charter of Trpimir, and the mention in *De Administrando Imperio*.²¹ Nator conveys the Frankish margrave Cadolah dying in *Ljutovit Posavski*, in the battle: *with withered lips, stuck on a thin stake/staring eyes of Cadolah's head*, while he actually died after his defeat and retreat to Friuli. It is also interesting to mention the role of the *liburnica*, used by Nator as the symbol of the Croats on the sea, opposed to the galleon and *dromon*, the symbols of the Venetians and Byzantines (*Sepont, Mika*). The *liburnica* (*liburna*) was originally a type of ship developed by the indigenous Liburni from the hinterland of Zadar. It was used in Roman imperial navies, as the most popular type of the warship. *Liburnicae* were not used after c. 4th-5th century.²² Nator probably followed the then fashionable opinion of Bartul Poparić, who assumed that early Croat warships must have been modelled upon the *liburnicae*, because the political core of the Croat duchy developed in the Ravni Kotari – ancient Liburnia (Poparić, 1899: 78-79, 90).

King Tomislav deserves a few words. In many ways this is a significant poem, as it was the first written (published in 1897 in the journal *Lovor*) and because it

19 "Until now the king was wandering around in villages/Tall golden chair I place in the city on the seaside, in the white court/... The phantoms prop up their heads/Sitting still. Silently look each other and cry." (*Stjepan Surinja*). Biograd near Zadar was one of the important centres of the Croat kingdom, see Antoljak (1990).

20 Ančić (1998); Budak (1998), cf. Dzino (2010): 175 ff.

21 On duke Trpimir see Budak (1994): 71-78; Matijević.-Sokol (2007).

22 Panciera (1956); Dzino (2005).

opens the second part – *The Kings*. Nazor makes his Tomislav fight the Magyars at Mt. Gvozd, as said earlier, to balance the defeat of Svačić at the same place towards the end of the section. The historical Tomislav is a rather shadowy character, known from very scarce sources. He was the duke of the Croats c. 910-925 and probably the first king of the Croats 925-928. The story that he fought the Magyars comes from *The Chronicle of the Priest Docleas*, a medieval chronicle from the later 12th century, which is known to be unreliable for information on the earlier periods.²³ Tomislav was not mentioned in older historiography until Rački made his study in 1871. Nazor probably found his information from Horvat's popular articles published in 1896, where he used the earlier studies of Kukuljević-Sakcinski and Smičiklas, which both incorporated the story from Docleas.²⁴

Hrvatski kraljevi are perhaps not the best or the most homogenous pieces of poetry written by Nazor in his substantial opus. However, it remained an important building block of 'poetical knowledge' for more than a century, the instrument for Croatians to address their past and their future, and negotiate their identity in the present. Nazor's verses, although slightly changed in order to accommodate the standards of the modern Croatian language, still carry a significant relevance for the present, being performed as a pop-song by the band *Obala* in most recent times. The discrepancies between outsider and insider perceptions of Croatian history (*They told us: 'You have always been slaves/And like a graveyard your history is'*) and the Croatian reaction to the 'Orientalism' of outside observers stretch from the times of Alberto Fortis and Ivan Lovrić (Giovanni Lovrich) to modern historiographical debates.²⁵

Nazor's *Hrvatski kraljevi* show his patriotic and romantic perception of the Croatian early medieval past. Compared with his earlier neo-pagan fantasies of 'Slav mythology' in *Slavenske legende* and *Živana*, Nazor is on first sight more constrained here, as he deals with more defined historical events. However, that does not prevent him continuing to actively use the past in order to justify the present. Nazor expresses his wish to portray medieval Croat rulers as human beings, 'good' and 'bad' in the *Prologue*, as: ... *neither heroes nor slaves – just humans*. Nevertheless, the poet does not always stay true to his word, Nazor's bans and kings are much more alike to ancient Greek heroes – larger than life, semi-divine mortals capable of superhuman deeds, 'good', but also 'bad'.

Hrvatski kraljevi functions perfectly within its Zeitgeist, as Nazor's way to *re-create* Croatian historical memory and distribute it as 'poetical knowledge' to the

23 On Tomislav see: Goldstein (1985): 35-54; Posavec (1997); Bratulić (1998a). The victory over the Magyars is generally believed by historiography but is based on single data that he fought the king 'Atilla', from chapter 12 of *The Chronicle*. He is called Thomislavus in the Latin edition and Polislav in the Croatian edition of the text, see recent commentary in Živković (2009): 168-72, whose conclusion that Docleas took the information from Thomas the Archdeacon of Split is disputable.

24 Rački (1871); Kukuljević-Sakcinski (1879); Smičiklas (1882): 215-26; Horvat (1896a); (1986b). See Goldstein (1985): 23-35; Posavec (1997): 285-86 on Tomislav in older Croatian historiography.

25 For Fortis and Lovrić see in English Wolff (2001): 165, 228 ff. In recent times see Budak (2009); cf. Džino (2010): 48-50.

readers. It contributes to the meta-narrative of the Croatian medieval past, which was developing in historiography of the time, but also in art and politics. The meta-narrative of the Croatian medieval past establishes medieval Croats as the 'forefathers' of modern Croats, in the same way the Gauls and Franks have been discursively related to modern French, ancient Germans to modern Germans, Anglo-Saxons to English, the inhabitants of medieval Bosnian kingdom to the Bosniaks and/or Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina more recently, etc. The metaphor of *blut und boden*, strongly showing throughout this topical collection of poetry, constructs and embodies continuity with the past, and boosts the sense of national unity in Nator's present(s). We know today that the medieval Croat duchy and kingdom was not a nation-state of the Croats, especially not in the sense imagined by Croats in the 19th and for a good part of the 20th century. However, for Nator's generation of Croats, medieval Croats were tremendously important symbols used to draw and develop a Croatian historical 'genealogy' in order to position the Croats amongst European nations of the time. *Re-creating* the Croatian past was one of the most important intellectual prerequisites needed to negotiate a Croatian identity and political future, and the efforts of Nator's generation resulted in the renewed strength and vitality of Croatian identity in the early 20th century.

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Percepcija hrvatske srednjovjekovne povijesti u *Hrvatskim kraljevima* Vladimira Nazora

Sažetak

Ovaj rad analizira percepciju hrvatske srednjovjekovne povijesti u djelu *Hrvatski kraljevi* Vladimira Nazora. Ova zbirka poezije ostaje jedno od značajnih identitetsko-kulturnih simbola kojima se Hrvati obraćaju svojoj prošlosti i budućnosti, ali i kojima konstruiraju svoj identitet u sadašnjosti. Nazor je u *Hrvatskim kraljevima* pokazao svoje domoljubne i romantičarske percepcije hrvatske povijesti. U usporedbi s ranijim neopoganskim fantazmagorijama u *Slavenskoj mitologiji* i *Živani*, Nazor je ovdje na prvi pogled ograničen, jer se bavi manje-više definiranim povijesnim događajima. On jasno izjavljuje u prologu trećeg izdanja da želi u svojoj poetskoj pseudorealnosti oslikati srednjovjekovne hrvatske vladare poput ljudskih bića, sklonih dobru jednako kao i zlu. No, pjesnik ne ostaje dosljedno vjeran svojoj riječi – njegovi banovi i kraljevi postaju mnogo više nalik na drevne grčke heroje poput Herakla ili Tezeja, robusni smrtnici nadljudske snage i pojave, sposobni da čine, ‘dobro’, jednako kao i ‘zlo’.

Ovo djelo funkcionira poput poetskog oruđa za *re-konstrukciju* hrvatskog povijesnog pamćenja, i njegove distribucije kao poetskog ‘znanja’ o prošlosti. Ono je Nazorov doprinos metanarativu hrvatske srednjovjekovne prošlosti, koji se snažno izgrađuje u njegovo doba kroz historiografiju, umjetnost i politiku. Metanarativ hrvatskog srednjovjekovlja uspostavlja srednjovjekovne Hrvate kao ‘pretke’ (‘očeve’, ‘pradjedove’) modernih Hrvata, na isti način na koji su se Gali i Franci diskurzivno ugrađivali u francusku percepciju povijesti, Germani u njemačku, Anglosaksonci u englesku, žitelji srednjovjekovne Bosne u percepciju prošlosti Bošnjaka i Hrvata u BiH u novije vrijeme, itd. Metafora *blut und boden*, se kontinuirano prikazuje kroz cijelu ovu tematsku zbirku poezije, pomažući konstrukciju i utjelovljenje kontinuiteta s prošlošću, te snaženje osjećaja nacionalnog jedinstva u Nazorovoj sadašnjosti.

Danas znamo da srednjovjekovna hrvatska kneževina i kraljevstvo nisu bili nacionalna država Hrvata, osobito ne u smislu kako su to zamišljali Hrvati u 19. i dobrim dijelom 20. stoljeća. Međutim, za Nazorovu generaciju, srednjovjekovni Hrvati su bili izuzetno važni simboli za konstrukciju i razvitak hrvatskog povijesnog ‘rodoslovlja’, koje je pozicioniralo Hrvate među europske narode tog vremena, i legitimiziralo ih kao zasebnu naciju. *Re-konstrukcija* hrvatske prošlosti postaje time jedna od najvažnijih intelektualnih pretpostavki za učvršćivanje hrvatskog identiteta i političke budućnosti za ovu generaciju, čiji su napori rezultirali revalorizacijom i jačanjem hrvatskog identiteta u ranom 20. stoljeću.

Ključne riječi: Vladimir Nazor, srednjovjekovlje, *Hrvatski kraljevi*