

## CROATIAN-CZECH AND CROATIAN-SLOVAK LITERARY RELATIONS IN NEO-ABSOLUTISM. KEY POINTS\*

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Based on previous research, the author attempts to identify the key points for the research of Croatian-Czech-Slovak literary and cultural relations in the period of neo-absolutism (1852-1859). Citing relevant examples, he refers above all to the abundant correspondence of Croatian, Czech and Slovak intellectuals from that period, and to literary periodicals, which he regards as indicators of the mutual reception of the literary production of these three nations.

**Keywords:** neo-absolutism; Croatian-Czech cultural relations; Croatian-Slovak cultural relations; correspondence; literary magazines

The relations between Croatian, Czech and Slovak writers and cultural activists during neo-absolutism were determined by their pre-existing acquaintances. These acquaintances were made mainly during studies in Prague, Vienna and Pest, and during the revolutionary events of 1848 and 1849. Young Croatian clerics and members of the emerging Croatian middle class met as members of the academic community at that time. The strengthening of Slavic identity and inter-Slavic reciprocity, which reached its peak in the Austrian Empire in the second half of the 1840s, was important for their rapprochement. Along with the strengthening of Slavic solidarity, distrust

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among the Slavic academic youth grew towards their German and Hungarian colleagues, towards the central government, which they considered unfriendly to the Slavic peoples in the Monarchy, as well as towards the Hungarian bourgeois elite, which showed increasingly strong nationalist tendencies. The central figures around whom the Slavic academic youth gathered ideologically were two Slavic revivalists. They were both Evangelicals and native Slovaks: the Slavist Pavol Jozef Šafárik, who lived in Prague until 1833, and the writer Ján Kollár, who was a pastor in Pest until 1849 and then taught at the University of Vienna. During the revolutionary events, some of these young intellectuals participated in the battles against the Hungarian insurgents, and some were on the barricades in Vienna. Most of them were not directly involved in military conflicts. Mutual acquaintances and connections acquired at Central European universities continued to be cultivated through correspondence even after the tumultuous events of 1848 and 1849.

Croatian, Slovak and Czech intellectuals oriented towards the revival, younger as well as middle and older generations, had in common that they were mostly politically engaged in the 1840s. After the revolution, in the conditions of neo-absolutism, they devoted themselves mainly to literary and scientific work, especially philological and historiographical. During this period, two processes can be observed in all three nations. The first one is the centralist disciplining of public and political life through the curtailment of civil liberties and the restriction of self-government, as well as the increased police-informant surveillance of prominent public figures from the revival period.<sup>1</sup> The second important process is, for the Czechs and Croats, the continuation and, for the Slovaks, the beginning of development of specific national non-church elites whose representatives were active in educational and cultural institutions as well as in state offices. From these institutions, far from any explicit political activism, they worked in many ways for the welfare of their own and other Slavic peoples in the Monarchy. I consider their mutual correspondence as one of the valuable starting points, key points for the study of cultural and literary relations of Croats with Czechs and Slovaks in the period from 1852 to 1859. The second key point I see in the mutual literary reception and translation of literary texts from Czech and Slovak into Croatian and vice versa, as well as in cultural reception in the broadest sense of the word, i.e., in the mutual echo of significant events in the social life of the three nations in the fields of education, art and science.

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Šoltés, "Prvé slovenské elity? Slovenskí úradníci v prvých dvoch rokoch neoabsolutizmu," in Adam Hudek, Peter Šoltés et al., *Elity a kontraelity na Slovensku v 19. a 20. storočí. Kontinuita a diskontinuita* (Bratislava: VEDA; Historický ústav SAV, 2019), 282-333.

The correspondence of Croats with Czech and Slovak “socio-semiotic entrepreneurs”<sup>2</sup> during neo-absolutism is preserved by various archival institutions. Efforts to collect and process as many documents as possible on the development of literature and culture in the Czech lands and make them available in one central institution, including documents on the lives, works and legacy of important Czech writers and cultural figures, are of great benefit to research on this subject. This central institution is the Memorial of National Literature in Prague,<sup>3</sup> which was founded in the early fifties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It remains an inexhaustible source for research into Czech ties with other nations, although part of the material kept there has not yet been catalogued and indexed according to the rules of the archival profession. In Slovakia, Literary Archive of Slovak National Library<sup>4</sup> in Martin has a similar function. Croatia, on the other hand, does not yet have a specialized institution, and in order to complete the picture of mutual communication when it comes to Czech and Slovak senders, researchers have to go through several institutions, from the Croatian State Archives to the HAZU Archives and the Manuscript Collection of the National and University Library in Zagreb to smaller local archives and estates, such as the Brlić Family Archive in Slavon-ski Brod. Even the lists of documents whose copies are kept on microfilm in the Croatian State Archives in Zagreb, indicate in the funds entitled “Correspondence of Croatian cultural and political workers with Czech cultural and political workers (1845-1931)” and “Correspondence of Croatian cultural and political workers with Slovak political and cultural workers (1855-1910)” that the originals are archived in the Institute of History of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences,<sup>5</sup> and most of the documents listed there are now kept in the LAPNP archives. When Milorad Živančević warned about important sources on Croatian contacts with Czech and Slovak intellectuals in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the material he was referring to was still in the National Museum in Prague.<sup>6</sup> When preparing Franjo Rački’s letters to Prague<sup>7</sup> and Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski’s letters to Pavol Jozef Šafárik,<sup>8</sup> Ivan Pederin also referred to the “Literární arhiv Národního musea” in Prague.

<sup>2</sup> Itamar Even-Zohar, “The Role of Literature in the Making of the Nations of Europe: A Socio-Semiotic Examination”, *Applied Semiotics / Sémiotique appliquée* 1 (1996): 20-30.

<sup>3</sup> Literární archiv Památníku národního písemnictví. Hereinafter: LAPNP.

<sup>4</sup> Literárny archív Slovenskej národnej knižnice.

<sup>5</sup> Historický ústav Československé Akademie věd.

<sup>6</sup> Milorad Živančević, “Prilozi proučavanju hrvatske književnosti XIX stoleća”, *Rad JAZU* 355 (1969): 6

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ivan Pederin, “Pisma Ivana Kukuljevića Sakcinskog Pavlu Josefu Šafařiku o glagoljici”. *Croatica et Slavica Iadertina* 3 (2007): 231-260.

Dealing with the correspondence between various leading figures in the literary and cultural life of the Croats, Czechs and Slovaks in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as part of my earlier projects, I gained the impression that its importance for knowledge of the connections between these three peoples came to the fore precisely during neo-absolutism. At that time, due to increased state surveillance, the political activism among prominent Slavic intellectuals in the Monarchy was to some extent replaced by literary and general cultural activism and scientific, mainly historiographical and philological work. Through the letters they exchanged, often forwarding them to third parties, one can glimpse a kind of network of Slavic solidarity through which they cooperated in various aspects of improving the development of their peoples on the cultural level. In this way, they cultivated their mutual ties that will serve them when the circumstances for political activism are ripe. Šafárik, whose immense estate is probably one of the richest sources for understanding Croatian-Czech and Croatian-Slovak ties, especially during the neo-absolutism era, was particularly committed to building such a network. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Czech Academy of Sciences and Arts launched an ambitious project to publish this material, but it was stopped by the First World War. Šafárik's estate has been preserved on various sites, part of it is kept by the aforementioned LAPNP, and only his extensive correspondence with Russian scientists, edited by Vladimír Andrejevič Francev, has been published from the entire project.<sup>9</sup> It is known that as part of the project, at least part of the letters that Šafárik received from Croatian and Serbian senders as a student in Prague at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were transcribed by Milan Prelog, and some of these transcriptions are kept alongside the originals in the same institution.<sup>10</sup> During my previous research into Croatian-Czech and Croatian-Slovak literary and cultural literary connections, I became convinced on several examples how valuable Šafárik's correspondence is in the study and research of this topic. One of these examples is his correspondence with the Croats in the context of the renewal of the Cyrillo-Methodian cult as an important thematic focal point of Slavic revivalist movements in the Monarchy. Namely, one of Šafárik's last major projects was the effort to publish Croatian Glagolitic manuscripts.<sup>11</sup> In doing so, he sought help mainly from Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski, Matija Mesić and Antun Berčić from Zadar, about which extensive correspondence has been preserved and partly published.<sup>11</sup> For this purpose, he made moulds for Glagolitic letters at the printing office of

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<sup>9</sup> Vladimír Andrejevič Francev, *Korespondence Pavla Josefa Šafařika. I. Vzájemne dopisy P. J. Šafařika s ruskými učenci (1825–1861)*. Praha: Česká akademie věd a umění, 1927–1928.

<sup>10</sup> Miloš Sládek, "Pokusy o souborné vydání Šafařikovy korespondence", *Acta Musei Nationalis Pragae – Historia litterarum* 58 (2013): 41–44.

<sup>11</sup> Zoe Hauptová, "P. J. Šafařik a hlaholice", *Slovo* 56–57 (2006–2007): 197–207.

the Haase Brothers in Prague. He printed Berčić's work *Chrestomathia linguae veteroslovenicae caractere glagolitico e codicibus, codicum fragmentis et libris impressis* (Prague, 1859) with these moulds shortly before his death. At the end of the fifties, Franjo Rački also corresponded briefly with Šafárik regarding the publication of Glagolitic texts, and after Šafárik's death in 1861, Rački often addressed the Slovak philologist and codifier of the Slovak language, Martin Hattala.<sup>12</sup> He asked Hattala for help and advice in preparing Assemani's evangeliary, which he published in 1865 as the first complete edition of a Glagolitic monument.<sup>13</sup> As another important example of the study of correspondence between intellectuals for the knowledge of Croatian-Slovak and Croatian-Czech cultural relations in the neo-absolutist era, I would highlight Matija Mesić's correspondence with his Czech and Slovak contemporaries. Mesić's role in the development of Croatian secondary education has not been sufficiently valorised to date. His correspondence with Šafárik's son-in-law Josef Jireček, a representative of the Czech administrative elite in Vienna, who was employed in various positions in the hierarchy of the Ministry of Worship and Education during neo-absolutism, is available. Through their letters, we can trace the difficulties Mesić encountered when writing, translating and adapting numerous high school textbooks into the Croatian language. In these textbooks, he took pioneering steps in creating basic scientific terminology from, for example, geography.<sup>14</sup> In addition to Jireček, Mesić also consulted with other Czechs and Slovaks regarding methodology of creating textbooks, primarily with his professor from Prague Václav Vladivoj Tomek and the aforementioned Šafárik and Hattal. Mesić's cooperation with Czech and Slovak circles will extend into the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and will have an impact on the formation of the personnel core of the Zagreb University, along with Mesić as its first rector.<sup>15</sup>

Mutual literary and cultural reception is the second key point of Croatian-Czech and Croatian-Slovak literary and cultural relations in the period in question. In the circumstances of reduced political activity, it gained additional value as a means of international communication. Their mutual political relations were replaced to a certain extent by the literary relations of the

<sup>12</sup> Vladimír Zagorský, *François Rački et la renaissance scientifique et politique de la Croatie (1828-1894)* (Paris, 1909): 245-249; Ivan Pederin, "Pisma Franje Račkoga u Prag. Pisma Franje Račkoga Františku Palackom, Josefu Jirečku i Aloisu Vojtěhu Šemberi". *Croatica et Slavica Iadertina* 4 (2008): 347-379, Marijan Šabić, "Pisma Franje Račkoga u Prag. Bohemističke i slovakičke dopune", *Croatica et Slavica Iadertina* 6, no. 6 (2010): 195-215.

<sup>13</sup> Ivanka Petrović. "Franjo Rački – otac hrvatske Cyrillo-Methodiane", *Zbornik Zavoda za povijesne znanosti Istraživačkog centra JAZU* 9 (1979): 84.

<sup>14</sup> Šabić, Černý, *Matija Mesić*, 85.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 172-179.

three nations, which intensified from the revival period to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century from a complementary aspect as well. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (with the disappearance of the common state, mutual relations will weaken significantly) we can thus speak of a specific Croatian-Czech and Croatian-Slovak inter-literary community, as defined by Zvonko Kovač in the terms set by Dionýz Ďurišin.<sup>16</sup> As a starting point for the study of literary reception, we have at our disposal several bibliographic aids,<sup>17</sup> synthetic works and anthologies,<sup>18</sup> from which it is already clear at first glance that the inter-literary communication of Croats with Czechs and Slovaks in the 19<sup>th</sup> century cannot be observed exclusively through monographic translations. In the 1850s, a certain number of book editions were published in the Croatian language, but they were mostly translations and adaptations of school and scientific books, rarely translations of fiction. Unlike textbooks, which were financially supported by the state through the Ministry of Worship and Education, monographically published fiction was supported only by Matica Ilirska or a few sponsors. The majority of Croatian literary production in this period, as well as throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was published in literary magazines. This is the main reason why Vinko Brešić asserted that recent Croatian literature was nurtured precisely in literary periodicals as its new medium.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Zvonko Kovač, "Slavenske međuknjiževne zajednice – južnoslavenski literarni konteksti", in Zvonko Kovač, *Poredbena i/ili interkulturalna povijest književnosti*, (Zagreb: Hrvatsko filološko društvo, 2001), 159-162.

<sup>17</sup> Oton Berkopec, ed. *Česká a slovenská literatura, divadlo, jazykozpyt a národopis v Jugoslavii: bibliografie od r. 1800 do 1935: knihy a časopisy = Les belles-lettres, le théâtre, la philologie et l'ethnographie tchèque et slovaque en Yougoslavie: bibliographie depuis 1800 jusqu'à 1935: livres et revues* (Praha: Slovanský ústav, 1940); Karolína Skwarska et al., ed. *Slavica v české řeči. I. České překlady ze slovanských jazyků do roku 1860. 2., dopl. vyd.* (Praha: Slovanský ústav, 2002); Vinko Brešić, ed., *Bibliografija hrvatskih književnih časopisa 19. stoljeća. Svezak 1, Danicza (1835) – Dragoljub (1867)* (Zagreb: Filozofski fakultet, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> Václav Žáček a kol., *Češi a Jihoslované v minulosti: od nejstarších dob do roku 1918.* (Praha: Academia, 1975); Zlatko Klátik, *Slovenská a juhoslovanvska literatura: Vývinové aspekty medzilit. vztahov* (Bratislava: Veda, 1987); Ján Jankovič, *Chorvátska literatúra v slovenskej kultúre. I. (do roku 1938)* (Bratislava: Ústav svetovej literatúry SAV, 1997); Dubravka Sesar, "Recepcija slovačke filologije i slovačke književnosti u hrvatskome tisku 19. stoljeća", in *Hrvatska/Slovačka. Povijesne i kulturne veze (Slična sudbina i zajedničke osobnosti) = Chorvatsko-Slovensko : historicke a kulturne vztahy : (podobny osud a spoločne osobnosti)* (Zagreb: Društvo hrvatskih književnika, 1998), 67-92; Marijan Šabić, "Hrvatska književnost i kultura u Mikovčevu 'Lumíru' (1851. – 1862.)", *Književna smotra* 39, no. 1 (2007): 113-122; Marijan Šabić, *Iz zlatnog Praga: češka književnost i kultura u hrvatskoj književnoj periodici 1835.-1903.* (Zagreb: Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Filozofski fakultet, 2008); Peter Stehlík, "Přehled dějin česko-chorvatských vztahů". (2017), accessed May 21st 2023, [http://www.kroatistikabrno.cz/stehlik\\_studie\\_ii.html](http://www.kroatistikabrno.cz/stehlik_studie_ii.html).

<sup>19</sup> Vinko Brešić, *Čitanje časopisa: uvod u studij hrvatske književne periodike 19. stoljeća* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 2005), 18-22.

In addition, magazines, most often on their last pages, also published ads for subscriptions to a small number of domestic book editions, so they also influenced the development of Croatian literature from that aspect. Political periodicals, which normally brought cultural news from the Slavic world in the supplement, were significantly reduced in all three nations in the fifties, so we can also consider literary magazines as the main indicators of their mutual cultural reception and creation of new inter-literary communities.

Mutual literary reception on the pages of Croatian, Czech and Slovak literary magazines took place in two ways. Firstly, through translations, published mainly in the primary part of the magazine (as opposed to newspapers, which occasionally published them “below the line”). Secondly, through texts about literary works (reports, reviews, overviews) and writers (biographies, obituaries, news, etc.), mostly in the secondary part of the magazine, usually entitled *Podlistak* or *Feuilleton*. The small number of such journals makes it easier for researchers to study mutual literary reception. During neo-absolutism, the only true fiction magazine in the Czech Republic was *Lumír*, edited by Ferdinand Břetislav Mikovec,<sup>20</sup> and in Croatia it was Bogović’s *Neven*. Slovaks did not have a literary magazine at the time, but relied on calendars, almanacs and periodicals,<sup>21</sup> as well as *Světózor*, which was published as a supplement to the regime’s *Slovanské noviny* in the “Old Slovak” (basically Czech) language standard. Even in such a scarce magazine production, Slovak literary translators managed to publish Kukuljević’s travelogue *Putovanje po Bosni* and Bogović’s story *Hajduk Gojko*. In the Czech Republic, however, the reception of Croatian literature was much richer, led by the aforementioned *Lumír*, in which translations of prose texts by Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski, Ivan Franjo Jukić, Mirko Bogović and Janko Tombor, fragments from Gundulić’s *Osman* and Mažuranić’s *Smrt Smil-age Čengića* were published, as well as adaptations of Croatian folk songs and verses by Petar Preradović and Napoleon Špun-Strižić. If we add to that the translation of Franjo Rački’s text entitled “Jihoslovanská literatura”, a comprehensive review of Bogović’s play *Frankopan* written by Jan Vaclík, and other smaller contributions (about the content of *Neven*, repertoire of the Zagreb theatre, Matica’s work, new books, etc.), we can conclude that *Lumír* presented Croatian literature to the Czech literary and cultural public through the authors of the best literary works published in the forties and the fifties.<sup>22</sup> Apart from *Lumír*, Czech translations from Croatian literature and news from Croatian cultural life appeared in the fifties

<sup>20</sup> Josef Galík et al., *Panorama české literatury: (literární dějiny od počátků do současnosti)* (Olomouc: Rubico, 1994), 129.

<sup>21</sup> Karin Schlosárová, *Slovenské literárne časopisy, almanachy a zborníky do konca 19. storočia* (Bratislava: Matica slovenská, 1991), 12-13.

<sup>22</sup> Šabić, “Hrvatska književnost i kultura”, 120-121.

to a lesser extent in illustrated and entertaining magazines and calendars (*Obrazy života*, *Zlaté klasy*), scientific magazines (*Časopis Českého museum*) and newspapers (*Pražské noviny*). The Croatian reception of Czech and Slovak literature in the fifties is mostly due to Bogovič's *Neven*, which, although it was published for only seven years (1852-1858), devoted a surprising amount of space to Slovak themes on its pages, for example to the translation of the historical romantic novel *Bratova ruka* by Ján Kalinčiak and contributions about the life and work of Ján Kollár, Martin Hattala and the important Slovak classicist poet Ján Hollý.<sup>23</sup> As far as the reception of Czech literature and culture is concerned, in comparison to the previous magazine reception (here I am thinking above all of Gaj's *Danica* and Vraz's *Kolo*, less so of *Zora dalmatinska*), there are two new, important aspects in *Neven*, from which the appearance of texts on Czech topics should be observed. The first aspect is poetic and refers to determination of the position of translated Czech literary texts in the context of the affirmation of artistic prose in Croatian literature, because the translations of Chocholoušek, Vocel, Nebeski, Košín and Hálek fit into the process of the development of the Croatian novella as a means of creating the widest possible Croatian literary audience. Another important aspect is the receptive one, because in *Neven*, a process of affirmation of the "European" wing of Czech Romanticism took place, as defined by Jakobson. Its main and, according to some, the only representative in the thirties was Mácha,<sup>24</sup> who during his lifetime (1810-1836), and not even a decade after his death, was not particularly favoured by the Czech literary criticism.<sup>25</sup> The translation form of the Croatian-Slovak-Czech mutual literary reception during neo-absolutism, as can be seen from the pages of literary periodicals, was mainly focused on literary texts that thematized the heroic history of the Slavic peoples and the struggle of the South Slavs against the Ottomans. Mirjana Sertić once concluded that exactly such stories, published in *Neven*, were the forerunners of the Croatian historical novel.<sup>26</sup> In this context, it is clear that Czech and Slovak prose proved to be close to Croatian in terms of their themes and poetics, so that through translation of stories they participated in sensitizing the Croatian audience to the new, post-Ilirian phase of Croatian romantic literature.

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<sup>23</sup> Sesar, "Recepcija slovačke filologije", 80-81.

<sup>24</sup> Galík et al., *Panorama české literatury*, 110.

<sup>25</sup> Šabić, *Iz zlatnog Praga*, 57-73.

<sup>26</sup> Mirjana Sertić, "Stilske osobine hrvatskog historijskog romana", in *Hrvatska književnost prema evropskim književnostima od narodnog preporoda k današnjim danima*, edited by Aleksandar Flaker and Krunoslav Pranjić, (Zagreb: Liber, 1970), 180.

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