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To Read, to Listen, to Understand, or: How to Recollect Yourself in Text¹

Abstract

The paper offers an analytical approach to Eliezer Papo's book *Nesabrane priče i još nesabranije misli i crtice, a o decemepuy da se i ne govori* [Uncollected Stories and Even More Uncollected Thoughts and Lines, Not to Mention Decasyllabic Verse] (2022), a notable addition to the corpus of Jewish literature written in the Serbian language. The study explores key themes such as the inauguration of canonicity, the limits of the oral and written literary mode, the status of the author, the discourse of nostalgia, and the author's rejection of diasporic perspectives as the only possible perspective. The author textualizes these questions with baroque linguistic stylization, reflecting his search for words that carry stable meaning and his commitment to the concept of truth. By employing a range of hermeneutic tools, this analysis highlights a new phase in the rich and dynamic history of Jewish literature in the Balkans.

Keywords: decasyllabic verse, oral literature, written literature, Sephardim, Megillot Ruth, Megillot Esther, *khôra*.

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Jewish literature written in the Serbian language has existed continuously for more than 100 years. The period between the two world wars is unimaginable without Stanislav Vinaver, Oskar Davičo, Moni de Buli [Monny de Bouilly], and Isak Samokovlija. By singling out the canonical writers, we would in no way want to diminish the importance of a large number of others, either of Ashkenazi or Sephardic origin,² who wrote and translated in the interwar period,³ especially since it was a time of accelerated harmonization of different cultural traditions (not only among Jews) within the framework of the new state: the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. In terms of language, for Jewish writers of Ashkenazi origin, who mostly lived in the northern parts of the country, it was a matter of switching from German and Hungarian to the Serbo-Croatian language, while the Sephardim abandoned Ladino. That transitional process, characteristic of the entire European Jewish diaspora, in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was, on the one hand, emancipatory, because it opened the door not only to cultural exchange, but also to a greater presence and affirmation on a wider cultural scene. For example, Laura Papo Bohoretta⁴ translated Serbian poems into Ladino. Kalmi Baruh, also from Sarajevo, was the founder of Hispanic studies in the Balkans. On the other hand, this

² Without intending to establish a hierarchy of values, it should be noted that literary works were also written during this period by, among others, Hajim S. Davičo, who introduced the theme of the Sephardic poor from the Jewish quarter of Belgrade; Moša Pijade (although more established as a painter) and his older brother David Pijade; lyric poet Alfred Rosenzweig alias Nenad Mitrov; prose writer Frida Filipović; and László Gal, poet, humorist and journalist. Theory and criticism were addressed by Paulina Lebl Albala and Oto Bihalji Merin, Pavle Bihali (founder of the Nolit publishing house), Aleksa Čelebonović (art criticism), and Enriko Josif (music criticism). Before, and especially after the Second World War, Eli Finci's critical word was of great importance, all the more so since he was a representative of the ruling ideology. More about the contribution of Jews to the theatrical life of postwar Yugoslavia in: Todorčić (2022). Some of the aforementioned contributed significantly to the presentation of Yugoslav culture beyond its borders.

³ Predrag Palavestra's (1998) book *Jevrejski pisci u srpskoj književnosti* [Jewish Writers in Serbian Literature] is certainly an indispensable source.

⁴ Muhamed Nezirović, Eliezer Papo, Jagoda Večerina, etc. wrote about this Sarajevo writer and translator, and the first Sephardic feminist in the Balkans. It is known that Isak Samokovlija's decision to write in Serbo-Croatian instead of Ladino was not welcomed in some Sephardic circles, as a symptom of losing identity. To understand the situation among the Sephardim of Yugoslavia, Krinka Vidaković Petrov's (1990) book *Kultura španskih Jevreja na Jugoslovenskom tlu, 16–20. vek* [Culture of Spanish Jews on Yugoslav Soil, 16th–20th Century] and Muhamed Nezirović's (1992) *Jevrejsko-španjolska književnost* [Jewish-Spanish Literature] are indispensable.

process inevitably led to assimilation,⁵ especially since this was a period dominated by the secular trend throughout Europe. Acceptance of Serbo-Croatian (as the language was called at the time) instead of another language, possibly spoken by previous generations in the families of the aforementioned writers (Ladino, except for Vinaver), brought significant works of a wide poetic range in (then) Yugoslav and today Serbian literature which is the central focus of this article. For example, Vinaver⁶ is the author of the manifesto of Serbian Expressionism, and Moni de Buli is considered one of the most important surrealist poets. Even during the implementation of the Holocaust, some works were written in the Balkans that hold not only historical but also literary value. They include Hinko Gottlieb's *Ne zaboravi ili Zapamti* [Do Not Forget or Remember] (Gotlib, 2023), written in the Kraljevica concentration camp in 1943, and Šani Altarac's *Partizanska agada* [Partisan Haggadah] from 1944, created in the spring of 1944 among Jewish refugees who found themselves in the free partisan territory of Kordun and Banija.⁷

The Holocaust did not stop the development of this literature, but it did redirect it and mark it significantly. In other words, from the first postwar years, Jewish writers appeared on the literary scene of Yugoslavia with works in which the motif complex can be labeled as Jewish, primarily because the topic of the Holocaust, which dominated among these writers in the postwar period, remained almost exclusively the topic of writers of Jewish origin.⁸ The

⁵ In this paper, we deal with literary issues but, in a broader context, it is possible to consider the extent to which these processes could be described as acculturation. According to Večerina-Tomačić, one interesting example of acculturation processes is the translation of Aleksa Šantić's poem *Ostajte ovdje* [Stay Here]. Šantić dedicates the poem to Bosnian Muslims, but Bohoreta uses the translation in her play *Escariño* [Longing] to express her dilemmas regarding Zionist ideas of returning to Eretz Israel. The question of naming the phenomenon is significantly conditioned by the processes of forming new identities in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, as well as by various political tendencies within the Yugoslav Jewry (Večerina-Tomačić, 2017).

⁶ Vinaver's parents moved to Serbia, to the city of Šabac, from Kraków, and Stanislav himself, in addition to mastering other European languages, wrote some of the most significant pages about the Serbian language and Serbian poetry. In the period from 2012 to 2015, 18 volumes of the collected works of Stanislav Vinaver were published (ed. Gojko Tešić).

⁷ *Partizanska agada* [Partisan Haggadah] was first published in Novi Sad as part of Papo's (2020) study on parodies of the Passover Haggadah. Gottlieb's one-act play was published in 2023 as part of the materials for a conference on Jewish war literature, held that same year in Novi Sad. The author of this paper has published several papers concerning these texts.

⁸ It should be noted that some non-Jewish writers also embraced Holocaust themes as well as the topic of antisemitism, such as Ivo Andrić (1959) and Desanka Maksimović

textualization of the Holocaust theme had its own development; from the first literary testimonies of József Debreczeni and Đorđe Lebović, whose almost naturalistic style (in the novel *Hladni krematorijum* [The Cold Crematorium] (1951) by Debreczeni and in the drama tetralogy by Lebović (2007)) left readers in great shock,⁹ through Frida Filipović's literature and the realistic texture in Žak Konfino's novel *Jesi li ti razapeo Hrista* [Did You Crucify Christ] as well as its modernist exploration of man and evil, which Aleksandra Tišma dealt with, all the way to the prose works of postmodern writers such as Danilo Kiš and David Albahari.

The contribution of women writers to the corpus of Serbian literature is vital. Some have made an effort to preserve tradition and establish continuity with previous generations. This is the case with Drita Tutunović, who in 1997¹⁰ published a collection of preserved Sephardic poems, *Ja sponto la luna* [The Moon Rises], and Gordana Kuć who, with her series of novels partly based on documentary sources, strengthens the Sephardic bond between Belgrade and Sarajevo. She also published a translation of the diary of Laura Papo Bohoreta (her aunt), under the title *Balada o Bohoreti* [Ballad of Bohoreta] (2006). However, the dominant trend is that women writers deal with Jewish themes as a means of discussing and reflecting on contemporary themes. Such are Ženi Lebl (the topic of the Cominform and camps for pro-Soviet communists or those designated as enemies by the Yugoslav Communist Party), Ana Šomlo and Judita Šalgo (both of whom delve significantly into the topic of Jewish identity in the post-Holocaust era, especially female identity). Šalgo is considered one of the leaders of the Novi Sad neo-avant-garde scene of the 1960s and 1970s.¹¹

(1954). Although this is not the main subject of this paper, it is worth mentioning several authors who have explored Jewish themes in various ways within the literature of Yugoslav writers, e.g. in the thematic issue of *Studia Judaica: Strategies of Survival: Balkan Jewish Women and Cultural Representations of Memory*, edited by Magdalena Koch and Katarzyna Taczyńska (Koch & Taczyńska, 2018), through monographs of individual writers, such as Maciej Czerwiński (2018), Stijn Vervaeke (2019; Vervaeke, 2020), Mark Thompson (Thompson, 2014), Viktorija Radić (2019), and Silvia Dražić (2013), to name just a few. It is clear that the issue of understanding the status of Jews in the 20th century remains an important topic that continues to attract researchers' attention.

⁹ In Lebović's case, as well as Debreczeni's, style is a function of introducing a previously unknown and mimetically irreducible theme: the experience of the Holocaust, with the emphasized intention of testimony. It seems that from today's perspective it is possible to argue that a low degree of poetic stylization was the right measure.

¹⁰ The first edition was published in 1997. We used the 2008 edition in this paper.

¹¹ In the field of research on Jewish texts from the former Yugoslavia, with a particular focus on texts authored by women, it is important to mention Dina Katan Ben

In the mid-1970s, with the novel *U potrazi za mesijom* (1978) [*In Search of the Messiah*], Erih Koš introduced the theme of Jewish mysticism into Yugoslav literature, thematizing the messianic movement of Sabbatai Tzvi, albeit in the function of an allegorical speech about the current political circumstances of Yugoslavia in the 1970s.¹² Such themes (Jewish mysticism) are significant in the opus of Filip David, too. As a rule, Jewish writers who wrote in Serbo-Croatian pulsed poetically in the spirit of their time, and were very often the bearers of new poetic trends, continuing in the footsteps of their prewar predecessors.¹³ Let us add that at the end of the 20th century, when it became clear that the Yugoslav project had failed, the first signs of identity reconstruction of the subject could be recognized precisely in writers of Jewish origin. In other words, writers asked themselves and tried to find an answer to the question: What makes me a Jew, after a century of secularism?¹⁴ Dealing with this issue has become a kind of new *minhag* (tradition), although it is a contradiction in adjecto, because each of them searched alone, while *minhag* implies a collective stepping on the path that the ancestors stepped on. Precisely because of that, when interpreting the literature of the most radical among the Serbian postmodernists, David Albahari, in an earlier paper we called that literature the post-Sephardic narrative.¹⁵

At the turn of the century, as postwar Yugoslavia was falling apart, rabbi and scholar Eliezer Papo appeared on the literary scene. First with *Sefardske priče* [Sephardic Tales] (2000) and *Sarajevska megila* [Megillah of Sarajevo] (2001). In terms of genre, as Maja Bošković Stulli states, these are stories about

Zion's books (Katan Ben-Zion, 2002, 2013). Among scholars working on the literature of Jewish women from Yugoslavia, Katarzyna Tarczyńska, Magdalena Koch, and certain publications by Aleksandra Twardowska should also be noted.

¹² One should also add the writer's introspective examination of the motifs of ideology, the authoritarian leader, dogma, and the Cominform – the ideological conflict among the members of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) from 1948. More in Todorić (2014, 2016, 2019a).

¹³ Danilo Kiš, Filip David, David Albahari and Aleksandar Tišma have been translated into numerous languages, thus making Serbian (Yugoslav) literature recognizable globally.

¹⁴ As mentioned earlier, the problem of identity uncertainty dates back to the interwar period of the 20th century. This was not only because assimilation processes were at work, but also because Jewish political life throughout Europe was more than dynamic. While some opted for Zionist ideas and some not, there were quite a few Jews who, by joining communist parties, considered their nationality a secondary or even transcended category, in the spirit of Marxist ideas. Positive fascination led some Serbian Jews to identify with the majority people. Austrian journalist and novelist Joseph Roth also wrote about intra-Jewish identity issues.

¹⁵ On the post-Sephardic narrative in David Albahari's literature, see Todorić (2019b).

life that shape the *literary skaz* (Bošković Stulli, 1984, p. 321). And indeed, Papo “does not contrive, by inventing special intrigues or situations for his characters, but talks about his own or other people’s observations” (Bošković Stulli, 1984, p. 320). He is interested in the plot, but also in the storytelling itself, as we also find in oral literature. It is uniform in style, with elements of the dialectal speech of Sarajevo (the pre-WWII vernacular in relation to Serbo-Croatian) and with a clear influence of folkloristic scholarship. However, the third book, *Časovničar i sačasnici* [The Watchmaker and His Peers] (Papo, 2023),¹⁶ with the subtitle *Zbirka postistorijskih priča (s domaćim zadacima) podijeljena u pet časova i najmanje četiri odmora* [A Collection of Post-Historical Tales (with Homework) Divided into Five Classes and Four Breaks], points to a poetic development comparable, in terms of the reading strategies to which the subtitle refers, to the postmodernism of Aleksandar Popović,¹⁷ one of the most important playwrights of the Serbian language, but it is also comparable to some peculiarities of the literature of Milorad Pavić, also an extremely important prose writer of that era. The author’s time frame for the entire book is: *somewhere, sometime*; poetically, it also belongs to the same poetic sensibility.

The possibility of contextualization in the streams of Serbian literature is an important fact. This indicates that Papo’s literature is less and less indicative of the isolation characteristic of minority groups. Moreover, elements that are really specifically Jewish (in Papo’s case – Sephardic) are now becoming signifiers of the majority culture. They become tropes.

This exciting interference of Balkan cultures reached its so far best embodiment in a literary text in the book *Nesabrane priče i još nesabranije misli i crtice, a o decemepuy da se i ne govori* [Uncollected Tales and Even More Uncollected Thoughts and Lines, Not to Mention Decasyllabic Verse], published in 2022. It is a three-part structure: a collection of tales, some of which had already been published in periodicals, two books from the Tanakh (Megillat Ruth and Megillat Esther) rendered in decasyllabic verse, and three original songs also in decasyllabic verse. This compositional structure may remind one of the comment of the copyist of the Talmudic treatises: nothing with nothing/*Gornisht mit Gornisht*. It is, however, quite different. When we pose the problem in this way, we are not primarily thinking about mixing different

¹⁶ The first edition of the book was published in 2007, but here we refer to the edition from 2023, because the author modified the text to some extent.

¹⁷ On the importance of subtitles in postmodern Serbian dramaturgy, see Todorčić (2012) for more details, although Dušan Kovačević should also be considered in relation to this phenomenon.

registers of literary expression; this in itself is not an entirely new phenomenon. Here, it is about the radicality of the procedure. Papo relies on linguistic and motivic sources ranging from the dialectal speech of Sarajevo Jews, but also of those other than them (Bosnian Muslims), to decasyllabic verse, which is the archetypal verse of Serbian but also wider, Balkan, oral literature.

Papo's textual strategies, described with old-fashioned tools (because there are no better ones), are as follows: The author divides the first part thematically into five subunits, and this is where the peculiarity of his style can be noticed. In the process of transposition from the oral to the written mode (and many of the tales from the first part of the book really exist as oral narratives), there are certain shifts that are not one-directional. This is not only because it is now a postponed dialogue (as in epistolary prose), but also for contextual reasons that, based on the experience of virtual communication he gained through numerous sessions of his virtual yeshiva, the author affirms the skill of storytelling as an ontological quality (for example, the short story "Šatro virtualni odnosi" [Ostensibly Virtual Relations]). In relation to the book *Časovničar...*, the experience of dialogue here is already integrated into the form of the *literary skaz*, whose complex memorabilia-like property can only be seen in the context of the whole book. Namely, it is not just a record of people and events that no longer exist, so they are not (only) the material of the discourse of nostalgia. Rather, one might say that, primarily in form, they appear as a mode of speaking about non-time and non-space, let's call it the Derridean *khôra*¹⁸ – the one to which, as can now be understood, the spatiotemporal determinant *somewhere* and *sometime* in *Časovničar...* referred. This can be noticed in the relationship between the form and elements of content of the three text units of *Nesabrane priče...* Thus, the tale "Sarajevski doprinos razvoju opšteg jevrejskog prava" [Sarajevo's Contribution to the Development of Halakha] is certainly a chronicle of past times, but, told/written by the hand of a rabbi, this story is saturated with the tradition of midrash (Štemberger, 2014, p. 237).¹⁹ This term is primarily used in the sense of text interpretation, if we understand text in a broader sense, like any order, the syntax of reality. Papo also deals with the words themselves, which is manifested in *Nesabrane priče...* through numerous lexical amalgams of different roots (very often Turkish and Serbian, reshaped in a way that is linguistically

¹⁸ "Khôra is not, is above all not, is anything but a support or a subject which would give place by receiving or conceiving, or indeed by letting itself be conceived" (Derrida, 1995, p. 95).

¹⁹ Midrash is a type of ancient Jewish interpretation of or commentary on the Hebrew Bible.

characteristic of Sarajevo Sephardim). Bearing this in mind, it is clear that the glossary at the end of the book is actually an integral part of the text, even comparable to the *Post scriptum* that Danilo Kiš integrates in *Enciklopedija mrtvih* [The Encyclopedia of the Dead]. And “Sarajevski doprinos razvoju opšteg jevrejskog prava” is certainly a witty endowment to the history of Sarajevo’s Jewry, but it is also a testimony to a tradition that was vital in the past and which, despite the catastrophic effect of the Holocaust, is still vital today. Because, if this is (one of) the tales told by the non-resident rabbi of the Sarajevo Jewish community (Eliezer Papo), then we are certainly talking about a living tradition. This typological group also includes the story “O poleznosti biblijskih kontradikcija” [On the Usefulness of Biblical Contradictions], in which the author interprets two versions of the story of the creation of man using modern language and apparatus, as well as other texts of the subunit entitled *Zemljom mudraca* [Through the Land of the Sages]. In the context of the book, these stories do not lose the character of a rabbinical sermon,²⁰ which can lead to some genre confusion if we consider them as part of the whole book, but not for long. The tale “O poleznosti biblijskih kontradikcija” is significant precisely because it provides the key to those possible doubts. The author seemingly replaces himself as a writer with the role of a witness and transmitter of the truth about the world. We cannot help but notice that this truth is found in the delicate borderline space between the roles of a rabbi and a writer. And the search for truth/witnessing the truth given by the God-given Text is no longer a postmodernist presage of a possible transcendental signifier. It is a new phase of the post-Sephardic narrative. In the words of literary theory, it is a kind of mediated autopoiesis by which the reader is obliged to read the other texts of this book in the way that has been demonstrated.

That it is so, is confirmed by the second tale, titled “Isak Navon” [Yitzhak Navon],²¹ which applies the same testimony about people and the world that can be seen in tales from (primarily) Sarajevo’s past to contemporary Israeli situations. As stated earlier, tradition is alive and transcends space and time limitations. The generation to which Papo belongs is no longer the one that faces the binomial determinations of a Jew who grew up in the European Diaspora.

²⁰ Of the four traditional types of rabbinic interpretation of the Bible (*Peshat* – “plain meaning”, *Remez* – “hint”, *Derash* – “allegory”, and *Sod* – “secret”), *Derash* seems to be the closest to what Papo does. For more on the typology of rabbinic interpretations of sacred texts, see Billig (2011, p. 571).

²¹ There are two of them with that title: *Isak Navon (Veliki predsjednik malog čovjeka)* [Yitzhak Navon (The Great President of the Little Man)] and *Isak Navon (Dostojan dostojnima)* [Yitzhak Navon (Worthy Among the Worthy)].

On the micro-stylistic level, one can observe a very open attitude towards dialectal speech, the Sarajevo idiolect. As a trope, with plenty of Turkisms but also words and expressions in Ladino, it refers to the oral origin of the tales, to regionalism of the 19th century. However, when a Turkism is explained in Ladino in the story “Sarajevski doprinos razvoju opšteg jevrejskog prava”, one must think about the cumulative effect of this procedure. The words have been brought into the relationship of synonymy: *poistilahu* (with the Serbian prefix -po), *sin siklet i sin adile*: “Između tih dviju tragedija, bosanski su Sefardi mahom vodili jedan neopterećen život, u kome su malo ugađali Bogu, malo više sebi, a sve to natenane i po istilahu, sin siklet i sin adile, bez srkleta i bez žurbe” (Papo, 2022, p. 103).²² The meaning would be, “slowly, no hurry, no nervousness”.²³ Arranged in this way, they are an example of hypertextuality in Genet’s sense of the word, and retroactively bring us back to the question of genre. Since the author only occasionally pays attention to the readability of such interventions, conventional denotational practices are called into question. Translations of Turkisms and coined phrases point to the writer’s gift for language creation,²⁴ and an exuberant narration with many inserted statements, imitating the slowness of oriental storytelling. All this, in the framework of the book, is still a search for the word that would be as god-like as possible. Because, if God, along with everything else, is also a writer (Faur, 2010), then, as the author once explained in a lecture, the act of writing is also a god-like behavior: *Imitatio Dei*. Finally, by transposing the oral into the written medium, shaped as a *literary skaz*, the author warns us that he has explored various media spaces and that the media and stylizations are extremely secondary in relation to the Truth that he wants to convey/witness.

The second and third parts of *Nesabrane priče...*, which consist of translations of two Megillot and three original poems, all in decasyllabic verse, form the segment that the author refers to with the part of the title reading *a o decemepuy da se i ne govori* [not to mention decasyllabic verse]. In spite of the suggestion, it should be pointed out that Papo’s experimentation with decasyllabic verse began in *Časovničar...*. In the chapter of that book titled “Mali odmor (prvi)” [Short Breaks (the First One)], subtitled “decasyllabic verse”, we read instructions for a social game with poetic forms. The mod-

²² “Between those two tragedies, the Bosnian Sephardim mostly led an unencumbered life, in which they pleased God a little, and pleased themselves a little more, and all this was deliberate and *po istilahu, sin siklet i sin adile*, without *srklet* and without rushing” [English translation – G.T].

²³ Papo (2007, 2013) wrote about the specificities of Sarajevo and Bosnian Ladino.

²⁴ Perhaps one might also speak of traces of Gongorism.

el offered is a poem in decasyllabic verse with the challenging title “Jedna pjesma o ljubavi” [One Poem About Love]. Although decasyllabic verse was traditionally intended for Serbian oral heroic poetry (Detelić, 1996, p. 217), notable Serbian Romantic poet Laza Kostić would probably confirm that it was possible to write a hymn of love in decasyllabic verse. Avant-garde poet and Serbian literature’s enfant terrible Stanislav Vinaver would certainly have included it in one of his parodic *Anthologies* from the 1920s. And yet, remembering Shakespeare, the year 2024 obliges us to ask again what we are to decasyllabic verse and what it is to us, and especially what it is to the writer. It is extremely surprising to learn that, in contrast to the previous prose text, which is a transposition of the oral narrative form, the segment sung in decasyllabic verse was created according to the model of folk/oral song.²⁵ Such a procedure, where the oral literary form is used in written literature, is recorded in the history of Serbian Romanticism. Read in this sense as a whole, parts of the book are poetic experiments with both modes: oral and written. At times it seems that colloquial or contemporary expressions and interpretations get away from the content (generating a split), but if we follow this stylistic process from the initial narrative forms all the way to experimenting with decasyllabic verse, we can see the avant-garde legacy that went precisely through this kind of exploration of the resistance of linguistic material. However, when someone today reaches for decasyllabic verse (in the Serbian language) without the intention of imitating the golden age of this verse, we must notice that they are making a break away from the almost prevalent individualization and intends to reach the deeper layers of the collective being.²⁶ In other words, this is also how Papo deals with the Balkans. Going the opposite way, he tries to reach that primal melody about which Serbian writer Momčilo Nastasijević wrote in an essay in the 1930s. If we then ask ourselves about the meaning of such a procedure, because the avant-garde has long been part of the history of literature, and if we also remember that, at the end of the 20th century, writer Danilo Kiš was looking for the right form for what he wanted to say, in this mathematical formula only the meaning remains unresolved, i.e. that which the author wants to say. Therefore, if the rhythm of decasyllabic

²⁵ Literary-theoretical expression: *pevanje na narodnu* (singing in the folk style).

²⁶ The history of literature also notes Miloš Crnjanski’s interest in decasyllabic poetry and the fiddle/guslar tradition, based, in fact, on similar foundations from which Papo starts. When Crnjanski (1925), in an article reporting on the fiddler/guslar competition held in Sarajevo in 1925, lists the participants, highlighting each one’s ethnic/religious origin and regional affiliation, he shows that this tradition is equally shared by almost all Balkan peoples and religions.

verse is inscribed in the collective unconscious of the speaker of Serbian, by making them aware, the reader (and the writer) re-actualizes the issue of the signified-signifier relationship. Perceived, with the help of Jacques Derrida, from a literary theoretical perspective, it would look like this: Decasyllabic verse, understood as a signifier, refers the reader to previous epochs in which orality was a mode in which there was no split between truth and speech. At the same time, decasyllabic verse placed in the context of a time that in its immediate experience has renounced the logocentric canon, becomes a tool for the deconstruction of such an experience (Derrida, 1997, p. 14).

On the thematic level, the content of the two biblical books, along with clear statements about the status of newcomers to the collective and the relationship of the individual to the collective in the light of God's providence, speaks of fundamental values. We are told that being newcomers is not an a priori disadvantage for us (whatever those who are not newcomers may have thought), nor is it a virtue for us to have found ourselves in a privileged position somewhere. Both cases are not unreasonable. To that part of the Jewish Diaspora that speaks Serbian, Papo with his literature offers the possibility of overcoming the identity problems that arose during the 20th century. The decasyllabic form of this procedure is comparable to the similar efforts of Yitskhok Leybush Peretz, who undertook Yiddish translations of the biblical Megillot as part of his attempt to develop a holistic Jewish culture.

The meaning of this kind of "uncollectedness" can best be seen in the poem "Јел Сарајево ће је некад било, или: одвјет једном мухаџеру" [Is Sarajevo Where It Once Was, or: Response to a Muhajer]. The lyrical subject, removed from the time and space he records, testifies with a (written) text about what was primarily marked by orality, both in his life and in his legacy. Repeating the pattern of creation of the oral Torah, the author writes things down to preserve them. On the stylistic level, it is an ironic play with fashionable non-canonicity, and it is unlikely that the postmodern practice we live in (or lived) would be able to produce any more collected canon than this. The question is whether a more radical procedure can be imagined.

If we return to Derrida's description of *khôra*, we will understand how it is possible to write the past, the present, and probably the future with jargon, dialect, decasyllabic verse and prose expression, and still write/speak consistently and with the joy of writing/speaking. As the author has said in one of his lectures, one reaches for the instruments, terminology and concepts of the majority in order to prove, study and establish one's own values. The chronotope of those values, because they transcend categories, no matter how controversial it sounds, generates the concept of *khôra*. Finally, style canons,

which are certainly nothing more than human conventions, are changeable. The idea of serving God is not, if we consider the intentions and strategies of rabbi, scholar and writer Eliezer Papo. In other words, the very fact that an author writes his literature from the position of a stable canon warns of new trends in Serbian literature.

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Čitati, slušati, razumeti, ili: Kako se sabrati u Tekstu

U radu se nudi analitički pristup knjiga Eliezera Pape *Nesabrane priče i još nesabranije misli i crtice, a o decemepuy da se i ne govori* (2022), zapaženom doprinosu korpusu jevrejske književnosti pisane na srpskom jeziku. Studija istražuje ključne teme kao što su inauguracija kanoničnosti, granice usmenog i pisanog književnog modusa, status autora, diskurs nostalgije i autorovo odbacivanje dijasporične perspektiva kao jedine moguće. Ova pitanja autor tekstualizuje baroknom lingvističkom stilizacijom, odražavajući svoju potragu za rečima koje nose stabilno značenje i svoju posvećenost kategoriji istine. Korišćenjem niza hermeneutičkih sredstava, analiza ističe novu fazu u bogatoj i dinamičnoj istoriji jevrejske književnosti na Balkanu.

Ključne reči: deseterac, usmena književnost, pisana književnost, Sefardi, Megillot Ruth, Megillot Esther, *khôra*.

Czytać, słuchać, rozumieć, czyli jak odnaleźć siebie w Tekście

Artykuł jest poświęcony analizie książki Eliezera Pape *Nesabrane priče i još nesabranije misli i crtice, a o decemepuy da se i ne govori* [Nieuporządkowane opowieści i jeszcze bardziej nieuporządkowane myśli i linie, nie wspominając



o dziesięciozgłoskowcu] (2022), która stanowi znaczący wkład w korpus literatury żydowskiej tworzonej w języku serbskim. Studium bada kluczowe zagadnienia, takie jak kształtowanie kanonu, granice ustnego i pisanego trybu literackiego, status autora, dyskurs nostalgii oraz odrzucenie przez autora perspektywy diasporycznej jako jedynej możliwej. Autor tekstualizuje te pytania za pomocą barokowej stylizacji językowej, odzwierciedlającej jego poszukiwania słów o stabilnym znaczeniu i własne zobowiązanie wobec kategorii prawdy. Wykorzystując szeroki wachlarz narzędzi hermeneutycznych, analiza ukazuje nowy etap w bogatej i dynamicznej historii literatury żydowskiej na Bałkanach.

Słowa kluczowe: dziesięciozgłoskowiec, literatura ustna, literatura pisana, Sefardyjczycy, Księga Rut, Księga Estery, *khôra*.

Przekład z języka serbskiego
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