

*A Personal Microcosm. The Collection as Identity of Eugenio Popovich**

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The Whole World in One Closet Shut

Beginning with the earliest examples of collecting and consequently the possession of a collection, embedded in itself the plurality of narratives – the ideological, collective and personal ones. From the earliest *Wunderkammers* of Ferrante Imperato, Maximilian I, Rudolph II, Lorenzo il Magnifico and later Francesco I Medici, John Tradescant and Aldrovandi the desired aim was to replicate the image of the world and make it one's own¹. The understanding of the collection as a microcosm of the world, natural and artificial alike, was firmly established from the mid-fifteenth century. Those collected artefacts were not only objects of desire, but the testimonies of the world beyond our usual grasp, a glimpse of the totality of the Divine creation. As a biographer of Emperor Maximilian I stated of his collection: *the universe was thereby shown to be under control of the Emperor*².

A particular impetus to this tendency was made with the discovery of the New World and the, up to then, unknown species and collectables. Henceforth, as the worldview of the early modern man expanded so did the horizons of the *Wunderkammer* (*Ibidem*: 137-155). From the luxurious cabinets they slowly grew into entire rooms and sometimes even the independent edifices devoted solely to the self-display of its owner. The encyclopaedic collections of rare and wondrous objects easily performed two functions for their owners – they represented them as the dominators of the universe and satisfied their need for the prime aesthetic principle of the time, the marvellous. As the age of reason approached, the character and correspondingly the function of a collection as an image of the world, evolved into the collection as a form of educating the nation, as a way of bringing the betterment to the world. Thus, it is not surprising that the first public museums had their origins at that time, from the British museum to the Louvre.

* I would like to express my deep gratitude to friends and colleagues who helped me in my adventurous discovery of the life and collection of Eugenio Popovich: Prof. Marija Mitrović, University of Trieste - she was the one who brought me to Trieste and helped me discover the curious persona of Eugenio Popovich. From Civici Musei di Storia ed Arte di Trieste: Dr. Antonella Cosenzi, Dr. Tiziana Gianotti, Dr. Michella Messina and Dr. F. Tissi-Santorini.

¹ For more information on the concept and function of the wunderkammer see Impey, MacGregor 2001; Arnold 2006.

² For Habsburg collections see da Costa Kaufmann 1997: 140.

Apart from the basic reading of a collection as the ‘world in one closet shut’ every compilation of artefacts had another vital function – to reflect the cultured identity of its owner. From its early modern beginnings the collection was both the display and legitimation of the owner’s elite status in the world (*op. cit.*: 137-155). It represented or fabricated for him the symbolic image of power denoting his place in the political arena of the early modern Europe. Both the works of art and works of nature in a collection stood as visual testimonies of the political or personal ideology of its creator. On the one hand was the collecting for public esteem and aristocratic display that drew its origins from the classical world and the Aristotelian concept of magnificence. The classical striving for magnificence denoted a public virtue of embellishing and enriching one’s city or one’s state. It was perceived almost as a duty of each wealthy member of the community to contribute in art or wealth to its wellbeing and its prosperity. It was an overt demonstration of power enfolded into a beneficial act that was in the basis of collections’ creation.

At the core of the impetus for collecting stood yet another, even more important reason, the will to present or reinvent oneself. Assembling a collection not only helped its possessor to gain a greater knowledge of the world, but enabled others to acquire the knowledge of the owner himself. It was the emergence of the concept of *man as possessor*, of an ideal self manifested in the figure of the owner. It could be said that collections served as symbolic imprints of identity, individual, social or, at a later date, national. As Da Costa Kaufmann clearly states in his description of the collection by Francesco I de Medici:

The need to legitimize the Grand Duke of Tuscany and his dynasty meant that the glorification of the prince, the celebration of his deeds, and the power of his family had constantly to be exposed to the eyes of the all, to be firmly impressed on the mind of every subject. (da Costa Kaufmann 1997: 142-143)

Paintings and sculptures were collected to depict the collector’s sense of identity both personal and communal. They were considered distinguished markers of status as embodiments of high culture. The ability to understand and interpret art was considered a sign of refinement and a reflection of one’s financial abilities. The combination of the historical and religious subject matter, with a more personal family portraiture, ensured that the image of the collector would be woven into the fabric of his family history and a greater narrative of the world (*Ibidem*: 142). Therefore, it could be proposed, that the purpose of collecting always involved not only the processes of presentation and assertion, but also the one of formation or fabrication of the collector’s self.

In this context I am going to examine the legacy and the collection of Triestine diplomat and adventurer Eugenio Popovich (1841-1931). Eugenio Popovich is commonly known for his work as lawyer, writer, owner and the main foreign policy commentator of *Il Diritto* magazine and, above all, as Garibaldi’s key collaborator in the war for the Unification of Italy. Among his other noteworthy activities were mediations between the Balkans and the Italian state and the post of the first Montenegrin consul in Rome.

Although not generally known as a collector, he left as his bequest to the city of Trieste a collection of prints, paintings and a rich library. Compiled during his truly remarkable life the artworks and books stand as his symbolic portrait, the collection acting as his other self.

Collecting One's Own Identity

Eugenio Popovich came from a notable and prosperous merchant family from Boca di Cataro (Boka Kotoroska)³. His father Drago Popovich was both an eminent merchant and a ship owner. With his ships *Dositej*, *Eugenia* and *Navigazione* he not only made his fortunes, but took a very active part in the wars for Greek independence and was victorious at Negroponte. After the war these ships were among the most valuable ones in his mercantile fleet that connected the trading ports of the Azov, the Black Sea and the Adriatic. His commercial connections spanned the large area between Russia, Serbia, London, Rome and Trieste. In 1840 he married Eugenia d'Angeli from a respectable Triestine family which gave several city chancellors,

One could say that cultural and military backgrounds of his parents, if not explicitly then surely implicitly, influenced the course of Popovich's life as a fervent patriot and a man of arts and letters. Shortly after their marriage, following Drago's commercial interests, his parents moved to the Azov see and the town of Berdjansk where Eugenio Popovich was born. In 1846, when Eugenio Popovich was only five years old, Drago Popovich moved back to Trieste where he remained until the end of his life. He was warmly welcomed in Trieste and became one of the eminent members of the Triestine mercantile society. He built a large palace on Corso dei Pescatori that remained the home of his family well into the twentieth century⁴.

From the beginning of his life in Trieste Drago Popovich enrolled his son in the best schools including the Lyceo of Capodistria. Growing in such an environment Eugenio Popovich had every chance of becoming a man of letters and a respected intellectual of his time. However, no one could foresee the polyvalent influence he would have both in Italy and in his country of origin. In 1853 he finished the Lyceo of Capodistria where, as his few biographers like to indicate, he made a friendship that would most influence his life – with the future king of Montenegro Nicola (*Nikola*) I. In the following years Eugenio Popovich after having finished law studies in Graz, Pisa and Bologna, he began to work as a journalist. At that time he had already worked with the revolutionary anti-Austrian movement⁵. While studying in Pisa Eugenio Popovich made another

³ The longer version of Eugenio Popovich's biography is published in Italian Todorović 2010: 195-208.

⁴ For Serbian palaces in Trieste see Mitrović 2007.

⁵ The document is kept in Archivio Popovich, Museo di Storia di Patria Trieste (later MSPT) Popovich, 8/ 840.

crucial friendship with the young prince of Savoy. By 1865 when he finished his specialization in law in Bologna he had already encountered Garibaldi and was a fervent supporter of the idea of the Unification of Italy. In the following years, during the war with Austria and the one for the Unification he fought on the side of Garibaldi although his Triestine background would have made him a soldier under the Austrian flag.

From 1873 he worked in Florence and Rome for several newspapers *Amico del Popolo*, *Adige*, *Adriatico*, *Tempo*, signing his contributions as Eugenio Tergesti and specializing in the political issues of the Adriatic question, particularly in the Balkans and Montenegro. The specialization in these issues, well before he became the Consul of Montenegro is also evident, as we shall see further, from the rich library he left to CMSA. His knowledge of the Balkan politics took him to Bosnia and Herzegovina where he spent two years (1875-79) as a war correspondent during the insurrection. In the Montenegrin uprising against the Ottomans he was as involved as any Montenegrin patriot and in that endeavour had a firm support of Garibaldi himself⁶.

In the following years he became a close collaborator of Garibaldi and fought in the wars for the Unification of Italy throughout the Apennine peninsula.

In one of his more famous portraits, displayed in the permanent exhibition of the Museo Oberdin in Trieste, we are confronted with a fitting image to the role of the young Garibaldist (fig. 1) (CMSA inv. No. 13/3910). It is a bust portrait placed in the then fashionable oval shaped frame (now unskillfully framed in a rectangular one). He is slightly turned towards the spectator, displaying fully his resolute face and his military red vestment of a Garibaldi supporter. Although painted with a modest skill this portrait still communicates the presence of one of the important men in the Italian Risorgimento. By the simplicity of the rendering and the sombre grey background it could be marked as a military portrait of the time, destined not for the show-piece image in the military headquarters after Risorgimento, but much more a contemporary visual document of the Italian liberation.

The next pivotal moment in Popovich's career came in 1896 when he was involved in the delicate negotiations between Montenegro and Italy that resulted in the royal marriage between the houses of Petrovich and Savoy. Achieving such a diplomatic success, the Montenegrin king Nicola I appointed him, in the following year, as the official Consul of Montenegro in Rome, and he remained in that capacity almost until the last years of his life.

As the Consul of Montenegro, Popovich was involved in a large number of successful political and economic negotiations between Montenegro and Italy. He took part in industrial and maritime partnerships (See Tissi-Santorini 2005; and Maserati 1996: 73-74). He also acted as a mediator in the Italian and Montenegrin relationships with the Austrian Habsburg monarchy and developed his major strengths in the issues of the Balkan politics. Considering his revolutionary past and his position of the official representative of Montenegro,

⁶ MSPT, Archivio Popovich doc. 5534.



Fig. 1
Eugenio Popovich as a Garibaldist,
Civici musei di Trieste (CMSA inv. No. 13/3910)

Popovich's offices in the Consulate in Rome became the key meeting point for all supporters of Montenegro and Serbia, and even more importantly, for all those who were against the Habsburg hegemony in the Balkans.

He remained in the diplomatic service until he contracted a grave illness in the 1920s and returned to Trieste to devote himself solely to the re-ordering of his collection and prepare the legacy he would leave to the city of his youth.

The Family Identity

In the foundation of every art collection lies the desire for the establishment of one's origins and their further glorification. Thus, a special place has always been given to the presentation of one's lineage, where the gallery of family portraits stands as a pictorial seal of legitimation and a proof of the family's uninterrupted historical continuum. Such galleries of family portraiture present the most private layer of multiple identities that an art collection stages for the viewer. This striving for the assertion and promotion of his familial and social self can be followed through the series of family portraits that Eugenio Popovich left to the Musei Civici and Museo Rivoltella in Trieste.

At the time when in 1799 Cristoforo Popovich, the founder of the family came from Bocche di Cattaro to the city, Trieste was undergoing a rapid transformation from the small town in the region of Friuli to the second most thriving commercial city in the Austrian Empire (see Dogo 2007). In the span of less than fifty years (from 1751-1800s), merchants from all corners of the Empire migrated towards this large port in the north of the Adriatic seeking their fortunes and their own personal metamorphoses. It was a city in the making, a communal work in progress that resulted in one of the most vital merchant communities of the time. In such surroundings, the Popovich family remarkably quickly established itself as one of the leading commercial dynasties, their fortunes borne on the powerful sails of their ever increasing fleet of ships. Together with the display of wealth went the desire for refinement nowhere more evident than in the lavish three-quarter length portrait of Eugenio's father Drago Popovich by Giuseppe Tominz⁷.

The three quarter form of the portrait denotes the importance that Drago held among the merchants of Trieste, while his pose and his attire enhance it even further. His face, brightly illuminated, communicates directly with the beholder facing him or her in a complete self-possession and assurance of one of the leading figures of Triestine merchant community. The strong light on his face together with the sharp contrast of his dark hair and pale features make a striking effect. His fashionable hairstyle and elegance of his clothing commu-

⁷ For more information of this portrait see Gregorat in *Jozef Tominiz*, 2002: 116-7 and the catalogue entry on the portrait in exh. cat. *Genti di San Spiridone, Serbi a Trieste 1751-1918*, Trieste 2009: 114.



Fig. 2

Giuseppe Tominz, Portrait of Drago Popovich, 1830-35
(Civico Museo Revoltella Trieste, inv. 684)

nicate to the viewer the refinement of Drago Popovich. He is dressed in a dark suit of heavy luxurious cloth with the silken waistcoat that subtly shimmers in the light. Against the white shirt the black and red embroidered cravat further accentuate the elegance of the entire attire. An additional, albeit discreet, display of status is given through the double golden chain of the watch that falls over his waistcoat and the two personal seals hanging from it. Equally subtle, yet decorative silver tie pin adorns his cravat and adds a slight shimmer of light to his presence. His entire posture, the elegant turn of his body towards the spectator and the languish leaning against the table behind him clearly present Drago Popovich as a man with a firm place in high society.

Drago is placed on a balcony against a dramatic seascape that was one of the characteristic compositional features of Tomniz's portraits of wealthy merchants of Trieste (Gregorat 2002: 114). But the background on this particular portrait also conveys two levels of meaning one personal and the other symbolic. Such representation of ships at sea, behind Popovich, one caught in tempest the other crossing calm seas, is a clear indication of Drago's profession as a captain and a merchant, but also a symbol of the fickle fortunes of every merchant's life. Moreover, the shipwrecked vessel is identifiable as an exact replica of Drago's own ship *Aristide*, painted by Francois Geoffroy Roux, destroyed in the tempest of 1832. The insertion of the ship's portrait into the formal portrayal of its owner denotes that the ship itself was of equal importance for the understanding Drago's persona. One time-honoured motif of many state and aristocratic portraiture: the light vs. the dark, was also employed here to depict Drago Popovich's life. The contrast of stormy and sunlit skies above him, denote Drago as a bearer of light and prosperity not only to his family, but to the wider community in general. It could be said that in this work by Giuseppe Tomniz Drago is given a suave and refined likeness more expected from a Romantic man of letters than of a prosperous merchant.

But that image was exactly what Drago Popovich strove for. His erudition and cultural interests brought him the social prestige and high esteem both in Trieste and in Berdjansk. Apart from the respect he had in Trieste he was two times elected as a civic representative in the city government and figured highly as a mediator for the Dalmatian merchants and captains at Triestine Lloyd. Drago was connected with important historical figures of the time, such as the exiled Serbian prince Mihailo Obrenovic and the king of Montenegro Nicola I. During his lifetime he was fervently supporting the liberation of the Balkans from the Ottoman rule, and held an unflinching belief in the power of the Slavic world, the conviction he so well transferred to his son Eugenio.

Drago Popovich married the daughter of one of the leading families of Trieste, Eugenia D'Angeli, and their wedding was celebrated as a social event of the highest rank. Not just the usual banquet, but several celebrations were organized on this occasion and their marriage was glorified in a panegyric composed to aggrandize their position in the society. In the text of the panegyric, now kept

in the Archivio Popovich⁸, the author clearly borrows his style from the aristocratic examples of that day and uses the language of the courtly and aristocratic occasional poetry to celebrate the union of ‘two illustrious’ Triestine families (the document is presently on display at Museo di Storia di Patria).

Although there are no preserved marriage portraits of Drago and Eugenia Popovich, this panegyric stands as a strong testimony of their times and their social standing.

In the creation of one’s family identity through official portraiture there have often been instances when this identity needed to be enhanced and the ties between members of the family embellished and sometimes even fabricated. To this category of personal historical fiction belongs another important, albeit curious portrait that I would like to single out from Popovich’s collection. This work by Antonio Zona is both an homage to Eugenia d’Angeli and a first likeness of a young Eugenio.

Created in 1842, this double portrait was commissioned by Drago Popovich as a posthumous image of Eugenia D’Angeli Popovich, who unfortunately died only a year after giving birth to young Eugenio. This double portrait had a clear function as posthumous portraits usually do, to serve as a family memento, a pictorial remembrance of Drago’s late wife. Moreover, it was meant to symbolically annihilate the past and create the image that could never have been. Only through this portrait the temporal gap could be erased and little Eugenio could share the space and time with his mother. For that very reason, in order to reconstruct the reality, Zona followed in this work all the conventions of an official family portrait.

In the style of the contemporary society portraits Eugenia D’Angeli is seated in an ornate chair heavily gilded and covered in burgundy velvet, stating her elevated social status. Her shimmering white satin cape lined with mink is casually thrown over the chair giving her appearance an even greater sense of opulence. Eugenia’s dress and her jewellery denote the wealth of her family. The décolletage of her black dress and the sleeves are covered in several layers of expensive lace, while a precious pearl and diamond brooch embellish it even further. The intricate golden and diamond bracelet that coils over her wrist echoes the golden hues of Eugenia’s hair curled in the fashion of the period. A heavy quadruple necklace of large pearls not only continues this narrative of wealth but, according to an established tradition of female portraiture, accentuates the exquisite pallor of her elegant neck. Moreover, paired with the brooch, the pearls speak of the chastity and purity of their wearer. Despite her elegant attire and refined demeanour her likeness seems distant and ethereal compared to a firm presence that emanates from the face and posture of playful Eugenio in her lap. Unlike his mother he is directly facing the beholder, his movements are full of strength and vitality. With great assurance he is clutching his sliver

⁸ *Fauste Nozze di Drago Popovich e Eugenia d’Angeli* MSPT Archivio Popovich 1/3 1.

toy much firmer than he clings to his mother's arm. Although this connection was completely fabricated, the major difference in figures is due to the fact that little Eugenio was painted from life, while the likeness of his mother was taken from an existing portrait. In a small watercolour of Eugenia D'Angeli painted on cardboard between 1835 and 1840 (CMSA inv. 13/2461), also preserved in Popovich's collection, one can clearly see where Antonio Zona took his inspiration from. There is an unmistakable similarity between the positioning of the head on both portraits, the almost identical arrangement of the hair and the expression in her pale eyes. Even the neckline of her dress that sits low on the shoulders is carefully repeated in Zona's work.

The double portrait of Eugenia D'Angeli and her son Eugenio served well to create an idealized image in order to visually reinforce the concept of family identity and it substituted the vital link in Popovich's personal historical narrative.

Of several portraits that are left in Popovich's bequest to the Civici Musei di Storia d'Arte in Trieste, the earliest one depicts him as an eleven year old boy; it is a very good illustration of Popovich's youth in Trieste. Painted by Antonio Zona with whom, as we shall see later in the text, Eugenio Popovich kept a close connection throughout his life, this portrait gives us a fuller indication of how his family wanted to see their son and heir. Painted in the manner inherited from the established tradition of aristocratic child portraiture, he is represented as a miniature adult ready to take over his family trade and fortunes. It is a small oval bust portrait with a simple dark background that sets off the pale and solemn features of young Eugenio Popovich. Dressed as a gentleman of that time, in elegant but sombre black and white, he communicates the solemnity and stiffness usually associated with the official state portraiture. Facing and confronting the spectator he possesses the serious demeanour well above his age, and only the gentle rounded cheeks and the plump lips betray the face of a child. It is not difficult to imagine the orderly high society life planned for the young man in the late nineteenth century Trieste, but there are no indications of his revolutionary, diplomatic and journalistic future career.

The Maritime Identity

As a mercantile pendant to this gallery of family imagery, stands in Popovich's collection an almost equally rich series of ships' portraits. Not unlike other merchant families of Trieste whose fortunes depended on seafaring, the Popovich family carefully constructed the painted embodiment of their commercial power.

The tradition of having the portraits of ships painted, originated in the Mediaeval times when such works of art served as *ex voto* offerings. They were commissioned by the seafarers grateful for their miraculous rescue. These early portraits of vessels used the same established matrix – the depiction of the ship at sea, usually in the tempest, the sign of the divine presence in one of the cor-



Fig. 3

Antonio Zona, *Piccolo Eugenio*, 1853
(CMSA, Inv. 13/2850)

ners of the sky and, most importantly a large inscription denoting the identity of the donor and the description of the peril that the sailor miraculously escaped from. However, these votive images would develop into more profane forms of portraiture from the onset of the seventeenth century. From 1600 onwards, particularly in Holland, the portraits of the ships moved from their specific religious genre towards profane and decorative imagery. In their new role, the ships' portraits were meant to stand far more as symbols of possession, than symbols of gratitude and salvation. There was an entire genre of marine painting that emerged then, with works of art commemorating not just the vessels

themselves, but also entire naval battles and even shipwrecks. Consequently, the atmosphere of the painting became as important as the image of the vessel itself. The centre of this art form was the maritime republic of Holland where artists like Hendrick, Joghem de Vries, and the family of Van de Veldes immortalized the most prized vessels of Dutch merchants. At the same time the marine painting flourished in Great Britain and the entire area of the Mediterranean. The countries on the shores of the Adriatic were strongly linked to the sea and sourced their wealth as well as their power from it. Seascapes depicted there, did not just reflect their maritime success but were also vital components of their respective national identities.

Therefore it is hardly surprising that the marine art and ship portraits flourished in such a successful port as Trieste. The prosperous merchants' families, belonging to that diverse and thriving life of the Triestine society, commissioned regularly images of their ships. The Serbian community and the Popovich family were no exception⁹.

If family portraits established their public and social selves, the portraits of Popovich's ships engraved them even further into the visual map of the Triestine society and enabled their proper social presentation. Eugenio Popovich kept and treasured his own collection of marine paintings as a further testimony of his family's unquestionable place in the history of Trieste.

Ten images of ships nowadays preserved in the Popovich collection, formed part of the original bequest that he left to the Civici Musei di Trieste in 1931. The majority of them are painted by two members of the respected French family of marine painters Roux, Matthieu Antoine and Francois-Geoffroy. Although usually residing in Marseilles where they had their main studio, many painters in this family worked at the key European ports, including Trieste. One of the characteristics of their art were many details they used in the depiction of the sky around the ships and the reddish tints they gave to the sails of the vessels in order to accentuate them¹⁰. Popovich's collection possess the images of the ships that his family owned from the time of his great grandfather Cristoforo to his uncle Spiro at the end of the 19th century. All of these paintings, conceived as a proud seal of the family identity, follow the established model of marine art. The central position in the painting is reserved for its main protagonist – the ship, while the background is given to the calm skies and waters of the Adriatic. Only two of these portraits are devoted to the vessels lost in shipwrecks, the *Aristide* and the *Dositej*. Each is carefully identified by the name and the name of the captain at the lower edge of the painting, and for those lost at sea the date and hour of the wreck is also recorded.

Of particular interest is the painting of the shipwrecked *Aristide* (fig. 4) that sailed under the command of Drago Popovich (CMSA inv. 14/2997) and

⁹ See the catalogue entry of Michela Messina in the exh. cat. *Genti di San Spiridione* (Resciniti et al. 2009: 185-207).

¹⁰ For ship portraits see Buchholz 1997.



Fig.4

Shipwrecked Artistide, captain Drago Popović
(CMSA inv. 14/2997)

unfortunately was destroyed in a storm in 1832. The entire drama of the tempest is contained in the image and the *brigantino* is represented half sunken into the furrowing waves. Only a little boat in the foreground indicates that some were saved from this horrendous storm. This event must have figured greatly in the life of Drago Popovich since he chose to have it included in the background of his formal portrait that we analysed in the first section of the text.

There is hardly a better example to perceive how much these ship portraits were a part of not just Drago's but also Eugenio's *persona publica*, of his self-presentation to the world. Although not a merchant and a captain himself, Eugenio considered these portraits of ships to be a part of his family legacy, a crucial part of his belongingness to the commercial history of Trieste.

The National Identity

Beside these two denominators of his social identity: familial and maritime, Eugenio Popovich's collection, conveys yet another equally significant and similarly formative element of his public self. The image of his national

identity surfaces from his collection, as clearly and poignantly, as the lines of his features on the official portraiture.

As Michela Messina correctly points out (see Resciniti *et al.* 2009: 185-207), Eugenio had always retained a dual sense of national identity, one connected to his Italian roots and the other to his Slavic ones. His Slavic, Montenegrin, belongingness is of particular interest, obvious not only in his diplomatic activity, but also in the structure of his art and book collection. As in his political and diplomatic work where he perpetually strove to act in the best interest and for the betterment of his peoples, in his book and print assemblages he presented the same devotion to his other fatherland. Throughout his life Eugenio Popovich diligently collected the literature and prints connected to the regions of Serbia, Montenegro, or Dalmatia.

The book collection that Eugenio Popovich left to the Civici Musei of Trieste gives us the complete image of his intellectual horizons. From the history of Ancient Rome to the latest publications in literature and arts, auction houses catalogues and surveys of world fairs, he covered the wide interdisciplinary area of the arts, the humanistic and social sciences. The aspect that emerges most vividly, from his entire library, is his perpetual interest in the history and culture of Serbia, Montenegro and the Balkans (there are works such as - *Balkanerlebnisse eines Deutschen Geheimkuriers*, by Joachim von Reichel (CMSA C MISC. 127; *Die Blakanstaaten und ihre Volker: Reisen, Beobachtungen und Erlebnisse*, by von Ernst von Hesse-Wartegg, CMSA STORIA 253). Of course, such interest would be expected from a man who became the first Consul to the Kingdom of Montenegro in Rome, but this interest in politics and culture he cultivated from the earliest days of his work in *Il Diritto*. Not unlike his father who, although a successful merchant and captain, pursued diverse patriotic endeavours that gained him a great esteem among his compatriots and friendship with Nicola I of Montenegro and the count Mihailo Obrenović, Eugenio, as a cultural counterpart to his diplomatic endeavours, always kept close connections with artists, writers and historians from Serbia and Montenegro and devotedly collected their works.

Among the numerous volumes in his library there is a large body of historical literature particularly on Serbia. *Istoriija naroda Serbskog* (The History of the Serbian People) by Dimitrije Davidović and another study of *Serbian History* by Nikola Krstić. The Montenegrin past is covered by publications in no less than three languages, Italian, English and Serbian (*Il Montenegro: le sue origini, la sua storia la sua indipendenza millenaria, la sua attuale posizione giuridica internazionale*, by Enrico d'Aulerio (CMSA STORIA MISC. 131), *Montenegro in History, Politics and War*, by Alex. Devine (CMSA STORIA 260) and *Dika Crnogorska* by eminent historian and author Sima Milutinović Sarajlija. The note on current affairs of Serbia and Montenegro are presented in such current works like *L'Annessione della Bosnia e dell'Herzegovina e la questione Serba* by the Serbian diplomat and famous poet Jovan Dučić, and *L'affare del Montenegro* by Attilio Tamaro. All these books enabled Eugenio Popovich to gain a multifaced view on this subject matter.

He collected with equal interest a wide range of studies on Dalmatia, its history, its customs, its culture and its art. Eugenio's interest in Dalmatia was for its cultural heritage which he shared. The large span of his knowledge of the region its history and art history is visible in these works: *Les ceremonies y fiestas nupciales entre los Morlacos de la Dalmacia* / por Vladimiro Pappafava traducción española [de] Antonio Balbin De Unquera (CMSA FL MISC. 2517); *La costa dalmata e il Monenegro: note di viaggio* / by Alfredo Serristori, (CMSA STORIA 301), *Il dalmatino Giorgio Utjesenovic Martinusio studio* / by Giuseppe Alacevic (Biblioteca storica della Dalmazia; 3), (CMSA FL MISC 6249) 2520, *La Dalmazia: la sua storia e il suo martirio* (CMSA FL MISC. 2158), *La Dalmazia note di viaggio* by Guido Podrecca (CMSA FL MISC. 4152), and *La Dalmazia monumentale* by Adolfo Venturi, Ettore Pais, Pompeo Molmenti (CMSA ARTE 76).

But Popovich's interest in his *patria* was not purely political – he was following with a keen interest the developments in geology, natural sciences (*Appunti di geologica montenegrina*, by Vinasse de Regny (1901), and literature (collected works by poet Marko Tzar, *Poems* by Petar Preradović, *Pesme* by Sundečić, *Luminacija u selu* by Stevan Sremac, *Smrt Smail Age Čengica* by Ivan Mažuranić, *Srpske narodne pjesme* collected by Vuk Srefanović Karadžić and *Život i običaji srpskog naroda*...

What emerges clearly from this short, but rich extract is the highly interdisciplinary nature of his knowledge and this interdisciplinarity corresponds to his sense of national identity of a wider belongingness, reflected with the utmost exactitude in his collection of prints that he also bequeathed to the Musei Civici di Trieste.

The same pattern could be perceived in more than four hundred prints that are noted in the collection – the prevailing number of prints cover the same subject matter as his books. They are related to the areas of Montenegro, Serbia, Dalmatia, Istria... The vedutas of the Dalmatian and Montenegrin cities stand beside the illustrations of the costumes and the daily life features of these places. The excellent prints by Carl Kunz, lithographer from Trieste, record in detail the costumes of Dalmatians both their daily robes and their finery, and Eugenio Popovich collected all 26 of the series. An image of *A Girl from Pag* (*Devojka Paška*) published in the series of Fratelli Battara gives not just a detailed depiction of the female costume from the Adriatic island of Pag but also, as it often happened in such illustrated studies of costume, positions the girl in her Mediterranean surroundings. A belfry in the distance, or a glimmering bay with pine trees in the background were aimed to enliven the stage for these protagonists. Other illustrations in this series, *A Girl from Brač*, *An islander near Zara*, *A Citizen from Dobrota in Bocche di Cattaro*, *A Man from Imotzko* show proud representatives of the people and complement the learned studies he could read in his books.

Equally eloquent are *vedute* and images of particular monuments from the Popovich legacy. Among the most interesting is the image of the *Roman Theatre of Pola* (Inv.no. 16/1571). (fig. 5).



Fig. 5

Roman Theatre of Pola
(CMSA Inv. No.16/1571)

Although from a later date, it is executed in the best tradition of Piranesi and Paninni. This view of this ancient Roman amphitheatre possesses all the evocative powers of the eighteenth century conception of ruins. It has, in the words of Horace Wallpole, the *delightful horror* of all the remains of the once glorious but lost classical past. What was once a grand amphitheatre is now a meadow with peasants and their flock, a fitting elegiac image of transience so beloved by the recorders of classical antiquity. This scene of Pola invites verses by a baroque poet Gryphius *On Vanity: What now is town would be a meadow tomorrow, where a shepherd's child would play with the flocks*¹¹.

* * *

If one can talk of a collection as wealth of one's identity, as an accumulated image of one's self, then Popovich's collection gives us the plurality of his identities, the multiple formative currents of his self. We learn from it about the diverse ways in which he constructed his personal sense of belongingness and his own sense of place.

¹¹ See Gryphius 'Vanity' in Hill, Caracciolo-Trejo 1975: 187.

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