SERBIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS
INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES

LII 2021

BALCANICA

ANNUAL OF THE INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES
UDC 930.85(4-12)
BELGRADE 2021
ISSN 0350-7653
eISSN 2406-0801

https://doi.org/10.2298/BALC2152069K
UDC 316.736(497.11:450)"1903/1914"
050.488СРПСКИ КЊИЖЕВНИ ГЛАСНИК"1903/1914"
111.852 Кроче Б.
821.131.1.09 Д'Анунцио Г.
Original scholarly work
http://www.balcanica.rs

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Liberalism and Imperialism: Croce and D'Annunzio in Serbian Culture 1903–1914

Abstract: This paper takes a comparative look at the missions and ideologies of the most influential periodicals in Serbian and Italian cultures in the years preceding the First World War, the *Srpski književni glasnik* (Serbian Literary Herald) and *La Critica*. It also describes the public roles and political ideas of the editor of *La Critica*, Benedetto Croce, and the editors of the *Glasnik*, Bogdan Popović, Pavle Popović and Jovan Skerlić. It looks at the interpretations of Croce's political ideas put forward in the *Glasnik*, recognizing a closeness between the liberal literary and political renewal programmes of Benedetto Croce, on the one hand, and Bogdan Popović, Pavle Popović and Jovan Skerlić, on the other. Finally, it points to the *Glasnik*'s repulsion towards the imperialist ideas of Gabriele D'Annunzio, Croce's main rival in the Italian culture of the period. But under the editorship of Jovan Skerlić, at the time when Serbia was subjected to Austria-Hungary's pressure and war threat, the *Glasnik* published D'Annunzio's short stories and advocated the ideals of activism, vitalism and heroism.

Keywords: *La Critica*, *Srpski književni glasnik*, Benedetto Croce, Bogdan Popović, Jovan Skerlić, liberalism, democracy, socialism, imperialism, activism, vitalism

The cultures of Serbia and Italy at the beginning of the twentieth century were marked by a number of journals which brought together diverse groups of intellectuals. In Serbia, the most influential and the most important was the *Srpski književni glasnik* (Serbian Literary Herald). This journal and its editors, Bogdan Popović, Pavle Popović and Jovan Skerlić, articulated and gave direction to the main stream of Serbian culture. In Italy, the journal *La Critica* and its editor Benedetto Croce had a similar importance and mission.

We shall point to the similarities and differences between the two journals and their editors in the decade preceding the First World War and analyse the *Glasnik*'s attitude not only towards Croce's liberal legacy but also towards Italian imperialist ideas, especially those professed by Gabriele D'Annunzio, probably the most important ideological opponent of Benedetto Croce in the Italian culture of the period.

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I

The conventional conception of the West as influencing the East and, by extension, western journals influencing Balkan journals is superficial and essentially erroneous. Similarities between the *Glasnik* and *La Critica* are incontestable but, while the founders of the *Glasnik* can indeed be said to have followed the example of the Paris-based *Revue des deux mondes*,[1] there is virtually no evidence that Croce's *La Critica* exerted any influence on its editorial policy. The *Glasnik* and *La Critica*, much like other contemporary periodicals of a similar orientation emerging in different European capitals, were products of the same age and of a Europe-wide cultural climate.[2]

Namely, the main goals of those intellectuals and their journals were not strictly literary but rather metapolitical, ideological and renewal-oriented. What they wanted above all was to interpret and shape their respective national cultures in their own way. Despite all local peculiarities, they all formed part of an old European phenomenon, rooted in the enlightened eighteenth century. It was as early as then that intellectuals gathered in periodicals, salons, clubs or academies driven by the ambition to breathe new vigour not only into the culture but also in the political life of their countries with the help of reason and science.[3]

That we are in fact dealing here with national forms of a Europe-wide phenomenon is shown by the similarities between the *Srpski književni glasnik* and a few journals published in neighbouring capitals. Pavle Popović described the Sofia-based journal *Misal* (Thought) as "something of a Sofia's *Književni glasnik*".[4] The *Glasnik* was also frequently likened to the Zagreb-based *Savremenik* (Contemporary), the hub of Croatian modernism. Antun Gustav Matoš described the *Srpski književni glasnik* as "the Serbian *Savremenik*".[5] From 1904 in Belgrade and Sofia the editors of the *Glasnik*, *Misal* and *Savremenik* and their contributors played the most prominent role in the events that promoted the cultural unity of the South Slavs, thereby setting the stage for a political rapprochement. After the First World War there were even talks about merging the *Glasnik* and the *Savremenik* into one periodical.[6]

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1 D. Vitošević, *Srpski književni glasnik 1910–1904* (Belgrade 1990), 125–126.

2 Ž. Diga, *Kulturni život u Evropi na prelazu iz 19. u 20. vek* (Belgrade 2007), 83–85.

3 U. Im Hof, *The Enlightenment* (Oxford UK and Cambridge USA 1994), 150–154.

4 Viator, "Drugi kongres jugoslovenskih književnika i publicista", *Srpski književni glasnik* (hereafter *SKG*) XVII/5 (1906), 388.

5 A. G. Matoš, "Jovan Skerlić", *Eseji i feljtoni* (Belgrade 1968), 91, 93.

6 Arhiv Jugoslavije (Aj) [Archives of Yugoslavia], Fonds Jovan Jovanović Pižon (JJP), 80–33–30.32, Note of J. M. Jovanović.

There is also a similarity between the *Glasnik* and the Bucharest-based journal *Semănătorul* (Sower) edited by Nicolae Iorga and Mihael Sadoveanu.[7] The Budapest-based *Nyugut* (West) with its westernizing views, modernism and central place in national culture was also akin to the *Srpski književni glasnik*.[8]

The *Glasnik* was founded in 1901 by Bogdan Popović, Svetislav Simić, Slobodan Jovanović, Ljubomir Stojanović, Vojislav Veljković, Ljubomir Jovanović, Jaša Prodanović – Serbian liberals and democrats, members of different political parties and traditions, but all of them born in the 1860s and all harbouring political intentions which they had to conceal behind the guise of a literary journal because of press censorship. Their main goal was to put up resistance to King Alexander Obrenović's absolutist intentions by invoking the rule of law and the natural right of the individual to resist repressive government. They also programmatically rejected the hitherto prevailing Austro-Hungarian and German cultural and political models with a view to reorienting Serbian culture and public life in a systematic and consistent manner towards the French and British democratic and liberal models.[9]

After the overthrow of the Obrenović dynasty in 1903, the influence of the editors and literary critics of the *Glasnik* Bogdan Popović and Jovan Skerlić grew to such proportions that they were dubbed as "dictators in Serbian culture". What counted as "literature" at that time was anything that was cast in a literary form, including science and journalism. Acting as an interest group, the *Glasnik*'s fellowship "came to power" in 1903 – as one of them, Milan Grol, put it – taking up posts in major cultural institutions, government ministries and departments. Their liberal and democratic ideology became Serbia's official cultural model. Serbia's foreign policy also shifted away from the Central powers and towards the Entente powers.[10]

From the foundation of *La Critica* in 1903, Benedetto Croce, himself a member of the generation born in the 1860s (b. 1866), became established as a "dictator" in Italian culture in his capacity as "literary" critic.[11] The age differ-

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[7] P. Palavestra, *Istorija moderne srpske književnosti: zlatno doba 1892–1918* (Belgrade 1995), 84–85.

[8] M. Cindori, "Madjarske teme i *Srpski književni glasnik*", in *Sto godina "Srpskog književnog glasnika": Aksiološki aspekt tradicije u srpskoj književnoj periodici*, eds. S. Tutnjević and M. Nedić (Belgrade 2003), 358–359.

[9] M. Ković, "Politička uloga Srpskog književnog glasnika", in *Sto godina "Srpskog književnog glasnika"*, 354–372.

[10] Ibid. 372–377.

[11] D. A. Trafton and M. Verdicchio, "Introduction", in *The Legacy of Benedetto Croce: Contemporary Critical Views*, eds. J. D'Amico, D. A. Trafton and M. Verdicchio (Toronto, Buffalo, London 1999), 3; H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought 1890–1930* (New York 1977), 201.

ence between him and his associate Giovanni Gentile (b. 1875) was similar to the one between Bogdan Popović (b. 1864) and his disciple and successor at the *Glasnik*, Jovan Skerlić (b. 1877). Just as the *Glasnik*'s influence was at its peak until 1914, although it continued until 1941 after a break during the Great War, so *La Critica* reached maximum influence between 1903 and 1914, although it continued until 1943 without a break and thereafter was published at different intervals and had a different character. Gentile's path began to diverge from Croce's even before 1914 until they parted ways entirely.[12] Skerlić died in 1914 and so the *Glasnik* was restarted by Bogdan Popović and Slobodan Jovanović after the war.[13]

The editors of the *Glasnik* and *La Critica*, then, were generationally close to one another and entered public life at the same time. Their journals remained influential until the Second World War, but this influence was at its highest in the decade preceding the First World War. Some historians believe that the role of Benedetto Croce was decisive in the renewal that Italian culture underwent between the 1890s and 1914.[14] Serbian culture underwent a renewal in the same period, at first set off in the mid-1890s by the intellectuals gathered around the journals *Delo* (Creation), *Red* (Order) and *Srpski pregled* (Serbian Review), and then, from 1901, around the *Srpski književni glasnik*.[15] Croce became a philosopher and public figure of world stature; the work of Bogdan Popović, Jovan Skerlić, Slobodan Jovanović and others remained tied to national culture.

The editors of *La Critica* and the *Glasnik* programmatically championed liberal values. Almost simultaneously, at the time marked by courts-martial after the attempted assassination of Milan Obrenović in Serbia and the state of emergency in Italy, they stood up in defence of the freedom of the individual from state repression. They all called for patriotism, but also for liberty.[16] Croce, as a conservative liberal, was more akin to Bogdan Popović, Pavle Popović and Slobodan Jovanović than to the socialist and radical Jovan Skerlić. *La Critica* did not fight only the "Jesuits" or the belligerent followers of Gabriele D'Annunzio but also the "Voltaireans", and even the "Jacobins" and "democrats".[17] The *Glasnik*, es-

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[12] C. Sprigge, "Benedetto Croce: Man and Thinker", in B. Croce, *Philosophy, Poetry, History: An Anthology of Essays* (London, New York, Toronto 1966), xix.

[13] See Lj. Djordjević, *Bibliografija Srpskog književnog glasnika 1901–1914* (Belgrade 1982), 20–21; S. Vojinović, *Srpski književni glasnik 1920–1941: bibliografija Nove serije* (Belgrade 2005), 11–13.

[14] Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society*, 63.

[15] M. Ković, Preface to *Srbi 1903–1914: Istorija ideja*, ed. M. Ković (Belgrade 2015), 15–18.

[16] F. F. Rizi, *Benedetto Croce and Italian Fascism* (Toronto, Buffalo, London 2003), 19.

[17] Ibid, 22–23; Sprigge, "Benedetto Croce: Man and Thinker", xvii–xviii; D. Mack Smith, "Benedetto Croce: History and Politics", *Journal of Contemporary History* 8/1 (Jan. 1973), 41–43.

pecially under the editorship of Jovan Skerlić, was quite democratically oriented; the Popović brothers, Bogdan and Pavle, and Slobodan Jovanović, although opponents of the "Jacobins" and "parvenus", also championed democracy while battling against King Alexander's autocratic intentions but after his assassination in 1903 as well.[18] Croce criticized the "Masonic mentality" by which he meant a French combination of radicalism and Jacobinism with positivism;[19] according to some sources, Bogdan Popović, Pavle Popović, Slobodan Jovanović, Ljubomir Stojanović and others joined the Freemasons in 1909, at the time when Austria-Hungary's war threats prompted attempts to gain the support of France.[20] Another important similarity was Croce's endeavour to "de-provincialize" Italian culture through opening it to foreign influences and ideas.[21] The fact that Croce was powerfully influenced by Hegel and German philosophy was, however, a point of difference between him and the anti-German, pro-French and pro-British leanings of the *Glasnik*'s editors. What they had in common, on the other hand, was the belief that periodicals devoted to literary, scientific and social issues should be the main tool for achieving their goal of national renewal.

Much like the *Glasnik*'s editors, Benedetto Croce entered the political battlefield in times of national crises. By his undoubtedly political temperament he was more akin to Jovan Skerlić and Slobodan Jovanović than to the Popović brothers. As staunch liberals, they all would be opponents of communism and fascism.[22] Unlike the *Glasnik*'s editors, however, Croce supported the Italian fascists for a brief while before becoming one of their fiercest opponents.[23]

II

Croce's essay "On a character of more recent Italian literature" which appeared in the *Srpski književni glasnik* in 1912 was translated by Boško Desnica, a Serbian lawyer, journalist and historian from Dalmatia.[24] Croce was a carefully-read au-

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[18] M. Ković, "La Révolution française et l'élite serbe (1889–1935)", in *La Serbie et la France, une alliance atypique: Relations politiques, économiques et culturelles 1870–1940*, ed. D. Bataković (Belgrade 2010), 187–204.

[19] Rizi, *Benedetto Croce and Italian Fascism*, 23.

[20] Z. D. Nenezić, *Masoni u Jugoslaviji (1764–1980). Pregled slobodnog zidarstva u Jugoslaviji: prilozi i gradja* (Belgrade 1984), 229–232; Vitošević, *Srpski književni glasnik*, 133–136.

[21] Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society*, 63.

[22] Ibid. 82–89, 202–229; R. Melillo, "Croce's *Taccuini di lavoro*", in *The Legacy of Benedetto Croce*, 231–238.

[23] Rizi, *Benedetto Croce and Italian Fascism*, 35–79; Mack Smith, "Benedetto Croce: History and Politics", 45–50.

[24] B. Kroče, "O jednom karakteru novije italijanske književnosti", *SKG* XXIX/4, 5 (1912), 291–300, 371–376.

thor in the Desnica family; after the Great War, his essays were also translated by the writer Vladan Desnica, Boško Desnica's nephew.[25] In a note below the 1912 translation, Boško Desnica states that the essay is being published with Croce's consent and that it is taken from his "Notes on the Italian literature of the second half of the 19th century" published in *La Critica*.[26]

This is, Croce wrote, a story of the "modern intellectual and literary life of Italy",[27] of the "state of mind" manifested in its literature, science and political ideas from 1865 to the most recent times. Croce set apart the poet Giuseppe Carducci as the most prominent figure in the first period, from about 1885, or between 1870 and 1890; in the second period, which included the most recent, Croce's times, the most prominent were Gabriele D'Annunzio, Antonio Fogazzaro and Giovanni Pascoli.[28]

In the first period, art was mostly veristic, philosophy positivist, historiography erudite, politics anti-clerical, liberal, democratic and patriotic.[29] The writers of the period were "ridiculous when they saw Spencer as a modern Aristotle and believed that Darwin was a philosopher".[30] In politics, one lived on "the still rich legacy of the Italian revolution, the legacy of Mazzini and Cavour, who agreed on the ideal of liberty and progress although they understood the ideal differently…"[31]

In their response to this, members of a new generation led by D'Annunzio, Fogazzaro and Pascoli were Catholics and aesthetes, admirers of force and preachers of imperialism.[32] Croce acknowledged D'Annunzio's literary gift, but called that kind of art "ineffable" and "ugly", a "stream of insincerity and emptiness", admiration for "force, imperialism and aristocratism":[33] He warned the readers of "evil and danger".[34] In an ironic tone, he described what he called their "programme of domination and destruction" as follows:

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[25] See B. Croce, *Eseji iz estetike*, transl. V. Desnica (Split 1938); B. Kroče, *Književna kritika kao filozofija*, ed. and trans. V. Desnica (Belgrade 1969). See also S. Šeatović Dimitrijević, "Kročeova estetika i Desničin mediteranizam", in *Split i Vladan Desnica 1918–1941: Umjetničko stvaralaštvo izmedju kulture i politike*, eds. D. Roksandić and I. Cvijović Javorina (Zagreb 2016), 145–156.

[26] Kroče, "O jednom karakteru", 291, 300.

[27] Ibid. 292.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid. 292–297.

[30] Ibid. 294.

[31] Ibid. 296.

[32] Ibid. 297–300, 371–376.

[33] Ibid. 297, 374, 375.

[34] Ibid. 376.

> Imperialism wants to lead Italy towards its grand goals, wants to squash the democratic beast, wants conquests, victories, bombardments, bloodsheds…[35]

Searching for the roots of this phenomenon, Croce wrote:

> If I were to trace these roots, I would begin by drawing attention to the international character of the phenomenon, which leads us to the general circumstances of Europe in the nineteenth century. Italy itself partly contributed to the creation of these general circumstances, and partly merely reflected them.[36]

Apart from the "general circumstances of Europe", Croce, once a socialist himself,[37] also detected a deep-seated antagonism of these writers to the rise of socialism:

> Those who set out to refute socialism, no longer at a particular moment in the life of a country but in general – let's put it as follows: in its idea – negate civilization, negate the very notion of morality on which civilization is founded. An impossible negation; a negation which cannot be expressed in words; and which has thus given rise to the ineffable ideals of force for force's sake, imperialism, aristocratism, which are so ugly that not even their preachers have the courage to defend with rigor.[38]

A liberal and preacher of the typical Victorian bourgeois ethic of "self-observation" and "character building", Benedetto Croce appealed to young people, warning them to beware of D'Annunzio and his companions:

> I think of young people, of those who are coming, and I point to evil and danger, and I am confident that they – the best of them, those who will prevail, not in number but in merit – will be able to steer clear of them, they will be able to keep away from evil through examining themselves, because there still is no better way to bring out truly deep and strong thoughts and to create a spirited and perfect art, to enable the continual improvement of oneself which constitutes the honesty of life.[39]

Unlike Croce, who rejected the positivism and Darwinism of the 1865–85 period, the members of the generation of the founders of the *Srpski književni glasnik* headed by Bogdan Popović were staunch positivists and Darwinists in their youth. Later on, they became powerfully influenced by the positivism of Hippolyte Taine and the ideas of Ernest Renan. Bogdan Popović remained a life-long admirer of Herbert Spencer. The only one who was not swayed by this

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[35] Ibid. 297.

[36] Ibid. 374.

[37] Sprigge, "Benedetto Croce: Man and Thinker", xv–xvii; Mack Smith, "Benedetto Croce: History and Politics", 41–42.

[38] Kroče, "O jednom karakteru", 375.

[39] Ibid. 376.

Darwinist fad was Slobodan Jovanović.[40] To this generation of Serbian intellectuals, however, French positivism, especially in its Tainean form, was a road to liberation from the dominant Viennese philological school and antiquarian learning.[41]

This is the reason why there was not a rebellion in Serbia against positivism and leanings towards German thought comparable to the one advocated by Benedetto Croce in Italy. Jovan Skerlić was the first to declare positivism outdated and, at the same time, he criticized "decadents", but in the name of democratic and socialist ideals. As with Croce, the target readership of Skerlić's programmatic texts after the Annexation crisis of 1908 were young generations.[42]

"Edmondo de Amicis", yet another of Croce's essays translated for the *Glasnik* (1913),[43] appeared under the editorship of Jovan Skerlić. It was an overview of De Amicis' political and literary views, from his patriotic and military beginnings during the Risorgimento to his eventual socialist commitment, when he joined the Italian Socialist Party. As Croce showed, De Amicis' socialism had a moralist literary origin and remained coloured by Italian patriotism.[44]

Croce also offered an evaluation of De Amicis' literary work, but there is no doubt that Skerlić was drawn primarily by the writer's political ideas.[45] Namely, they were quite compatible with his moralistically coloured patriotism, democratism and socialism. Skerlić's belief that these ideals could only be propagated bit by bit, through literature and education, changed in the time of trials after the Annexation crisis of 1908/9. His support to the liberation of Old Serbia and Macedonia in the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 led to his finally parting ways with his old social democratic and Marxist friends.[46] In 1908 the *Glasnik* under his editorship published a text on D'Amicis and his patriotic, ethical literary socialism penned by Marko Car, another Serb from Dalmatia apart from Desnica touched by Italian culture.[47]

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[40] *Spomenica o stogodišnjici Prve muške gimnazije u Beogradu* (Belgrade 1939), 296–297, 308; Dr K. Milutinović, "Razvojni put Bogdana Popovića", *Portreti i eseji* (Novi Sad 1994), 164–176, 179; F. Grčević, *Književni kritičar i teoretičar Bogdan Popović* (Zagreb 1971), 11–12; S. Jovanović, "Bogdan Popović", vol. 11 of *Sabrana dela Slobodana Jovanovića* (Belgrade 1991), 721–722, 746–748; B. Milosavljević, *Slobodan Jovanović: Teorija* (Belgrade 2017), 210–229.

[41] R. Samardžić, "Ipolit Ten kod Srba", *Pisci srpske istorije*, vol. 2 (Belgrade 1981), 239–269; R. Samardžić, "Izmedju Rajića i Ruvarca", *Pisci srpske istorije*, vol. 1 (Belgrade 1974), 76; R. Samardžić, "Slobodan Jovanović: delo i pisac", *Pisci srpske istorije*, vol. 4 (Belgrade 1994), 149.

[42] M. Ković, "Jovan Skerlić", in *Srbi 1903–1914*, 543–549.

[43] B. Kroče, "Edmondo de Amicis", *SKG* XXX/12 (1913), 931–943 and XXXI/1, 52–65.

[44] Ibid. 931–941.

[45] Ibid. 52–65.

[46] Ković, "Jovan Skerlić", 551–565.

[47] M. Car, "Edmondo Deamićis (1846–1908)", *SKG* XX/7 (1908), 502–505.

III

The editors of the *Srpski književni glasnik* were consistent opponents of Gabriele D'Annunzio's imperialist ideas, those that Croce warned his readers against. Jovan Skerlić's programmatic texts in the *Glasnik* had, however, an activistic, vitalist vein akin to this colourful writer.

As early as 1900, Skerlić, in his review of the French historian Edouard Driault's *Political and Social Problems at the End of the 19th Century*, recognized the critical importance of imperialism and colonialism in the culture and politics of the period.[48] He wrote: "The most characteristic phenomenon at the end of the nineteenth century is this colonial expansion."[49] He readily admitted that Britain and France, followed by the USA and Russia, were ahead in that respect. Those were the countries whose cultures he would be the most favourably disposed to. Italy, however, also fought its way into Africa and "is pouncing on an already half-dead China".[50] He was particularly interested in ideological justifications of colonial wars: "Never on the Globe has sheer force been more brutal, the weak more disempowered, and large-scale crimes obscured up by grander words."[51]

Italian imperialism attracted the attention of the Serbian intellectuals who wrote about international relations and geopolitics. Already in the first issues of the *Glasnik* Slobodan Jovanović warned of the intention of Italian imperialism to penetrate into the Balkans from the Adriatic coast, thereby endangering the interests of Serbia.[52] As early as 1905 Milan Dj. Milojević wrote that Italy was working on creating Albania as a barrier against the spread of not only pan-Germanism but also pan-Slavism.[53] The same year, Jovan Jovanović Pižon, in his review of *An Eastern Confederation as a Solution to the Eastern Question*, the book of an Italian author hidden under the pseudonym "A Latin", also wrote about the Balkan ambitions of Italian imperialism.[54] This anonymous author

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[48] J. Skerlić. "Politički i socijalni problemi krajem XIX veka", Les problèmes politiques et sociaux à la fin du XIX^{e} siècle, par E. Driault, professeur agrégé au lycée d'Orleans, in *Feljtoni, skice i govori*, vol. 7 of *Sabrana dela Jovana Skerlića* (Belgrade 1964), 49–52.

[49] Ibid. 49.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid. 50.

[52] S. Jovanović, "Ravnoteža na Jadranskom moru od Šarla Lazoa", *SKG* III/1 (1901), 61–67.

[53] M. Dj. Milojević, "The Balkan Question. The present condition of the Balkans and of European responsibilities. By various writers. Edited by Luigi Villari, London 1905", *SKG* XV/2 (1905), 139.

[54] J. M. Jovanović, "Istočna konfederacija kao rešenje Istočnoga pitanja (Une confédération orientale comme solution de la Question d'Orient, par un Latin, Paris 1905)", *SKG* XIV/12 (1905), 952–955.

proposed the creation of a Balkan confederation with Italian as its official language and Italian governors ruling Albania and Macedonia. Pižon read this project as the pursuance of "nationalist interests":[55]

> He censures the Bulgarians for their aspiration for Samuel's empire, the Serbs for Dušan's, the Greeks for Alexander the Great's, and he himself speaks of the restoration of an eastern empire under the sceptre of Victor Emanuel II, he dreams of a rebirth of the Latin race pressed by the Germanic and Anglo-Saxon races from several sides.[56]

As early as 1901 the *Glasnik*'s editor Bogdan Popović published a text of Marie-Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé which likened D'Annunzio's imperialism to that of Rudyard Kipling and the ideas of the Russian Bolshevik Maxim Gorky.[57] This diplomat and writer, a contributor to the *Revue des deux mondes*, known for having acquainted France and the West in general with the work of Dostoyevsky, ideologically belonged, like Benedetto Croce, Slobodan Jovanović or Bogdan Popović, to a late stage of conservative liberalism born out of an encounter with socialism, radicalism and clericalism. In this text, he claimed that D'Annunzio, Kipling and Gorky:

> have a common father, Nietzsche, they all are imbued with romanticism, all are irresistibly drawn to the exotic and the unusual. The heroes of all three are bursting with a thirst for life, desirous of conquering the world with it. On the whole, they are some sort of imperialists whom nothing can sate, who irresistibly push for the triumph of individualism, force, passion and amorality.[58]

Reading D'Annunzio, De Vogüé, much like Croce, intuited what the dawning twentieth century would look like:

> The century that was proud of its bright light, and of its legacy to mankind to be brothers and together in everything, has lost its shine and dusk has set in. A flock of young hawks has fledged from the nest and is just flying about and flapping in the dusk. The dying century is uttering the serene words of its legacy, while the young hawks are cutting the air with their sharp little wings and causing a tempest. Do the hawks indeed have command of the mystery of life and is that mystery indeed in brutal force?[59]

While Croce's critique of D'Annunzio's literary work published in the *Glasnik* in 1912 matched the views of Jovan Skerlić, De Vogüé's 1901 image of "young hawks" matched the views of Bogdan Popović, Slobodan Jovanović and

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[55] Ibid. 955.

[56] Ibid. 954.

[57] -ks- [J. Maksimović], "O Maksimu Gorkom. Mišljenje E. M. de Vogie", *SKG* IV/3 (1901), 226–229.

[58] Ibid. 229.

[59] Ibid.

their friends. The liberals, democrats and socialists from the *Glasnik* rejected those ideas in the name of political morality and in principle opposition to political violence. Under the editorship of Bogdan Popović, the *Glasnik* was an expression of late nineteenth-century liberal culture and, occasionally, of a pessimistic fin de siècle. Activism, vitalism and pragmatism, which after 1905 were spreading across Europe in the form of the ideas of Nietzsche, Bergson, William James and other writers, would only become visible in the *Glasnik* under the editorship of Jovan Skerlić. It was in particular after the German and Austro-Hungarian war threat during the Annexation crisis of 1908/9, that Skerlić would turn the *Glasnik* into a vehicle of a vigorous, romantic national activism.

The *Glasnik* under Skerlić's editorship, between 1906 and 1914, published five of D'Annunzio's short stories.[60] They, however, hardly contained any of the author's typical political ideas. Moreover, important motifs in his "Boatman" were mutual care and solidarity. Only "San Laimo navigatore" was a cruel, passionate and adventurous account whose main character was, successively, a shark fisherman, a pirate, the ruler of a native people and, finally, a saint.

But Skerlić collected whatever he believed could support the ideas of activism, robustness and heroic endeavour. Even though his *Glasnik* published literary works of Nietzsche, D'Annunzio and Kipling, what was an essential difference between him and these writers was his belief in democracy, solidarity and political morality. Instead of invoking a "common father, Nietzsche", he invoked the "vitalist activism" of Jean-Marie Guyau. This French writer, an important influence on Nietzsche, preached compassion, solidarity, democracy and moral revival fostered by art and literature.[61]

The moralistic current in European literature, which emerged concurrently with activism, was much closer to the *Glasnik*'s heart. Its representatives, Anatole France, Herbert Wells, Leo Tolstoy, Anton Chekhov and other authors, were much more frequently translated for the *Glasnik* than D'Annunzio, Nietzsche or Kipling. Their views were in full agreement with the *Glasnik*'s Enlightenment-inspired rationalist liberalism. Authors of the age of activism were the need of the political moment.

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[60] Translations of D'Annunzio's stories published in the *Glasnik*: "Sveti Laimo Moreplovac", *SKG* XVII/2 and 3 (1906), 9–99 and 175–185; "Na rijeci", *SKG* XXV/8 and 9 (1910), 571–578 and 650–656; "Morski vidar", *SKG* XXIX/10 (1912), 727–736; "Brodar", *SKG* XXXII/4 (1914), 248–263; "Zvona", *SKG* XXXII/12 (1914), 890–894.

[61] J. Skerlić, "Gijo", *SKG* III/3 (1901), 210–220; M. Begić, *Jovan Skerlić: Čovek i delo* (Belgrade 1966), 63–64, 97–98, 113–115, 308–309.

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The most important Serbian and Italian journals of the 1903–1914 period, the *Srpski književni glasnik* and *La Critica* respectively, all differences highlighted here notwithstanding, had important points of similarity. Their roles in the cultures and societies of Italy and Serbia were very similar. The liberal revivalist "European" literary and political programme of *La Cultura*'s editor Benedetto Croce was basically analogous to the views of *Glasnik*'s editors Bogdan Popović and Jovan Skerlić. On the other hand, the *Glasnik* was clearly averse to the imperialist ideas of influential Gabriele D'Annunzio but, at the time of Austria-Hungary's belligerent pressures on Serbia, it published D'Annunzio's short stories and championed the ideals of activism, vitalism and heroism.

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ISSN 0350-7653