

SLAVIC DIOSCURI: A DISCUSSION FROM THE HISTORY OF CROATIAN-POLISH LITERARY TIES

Slavenski Dioskuri: rasprava iz povijesti hrvatsko-poljskih književnih veza
Tea Rogić Musa. Synopsis, Zagreb–Sarajevo 2021, 251 pp.

Slavic Dioscuri: A discussion from the history of Croatian-Polish literary ties (*Slavenski Dioskuri: rasprava iz povijesti hrvatsko-poljskih književnih veza*), a book by Tea Rogić Musa, is an expression and mature fruit of Croatian-Polish literary friendship. The reason I write »Croatian-Polish« is because it was Croatian authors who sought such literary ties with Polish authors. This work is the first treatise on Croatian-Polish literary ties and their reciprocity in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The fact that a Croatian author was the first to write such a book holds, in my opinion, a great importance for both cultures. Likewise, the choice of the topic, even though niche, deserves praise, as the number of works dedicated to Croatian-Polish literary ties is not large. Besides, the period that the book focuses on has not been covered from a Croatian perspective before.

As the author also emphasises, Croatian-Polish ties in the 19th century are particularly important because it was a time when Illyrism was flourishing and Croatia was being reborn under the influence of the independence movements of Poland, which was then under partition. The Slavophile project of the Illyrian movement achieved a number of Polonophile connections. Please note that the book includes 'literary ties' in its title, rather than the dominance or influence of Polish literature on Croatian literature. These ties are fraternal, they were built on the same level of partnership. The title itself comes from a poem by Petar Preradović, *Slavljanski dioskuri* (*Slavic Dioscuri*, which contains ideas about the fusion of religious and patriotic thought and the suggestion that St Cyril and St Methodius are a metaphor for Slavic brotherhood. Poland and Croatia were also linked by the Christian understanding of God, the statelessness of their nations, and their literary fates, as their literatures were called »peripheral«. According to the author, Croatian literature during both Romanticism and Modernism regarded Polish literature as a guide to the European canon through Slavic literature. Indeed, the influence of Polish literature brought Croatian literature to the aforementioned level. The book also highlights the role of the historiographer in shaping these mutual ties. Croatian-Polish

literary relations have a long tradition of research in Croatian literary historiography, which is also covered in the book.

The main themes of the work of Rogić Musa are the memory of Romanticism, the culture of remembrance in literature, and Neo-Romantic literature, which became a medium for the »new Romanticism«, Modernism and Anti-Modernism. Right at the beginning of the book, the author draws attention to the culture of remembrance and collective memory that are present in the literatures of both nations.

The author dedicated two voluminous chapters to Romanticism. Polish Romanticism provided an inspiration to the Croatian National Revival and Illyrism. An important aspect here is the worldview that was in force at the time: the messianism of Adam Mickiewicz and so-called »romantic thinking« in general, such as in the works of Juliusz Słowacki, Zygmunt Krasiński, and Cyprian Kamil Norwid, and the *realpolitik* in those of Petar Preradović, Stanko Vraz, and Ivan Mažuranić. The synchronic links between Krasinski-Preradović and, above all, Mickiewicz-Vraz are particularly evident, as Mickiewicz was the source of a homogenising poetics that enabled the aesthetic synchronisation of Croatian post-Illyrianism literature with the European paradigm, and this Mickiewicz-Vraz bond was of a purely literary rather than political nature. A significant number of the works of Mickiewicz, the Polish national bard, was translated into Croatian, mainly by Stanko Vraz. The works of Mickiewicz also influenced Franjo Marković. A very important name for Croatian culture, Ljudevit Gaj was also one of the greatest Croatian Polonophiles.

Later on, authors of Croatian literature were also influenced by Stefan Żeromski, Jan Kasprówic, Stanisław Przybyszewski, and Stanisław Wyspiański. Croatian literature followed the poetic and literary traces of Polish literature of the Romanticism and Young Poland (*Młoda Polska*) periods. Among others, a strong connection can be seen between Przybyszewski and Benešić. Julije Benešić was interested in the transmission of Polish literature into the Croatian literary environment and life. He was the central figure of the metonymic culmination of Croatian-Polish literary ties. A very versatile man, he was a Polonist who promoted the works of Polish authors and translated them into Croatian.

Was this Slavic brotherhood fully mutual? Was Polish literature in the Illyrian era the »dominant« one, the »big« culture that provided a model for the »little« Croatian literature? It seems that the influence of Polish culture on Croatian culture was one-sided during this period. It should be emphasised that Croatian literature was poorly known among Poles back in 1830, and interest in it was not so great. Moreover, domestic and foreign influences in Croatian literature were intertwined. The dynamics between Polish and Croatian literatures developed and vigorously

changed according to the political context and the circumstances of social life in both countries at a time when Poland was under partition and Croatia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Such influences of Polish literature on Croatian literature continued until the beginning of the 20th century. It should also be kept in mind that Croatian acceptance of Polish influence had its limits, as authors of the Illyrian period rejected Polish Romanticism where they could not use it for social purposes. In addition to the links between Croatian literature and Polish literature, Rogić Musa provides an in-depth insight into the Illyrism and Modernism periods in Croatian literature and into Illyrian literary circles.

The structure of the book and the narrative is constructed in a clear, linear manner that allows for an insightful and coherent analysis of the mentioned issues. The author takes a comparative perspective and includes the social and historical images of the era in this comparison. The inclusion of the duality of the historical facts in the book is also essential. This is a synthetic study of Croatian-Polish literary relations in a historical-literary aspect, a reciprocal relation of two literary canons.

It is noteworthy that there is a Department of Polish Language and Literature at the University of Zagreb with a long tradition built by Julije Benešić, Zdravko Malić, Dalibor Blažina, Neda Pintarić, and Barbara Kryžan-Stanojević, and which is today led by Đurdica Čilić, Ivana Vidović Bolt, and Filip Kozina. I would like to point out that the author of the book is also a graduate of the Polish Studies Department of the University of Zagreb.

In my opinion as a Croatist, comparatist, Polishist, and representative of Polish culture, the book is very significant, insightful, profound, interesting, and complex. I sincerely recommend this work to both Polish and Croatian readers, and also to readers from different cultural backgrounds. The book may be of particular interest to comparatists as well as Polish Croatists and Croatian Polishists. I hope that the book will reach numerous recipients, including readers who have not been familiarised with Croatian literature so far. I believe that Tea Rogić Musa's book will open an even wider Croatian-Polish window on the world, through which we will look forward to the author's next treatises on Croatian-Polish literary relations.

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