

ROBERT AUTY

PANNONIAN PARALLELS AND DIVERGENCES:
THOUGHTS ON THE HISTORY OF THE CROATIAN
AND HUNGARIAN LITERARY LANGUAGES

From 1102 to 1918 the Kingdom of Croatia was in personal union with the Kingdom of Hungary; and thus, notwithstanding the complex historical vicissitudes which affected both countries, a certain degree of language contact persisted throughout this period. Few traces of this contact are visible in the literary languages of today; and it may be of interest to try to identify parallel and divergent features in their historical development and to seek the historical reasons for both the similarities and the differences. Genetically and typologically the two languages are, of course, extremely divergent, Croatian forming part of the Slavonic subgroup of the Indo-European family of languages, Hungarian being the most westerly member of the Ugrian sub-group of the Finno-Ugrian family, which itself, together with the Samoyedic languages, is a constituent of the wider Uralic group. Typologically Croatian retains to a high degree the Indo-European flexional system, whereas Hungarian, on the whole, still exhibits the characteristic features of an agglutinative language. Lexically Hungarian shows many Slavonic loan-words, but the great majority of them were acquired before, during, or immediately after the Hungarian *Landnahme* (*honfoglalás*) in the late ninth century and do not concern the present study.

In medieval Hungary it was some centuries before the vernacular came into use as a normal means of written communication. Latin, the language of the Church, was also the language of official secular texts and of scholarship (e. g. chronicles). Latin thus fulfilled the 'higher' functions associated with a literary language, and consequently the assumption of these functions by the vernacular was slow. The need to translate certain religious or legal texts into the vernacular for the benefit of those who did not know Latin caused the emergence of texts in Hungarian from the late twelfth century onwards. The dominance

of Latin continued throughout the Middle Ages and may be said to have delayed the development of the vernacular into a literary language. At the same time, however, it must be said that the influence of Latin enabled the vernacular swiftly to develop subtlety and flexibility of expression, once it came to be used for a wider range of functions. In the sixteenth century the Hungarian vernacular became largely emancipated and its use, as well as its development towards some degree of uniformity, persisted despite the Turkish occupation of central and southern Hungary after 1526.

Among the Croats too the development of a written form of the vernacular was in some sense delayed by the predominance of a language originally introduced for liturgical purposes — Church Slavonic. This is not the place to discuss the complex question of how the Church Slavonic language of Saints Cyril and Methodius, and the Glagolitic alphabet in which it was written, reached the Croats probably in the tenth century: suffice it to say that, at any rate by the time the *Bečki listići* were written in ca 1100, we can speak of the existence of a Croatian variety of Church Slavonic. Yet the Croatian situation differed from the Hungarian, in that the liturgical language, which soon became also the medium of a wide range of other religious texts and of secular ones besides, was closely akin to the Croatian vernacular so that the possibility of mutual influence existed and could even be stylistically exploited. Thus there developed in medieval Croatia a broad division between religious texts, where the Church Slavonic elements predominated, and secular ones, where vernacular elements are more numerous.¹ Needless to say, this generalization covers a host of intermediate types of language and, among the vernacular features, of dialect mixture. But we may be sure that all the types of text we have mentioned were felt to be realizations of the national vernacular at different levels and were not ascribed to separate, Church Slavonic or Croatian, languages. Thus, when under the influence of the western renaissance the Latin alphabet replaced the Glagolitic for secular writings and fully vernacular literary works came to be written, first in Dalmatia, these could derive some of their linguistic inspiration from the hybrid medieval tradition.

When we observe the development of the written Hungarian and Croatian vernaculars in the period from the early sixteenth century to the national revivals which began in the late eighteenth century, the first impression is of two quite dissimilar developments. With Hungarian there is a slow, but marked and steady, development towards a unified, more or less normalized, literary language. In the case of Croatian however, the tendency seems to be towards fragmentation; the life of the literary language is polycentric. The greater degree of uniformity of Hungarian is due, above all, to the relatively slight degree of variety between the different dialects. There was no question of local 'literary

¹ See E. Hercigonja, *Povijest hrvatske književnosti 2. Srednjovjekovna književnost*, Zagreb 1975, 30—41.

dialects', even if dialectal features are apparent in the early modern texts. After the Turkish conquest in the first half of the sixteenth century another factor reinforced the trend towards normalization. Both in the *reliquiae reliquiarum* of Habsburg Hungary and in the Turkish-dominated centre and south scribes from different regions came together as the result of war and movements of population; thus, texts written in both areas tend towards dialect mixture rather than local differentiation. By the eighteenth century, as G. Bárcki clearly showed,² normalizing tendencies were very strong, even if we cannot yet speak of a fully normalized literary language.

The Croatian literary language developed, from the early sixteenth century, in a series of clearly distinct regional variants. The štokavico-ijekavica literature of Dubrovnik flourished in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and, while Ragusan literature shared in the general decline of the Republic in the eighteenth century, the language of Dubrovnik still remained a stable and viable vehicle of literature and of a further range of functions besides. If we still feel bound to qualify it as a 'literary dialect', this is because its authority was still regionally restricted.

The čakavica literature which had arisen in sixteenth-century Dalmatia withered away in the succeeding centuries, so that on the eve of the Croatian national revival it could not rival the different forms of štokavica. As čakavica declined, however, the kajkavica of Civil Croatia (Zagreb and the Zagorje), first launched as a self-conscious idiom at the time of the Protestant Reformation, grew in importance, and by the late eighteenth century represented another clearly defined literary dialect. To the variants that have been mentioned there must be added the štokavico-ikavica of Slavonia which developed another regionally restricted form of literary Croatian in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Thus, a superficial view of the early modern history of the two languages would oppose Hungarian uniformity to Croatian fragmentation. If however we try to probe beneath this surface picture we come upon other factors which complicate, but modify, the Croatian picture. First of all there is the consciousness of the fundamental unity of the language. This is expressed in a most striking fashion at the very beginning of the modern period by the use of the term 'Croatian' to describe two very divergent representatives of the vernacular. Bishop Kožičić of Modruš entitled his Missal, printed at his house in Rijeka in 1531, as *Misal hrvacki*,³ and the term is used by him more than once in describing his religious publications. The language of Kožičić's books has not been investigated in detail, but there is no doubt that in essence it is a Croatianized form of Church Slavonic, one of the last exponents of the medieval literary language which has been mentioned earlier. 'Croatian' is also the word used by Marko Marulić, writing only ten

² See G. Bárcki, *A magyar nyelv életrajza*, Budapest 1963, 242 ff.

³ *Misal hrvacki po rimski običaji i čin . . .*, Rijeka 1531, f. 1 r.

years earlier than Bishop Kožičić, to describe his story of Judith (*Judita*): it is, he says 'u versih harvacki složena'.⁴ Yet how different is the Spalatine čakavic of the humanist Marulić from the liturgical language of the books of Rijeka! Despite the differences, both forms of the vernacular are felt by their users to be exponents of a single national idiom. Later, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we find a number of instances of a mixture of dialects, conscious or unconscious. No doubt the dialectal inconsistencies of Petar Zrinjski resulted from his life's experience, moving as he did through territories of different dialectal character. In the case of Pavao Ritter Vitezović the mixture of dialectal elements in his work is probably part of a conscious endeavour to create a common literary language for all speakers of Croato-Serbian dialects. Eighteenth-century grammarians, too, were aware of the essential unity of the 'Illyrian' dialects, even though those who wrote in Dubrovnik may have regarded the Ragusan literary dialect as a kind of *volgare illustre*.

A further unifying factor in the development of the written forms of Croatian was undoubtedly the predominance of štokavic. The language of Dubrovnik, Slavonia, and Bosnia represented different variants of this dialect; and other variants were represented in the spoken idioms of Herzegovina and Serbia. The weakening literary čakavic of the eighteenth century and the territorially restricted kajkavic of Zagreb at the same period represented a less strong current than the common elements in the different varieties of štokavic. We should not however, be prepared to agree with Dalibor Brozović, who has claimed that a štokavic *standard language* existed continuously from the renaissance to the present day.⁵ The regional differences were still too strong for such an interpretation to be a full reflexion of the Croatian literary language before the 1830s. Yet while, in the opinion of the present writer, the action of Gaj and his (mostly nonštokavic speaking) associates in the Illyrian movement must still be regarded as a decisive, historically influential step in the evolution of modern standard Croatian, we may concede that that decision was a natural development arising out of the history and contemporary situation of the language: that this was so would seem to be confirmed by the relatively swift acceptance of the 'southern dialect' by the Croats and by the rapid reduction of the functional spread of kajkavic.

In the first half of the nineteenth century both the Hungarian and the Croatian languages were involved in the process of language reform (Hungarian *nyelvújítás*), a process aiming at the achievement of what Henrik Becker has called *Sprachanschluß*,⁶ the attainment of a position of functional equality with the older literary languages of western

⁴ *Libar Marca Marula Splichianina Vchomse usdarfi Istoria Sfete udouice Iudit u uerfih haruacchi flosena*, Venice 1521 (facsimile reprint Zagreb 1950), f. 1 r.

⁵ Dalibor Brozović, *Standardni jezik*, Zagreb 1970, *passim* and especially 138.

⁶ Henrik Becker, *Zwei Sprachanschlüsse*, Leipzig and Berlin 1948.

Europe. With the Hungarians the process began in the last decades of the eighteenth century; and it soon had political consequences. The demand of the Hungarian Diet in 1790 that Hungarian should become the official language in both Hungary and Croatia was, it is true, unsuccessful; but it was followed by further Hungarian efforts to establish the dominance of Hungarian throughout the territories of the Holy Crown, and equally by a reaction in favour of the Croatian vernacular. Thus the Hungarian and Croatian language reform movements were developing side by side in the first decades of the new century, and there are certain obvious parallelisms. The desire for *Sprachanschluss* meant, above all, the need to expand the lexical stock, especially in the abstract sphere, so that the languages in question might be suitable for use in all areas of life and of written communication. Similar aims were served by similar methods, though, as will be indicated below, the different character of the two languages meant that each of the two language renewals developed its own specific features.

It is difficult to say to what extent either of these movements affected the other. Although the printed sources reveal little interest in, or knowledge of, the Croatian linguistic developments on the Hungarian side — and on the Croatian side the situation is little different — yet we cannot doubt that the multi-national intellectual circles of Pest and Buda were aware of all the linguistic upheavals that were inducing rapid change in the literary languages of the Slavonic and non-Slavonic nationalities of the Empire. The extent and complexity of the intellectual contacts between the different nationalities in Pest-Buda have been illuminated in a series of pioneering studies by László Sziklay.⁷ Nor can we overlook the important role of the Pest University press, which printed a number of works which were of significance in the language reform movements of different peoples, including the Croats. The spirit of language reform was in the air, and we can hardly doubt that, whether by way of influence, emulation, or reaction, the parallel developments were not pursued in isolation but fructified one another.

The similarities between the Hungarian and Croatian linguistic developments in the first half of the nineteenth century were dictated by their common aims — standardization, and the enrichment of the languages (especially lexically) in order to attain the degree of polyvalence (functional variety) that is essential for a fully-fledged national literary language. The differences between them were generated by their genetic and typological diversity. Croatian could turn, when devising a new abstract vocabulary, to more developed Slavonic languages — in particular Czech, whose revival had begun earlier and was already far

⁷ See, *inter alia*, L. Sziklay, »Rôle de Pest-Buda dans la formation des littératures est-européennes« in *Littérature hongroise, littérature européenne*, Budapest 1964, 327—54, and »Ján Kollár magyar kapcsolatai Pesten« in *Szomszédainkról*, Budapest 1974, 118—49.

advanced by the 1830s,⁸ but also Russian — from which, owing to the structural affinity of the Slavonic languages, words could be borrowed with little or no adaptation. Such resources were not available to Hungarian. Of the Finno-Ugrian languages Hungarian was itself the most advanced, and Finnish would have had little to offer for lexical enrichment, let alone the Finno-Ugrian languages lying further afield. Moreover, despite the exposition of Finno-Ugrian linguistic kinship by Sajnovics⁹ and Gyarmathi¹⁰ already in the eighteenth century, there was in the early nineteenth century as yet no sense of affinity such as that which strongly influenced all the Slavonic language-revivals. The new-fashioned Hungarian abstract vocabulary thus developed in isolation, and this isolation was intensified by the purism which replaced German or Latin terms by newly-forged Hungarian ones. Lexical purism, of course, played a not unimportant part in the process of Croatian lexical enrichment; but its effect was to some extent mitigated by the wider Slavonic connexions of many of the new words. Moreover, the agglutinative character of Hungarian combined with the lack of resources from kindred tongues, gave free rein to the formation of the most radical neologisms, thus still further emphasizing its isolated character.

This isolation is, however, essentially a surface phenomenon, affecting form rather than content. Inwardly it may be said that Hungarian and Croatian drew closer during the period of their re-formation. This is so because many of their neologisms were calques drawn from common sources. Thus, while to Croatian *kolodvor* 'railway station', *konobar* 'waiter', *utjecaj* 'influence', *utisak* 'impression' there correspond the externally wholly dissimilar Hungarian words *pályaudvar*, *pincér*, *befolyás*, *benyomás*, these are all, in the picturesque Hungarian expression 'mirror-words' (*tükörszavak*), and what they reflect are the German words *Bahnhof*, *Kellner*, *Einfluss*, *Eindruck*. These are but a few examples of a process which affected large areas of the lexicon of both languages. A consequence of it was a unification of the conceptual worlds of these languages, which both came to reflect a similar view of reality, despite their superficial divergences.

A factor in the development of Croatian which had no analogy in the history of Hungarian was, of course, the relationship between the Croatian and Serbian exponents of the common Croato-Serbian dia-

⁸ It is a special merit of Ljudevit Jonke to have defined and illustrated the influence of Czech on the Croatian literary language: see especially »Češki elementi u hrvatskosrpskom književnom jeziku« in *Književni jezik u teoriji i praksi*, Zagreb 1965², 151—63, »Šulekova brigada u hrvatskoj naučnoj terminologiji«, *op. cit.*, 137—50, and »Slavenske pozajmljenice u Šulekovu« »Rječniku znanstvenoga nazivlja« in *Hrvatski književni jezik 19. i 20. stoljeća*, Zagreb 1971, 161—78.

⁹ *Joannis Sajnovics... Demonstratio idioma Ungarorum et Lapponum idem esse*, Tyrnaviae Nagyszombat/Trnava 1770 (facsimile reprint, Bloomington and The Hague 1968).

¹⁰ Samuel Gyarmathi, *Affinitas linguae hungaricae cum lingua fennicae originis grammaticae demonstrata*, Göttingen 1799 (facsimile reprint, Bloomington and The Hague 1968).

system.¹¹ The relationship between them has, at least since the period of national revival, been governed by antithetical tendencies — attraction and repulsion. This is not the place to discuss this delicate and involved problem; but it adds a complex new dimension to the history of the language of the Croats which cannot be left out of account in any study of that history.

At the present time the surface divergence of the two languages is still very great; but it is probable that the convergence of the conceptual worlds reflected in them is even greater than a century ago, as a result of the unifying factors resulting from the development of modern industrial civilization, factors which affect all the major languages of the world and especially of Europe. The strictly purist attitudes of the Hungarian revival period have been modified, so that more loan-words are accepted in preference to calques. To this extent the isolation of Hungarian is slightly less than it was. Both languages have achieved a high degree of standardization; and Croatian has attained the unification which was one of the aims of the nineteenth-century language-reformers. Memories of past literary dialects are stirred by the flourishing, though small-scale, poetic literature in čakavic and kajkavic; but these functionally restricted idioms, while enriching the creative possibilities of Croatian writers, in no way threaten the unity of the national literary language.¹²

S a ž e t a k

PANONSKE PARALELE I RAZILAŽENJA: RAZMIŠLJANJA O POVIJESTI HRVATSKOG I MAĐARSKOG KNJIŽEVNOG JEZIKA

Iako su hrvatski i mađarski književni jezik genetički i tipološki različiti, ipak su do određene mjere dijelili sličnu povijesnu sudbinu. Čini se da su prije devetnaestog stoljeća mađarske tendencije prema ujedinjavanju književnog jezika bile u kontrastu s fragmentarnim karakterom hrvatskog, koji se odražavao u postojanju različitih literarnih dijalekata. Međutim, usprkos toj očitoj raznovrsnosti mogu se i kod hrvatskog otkriti tendencije prema ujedinjenju koje se manifestiraju: 1) u svijesti o bazičnom jedinstvu jezika, 2) u miješanju dijalekata u djelima stanovitog broja pisaca, te 3) u dominantnoj ulozi štokavskog. U devetnaestom je stoljeću uvođenje purističkih leksičkih neologizama povećalo izvanjske razlike između dva jezika, a u isto vrijeme i njihovu sličnost u odnosu na sadržaj ili »unutrašnju formu«.

¹¹ I take this convenient term from Dalibor Brozović, *op. cit.*, 14.

¹² The present article develops and in some ways amplifies views expressed in an earlier study: R. Auty, »Párhuzamosság és eltérés a magyar, a szerbhorvát és a szlovén irodalmi nyelv történetében« in: *Szomszédtság és közösség. Délszláv magyar irodalmi kapcsolatok*, Budapest 1972, 135—51.