

MAŁGORZATA FILIPEK

University of Wrocław, Faculty of Languages, Literatures and Cultures

malgorzata.filipek@uwr.edu.pl

ORCID: 0000-0001-6230-151X

## Portugal in the Notes from Radovan Vučković's Travels

*I know so little about Portugal,  
less than about any other country [...] I have ever visited. [...] Portugal is a wonderland.  
Is it possible not to see this?*<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

The article analyses the accounts of the Serbian writer and literary historian Radovan Vučković (1935–2016) from his trip to Portugal, included in the book *Read Cities*, a travel diary documenting the writer's numerous journeys to European cities in 2008–2010. He visits such Portuguese cities as Porto, Braga, Guimarães, Batalha, Évora, Coimbra, Lisbon, Cascais and Estoril, following the itineraries offered by travel agencies. Taking part in an organised trip allows one to experience a foreign reality only superficially. Vučković focuses on describing historic sacred and secular buildings, as well as monuments dedicated to Portuguese rulers and the discoverers of new lands. In his accounts, he refers to Ivo Andrić's works *Portugal*, *the Green Country* and *Byron in Sintra*, and his manner of depicting foreign places is reminiscent of the travel prose *Cities and Chimeras* by Jovan Dučić (1873–1943), an outstanding Serbian poet and diplomat who served as ambassador in both Iberian countries during the interwar period.

**Keywords:** Radovan Vučković, travel, Portugal, history, tourism, travel writing, Jovan Dučić

Knowledge of the distant part of the European continent, represented for centuries by the Iberian Peninsula was limited in the minds of the Serbs to events such as military campaigns and trade relations<sup>2</sup>. Already at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the writer, thinker and founder of the University of Belgrade

1 Radovan Vučković (2010) *Čitanje gradova. Dnevnik putovanja*. Belgrade: Službeni glasnik; p. 441. All Serbian translations, unless otherwise noted, are mine – M.F.

2 Nenad Fejić (1988) *Španija u Dubrovniku u srednjem veku*. Belgrade: Prosveta.

Dositej Obradović (1742–1811) recommended Cervantes' masterpiece in his work *Advice on Common Sense* [*Savjeti zdravog razuma*], which entered Serbian cultural circulation only in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (Stojanović 2005: 145–188). Many Serbian writers used motifs from *Don Quixote* in their own works (Stojanović 2005: 17–114).

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Vojislav Ilić (1862–1894) introduced elements of the topography of the Iberian Peninsula into Serbian poetry, as well as figures associated with it. One of them was the Arab prince Abd al-Rahman (734–788) of the Umayyad dynasty, who, after fleeing Damascus and seizing Cordoba in 756, made it the capital of the emirate (Nastić 2012: 283). The poet portrayed Abd al-Rahman in the series *Four Poems of the Caliph Abu-el-Rahman* [*Četiri pesme kalife Abu-el-Rahmana*]. The second figure was Luiz de Camões (1524–1580), author of the Portuguese national epic *Os Lusíadas* (1572), who appeared in the drama *The Poet* [*Pesnik*]<sup>3</sup>. The Iberian Peninsula became a destination for Serbs only at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>4</sup>, especially after the First World War, when it was visited by prominent representatives of Serbian literary life who were staying beyond the Pyrenees as diplomats, journalists or tourists<sup>5</sup>. The most important event which drew public attention was the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), described both by Yugoslav volunteers fighting on the side of the Republic and by war correspondents<sup>6</sup>.

After the Second World War, the UN General Assembly's appeal to break off diplomatic relations with the regimes of Francisco Franco and António Salazar (Miłkowski, Machcewicz 1998: 394) restricted

- 
- 3 Ilić's *Poet* was also published in Portuguese in Lisbon in 1943, thanks to the actor, director, translator, and theater historian Mihailo Kovačević (1891–1961), who was living in the Portuguese capital in the 1940s. See Јовановић (2003: 265–269). An anonymous critic attacked Ilić in the newspaper *Liberty* [*Sloboda*] in Niš in February 1893 for allegedly plagiarising the Russian poet Koltsov. Ilić responded in the magazine *Male novine* (1893, issue 51), publishing the text of the work that he was accused of plagiarizing alongside his own poems. The work is based on the poem *Kamoens* by Austrian writer Friedrich Halm (1806–1871). According to Rista Odavić, Ilić indicated this in the subtitle of the manuscript. This information does not appear in the printed version. *The Poet* was first performed at the National Theatre in Belgrade in 1901, together with *The Death of Pericles* [*Periklova smrt*] and *Radoslav* [*Radoslav*], and was the most successful of the three, although the overall production was considered disappointing.
- 4 In 1905, Svetozar Zorić published his impressions of Spain in the *Serbian Literary Newspaper* [*Srpski književni glasnik*], devoted mainly to Andalusia.
- 5 These included Jovan Dučić – *Letter from Spain* [*Pismo iz Španije*]; Jelena Dimitrijević – *Seven Seas and Three Oceans. A Journey around the World* [*Sedam mora i tri okeana. Putem oko sveta*]; Stanislav Krakov – *The Charm of Sintra* [*Čar Sintre*], the *Spain* series (*Španija*) from the volume *Putopisi* (2017); Rastko Petrović – *In the Shadow of the Toledo Mystery* [*Iza misterije Toleda*], *Theatre! Theatre!* [*Teatar! Teatar!*]; Ivo Andrić – *Spanish Reality and the First Steps in It* [*Španska stvarnost i prvi koraci u njoj*], *Portugal, the Green Country* [*Portugal, zelena zemlja*], *Byron in Sintra* [*Bajron u Sintri*]; Miloš Crnjanski – *In the Land of Bullfighters and Sun* [*U zemlji toreadora i sunca*].
- 6 In their works, Miloš Crnjanski – *In Spain 1937* [*U Španiji 1937*] – and Oto Bihalji-Merin – *Spain between Death and Birth* [*Španija između smrti i rađanja*] – wrote about the civil war in 1937. In the 1970s, a five-volume collection of memoirs by participants in the fighting was published: *Spain (1936–1939). Collection of Memoirs of Yugoslav Volunteers in the Spanish War* [*Španija (1936–1939). Zbornik sećanja jugoslovenskih dobrovoljaca u španskom ratu*] (Belgrade 1971). Miodrag Kujundžić published his impressions at that time – *White Houses and Black Bulls* [*Bele kuće i crni bikovi*], *Letopis Matice srpske*, vol. 147, book 407, no. 4, April 1971, pp. 197–231; Miodrag Popović – *Journey to Spain* [*Put u Španiju*], in *Putopisni dnevnik*, Belgrade 2006, pp. 139–157; and Milka Lučić published her impressions from a journey she made in the 1970s in the book *Mediterranean Ceremony. Sentimental Journal of a Journey through the Mediterranean and Its Imaginary Oxbow Lakes* [*Mediteranska ceremonija. Sentimentalni dnevnik s putovanja po Sredozemlju i njegovim imaginarnim rukavcima*] (Belgrade 2010).

travel to the Iberian Peninsula, and writers from Yugoslavia were able to travel beyond the Pyrenees only from the 1970s onwards<sup>7</sup>. The 1980s saw the publication of books by Gordana Kuić (1942–2023), who, inspired by the homeland of her ancestors, created two series of novels about the fate of Sephardic Jews, from their expulsion from Spain in 1492 and arrival in the Balkans, to the collapse of Yugoslavia in the 1990s<sup>8</sup>. The decade also saw the work of Gordana Ćirjanić (1957)<sup>9</sup>, for whom Spain is the homeland of her husband, the anti-Franco journalist and half-Portuguese José Antonio Novais Tomé (1925–1993), and of their daughter Julia.

In Serbian circles, Portugal was even less known than Spain. Ivo Andrić (1892–1975), who served as vice-consul in Madrid in 1928–29, dedicated the work *Portugal, the Green Country* [*Portugal, zelena zemlja*, 1931] to the neighbouring country, and in *Flying over the Sea* [*Leteći nad morem*, 1932], he quoted the words of Luiz Camões. The author of the Portuguese national epic also attracted the attention of Miloš Crnjanski (1893–1977), who devoted an essay, *Camões* [*Kamuinš*, 1975], to the poet, addressing the dispute among Iberian scholars regarding the origin of the creator of the poem “about sailing Africa around [...] the Cape of Good Hope” (Crnjanski 1975: 254). Stanislav Krakov (1895–1968) included his journalistic impressions of Portugal, originally published in the newspaper *Vreme*, in the text *The Charm of Sintra* [*Čar Sintre*, 1931], in which he referred to Byron’s stay in the eponymous town near Lisbon. In the story *Byron in Sintra* [*Bajron u Sintri*, 1935], Andrić also recalled the English poet’s visit.

Mihailo Petrović Alas (1868–1943), a mathematician, inventor, professor at the University of Belgrade and member of several foreign scientific societies, described the part of the Portuguese state far removed from Europe in three notes entitled *Around the Azores Islands* [*Oko Azorskih ostrva*, 1939]<sup>10</sup>, written while taking part in eel fishing in the Atlantic. Journalist Milka Lučić (1942) portrayed an imaginary journey to Lisbon in the footsteps of the modernist poet Fernando Pessoa (1888–1935) in a 1970s travel essay<sup>11</sup>, which was based largely on her real travels across mainland Spain and the Balearic

7 Miodrag Kujundžić published his impressions at that time – *White Houses and Black Bulls* [*Bele kuće i crni bikovi*], *Letopis Matice srpske*, vol. 147, book 407, no. 4, April 1971, pp. 197–231; Miodrag Popović — *Journey to Spain* [*Put u Španiju*], in *Putopisni dnevnici*, Belgrade 2006, pp. 139–157; Milka Lučić published her impressions from a journey she made in the 1970s in the book *Mediterranean Ceremony. Sentimental Journal of a Journey through the Mediterranean and Its Imaginary Oxbow Lakes* [*Mediteranska ceremonija. Sentimentalni dnevnik s putovanja po Sredozemlju i njegovim imaginarnim rukavcima*] (Belgrade 2010).

8 G. Kuić is the author of the following novels: *The Smell of Rain in the Balkans* [*Miris kiše na Balkanu* (1986)], *The Blooming of Linden Trees in the Balkans* [*Cvat lipe na Balkanu* (1991)], *The End of the Day in the Balkans* [*Smiraj dana na Balkanu* (1995)], *Ghosts over the Balkans* [*Duhovi nad Balkanom* (1997)], *The Legend of Luna Levi* [*Legenda o Luni Levi* (1999)], *The Tale of Benjamin Baruch* [*Bajka o Benjaminu Baruhu* (2002)], *Ballad about Bokhoreta* [*Balada o Bohoreti* (2006)].

9 Gordana Ćirjanić is the author of notes printed in Belgrade magazines and later published in book form, such as *Letters from Spain* [*Pisma iz Španije*] and *Other Letters from Spain* [*Druga pisma iz Španije*], as well as a series of novels and short stories set on the Iberian Peninsula. The novel *A House in Puerto* [*Kuća u Puerto*] was translated into Spanish.

10 Mihailo Petrović (1998) “Oko Azorskih ostrva. Putopisi.” Second part. In: *Mihailo Petrović: Sabrana dela* 12, ed. Slobodanka Peković. Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike; 273–297.

11 Lučić, Milka (2010) “Naš vodič Don Kihot.” [In:] *Mediteranska ceremonija. Sentimentalni dnevnik s putovanja po Sredozemlju i njegovim imaginarnim rukavcima*. Belgrade: Službeni glasnik; 94–126.

Islands. The writer Dejan Tiago-Stanković (1965–2022)<sup>12</sup> linked his life with Portugal, placing the plot of his novel *Estoril* [*Estoril*, 2015], set during the Second World War, in that country.

Contemporary Serbian literature owes its most extensive notes on travels to the Iberian Peninsula to the scholar of modernism and expressionism, and noted expert on the works of Ivo Andrić<sup>13</sup>, Radovan Vučković (1935–2016). In his book *Read Cities. Travel Diary* [*Čitanje gradova. Dnevnik putovanja*, 2010], he continued the travel-writing career, which he began in the 1990s<sup>14</sup>, *Read Cities* comprises notes from numerous corners of Europe<sup>15</sup> that the author visited between 2 April 2008 and 10 April 2010, spending 94 days over the course of 24 months on one- or multi-day trips. The longest of these, lasting a week, included visits to Spain and Portugal. Vučković's stay in Portugal lasted from 2 to 10 April 2010. The title of the entry reads PORTO–LISBON, 2–10 APRIL 2010 (*PORTO–LISABON, 2–10. APRIL 2010*), and the two main cities are marked by the dates of arrival and departure. He also visited towns such as Guimarães, Braga, Évora, Coimbra, Batalha, Alcobaça, Sintra, Cascais, Estoril and the westernmost point of the European continent – Cabo da Roca.

The trip to Portugal, like his stays in other countries, was accompanied by historical reflections on local history and contemplations of the past, prompted by visits to sites of sacred and secular architecture. The author referred to Roman times, the era of Vandal, Visigothic and Arab rule, and mentioned the expulsion of the Islamic population from the Iberian Peninsula. He alluded to the beginnings of the Portuguese state and listed its early rulers, headed by Afonso Henriques (1109–1185). His notes also contain references to the flourishing of Portugal under Prince Henry the Navigator (1394–1460), when the country became a colonial power. He mentions the weakening of the state after the accession of the Spanish King Philip II to the Portuguese throne, liberation from Spanish rule, the loss of Brazil, the conquest by Napoleon's troops, the transition from monarchy to a republic in 1910, and the rise of the pro-fascist dictatorship of António de Oliveira Salazar (1889–1970), which ended on 25 April 1974 with the so-called “Carnation Revolution,” during which Salazar's successor, Prime Minister Marcelo Caetano (1906–1980), relinquished power, thus initiating the building of Portuguese democracy.

The author of *Read Cities* finds “exciting and intricate” (Vučković 2010: 441) the history of a country that shrank from a global colonial power to its present size. He explains the origin of the

12 Dejan Tiago-Stanković was the author of the short-story collection *From Here I Was, I Am No More and Other Lisbon Stories* [*Odakle sam bila, više nisam i druge lisabonske priče*], the novel *Zamalek* (2020), the translator of José Saramago's works and Fernando Pessoa's poetry into Serbian, as well as the Portuguese translations of Dragoslav Mihailović's novel *When the Gourds Blossomed* [*Kad su cvetale tikve*], Ivo Andrić's *The Cursed Courtyard* [*Prokleta avlija*] and *The Bridge on the Drina* [*Na Drini ćuprija*], Miloš Crnjanski's *Embahade*, and Dušan Kovačević's play *The Professional* [*Profesionalac*].

13 Compare: *Andrić. Istorija i ličnost* (2002); *Andrić: paralela i recepcija* (2006); *Poetika hrvatskog i srpskog ekspresionizma* (1979); *Moderna drama* (1982); *Danica i druge zvijezde* (1980); *Krležina dela* (1986); *Avangardna poezija* (1989); *Od Ćorovića do Ćopića* (1989); *Moderna srpska proza: kraj 19. i početak 20. veka* (1990); *Srpska avangardna proza* (2000); *U znaku tradicije i avangarde* (2004); *Moderni roman XX veka* (2005); *Vojvođanska književna avangarda* (2006); *Paralele i ukrštavanja* (2009).

14 R. Vučković, *Zbogom, Sarajevo* (1994, 2012); *U nevremenu: dnevnički zapisi*, Belgrade 2004; *Put na Istok. Dnevnik putovanja* (2012).

15 The map charted by the writer's travels includes, among others: Trebinje, Dubrovnik, Belgrade, Prague, Karlovy Vary, Vienna, Herceg Novi, Podgorica, Sjenica, Novi Pazar, Čačak, Banja Luka, Verona, Pisa, Rome, Florence, Venice, Graz, Sarajevo, Istanbul, Athens, Mycenae, Delphi, Salzburg, Paris, Munich, Berlin, Zagreb, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Madrid, Toledo, Barcelona, Figueres, Girona, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Porto, Lisbon, as well as Guimarães, Braga, Évora, Coimbra, Évora, Sintra, Cascais, Estoril.

country's name, which is derived from the combination of the Roman settlements Portus and Cale. Vučković devotes considerable attention to events in the history of individual cities, such as Lisbon, founded by the Carthaginians in 1200 BC, already thriving in Roman times, occupied by the Moors in the early 8<sup>th</sup> century, liberated in the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century by the first king, and proclaimed the capital of Portugal in 1255. The city experienced particular growth at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. However, in 1755 it suffered a devastating earthquake and was subsequently rebuilt, so that "the most important part of today's architectural and cultural heritage was created in the 18<sup>th</sup> century" (Vučković 2010: 442–443).

Participation in a guided tour significantly limits individual travel practices (Barthes [1957] 2000: 157). Thus, Vučković, who began his encounter with the country in Porto, where he arrived by plane from Belgrade via Frankfurt, visited Portugal in a set order. Upon arrival, he was transported by bus with other tourists to the hotel, and in the following days reached the most popular and most attractive tourist destinations. Guided bus tours, with breaks for sightseeing ("in some places we stayed longer when we had to take a closer look at some buildings" (Vučković 2010: 445)), enabled the author to form an impression of the area's topography, which in turn facilitated his later solo wanderings. Vučković noted that the itinerary did not include museum visits, and he did not visit any himself: "Museums are specialised and there is none among them that would suit my preferences [...]. I am flexible with group tours with comprehensive explanations from guides" (Vučković 2010: 461). By choosing to take part in an organised trip, the writer was able to pursue his own interests only when the other participants were resting after the exertions of sightseeing or out shopping.

During the trip the author visited cathedrals, monasteries, churches and royal palaces, and walked through numerous squares and streets. Streets, which contain the imprinted history of a city and form elements of its structure rooted in social consciousness, preserve the memory of the fate of many generations, as evidenced by their architecture, reflecting shifts in style, taste and fashion. The value of streets as spatial and social forms depends on their ability to create mental images that are easy to remember. These images arise from the physical characteristics of the street (its width or length), the appearance of façades, the proximity of landmarks or distinctive buildings, and the orientation that indicates where the street leads. Their creation is aided by the social character of the street, that is, who lives there and who moves through it. Through its spatial form and social life, the street becomes a sign that anchors a specific place in memory (Jałowiecki, Szczepański 2009: 397–399).

During his stay in Portugal, Vučković visited the districts of Lisbon (Baixa, Alfama, Belém, Oriente), Porto (Ribeira), and Coimbra (Cenrar), and saw numerous cathedrals (in Porto, Braga, Coimbra, Lisbon), monasteries (the Holy Cross in Coimbra, the Hieronymites in Lisbon, Our Lady of Batalha and Alcobaça), churches (the Church of the Clerics and the Franciscans in Porto, the Franciscan Church in Évora), and more. The writer was also interested in secular buildings, including the Porto Stock Exchange, the city hall, and buildings from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries "with elements of neoclassical and baroque style" (Vučković 2010: 447), Vasco da Gama's house, the University of Coimbra, the Royal Palace in Sintra, and the Castle of St George, from where "you can [...] admire the view of Lisbon" (Vučković 2010: 460). He also visited the Belém Tower, the Oriente train station, the shopping centre and the Vasco da Gama Tower, which is "the largest building [...] in Portugal" (Vučković 2010: 463), as well as the oceanarium opened during Expo 1998. Numerous monuments also attracted his attention - those dedicated to Portuguese rulers (Pedro V, Pedro IV, Pedro Manuel, João I, Dionysius), explorers (including images of Henry the Navigator, Vasco da Gama, Pedro Álvares Cabral and Ferdinand

Magellan), the poet Luís de Camões, the politician Sebastião José de Pombal, the military commander Nuno Álvares Pereira, and the obelisk commemorating the triumph of the British-Portuguese troops over Napoleon's army, where "the ecstasy of the victor is expressed by an allegory at the top of the column in the form of a lion aiming at [...] an eagle, and by soldiers with weapons depicted at the base" (Vučković 2010: 447).

The writer admired Porto's steel bridges, especially the two-level Dom Luís I Bridge, the more than two-kilometre-long 25 April Bridge in Lisbon, and the over seventeen-kilometre-long Vasco da Gama Bridge. He walked along the streets of Portuguese cities (e.g. Santa Catarina Street in Porto, Broken Ribs Street in Coimbra, Rua Augusta in Lisbon) and visited numerous squares, such as Batalha Square and Liberty Square in Porto, "several squares and streets that [...] form the old centre" (Vučković 2010: 450) of Guimarães, Restorers Square and Marquis of Pombal Square in Lisbon, and others.

The Catholic Easter holidays, which coincided with his stay in Portugal, prompted reflections from a writer who came from a different religious tradition. The column with hooks on which people were once hanged near the entrance to the cathedral in Porto made him realise "how the Catholic Church, while preaching [...] the faith, committed [...] violence [...], persecuted and cruelly punished people of other faiths and non-believers" (Vučković 2010: 446). At the Sanctuary of Bom Jesus do Monte near Braga, he was struck by the "long [...] stairs in two rows surrounded by statues of saints" (Vučković 2010: 450) and by the "fanatic believers" (*ibid.*) who climbed the steps on their knees to "cleanse themselves of sins" (*ibid.*). In Braga, the capital of the Minho province, which claims to be the religious centre of Portugal, the writer noted the presence of many clergy and numerous processions.

Sintra is the only Portuguese city about which the writer, by his own admission, knew anything before he arrived in Portugal. This was thanks to Andrić's two works, "the travel diary *Portugal, the Green Country*. Then [...] *Byron in Sintra*" (Vučković 2010: 455). In the town, Vučković visited the Royal Palace, where his attention was drawn to the walls covered with azulejo tiles and the richly decorated ceilings of the halls. He was not troubled by the inability to visit the Pena Palace, famous for its vibrant colours; he only regretted that he had not been able to reach the Moorish Castle and could look at the "magnificent 8<sup>th</sup>-century fortress" only "from afar and from below" (Vučković 2010: 457). To compensate for the lack of opportunity to visit some of Sintra's attractions, the tourists from Belgrade were offered a drive along the Atlantic coast, with stops in several small towns. They stopped in Estoril, and at Cabo da Roca admired the "endless expanses of the Atlantic Ocean" (*ibid.*). They had lunch in Cascais, where beachgoers, despite the early spring, "tried to overcome the waves [...] in cold water" (*ibid.*).

Vučković leads the reader through a foreign space along predetermined routes intended for organised groups. The space recorded in the writer's accounts is subordinated to the requirements of the "plot," which develops according to the location of places renowned for their monuments and historical events (Kowalski 2002: 71). In the structure of Vučković's text, the proximity of sites is determined by their spatial arrangement, and the manner and sequence of their presentation allow for the reconstruction of the appearance of the Portuguese cities in which the writer is staying. For example, the Baixa district in the centre of Lisbon "from the bank of the Tagus River and from Commerce Square, with the passage through the Triumphal Arch and [...] Rua Augusta and further through Restorers Square to Marquis of Pombal Square, forms a unique whole which [...] was created after [...] the earthquake in 1755" (Vučković 2010: 459); and from the monument to the Marquis of Pombal, "with a lion under his arm and allegorical figures of women at his feet" (*ibid.*), runs "the long and wide Avenue of Liberty, built on

the model of the Champs-Élysées in Paris, leading to Renaissance Square, decorated with [...] statues and monuments, including the monument to those who died in the First World War, where [...] a white obelisk rises" (*ibid.*), etc.

Streets are places of residence, work, social life and the exchange of experiences and information. Any street can become the centre of events that determine its social and symbolic character. The street creates a sphere of symbolism for the city and its inhabitants; street life resembles a spectacle in which individuals participate as spectators and sometimes also as actors (Jałowiecki, Szczepański 2009: 403–405). In the oldest part of Porto, the medieval Ribeira district on the Douro River, there is a "colourful abundance and bustle of strollers, some of whom sit in front of restaurants and cafés, here and there offering fruit and vegetables, and there are also many small shops" (Vučković 2010: 448). Lisbon's Rua Augusta is filled with tourists at tables and with people who "make music, sing or perform their acting numbers" (Vučković 2010: 459). In Alfama, the only district undamaged by the earthquake, tourists experience the everyday life of Lisbon's residents, squeezing through winding stone stepped alleyways "under the windows of tenants who hang their laundry there" (*ibid.*).

In addition to architecture and monuments, to which he devotes much attention, the writer also has the opportunity to admire nature. This happens mainly during coach travel; for example, from the airport to the hotel in Porto, "along valleys and rising and falling hills" (Vučković 2010: 444); during a trip to the north, where he visits Guimarães, Braga and Batalha; on the journey from Porto to Évora, Coimbra and Lisbon; and on the route from Lisbon to Sintra, Cascais, Estoril and Cabo da Roca. Along these routes, forests "stretch endlessly [...] over the undulating surface of the earth, where hills and valleys intertwine" (Vučković 2010: 451). A bus full of tourists passes through "forest areas full of greenery" (Vučković 2010: 449). Travelling to Évora, the capital of the southern province of Alentejo, he admires the trees, which seem "slightly different in species than in the northern parts of the country" (Vučković 2010: 454), and observes the oaks "from which cork is obtained" (Vučković 2010: 454). On the way to Lisbon, he admires a landscape which is made up of "endless green coastal vegetation" (Vučković 2010: 451); the area seems almost fairy-tale-like to him because of the windmills, resembling "funny giants painted by the hand of a modern painter" (Vučković 2010: 451). The Atlantic makes a huge impression, and the writer watches with excitement "as furious, bristling and foaming waves hit the coastal rocks" (Vučković 2010: 447–448).

A tourist is always limited by the time available to him (Wojciechowski 1986: 101). This restriction applies to group travellers even more than to individual ones. The strict schedule of an organised tour means that the time for sightseeing is tightly fixed, which Vučković emphasised several times [e.g. "there won't be much time for sightseeing" (Vučković 2010: 443); "we are currently rushing [...] towards [...] Ribeira" (Vučković 2010: 448); "I regret that [...] I saw the 8<sup>th</sup>-century fortress only from a distance [...], there was no time to get there even by taxi" (Vučković 2010: 457)].

The necessity of immersing oneself in a different historical and cultural context during the trip leads to "the stratification of the present tense and many past tenses in such a way that they appear together in the text" (Kozicka 2003: 78). The writer is connected to the past through the historical figures (rulers, politicians, and explorers) recalled while visiting monuments. The past is also evoked through Portuguese history, revealed by architectural landmarks whose dates of construction he meticulously records [e.g. the Porto Cathedral, "dates [...] from the 12<sup>th</sup> century" (Vučković 2010: 446); construction of the Monastery of the Holy Cross in Coimbra began "in the 12<sup>th</sup> century" (Vučković 2010: 452); Évora

is surrounded by a “fortress dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century” (Vučković 2010: 454); the Belém Tower was “built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century” (Vučković 2010: 462), *etc.*].

Seeing numerous sites in a short period of time, travelling by bus from monument to monument and from city to city, and walking through squares, parks and streets allowed Vučković to experience a foreign reality only to a small extent. The task he set himself – to get to know the country “in its cultural and historical integrity” (Vučković 2010: 443) – is not feasible during a tourist trip, because a tourist is usually separated from real life by a “filter serving only consumer needs” (Bauman 2000: 149). Choosing an organised tour means accepting physical proximity and spiritual distance. A partial view of the world outside the bus window plays a role similar to watching through a cinema, television or computer screen, pointing to the kinship between tourism and spectacle. The walks that allowed him to reconstruct the topography of the centres of Porto, Coimbra, Évora, Lisbon and other cities made possible a kind of dialogue between the writer and the Portuguese past, architecture and culture, but this dialogue remains extremely superficial. In fact, the description of a journey constitutes an intercultural dialogue to a much greater degree than a monologue delivered by a representative of a given culture (Bakhtin [1967] 1997: 59).

The shape of this “dialogue” with a foreign culture is determined by the visitor’s mood and well-being, gender, age and physical condition, as well as by his or her social position, level of education and cultural capital: a reservoir of memory, knowledge, aesthetic and ethical values passed down from generation to generation that shapes perception, evaluation and involvement with space (Jałowicki, Szczepański 2009: 353). During his visit to Portugal, Vučković, who was then 75 years old, wished to make the most of his stay, often forgoing rest in favour of intensive sightseeing. In his account, he conducts an intellectual and intertextual dialogue with Ivo Andrić, who, during his diplomatic mission in Madrid, also left a literary record of his time in Portugal. Vučković quotes Andrić’s opinion of the town of Sintra near Lisbon, whose location “exceeds the beauty of everything that can be imagined and told” (Vučković 2010: 455).

In a less obvious way, because it lacks direct references, Vučković’s work also contains a dialogue with the Serbian “prince of poets,” Jovan Dučić (1873–1943), a diplomat and ambassador of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia to both Iberian countries<sup>16</sup>, and the author of notes from various cities and countries published in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the newspaper *Zora* (*Dawn*), later collected in the book *Cities and Chimeras* (*Gradovi i himere*, 1940). Dučić, who depicted foreign spaces in *Cities and Chimeras*, was inspired by three forms of exploring them: pilgrimages, travels and tourism. From pilgrimage he drew his tendency to avoid discussing everyday life and to focus instead on the essence of things, referring to “what is important and most profound” (Dučić 1932: 442). From the idea of travel the author of *Cities and Chimeras* adopted its educational function, an interest in concrete images of the world and a belief in the possibility of getting to know the Other. Dučić also inherited something of the tourist, although in *Cities and Chimeras* he takes a critical attitude towards this form of travel (Gvozden 2003: 660). He emphasises that someone who stays in a country for a longer period focuses on its essence (its historical conditions, national specificity,

---

16 From 1906 until his retirement in 1927, Jovan Dučić held diplomatic posts in Istanbul, Sofia, Athens, Geneva, and Madrid (1918–1922). In 1929, he returned to diplomatic service, beginning in Cairo. Until his departure from Europe in 1941, he served as ambassador of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in Budapest, Rome, Bucharest, and both capitals of the Iberian Peninsula.

and artistic possibilities), whereas a tourist experiences a foreign place only superficially, and fleeting interest distorts the practice of rigorous cultural description (Clifford 2006: 153).

Although Vučković does not mention the title of Dučić's work, he constructs his accounts in *Read Cities. A Travel Journal* along similar lines to *Cities and Chimeras*. Both writers emphasise the importance of urbanised spaces in shaping the historical destinies of individuals and nations, and this perspective is already visible in the titles of their works. Like Dučić, Vučković depicts the urban landscape in connection with history, architectural works, painting and literature, that is, the products of human intellect. By reading the cultural codes of the cities they visited, both writers created their own spiritual maps of Europe and the world. Showing interest in the sites that he toured and indicating in detail the dates of their construction, appearance and architectural style, Vučković, as a literary historian, also referred to Portuguese achievements in the field of literature, stating that "no name has emerged [...] that has gained recognition among the world audience [...], not even the most famous [...] poet Luís Camões" (Vučković 2010: 462). For unknown reasons, his comment on Portuguese literature makes no mention of the 1998 Nobel Prize laureate José de Sousa Saramago (1922–2010), who interwove the history of his country with myth and surrealist imagination.

Vučković stressed that Portugal compensates for the lack of global recognition of its literary achievements by cultivating the memory of the discoverers of new parts of the world. One manifestation of this was the erection of the Monument to the Discoveries (*Padrão dos Descobrimentos*) in 1940. In 1960, on the five hundredth anniversary of the death of Henry the Navigator, the monument, whose summit commands a panoramic view of the capital, was supplemented with sculptures of prominent figures in the country's history:

Henry the Navigator, [...] King Afonso V, who was the first patron of the voyage, [...] Vasco da Gama, who rounded the Cape of Good Hope and reached India, [...] Pedro Álvares Cabral, who discovered Brazil, [and] Fernando Magellan, who was the first to circumnavigate the world on a Spanish expedition. (*Ibid.*)

Dučić did not agree with calling his own travel notes *putopis* (Serbian for travel description), contrasting his deep reflections on cultures with the superficial impressions recorded by the authors of ordinary travel accounts (Dučić 1932: 442). In the hybrid literary genre of *Cities and Chimeras*, one can nevertheless discern traditional features of travel writing. The work has an autobiographical undertow and also contains cultural analyses, ethno- and geographical observations, literary references and essayistic elements (Gvozden 2003: 657(3)). The author emphasised the dual nature of the travel journal as autobiography, a "novel about myself" (Dučić 1969: 113), but also as a scholarly work, noting that there is no greater skill "than to convey through seemingly naïve art what is the subject of [...] science and erudition" (Dučić 1969: 112–113).

Vučković likewise introduced autobiographical elements into his account and did not refrain from revealing, among other things, his impressions, feelings and artistic preferences ["I will try to give [...] a general picture of everything I saw, experienced and felt" (Vučković 2010: 443); "the journey [...] in beautiful weather was a real pleasure" (Vučković 2010: 449); "Eastern motifs and biblical figures decorate the interior of [...] the church, which – save for its stained-glass windows – has no other pictorial details and therefore corresponds to my idea that a church building should be modest" (Vučković 2010: 453)]. Vučković frequently refers to his own intellectual experiences as well as his private life, mentioning his

wife Mubera Pašić (1945–2007), a Bosnian-Herzegovinian poet and translator from English, born in Sarajevo.

The basic task of the literary presentation of a journey is to balance informational (intellectual) and aesthetic (poetic) functions. A characteristic feature of Dučić's writing is the oscillation between subjectivism and fictionalisation, balancing between "cities" as real spaces and "chimeras" as fantasies about reality (Gvozden 2003: 658). According to the author of *Cities and Chimeras*, a valuable travelogue searches for "great artistic stylistic devices" (Dučić 1969: 113–114), which allow the reader to recognise immediately when the author is not a poet – "one immediately senses a non-poet" (*ibid.*). Dučić claims that the author of travelogues must rationally "receive, differentiate and compare" (Dučić 1969: 112) and at the same time emotionally "feel, love or hate" (*ibid.*). On the one hand, this implies positivist research, and on the other, Dučić's characteristic lyricism (Gvozden 2003: 659).

Vučković, alongside strictly informative details (e.g. the dates of construction of buildings, the number of cities, the length of bridges), does not shy away from poetic language in his descriptions. The stone bridges look "like a canvas stretched over the water" (Vučković 2010: 449); the Belém Tower is "an ancient and elegant beauty wading into the water in white garments" (Vučković 2010: 461–462); the roof of the Oriente train station resembles "tree branches [...] unfurling into the shapes of colossal birds in mid-flight" (Vučković 2010: 463); Lisbon's small trams dart "like goats in the city's ravines" (Vučković 2010: 458); the characteristic mosaics on the pavements resemble "snakes trampled into the ground" (Vučković 2010: 445); the city of Évora evokes a swan "that is poised to take flight, yet is held fast by its stone shackles" (Vučković 2010: 454). The old houses of Sintra "stare into the distance with the dead, empty eyes of their windows" (Vučković 2010: 456), and the city itself "seems [...] to be set in the sky [...] as if conversing with divinity itself" (Vučković 2010: 456), *etc.*

Openness to novelty and otherness is the primary driving force behind a journey, encompassing a range of more or less voluntary practices of leaving "home." Moving to another place is undertaken in order to gain some form of benefit (material, spiritual or intellectual) and involves acquiring knowledge and/or having an experience (Clifford 2006: 153–154). Vučković learned about the possibility of visiting Portugal at a moment when he was preparing to end his foreign travels after two years of intensive journeys. However, the writer's intention was overcome by the desire to find himself once more in a different country, to "wander and see [...] new wonders that humanity has created in its history and present" (Vučković 2010: 440).

The principle governing travel is the appropriation of a foreign reality through analogy. The attitude of the travel writer towards reality is specific, based on a certain kind of selection and comparison. Dučić selects those events and experiences that best correspond to his understanding of encounters with the realities of other nations and cultures; he does not assign equal importance to all details. The absence of impressions from the cities in which he lived for longer periods (Bucharest, Budapest, Sofia, Constantinople) reflects a particular tendency in his writing. The choice of cities and regions included in *Cities and Chimeras* is "biased" in the sense that it places a higher value on the "cultures of the South" in contrast to the "cold North" (Gvozden 2003: 658–659).

The traveller, reconstructing the world according to a familiar model, projects a known pattern of meaning onto a new and different reality. A stay in an unfamiliar space encourages constant comparisons. "The description of here (new, foreign, unknown) evokes the context of there (known, native, one's own, homely), forcing the Self to define its relationship to the space" (Kozicka 2003: 78). The atmosphere

of Porto reminds the author of *Read Cities* of Dubrovnik, as it gives the impression of “similar [...] uniqueness” (Vučković 2010: 445). He also associates the seagulls with Dubrovnik, recalling personal memories connected with “the evocative poem “The Glass Seagull” (*ibid.*), written in 1978 by the writer’s wife, Mubera Pašić. Admiring Porto’s coastal district, Ribeira, from a ship sailing towards the mouth of the Douro River and the Atlantic, the writer recalls Istanbul: “I was overcome with excitement, as it used to be when [...] I was sailing across the Bosphorus between two seas” (Vučković 2010: 449).

Vučković sees a similarity between the neoclassical building of the Porto Stock Exchange and Stockholm City Hall. The eclectic structure of the monastery in Batalha reminds him of “Gaudí’s cathedral in Barcelona” (Vučković 2010: 452). Lisbon’s Alfama district evokes the image of Monastiraki Square in Athens and the “neighbourhoods under the Acropolis” (Vučković 2010: 459). The former Arab quarter of Lisbon summons to mind Sarajevo, and while walking through the Portuguese capital, the writer, who comes from Muslim Bosnia, notices traces of Islamic art, which he associates with cities of the East.

The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the era of mass travel (tourism), which transformed the travel journal and jeopardized its status. The travel journal is largely a didactic text used to convey a variety of information, thus becoming a kind of guidebook (Gvozden 2003: 655). Detailed descriptions of the monuments viewed by Vučković, the precise location of buildings and monuments in the urban space, references to the dates of construction of particular landmarks, and practical information about distances between cities (e.g. Évora, 150 kilometres from Lisbon, the main city of the Alentejo province), as well as the number of inhabitants of cities – Lisbon [“the inner part [...] has 650,000 inhabitants, and the periphery [...] about 2,600,000” (Vučković 2010: 458)]; Coimbra [“150,000 inhabitants in the city centre and 450,000 in the remaining parts” (Vučković 2010: 451)], *etc.* – make the work resemble a Baedeker travel guide. Without abandoning historical reflection in the form of extensive information about the country’s past, the history of the cities which he visited, the fates of historical figures (kings, explorers of the New World, politicians) and detailed descriptions of monuments (statues, cathedrals, churches), Vučković becomes a guide to Portuguese cities, as the reader moves through their spaces according to the route laid out by the writer and represented in the cartography.

In presenting a given fragment of reality, Vučković avails himself of the knowledge and experience of a scholar, reader and tourist. His way of observing and presenting space is reminiscent of *Cities and Chimeras*, not least because of the degree to which his texts are saturated with history and monuments and because of the near-total omission of contemporary events. The few references to the present include mentions of crowds of tourists by the seaside, city dwellers in cafés and on the streets, and street performers, which connect the writer with the contemporary reality he visits and underline his presence in a given place. However, the anonymity of the performers and spectators, as well as the writer’s solitude in the crowd, do not make him a participant but merely an observer. For this reason, Vučković (like Dučić) maintains a distance from the space which he inhabits and describes.

Vučković’s travel experiences are presented in descriptive form, whose reading demands effort and attention from the reader. Vida Ognjenović’s observation that travel reports should be read only when they concern places that the reader knows from personal experience applies to Vučković’s accounts of his stay in Portugal and the other locations included in *Read Cities*, because only then can the reader enter into a dialogue with the writer about the places visited (Ognjenović 2005: 116–117). A reader unfamiliar with the places described in *Read Cities* moves through a thicket of details, just as the author does: through the labyrinth of streets and corners of unknown cities.

## References

42

- Bahtin, Mihail ([1967] 1997) *Smelije se koristiti mogućnostima*. A Collection of Eassays and an Interview translated into Serbian by Nikola Grdinić. *Dometi*. Sombor, god. 24; 90–91, 43–50.
- Barthes, Roland [1957] (2000) [*Guide bleu*. Paris.] Polish translation by Adam Dziadek “Błękitny przewodnik.” [In:] Roland Barthes. *Mithologies*. Translated into Polish by Adam Dziadek. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Aletheia; 130-162.
- Bauman, Zygmunt (2000) *Ponowoczesność jako źródło cierpień*. Warszawa: Sic!
- Clifford, James ([1997] 2006) “Spatial Practices: Fieldwork, Travel, and the Disciplining of Anthropology” Los Angeles.] Polish translation by Sławomir Sikora “Praktyki przestrzenne: badania terenowe, podróże i praktyki dyscyplinujące w antropologii.” [In:] *Badanie kultury. Elementy teorii antropologicznej. Kontynuacja*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN; 139–179.
- Crnjanski, Miloš (1991) “*Kamuinš*.” [In:] Miloš Crnjanski. *Eseji i prikazi*. Novi Sad: Književna zajednica Novog Sada; 248–263.
- Dučić, Jovan (1932) “Jovan Dučić o svojim putopisima.” [In:] *Pregled*. Vol. 97. Sarajevo; 442.
- Dučić, Jovan (1969) *Moji saputnici. Prilozi (kritike, članci, beleške)*. *Sabrana dela*. Knj. 4, prir. Ž. Stojković. Sarajevo: Svjetlost.
- Fejić, Nenad (1988) *Španija u Dubrovniku u srednjem veku*. Beograd:Prosveta.
- Gvozden, Vladimir (2003) “«Gradovi i himere» Jovana Dučića i tradicija evropskog putopisanja.” [In:] Jovan Delić (ed.) *Zbornik Matice srpske za kniževnost i umetnost. Žanrovi u srpskoj književnosti – poreklo i poetika oblika*. Knj, 51 (2003), sveska 3; 649–663.
- Jałowiecki, Bohdan, Marek S. Szczepański (2009) *Miasto i przestrzeń w perspektywie socjologicznej*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.
- Kowalski, Piotr (2002) *Odyseje nasze byle jakie. Droga, przestrzeń i podróżowanie w kulturze współczesnej*. Wrocław: Atla 2.
- Kozicka, Dorota (2003) *Wędrowcy światów prawdziwych. Dwudziestowieczne relacje z podróży*. Kraków: Universitas.
- Lučić, Milka (2010) “Naš vodič Don Kihot.” [In:] Milka Lučić (ed.) *Mediterranska ceremonija. Sentimentalni dnevnik s putovanja po Sredozemlju i njegovim imaginarnim rukavcima*. Beograd: Službeni glasnik; 94-126.
- Miłkowski, Tadeusz, Paweł Machcewicz (1998) *Historia Hiszpanii*. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich.
- Nastić, Dimitrije (2012) *U vrtovima Andaluzije*. Beograd: Ljiljana Nastić – izdavač.
- Ognjenović, Vida (2005) *Putovanje u putopis*. Zrenjanin: Gradska narodna biblioteka “Žarko Zrenjanin”.
- Petrović, Mihailo (1998) “Okolo Azorskih ostrva. Putopisi.” Drugi deo. [In:] Mihailo Petrović *Sabrana dela 12*, prired. Slobodanka Peković. Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike; 273–297.
- Stojanović, Jasna (2005) *Servantes u srpskoj književnosti*. Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike.
- Wojciechowski, Krzysztof H. (1986) *Problemy percepcji i oceny estetycznej krajobrazu*. Lublin: UMCS.
- Vučković, Radovan (2010) *Čitanje gradova. Dnevnik putovanja*. Beograd: Službeni glasnik.

Received:  
03.03.2025  
Reviewed:  
03.05.2025  
Accepted:  
18.05.2025