

***SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN:  
THE LANGUAGE OF SERBIAN WRITERS FROM CROATIA***

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**Key words:** Serbs in Croatia, national minority, minority language, minor literature, Croatian language, Serbian language.

**Summary:** Since 1991, Serbian citizens in the Republic of Croatia have held the status of a national minority, and the Serbian language is categorized as a minority language. Surprisingly, the population censuses of 2001 and 2011 have shown that only a quarter of Croatian Serbs listed Serbian as their mother tongue. Those censuses (as well as legal acts on minority language rights) do not reveal much about the actual language used by Croatian Serbs, but only reflect how they have listed their native language.

This paper analyzes the language of literature written by Serbian writers from Croatia whose works were published after 1991 by the Serbian Cultural Society *Prosvjeta's* publication company in the edition *Mala plava biblioteka*. Since their works reflect the tension between Deleuze's and Guattari's (1986) concept of a *minor literature* as a literature "that which a minority constructs within a major language" and the preservation of a minority language through literary production, this paper will analyze the collective and political values attributed to the literature written by Serbian writers from Croatia.

***NEGDJE IZMEĐU: O JEZIKU SRPSKIH PISACA IZ HRVATSKE***

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**Ključne riječi:** Srbi u Hrvatskoj, nacionalna manjina, manjinski jezik, manjinska književnost, hrvatski jezik, srpski jezik.

**Sažetak:** Od 1991. godine srpsko stanovništvo u Republici Hrvatskoj ima status pripadnika nacionalne manjine, dok je srpski klasificiran kao manjinski jezik. Popisi stanovništva provedeni 2001. i 2011. godine donijeli su neočekivane podatke prema kojima je tek četvrtina hrvatskih Srba navela srpski jezik kao materinji. Takvi podaci, međutim, (jednako kao ni zakonski akti o manjinskim jezičnim pravima) ne govore mnogo o tome kakvim se jezikom oni doista služe, već svjedoče tek o tome kojim su imenom ispitanici nazvali svoj materinji jezik.

Ovaj rad posvećen je jeziku književnosti, točnije analizi jezičnih obilježja književnih djela srpskih pisaca iz Hrvatske objavljenih nakon 1991. godine u izdanju Srpskog kulturnog društva *Prosvjeta*, u ediciji pod naslovom *Mala plava biblioteka*. Budući da publicirana književna djela reflektiraju napetost između Deleuzova i Guattarijeva (2013) koncepta manjinske književnosti kao književnosti koju neka manjina stvara na većinskom jeziku te očuvanja manjinskog jezika kroz književno stvaralaštvo, rad propituje kako stvaralaštvo srpskih autora u Hrvatskoj poprima kolektivnu i političku vrijednost.

## 1. Introduction

Thus far, the language of Croatian Serbs has not received a lot of academic attention. Accordingly, the language features of their literary production have not yet been reviewed systematically, largely because of various methodological and ideological issues. This paper places specific emphasis on the difficulty of specifying a literary corpus of Serbian writers from Croatia, criteria for classification of their language, as well as the language of the representative works by these authors, operationally defined as those published in Croatia in the years between 1996–2016 in a special book edition published by the Serbian Cultural Society *Prosvjeta*'s (Srpsko kulturno društvo *Prosvjeta*) publishing company.

The introductory chapter deals with the status of Serbian language as a minority language in Croatia. It also discusses the language Croatian Serbs use in their private and public language practices, as well as the matter of present Croatian language policy in regard to this issue. Following chapters present the common issues with defining and categorizing the literary corpus of Serbian authors from Croatia. Through a brief analysis of key studies on the literary production of Serbian authors in Croatia (monographies by Stanko Korać (1979, 1987) and Dušan Ivanić (1998)), the ambivalence each study used as criteria to establish its framework and corpus is discussed as well as the disparate nature of these criteria – with particular emphasis on the

specific and sensitive issue of language criterion. The central part of the paper presents the results of the analysis conducted on representative works of Serbian writers published in SCS *Prosvjeta's Mala plava biblioteka* (Eng. *Little Blue Biblioteque*)<sup>1</sup> book edition.

The main aim of this study is to determine which language features (mostly lexical choices) are employed by Serbian writers from Croatia—especially those used by members of the younger generations. We believe that the results of this analysis present an important contribution to the search for an objective and comprehensive answer to the question of the language Croatian Serbs use.

## 2. The language of Serbian minority members in Croatia<sup>2</sup>

After the breakup of SFR Yugoslavia, the formation of independent successor states, and the subsequent military conflicts, the percentage of the Serbian population in Croatia fell significantly<sup>3</sup>. Also, their formal status changed from that of a constitutive nation to one of an ethnic minority. The new Croatian constitution (1990) proclaimed Croatian as the official language of the nation and the Latin alphabet as the official script.<sup>4</sup> *Constitutional Law on National Minorities* (2002) states that the minority language and script must be used equivalently in all territories in which the members who use it constitute at least a third of the population of a local or regional self-government<sup>5</sup>. Accordingly, in Croatia, less than 30% of Serbian minority members exercise the right to officially use the Serbian language and Cyrillic script (across 23 local self-government units in which they constitute a relative (>33%) or absolute (>50%) majority).

The last two censuses (conducted in 2001 and 2011) indicate that only a quarter of the declared Serbs in Croatia consider Serbian their native language. Certainly, the data from these censuses do not reveal much about the features of their language, but it does point to the complexity of the sociolinguistic situation and the variety of language attitudes.

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<sup>1</sup> The edition was named after the blue book covers.

<sup>2</sup> This chapter only contains the basic information about the status of Serbian as a minority language in Croatia. The overview is based on Karlič (2019). For a more detailed description of the topic, see the source reference.

<sup>3</sup> While the total number of Serbs in Croatia amounted to 581.663 in 1991 (12,2% of Croatia's overall population), by 2001 this number had decreased to 201.631 (4,54%), and in 2011 it fell to 186.633 (4,36%). This data was originally published by *Croatian Bureau of Statistics*: <http://www.dzs.hr <24/2/2019>>

<sup>4</sup> See *Constitution of the Republic of Croatia* (1990), Article 12.

<sup>5</sup> See *Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities* (2002), Article 5.

## 2.1. Private and public communication

Members of the Serbian minority in Croatia live in various kinds of environments and circumstances—within nationally homogeneous and often either mixed-rural and mixed-urban environments (Pupovac, 1991). Due to various social factors and differing territorial divides, they use the differing language varieties. However, generally speaking, Croatian Serbs typically speak the Novoshtokavian Ekavian and Iekavian dialects, which are influenced by Croatian rural and urban dialects to a greater or lesser extent. Migrations of the Serbian population to cities has increased the influence of Croatian dialects on their language, as has the Croatian standard language. Linguistic influences differ depending on territorial and various sociolinguistic factors.

Croatian and Serbian sociolinguists who have so far written on this matter hold that the language of Croatian Serbs, within mixed communities and especially in urban environments, does not differ substantially from the Croatian language (*cf.* Karlič, 2019). The language of some Croatian Serbs can potentially be distinguished from Croatian by specific language markers because these speakers do not accept the changes made in the “new” Croatian language standard (Kapović in: Rešković, 2016). However, the use of Cyrillic script is considered to be the only “tangible” language specificity of Croatian Serbs, with this use falling significantly as the Latin script becomes the preferred one.

The language Serbs in Croatia use publicly has changed over time<sup>6</sup>. Following Croatia’s declaration of independence, in accordance with Pupovac (in: Jurčec, 2016; *cf.* Karlič, 2019), Croatian Serbs have three linguistic variants at their disposal: (1) the ‘western variant’ of the (former) Serbo-Croatian/Croato-Serbian language standard; (2) the variant based on the Šumadija-Vojvodina dialect (in use among Serbs and Croats in eastern Slavonia), a variety which is linguistically closest to the Serbian standard language, and (3) the “new” Croatian standard language, one which the author does not see as a real option because contemporary Croatian language policy completely excludes Serbs from its scope.

Since there are numerous forms of public communication available, each develops its own specificities and thus requires separate research. Concerning the forms of public communication in written form, the language used in public journals and literary production is of most significance to the study of

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<sup>6</sup> Public or mass communication differs from the interpersonal communication primarily because it is not reciprocal, has instead a single speaker, with others placed into the complementary role of listener (Tubbs 2012). Public communication takes part through television, radio, print, video, literary works, commercials of varying content, and other media.

the language of Croatian Serbs<sup>7</sup>. Our research focuses on the latter, one of our main goals being to describe the richness and diversity of language choice(s) in works of currently active Serbian writers from Croatia. This study presents just a first step toward a more detailed and systematic analysis of linguistic features found in their literary works. Results of such an analysis could present a small part of the mosaic that is commonly denoted “the language of Serbs in Croatia”. However, before such an analysis can be undertaken, it is necessary to define the category of “literary production of Serbian writers from Croatia”.

### 3. Literary production of Serbian writers from Croatia

Monographs on the literary production of Serbian writers from Croatia remain scarce, testifying to unresolved issues of periodization, classification, and criteria for inclusion<sup>8</sup>. There are also issues to resolve with descriptions of cultural heritage. Existing studies often arise from individual initiatives and rarely as a result of institutional support. Additionally, finding a suitable term for such heritage has proven difficult – historians most often use the phrase *literary work*, while *literary heritage of Serbs in Croatia* (Korać, 1979) and *Serbian literary tradition* (Ivanić, 2009) appear in several texts. Following the breakdown of the SFR Yugoslavia, the term *minority literature* (Ivanić, 2009) also appeared, as did the more (geographically) precise phrase *literature of Serbian Krajina* (Ivanić, 1998). The phrase *Serbian literature in Croatia* does not refer to this phenomenon, having mostly been in use for Serbian authors from the Republic of Serbia. Demarcating the literary work of Serbian writers from Croatia from the larger Croatian literature, based on the linguistic criteria used in existing monographs and literary reviews, remains an open problem.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Stanko Korać played a significant role in the study of the Croatian Serbs' literary production. His *Literary Chrestomathy: From the Cultural Heritage of Serbian People in Croatia* (1979; the original title: *Književna hrestomatija. Iz kulturne baštine srpskog naroda u Hrvatskoj*), contains the works of thirty-one authors, ranging from the eighteenth century to the 1960s, as well as the oral literature of Serbs in Croatia. In *Chrestomathy*, Korać reviews linguistic features as potential criteria for the determination of literary-cultural borders, finding them to be an insufficient differentiator. The fact that Serbs in Croatia spoke Shtokavian with the Iekavian reflex of *Yat* contributed to the linguistic union of Serbs

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<sup>7</sup> E.g. the periodicals: *Prosvjeta*, *Bijela pčela*, *Ljetopis SKD Prosvjeta*, *Kalendar SKD Prosvjeta*, *Artefakti*, *Identitet*, *Novosti*, *Naša stvarnost* *Privrednik*.

<sup>8</sup> On conceptualizations of the literary tradition among Serbs in Croatia, see more in Marinković and Karlič (2013).

and Croats. Korać notes: “The language that Serbs in Croatia spoke was close to language of Croatians, so this part of Serbian population presents an important connection between the two nations” (Korać, 1979: 13)<sup>9</sup>. Literary borders between the Serbian and Croatian people, according to Korać, “are not defined solely on the basis of language, or, if they are defined in such a way because of the lexical differences, are usually not considered to be enough – although, they have to be kept in mind”<sup>10</sup> (ibid. 14). Additionally, Korać states that the language of Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina is identical, be it from a lexical or any other perspective (ibid. 13). Although he considers the linguistic criteria to be an insufficient differentiator, Korać lists several language characteristics of Serbian writers from Croatia: there is no “dialectal spillover”, their lexis is regional (Shtokavian), and certain words are “croatisms” (which are not found in the texts by writers from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Vojvodina, Montenegro or Serbia). Korać does not provide a detailed description of lexical differences because such a description is not the point of his introduction, but he does list several particular examples of this differentiation and notes that almost everybody writes *ko* (instead of *tko* – Eng. *who*), *ćutanje* (instead of *šutnja* – Eng. *silence*), *januar* (instead of *siječanj* – Eng. *January*) and that the lexemes *krst* (instead of *križ* – Eng. *cross*), *saradnik* (instead of *suradnik* – Eng. *coworker*), *sveštenik* (instead of *svećenik* – Eng. *priest*), *hrišćanin* (instead of *kršćanin* – Eng. *Christian*), *Hrist* (instead of *Krist* – Eng. *Christ*), *porodica* i *familija* (instead of *obitelj* – Eng. *family*) are prevalent in the writings. On the other hand, these writers interchangeably use the lexemes *vazduh* – *zrak* (Eng. *air*), *hljeb* – *kruh* (Eng. *bread*), *pozorište* – *kazalište* (Eng. *theatre*), *suština* – *bit* (Eng. *essence*) etc. (ibid. 15–16).

His second book dedicated to this topic, *A Review of Literary Work of Serbs in Croatia* (1987; the original title: *Pregled književnog rada Srba u Hrvatskoj*), is considered to be the first systematic study of this kind because the author managed to collect the primary biographical and bibliographical data for over 150 writers, tackling the problem of periodization. Criteria which Korać utilizes to include writers in his review were variable; these criteria selected for not only writers who were born and lived on the territory of what used to be the Socialist Republic of Croatia, but also selected writers

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<sup>9</sup> The original quote: „Jezik kojim je govorio srpski narod u Hrvatskoj bio je bliz Hrvatima, pa je ovaj dio srpskog naroda bio važna spona između Hrvata i Srba u cjelini“ (Korać, 1979: 13).

<sup>10</sup> The full original quote: „Da je u hrvatskoj književnosti preovladao kajkavski ili čakavski dijalekat, ili da je na osnovu tri dijalekta kojim govore Hrvati stvoren takozvani *koiné*, kao književni jezik, književne granice između Srba i Hrvata bile bi određene samim jezikom, ovako one *samo* jezikom nisu određene, ili ukoliko se u pojedinim slučajevima i određuju samo jezikom zbog leksičkih razlika, obično ih ne smatramo dovoljnim, ali ih moramo imati u vidu“ (Korać, 1979:14).

who were born in Croatia, but lived and worked elsewhere, as well as writers who worked in Croatia but were born somewhere else. Korać utilizes criteria such as the notions of “connection to the nation”, “national consciousness” and “spiritual landscape of a nation” as criteria to define the literary corpus he has established (Korać, 1987: 8). According to the author, the crucial criterion is the cultural-historical continuity in terms of political relations and cultural development, which is why he concludes that the author’s time-space proximity is not a necessary prerequisite for establishing a “continuity of sentiment”. In addition to establishing a relationship between the writers and institutions such as schools, monasteries, publication houses, and political parties, Korać emphasizes the use of Cyrillic script as an important symbol of the identity – although its usage was reduced after 1945. Aside from the topic of the writer’s political views and the use of the Cyrillic script, Korać points to the “nuances in language” as specific markers by which he chooses the writers to include in his review: “In the language of many of these authors there is a nuance (we are not talking about a variant, but a nuance only) based on Serbian vernaculars, which is an interesting fact we have to keep in mind”<sup>11</sup> (Korać, 1987: 10). Korać points out that this book is not a literary historical review; instead it is a review that demonstrates a literary-cultural continuity of writers related to dominant literary tendencies.

While the *Review* encompassed the full territory of what used to be SR Croatia within the SFR Yugoslavia, Dušan Ivanić applies the phrase *literature of Serbian Krajina* (according to the title by Ivanić, 1998) to the literary works of Serbs, who, under historically changing terms, inhabited the edges of the Austrian and Turkish border. According to Ivanić, ever since the Illyrian movement, the consciousness of the literary, linguistic and cultural specificity of the Krajina Serbs ceded to the concept of Croatian and Serbian unity, which resulted in assimilation within schools and media. Thus, the literature of Serbian people in Krajina holds the semiotic features of “border-literature”, which is determined through dialogicality, experimentation, expression of self-awareness, and openness toward others (Ivanić, 1998: 13).

On the other hand, the bordering position the literature of Serbian writers from Croatia holds is, according to Ivanić, under the constant threat of endangerment and denial, assimilation and ghettoization (Ivanić, 2009: 17). In his collection of polemical essays from 2009, *Springs in the Crag: Literary Heritage of Serbs in Croatia* (the original title: *Vrela u vrleti: o književnoj baštini Srba u Hrvatskoj*), Ivanić describes the characteristics of border literature and states that this sort of literature expresses religious-national

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<sup>11</sup> The original quote: „Kod mnogih je važna nijansa u jeziku (ne govorimo o varijanti, nego samo o nijansi), koja se temelji na srpskim narodnim govorima, pa je i to jedna zanimljiva činjenica koju moramo imati u vidu“ (Korać, 1987: 10).

self-awareness, the possibility of constructing a new identity based on language factors (Illyrian, Serbian or Croatian), as well as the writer's acceptance of a literary context without the denial of a national identity (ibid. 35). Unlike Korać, Ivanić does not specify what the differentiating language factors might be, but states that, since the political events of the 1990s, nationality has been expressed through language, mainly noticeable in the return to the local lexicon and the use of Cyrillic script, followed by the return of retrograde literary forms, regional themes, and folklore. Differentiation of the Serbian literary tradition in Croatia cannot be reduced to a mere name, suggests Ivanić, because an identity without the established difference to other is not possible. However, he believes overemphasizing these differences would lead to animosity and conflict between the two sides (ibid. 2009: 53).

This discussion on the literary works of Serbian writers from Croatia can be supplemented with Deleuze and Guattari's definition of *minor literature*, the literature a minority creates in the language of the majority, as opposed to literature in the minority language. In their study *Kafka: Toward A Minor Literature* (1986), the authors derive the three core features of minor literature, which can, with some deviations, be applied to an analysis of Croatian Serbs' literary work today. The first of these features is the exposure of the language to a "high coefficient of deterritorialization". The second feature states that language can succumb to the all-encompassing influence of politics; that is, everything in these languages can be connected to politics. The third feature is the collective value of everything, which is the result of the political field contaminating every speech act (cf. Deleuze & Guattari, 1986: 16-18). The authors (ibid.) consider every literary work developed under the wing of established literature to be a minority one. That is why the literary work of Serbian writers from Croatia, when viewed within this context of minority literature, and this classification, opens a discussion about identity, multilingualism, and relationship between literature and politics. Most importantly, the analysis of the literary texts themselves reveals possible answers to those open questions.

Monographs presented in this chapter suggest the periodization and systematization efforts initiated in the 1970s are still in their early stages, and that the criteria for classification of Croatian Serbs' literary production are still ambiguous and uncoordinated. Their linguistic features are not described or well researched. Also, the linguistic criteria for differentiating their literary production from both Croatian and Serbian literature are still uncertain: there is still a tension between acceptance of the language specificity, which insists on factors such as Cyrillic script and local vernacular, and the features of so-called *minor(ity) literature*.



## 4. Corpus, methods, and research results

This chapter presents the results of the linguistic analysis conducted on the literary works of Serbian authors from Croatia published in an edition entitled *Mala plava biblioteka* (Eng. *Little Blue Biblioteque*), published by Serbian Cultural Society *Prosvjeta*. The goal of this study was to determine the linguistic features of these works, as well as to establish a general classification of the language choice(s) made by their authors. We consider this classification to be the first step toward acquiring a clear(er) linguistic description of Croatian Serbs' language in the period after the breakdown of the SFRY.

Additionally, we conducted an interview with Čedomir Višnjić, managing editor of the selected edition. The interview focuses on *Prosvjeta's* publishing policy, especially regarding the language and script choice.

### 4.1. The edition *Mala plava biblioteka* and its publishing policy

During the period between the 1996 and 2016, thirty-three books across different genres written by twenty-five authors were published within the *Mala plava biblioteka* edition. These include sixteen books of poetry, twelve books of prose, one book of dramatic texts, and four books of essays<sup>12</sup>.

Višnjić claims that no strictly defined criteria were used to select the works included in the edition. In that respect, the edition reflects nearly all of the classification problems and dilemmas found in the aforementioned reviews of works by Serbian writers from Croatia in terms of national, linguistic, territorial and culturally-historical affiliation. Although the edition

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<sup>12</sup> Following is a list of titles published within the *Mala plava biblioteka* (1996–2016): Milena Severović: *Cvijeće i lopoči*, 1996; Divna Zečević: *Autoportret s dušom*, 1997; Nebojša Devetak: *Rasulo*, 1997; *Razgrtanje pepela: zapisi o tragičnoj komediji sa pjevanjem, pucanjem i plakanjem*, 1998; *Uzalud tražeći*, 2008; Lidija Vukčević: *Latinska knjiga*, 1998; *Obične stvari*, 2009; Mirko Andrić Gužulić: *U paukovoju mreži: zagrebačke priče*, 2000; Mirko Demić: *Čilibar, med, oskoruša*, 2001; Simo Mraović: *Konstantin Bogobojažni*, 2002, 2017; *Nula-nula*, 2006; Đorđe Očić: *Pod sumnjom*, 2003; Duško Rokсандić: *Libido: komedije*, 2004; Miloš Kordić: *Propušteno*, 2005; *Azbučnik sela Komogovine*, 2014; Dragan Božić: *Lijepa smrt moga oca: pripovijetke*, 2004; *Uz Kupu*, 2007; Đorđe Nešić: *Granica*, 2006; Grigor Vitez: *Šaka čičaka*, 2007; Mladen Blažević: *Tragovi govoda*, 2008; *Ilirik*, 2015; Borivoj Vezmar: *Noć u čitalištu*, 2008; Dara Sekulić: *Kameni kašalj*, 2009; *Zapisi o bilju i nama*, 2013; Dejan Rebić: *Rukopis o Dubravama*, 2012 (reprint); Luka Šteković: *Praške i neke prethodne pesme*, 2012; Branimir Kršić: *Razgovor sa Stevanom*, 2012; *Govorne mane*, 2016; Goran Dakić: *Petodinjarke*, 2014; Srđan Oršić: *Čegrst i kamašne: eseji o delu Slobodana Selenića*, 2014; Goran Babić: *Nebesa: jedan srpsko-hrvatski roman*, 2015; Slobodan Grubač: *Pronađene pjesme*, 2015; Jochen Kelter: *Dogodine u Sarajevu*, 2015; Boris Vrga: *Svjetlom po rubu (studije, ogledi, portreti)*, 2016.

includes authors of different nationalities who live and work in Croatia, it also includes authors who work outside of Croatia's borders, but can easily be connected to the literary work of Serbs from Croatia because of the author's origin or the topic of the text. Based on the territorial criteria, the authors who published within this edition can be sorted into three categories: (1) those who live and work in Croatia<sup>13</sup>; (2) those who are originally from Croatia, but live and work outside of the country (in Serbia or Bosnia and Herzegovina)<sup>14</sup>; and (3) those who neither originate nor live in Croatia<sup>15</sup>, which is why their works were not included in the analysis.

Regarding the script used, Višnjić notes that it is always difficult to choose between the desire to protect the Cyrillic script and the intentions to make the book more available to a wider audience. The majority of the titles are, thus, written in the Latin script, whereas the Cyrillic appears in cases where it could be "afforded" (primarily due to the specific author's popularity) or in cases where the authors insisted on it. It is worth noting that the authors had the complete freedom to choose the language variety which suited them best, with Višnjić stating there were no major editorial interventions on this matter.

#### **4.2. Linguistic features of the *Mala plava biblioteka* edition**

The absence of unified criteria for determining the corpus of literary works of Serbian writers from Croatia was not the only methodological problem we faced within this study. According to Pupovac's (cf. Chapter 2.1.) description of possible linguistic choices Croatian Serbs have in public communication, we started with the assumption that literary works in the analyzed corpus could have been written in any of the three standard language norms which are at their disposal (the former western variant of the Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian language, the contemporary standard Serbian language [Ekavian/Iekavian], or the contemporary standard Croatian language) or in some substandard idiom (dialect/sociolect). In many of the analyzed cases, drawing a hard line between the features of these three norms proved difficult, and rarely could a literary work be strictly classified within a single category. Moreover, in particular cases, it was precisely this multiplicity of linguistic choices that served the poetical purpose, such as

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<sup>13</sup> Divna Zečević, Lidija Vukčević, Mirko Andrić Gudžulić, Mirko Demić, Simo Mraović, Dragan Božić, Đorđe Nešić, Grigor Vitez, Mladen Blažević, Dejan Rebić, Luka Šteković, Slobodan Grubač, Boris Vrga.

<sup>14</sup> Milena Severović, Nebojša Devetak, Đorđe Ocić, Duško Roksandić, Borivoj Vezmar, Dara Sekulić, Branimir Kršić, Srđan Orsić, Goran Babić, Miloš Kordić.

<sup>15</sup> Goran Dakić, Jochen Kelter (translated by Sinan Gudžević).

word-play or character profiling. Many of the works also combine different language varieties, further complicating any sort of strict classification. In spite of these methodological difficulties, linguistic analysis of the works in *Mala plava biblioteka* indicates the existence of general tendencies, which are presented and classified below. Considering the “crudeness” of this classification, it is worth noting that in many cases, such a classification blurs the linguistic complexity and specificity of individual literary works, but it also illuminates their common features.

The analysis presents the three possible linguistic categories, with an additional subcategory. Along with a brief outline of every category, a few of the most representative examples from the edition are listed below.

(1) The first category consists of works in which the features of the contemporary Croatian language are the most prominent. An example of such is the novel, *Nebesa (jedan srpsko-hrvatski roman)*<sup>16</sup>, by Goran Babić in which the only deviations from the modern Croatian standard are the quotes of Serbian poets. Poem collections by Slobodan Grubač (*Pronadene pjesme*) and Simo Mraović (*Nula nula*) feature such selections (of both languages) as well. An interesting fact is that Grubač accentuates the differences between the Croatian and Serbian languages in his work, occasionally utilizing them within his poetical word-plays (Example 1).

### Example 1

Nitkovi nikogovići neznalice

sada su **milioneri**

**ili milijunaši** kako se govori

a sve što imaju nama su oteli

(...)

Slavi se tako **Prvi maj**

**odnosno Prvi svibanj**

kako vam drago

(Grubač, 2015: 29)<sup>17</sup>.

These works were printed in the Latin script, and they were composed by authors who live or have lived in Croatia. This category also includes novels by Mladen Blažević (*Tragovi govoda* and *Ilirik*), in which the language of the narrator can be described as a contemporary Croatian standard language, while the language the characters use in dialogues can be described as a local dialect. For example, the narrative of *Tragovi govoda* takes place in a rural

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<sup>16</sup> Only the titles relevant in this context are translated here; Goran Babić: *Heaven (One Serbo-Croatian Novel)*.

<sup>17</sup> Both the Croatian and Serbian variants of lexemes *millionaire* and *May Day* appear in this poem.

environment, the Smrčković village, which is why the dialogue sequences often contain local lexemes and phrases (Example 2).

### Example 2

Van!... Marš van... a tebe ću ubiti... ubio me bog ako neću... **zatuću te ki ćenu**<sup>18</sup> (Blažević, 2008: 13).

Simo Mraović's *Konstantin bogobojazni (Manjinski roman)*<sup>19</sup> is written in a mixture of the Croatian standard language and Zagreb slang (Example 3). Serbian lexemes function to profile the protagonist, indicating his national affiliation and his attitude toward the newly formed political situation (Example 4).

### Example 3

Clif nas je paranormalno **kužio**, naručivao je po tri dum-dum tekile. Lui se držao djevojaka i samo se smješkao. Tea, Edita i Nataša su **fakat čagale**. Totalne **čagerice**<sup>20</sup> (Mraović, 2002: 67).

### Example 4

- Gdje ti je otac?
- U **Holandiji**.
- U **Holandiji** se kaže u nekoj drugoj državi, na hrvatskom se to kaže **Nizozemska**, jel jasno?
- Jasno – odgovorio sam. Jebemti kako sam bio glup, inače uvijek kažem u Nizozemskoj, ne znam što mi je bilo<sup>21</sup> (Mraović, 2002: 44).

(2) The second category consists of works written in a language that could best be described as the Serbian standard language (Ekavian or Iekavian variant). Most of these works were written while the authors lived in Serbia. The authors included in this category include Mirko Demić (novel *Ćilibar, med, oskoruša*), Nebojša Devetak (books of poetry *Kao kad sneg krvari, Razgrtanje pepela, Uzalud tražeći*), Đorđe Očić (novel *Pod sumnjom*) and Duško Roksandić (drama *Dvoje*).

Some works from this category feature sections in non-standard language varieties as well. For instance, while the didascalies in Roksandić's dramatic

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<sup>18</sup> *Zatući te ki ćenu* [I will beat you to death like a dog] – local phraseme meaning to beat someone to death.

<sup>19</sup> Simo Mraović: *God-fearing Constantine (A Minority Novel)*.

<sup>20</sup> Zagreb slang words: *kužiti* – comprehend; *fakat* – really; *čagati* – dance; *čagerica* – female dancer.

<sup>21</sup> In this passage the main character gets in trouble because he uses the “serbism” *Holandija* (Eng. *Netherlands*) instead of the “croatism” *Nizozemska* in a conversation with a policeman.

text *Dvoje* are written in the Serbian standard language, the dialogue between characters are written using Belgrade slang (Example 5).

#### Example 5

VUKOSAVA: **Mufljuz**. Ništarija. Četiri meseca nakon smrti supruge – on hoće drugu. Nije sačekao ni godinu dana, obavezne žalosti... Mućak! Izgubila sam svaku nadu, al na sreću banuše dva **muvaroša**... (Roksandić, 2004: 117)<sup>22</sup>.

(3) The works included in the third category contain elements of both Croatian and Serbian language standards. Such a “mixture” resembles the former western variant of the Serbo-Croatian / Croato-Serbian language. According to Kapović (in Rešković, 2016), the authors utilize such an approach to indicate their unwillingness to accept the novelties in the contemporary Croatian standard language. Representative examples include the works of Miloš Kordić – a collection which includes notes, essays, and writings; *Propušteno*, printed in Latin script; and a collection of prosaic essays and notes *Azbučnik sela Komogovine*, printed in Cyrillic script. Exceptions from the Croatian norm in both works can be observed in foreign names, which are written according to the phonemic orthography principle (e.g. *Dekart* instead of *Descartes*, *Anri Mišo* instead of *Henri Michaux*) and the utilization of lexemes typical for Serbian-speaking territories (e.g. *zavisnik* instead of *ovisnik* [Eng. *addict*], *projektuje* instead of *projicira* [Eng. *project*], *uopšte* instead of *uopće* [Eng. *even, at all*], *kiseonik* instead of *kisik* [Eng. *oxygen*], *čutnja* instead of *šutnja* [Eng. *silence*]). Such examples are scarce in these two novels, and the author seems self-aware while using them (Example 6):

#### Example 6

Kako žlicu i kašiku u kućnom razgovoru upotrebljavam kao potpuno ravnopravne riječi svoga jezika, sasvim je svejedno kojom ću uzimati propisani lijek (Kordić, 2005: 26)<sup>23</sup>.

Additionally, *Azbučnik sela Komogovine* contains many segments written in local dialect—the author lives in Belgrade, but he reminisces on the village where he was born and which he “takes with him through his speech” (Kordić, 2014: 356). This characteristic is the reason that there are so many

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<sup>22</sup> Non-standard, Belgrade slang words: *mufljuz* (Eng. *scoundrel*) and *muvaroš* (Eng. *Pursuer* – in a romantic sense).

<sup>23</sup> “Seeing as I consider *žlica* and *kašika* to be fully equal terms of my language, the matter of which one I use to take my prescribed medicine is entirely arbitrary” (*žlica/kašika* – standard Croatian and Serbian words for *spoon*).

local expressions in the text (e.g. *vočar* instead of *voćnjak* [Eng. *orchard*], *tušnjak* instead of *kokošinjac* [Eng. *henhouse*], *raca* instead of *patka* [Eng. *duck*], *šoder* instead of *šljunak* [Eng. *grave*]).

Comparative analysis of works written by authors who published more than one of their works in *Mala plava biblioteka* demonstrates that their language choices have not necessarily been consistent – they vary for different reasons, even within the same edition. Such an example is the book *Libido* by Duško Roksandić, which consists of two dramatic texts printed in Latin script. The first drama (*Dvoje*) was written during the author's stay in Belgrade, using a mixture of the Serbian standard language and Belgrade slang. The other drama (*Libido*) was written while he lived in Zagreb. The didascalies are linguistically the closest to the former western variant of Serbo-Croatian / Croato-Serbian, while the dialogue is written in a local dialect.

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These examples indicate another highly important categorization factor within a corpus analysis representation of nonstandard varieties—while some of the works are written in the standard language, many others are infused with elements of Croatian/Serbian local dialect or urban sociolects. However, none of the works published in *Mala plava biblioteka* are written entirely in a nonstandard variety, these typically being reserved for dialogue between characters. The question of the function of such linguistic choices is an issue which deserves a separate study.

## Conclusions

This work deals with three core issues:

(1) The status of Serbian as a minority language in Croatia, as well as the features of the language that Croatian Serbs use in private and public communication.

(2) The criteria for determining the literary corpus of Serbian writers from Croatia.

(3) The linguistic features of literary works written by Serbian authors from Croatia in the post-war period.

Based on our research, the following conclusions are warranted:

(1) Although Serbian is the official language of the Serbian minority in Croatia, different language varieties are present in private and public communications.

(2) Linguistic analysis of literary works published in *Mala plava biblioteka* confirms that authors utilize three different language norms: contemporary Croatian, contemporary Serbian, and a western variant of the (former) Serbo-Croatian / Croato-Serbian standard language.

(3) The edition includes many works containing elements of nonstandard varieties—local dialects and urban sociolects alike.

(4) Variations in language choice are observable even in works by the same authors.

Even a simple, unrefined categorization such as this affords a glimpse into the wealth and variety of linguistic choices used by the Serbian writers from Croatia. First and foremost, this is made possible by as many as three literary standards and two separate scripts at their disposal and the opportunities their interplay allows. Further research of this topic should include a linguistic analysis of specific authors and the issue of the function of their linguistic choices.

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