



# **Slovenian Manuscripts of the Late Baroque: Literary Tradition Defying Enlightenment Censorship**

Slovenski rokopisi poznega  
baroka: kljubovanje  
literarne tradicije  
razsvetljenski cenzuri

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Slovenian literature of the early modern period is characterized by a fact common to some smaller European literatures: because of difficult access to printing, manuscript culture played an important role in this literature from the early seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. For certain literary genres of this period, the existence of texts, their textual transmission, distribution, and reader reception could be based almost exclusively on the medium of the manuscript. When Enlightenment censorship began to suppress Baroque Catholic literature in the late eighteenth century, Slovenian manuscript culture was a means of perpetuating the literary tradition in a persistent and creative way. This article outlines six groups of Slovenian manuscripts that managed to do so, albeit only for a limited period of time.

SLOVENIAN LITERATURE,  
BAROQUE, MANUSCRIPTS,  
CENSORSHIP, VITA CHRISTI,  
HAGIOGRAPHIES, ASCETIC PROSE

Slovensko književnost zgodnjega novega veka zaznamuje dejstvo, skupno nekaterim manjšim evropskim literaturam, da je zaradi težavnega prehoda v tiskani medij vse od zgodnjega 17. stoletja do srede 19. stoletja v tej književnosti imela pomembno vlogo rokopisna kultura. Za določene literarne zvrsti tega obdobja so se obstoj besedil, njihova preoddaja, diseminacija in bralska recepcija lahko opirali skoraj izključno na rokopisni medij. Ko je v poznem 18. stoletju razsvetljenska cenzura začela zatirati baročno katoliško literaturo, je bila slovenska rokopisna kultura sredstvo trdoživega in kreativnega nadaljevanja literarne tradicije. Članek oriše šest skupin slovenskih rokopisov, ki jim je to v veliki meri uspelo, četudi le za omejen čas.

SLOVENSKA KNJIŽEVNOST, BAROK,  
ROKOPISI, CENZURA, VITA CHRISTI,  
HAGIOGRAFIJE, ASKETIČNA PROZA

## THE ENLIGHTENMENT VERSUS BAROQUE LITERATURE

From the seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century, Slovenian literary and semi-literary works—such as collections of religious poems or hymnals, the majority of homiletic or rhetoric prose, ascetic or meditative prose, and ultimately religious drama in its diverse forms, especially passion plays—existed primarily or exclusively in manuscript form. The reasons for this were complex, from economic to conceptual ones, but an important reason was undoubtedly the exceptionally small market for books in Slovenian. This article discusses six genres or groups of late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Slovenian manuscripts that never made their way into print not only because of economic problems, but also another, insurmountable obstacle: censorship.

Most of these manuscripts were translations and adaptations of older ascetic or meditative prose from German Baroque literature, including texts from the *Vita Christi* genre, prophetic texts about the arrival of the Antichrist, Baroque hagiographic prose, meditative prose on eschatological topics, and so on. Early German printed books—which, upon their publication, were popular and highly valued works of literary and spiritual culture of the High Baroque—served as the bases for very loose adaptations in these manuscripts. Hence for example, the ascetic, hagiographic, and other religious texts by the German Capuchin Martin of Cochem (1634–1712) were extremely popular at the end of the seventeenth century and the early eighteenth century, which was manifested in the publication of numerous editions of his books: according to Volker Meid (779), over 450 German editions of his books were published between 1666 and 1740, and a total of over 1,500 by the twentieth century. One reason for this was Father Martin's style, which, in addition to clarity and striking picturesqueness, was marked

by a special triple-layer narrative structure that combined psychological persuasiveness and unintrusive religious instruction in literary form (Žejn: 179–191). His exceptional popularity was not limited to the German-speaking environment, but it also extended elsewhere across central Europe. For example, in the eighteenth century, Father Martin's works were published in over 130 editions in Czech alone, and a total of over two hundred editions were published in the Czech lands, also counting the German and Latin editions, and those published in Czech in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Sládek: 8).

However, as early as the mid-eighteenth century, something extraordinary happened: the emerging Enlightenment period—specifically, the Enlightenment proponents among the highest ranks of the Church and the state—harshly rejected these popular Baroque texts and, contrary to their declared tolerance, sought to eliminate them: they included them on the Austrian state list of prohibited books.

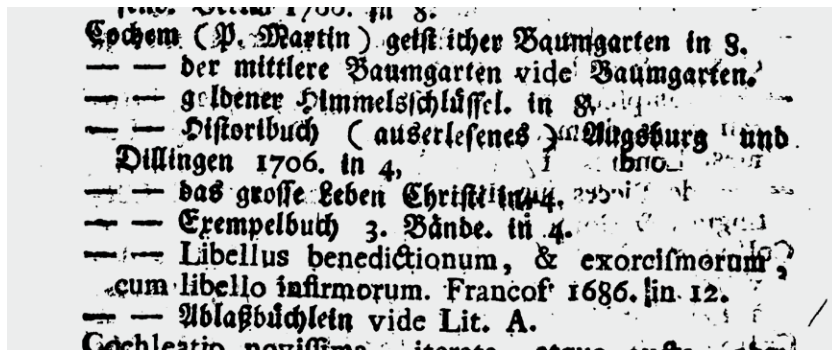
One of the essential tendencies of the Enlightenment was to reform Christianity by reducing it to a set of “rational” and “natural” ethical principles beneficial to public morale and hence the state. On the other hand, the Enlightenment mostly either ignored or sought to eliminate or suppress all Christian spirituality that was founded on canonical revelation and complemented by personal revelations—in short, anything that was contemplative, mystical, and miraculous (Borgstedt: 35). These tendencies materialized, visibly and with dramatic effects, in radical changes to the traditional forms of Catholic devotions introduced by some bishops and Emperor Joseph II: they reduced the number of Church holidays (turning them into workdays suitable for doing *corvée*!) and prohibited pilgrimages, passion plays, processions, and so on. Through these measures, the state authorities and pro-reform Enlightenment Catholicism, whose goal was subordination of the

Church to the Austrian state (Klueting: 129), sought to cleanse religious life of anything that the Enlightenment bishops and Joseph II deemed “superstitious” or “irrational” (Reinalter: 16).

### **CENSORSHIP AS A FORM OF OPPRESSING LITERARY TRADITION**

An obstacle in seeking to understand the fact that the Enlightenment also used censorship to fight against the Christian spiritual tradition is the firmly rooted notion that, already in principle, censorship has always been conservative and that it oppressed any progressive and development-oriented conceptual initiatives by definition. This notion is oversimplified and does not agree with the real historical material. Censorship also served as a powerful weapon of the Enlightenment authorities in the battle against traditional Catholicism.

In 1758, the Austrian court censorship committee published the index *Catalogus librorum a commissione aulica prohibitorum*, which was later revised several times; 1776 already saw the publication of its ninth edition. In addition to morally questionable works and texts by some radical French Enlightenment authors, listed on the index and labeled “superstitious” alongside dubious brochures were also many classic Baroque religious works. According to Franz M. Eybl, censors took a special interest in reading material for the general public and hence they “sought, along the lines of Jansenist religious concepts, to eradicate any Baroque forms of piety” (Bachleitner et al. 2000: 111). Enlightenment authorities thus interfered directly with Catholic pastoral and preaching practice—that is, an area that the state had not interfered with for over a millennium. However, these authorities did so because they perceived it as the key area for disseminating ideas, transforming people’s mindsets, and thus reeducating the widest circles.



← **FIG. 1**  
 Excerpt from page 60 of the state index of prohibited books, *Catalogus librorum prohibitorum* (1776), prohibiting the ascetic, hagiographic, and meditative works by the Capuchin Martin of Cochem. Source: DLib.

In this respect, the fate of Czech Baroque literature of that time can serve as an example. When the Prague governorate councilor Joseph Anton von Riegger was tasked with implementing Joseph II's 1781 censorship rules in Bohemia, he appointed exclusively Prague intellectuals from among the opponents of monasticism as censors. According to Norbert Bachleitner (2017: 200–201), these were radical Enlightenment men, known for their criticism of Baroque sermons, polemics against monasticism, and so on. With their help, Riegger

**1**  
 For more details on the censorship of Czech Baroque literature, see Wögerbauer et al. (131–134).

*gave orders to especially supervise literature accessible to the general public. This was followed by reimposed censorship of classic Czech and German Baroque religious works, which were inspected in detail for new editions and partly or fully banned; this was nothing new because such a ban had already been in force since 1778 in all Austrian hereditary lands for all of Martin of Cochem's works. In 1784, similar measures were taken against a collection of Mariological works comprising 128 Latin book titles. In this way, Czech Enlightenment figures were able to carry out their cultural and political program as official Habsburg censors. (Bachleitner 2007: 201)<sup>1</sup>*

However, they were not the only ones doing this: even as late as 1810, a Baroque-inspired Czech manuscript was rejected by the Slovenian linguist Jernej Kopitar (Vidmar: 105).

The example of Czech Baroque literature censorship is important because it proves that in the hands of strict men of the Enlightenment, such as von Riegger and his Prague circle, the seemingly liberal censorship rules of Joseph II could have very repressive consequences in practice. It should be noted that the Czech Baroque authors were not even listed on the state index of prohibited books, but von Riegger's enlightened friends saw to it that they were censored or banned nonetheless. According to Eybl, the freedom of the press introduced in 1781 under Joseph II "by no means entailed a complete removal of state control over the press, but a great liberalization" of this area (Bachleitner et al. 2000: 112)—a liberalization that, in principle, already included the oppression of what men of the Enlightenment perceived as "irrational" and "obscure" in the Catholic spiritual tradition.

### **SLOVENIAN MANUSCRIPTS AS "PUBLICATIONS" OF PROHIBITED BOOKS**

Such was the reality of the situation in which Slovenian writers of the second half of the eighteenth century translated, adapted, and reworked older Baroque ascetic texts to convey them to Slovenian readers, who were no less eager to read them, and the illiterate to listen to them, than those in the Catholic parts of Germany or in Bohemia.

However, an important difference lay somewhere else. In Slovenia, the obstacles that Enlightenment authorities imposed on Baroque literature accompanied the already old problems associated with printing books: high costs due to the extremely small market for Slovenian

books. In addition, it should be noted that from 1769 to 1787 the Ljubljana Diocese was headed by Bishop Johann Karl von Herberstein, who proved to be the most ardent supporter of Josephinism among all the bishops in the Habsburg Monarchy. He enforced Joseph II's decrees so eagerly that he even came into conflict with the Pope himself (Lesar).

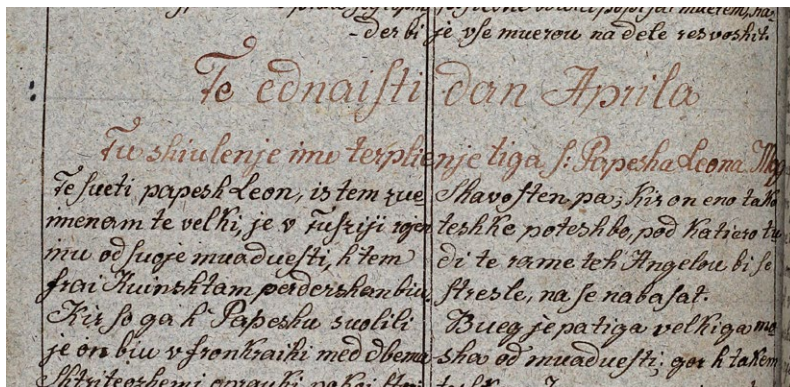
Within this context, the position of Slovenian Baroque literature deteriorated to the extent that most literary genres could not be circulated in any other way than in a form that was already somewhat anachronistic in the second half of the eighteenth century: that is, as manuscripts. As unusual as it might have seemed, manuscript culture nonetheless functioned as an independent, but vital and resilient preserver of the oppressed literary tradition, immune to both official bans and informal censorship. It was eventually destroyed by the ravages of time because under later owners many manuscripts deteriorated or were lost, especially after the dissolution of monasteries. A brief overview of the main genres and groups of these manuscripts presented below indicates the extent of the diversity of Slovenian texts that were able to exist and be received with the help of manuscript culture. However, it should be noted that the specimens preserved clearly constitute only a miniscule fragment of the former Slovenian manuscript literature.

- 1) The first genre discussed here is hagiography, or the lives of saints. From early Christianity, through the Middle Ages, and up until the early modern period, hagiography was an extremely popular genre among the common people. It existed in a multitude of manuscripts created as records of previous oral tradition, and so many elements of folk legends and narratives entered the hagiographic texts. There is no reason to believe that these things were any different in the historical Slovenian lands, but the first booklets on the



**FIG. 2** ▶

The Carinthian manuscript *Dober Legent teh Suetnikov*. The beginning of the biography of Pope Leo the Great. Source: RRSS Ms 14.



lives of the saints in Slovenian, prepared by Marko Pohlin, were only printed after 1768, and major Slovenian hagiographic works recorded by literary history were only published during the nineteenth century. However, literary history did not take into account Slovenian manuscript culture, in which hagiography already occupied an important place in the eighteenth century. For example, this is proven by the Carinthian manuscript *Dober Legent teh Suetnikov*, created in the second half of the eighteenth century, which contains 1,032 pages of text in two columns and is thus the most extensive Slovenian Baroque manuscript work (RRSS Ms 14; Ogrin 2011b). In broad terms, the 181 legends of saints translated from German and covering half the calendar year, from January to June, include material from various older sources, partly medieval and partly early modern ones. Therefore, these narratives are full of spiritual and even mystical exuberance, alongside legendary and fantastic elements adopted from the oral culture of Classical Antiquity and the Middle Ages. All this combined strongly enhances the literary nature of hagiographies.

The manuscript *Dober Legent teh Suetnikov* would have undoubtedly become a popular Slovenian book as early as the eighteenth century if it had been printed, but that did not happen. This was also contributed to by the fact that the author of the German original was Martin of Cochem, whose works were prohibited. The manuscript, which—judging from its worn corners—was frequently borrowed, defied this ban as best as it could.

- 2) The second important genre of prohibited Slovenian texts that could only exist in manuscript form is the *Vita Christi* or the stories of the lives, activity, and especially suffering of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. The most important preserved representative of this genre is the Poljane manuscript, which is described in detail in the Register of Early Modern Slovenian Manuscripts (RRSS Ms 23) and which has already been the subject of several studies and analyses.<sup>2</sup> Less research has so far been done on the surprisingly rich textual tradition of this manuscript.<sup>3</sup> Because these manuscripts were only discovered recently, the fact that the great work by the Capuchin Martin of Cochem, *Das grosse Leben Christi*, was transmitted to Slovenians through them also remained unknown. Cochem's work was created in the late seventeenth century, over a long process of revisions spanning several editions roughly up to 1685, after which it was printed again and again until Enlightenment-era book censorship finally put an end to it. The manuscripts described were the only mediators and preservers of the Slovenian version of the text on the life of Jesus, which, through its specific combination of theology and legend, dogma and fantasy, and religious instruction and first-rate rhetorical and literary design, mesmerized and enthused—initially in German and then also in other languages—hundreds of thousands of readers in central and western Europe.

**2**

Cf. Ogrin (2011a: 394–397), Avsenik Nabergoj, and Žejn (2016, 2017).

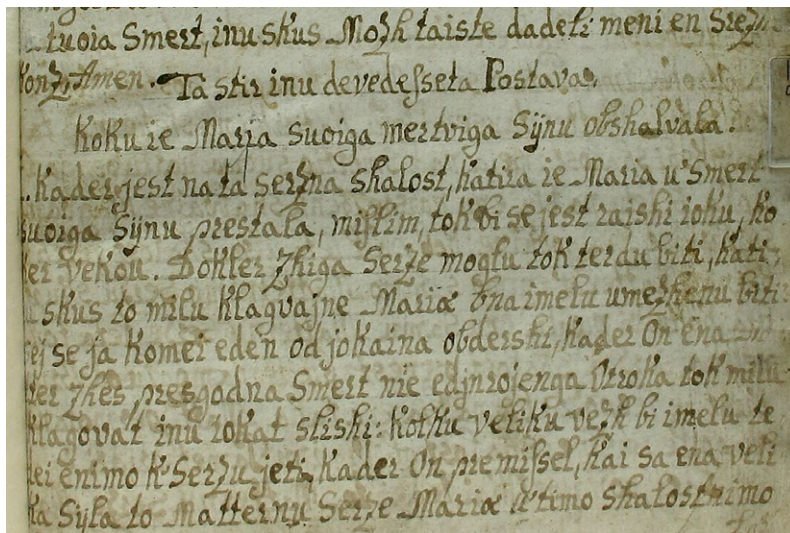
**3**

In the Register of Early Modern Slovenian Manuscripts, this primarily includes the units Ms 28 and Ms 111; cf. Ogrin (2017b: 35–36). With certain reservations, Ms 117 can also be included in the textual tradition roughly outlined there; this manuscript is based on an original that was reworked in Jansenist style but was probably created as an Enlightenment adaptation of a Baroque text.

**FIG. 3 ▶**

Eighty pages have been preserved from the manuscript protograph of the life of Jesus from the mid-eighteenth century, which had over nine hundred pages and from which the Poljane manuscript was later copied.

Source: RRS, Ms 28.



Conclusions comparable to those made for this work by its main researcher and editor of the contemporary Czech edition, Miloš Sládek (8, 10, 18, 19), can be made for the Poljane manuscript and its protographs, albeit in much smaller dimensions because these are only manuscripts. Sládek's main arguments are that the great book about the life of Jesus written by Martin of Cochem, which is sometimes described as the only Czech Baroque novel, influenced entire generations of folk readers, shaped their thoughts and value systems, stimulated various expressions and forms of Czech devotions, influenced certain folk plays (especially passion plays), and even had an impact on handicrafts and the folk visual arts. The work, which was written in German in the 1670s, was very popular among the Czechs; it was already translated into Czech in the 1690s by the Capuchin Edelbert of Nymburk. This text is an important

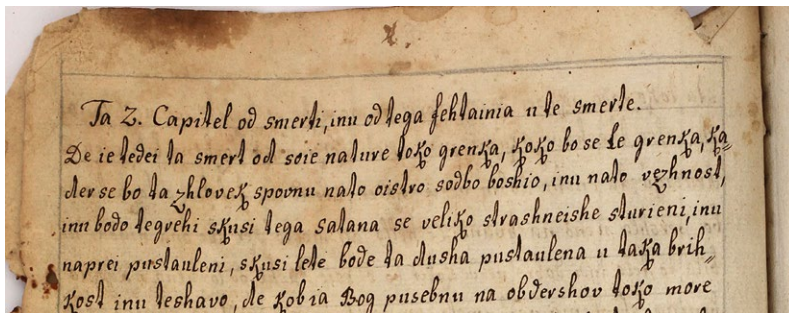
link between the German, Czech, and Hungarian rural and market-town communities in the early modern period. In some cases, it has been attested that owners loaned or read the same copy of the book to their neighbors for several generations, and so on.

A similar conclusion can be drawn for Slovenian manuscripts, of which only the Poljane manuscript has been nearly fully preserved and others only in fragments: with their literary-aesthetic form and theological-parabiblical material, they make up a true folk hermeneutics of the gospels. They introduced a long tradition into Slovenian literature, extending from the Church Fathers via Pseudo-Bonaventure and Ludolph of Saxony to Martin of Cochem. Therefore, these manuscripts “testify to the exceptional and undisputed topicality and existential resilience of the *Vita Christi* genre in the long period from the eleventh to the eighteenth century” (Avsenik Nabergoj: 595–596), or even to the twentieth century, one might add.

- 3) Closely connected with the previous category of texts is the group of manuscripts about the Four Last Things (*quattuor novissima*). These are ascetic meditative texts discussing eschatological topics—that is, the last stages of the soul in life and the afterlife according to Christian theology: death, judgment, heaven, and hell. All these Slovenian Baroque texts, too, most likely derive from the prohibited works of Martin of Cochem, specifically his book *Nützlicher Zusatz zu dem Leben Christi, von denen Vier letzten Dingen: Nemlich von dem Tod, Gericht, Höll, und Himmelreich*, which began to be published around 1700 together with *Das grosse Leben Christi*. Based on the research conducted to date (Ogrin 2017b: 37–40), two major groups can be identified among these manuscripts: the first one comprises manuscripts that initially included all of Cochem’s book, even

**FIG. 4** ▶

The oldest preserved manuscript about the Four Last Things was written in 1793, during the greatest Enlightenment oppression of Baroque devotion. Source: RRSS, Ms 34.



though the text is partly lost due to damage (RRSS Ms 34, 37, 119), and the second group included manuscript fragments of the entire book, in which some had already been copied only as individual chapters or a sequence thereof. The unit Ms 111 of the Register of Early Modern Slovenian Manuscripts includes one that, for the most part, falls under the *Vita Christi* genre, but it also includes a chapter on the Four Last Things. This raises an important question of whether it was copied as a selected passage from a longer manuscript or whether it is simply a preserved copy of an already damaged, fragmentary manuscript. This will probably remain a mystery. The only fact that remains clear is that Cochem's forbidden ascetic texts on the Four Last Things also continued to be disseminated through many Slovenian manuscripts well into the nineteenth century and that these manuscripts confirm how extremely popular and necessary reflection on the last existential horizons of human life was among the people of that time.

- 4) The fourth group of Baroque texts that were affected by the prohibitions of the Enlightenment and that therefore found modest shelter in manuscript culture in Slovenian literature comprises prophetic texts, which continued the medieval prophetic and

apocalyptic literary tradition from the early Baroque onward. A very popular and widespread work in this genre was *Leben Antichristi* by the German Capuchin Dionysius of Luxembourg (1652–1703), published in 1682 and prohibited in the Austrian monarchy from at least 1774. His picturesque apocalyptic narrative relies partly on biblical stories and partly on parabolic stories about the genesis and the age of the world, various historical periods, the arrival of the Antichrist, the prophets Elijah and Enoch, who will fight against him, and the end of the world. After the allegedly initial Slovenian translation or adaptation by the self-educated rural writer Mattias Schegar (1734–1798) in 1767, this text was also copied by other authors in Carinthia and Carniola. A thorough study on the Slovenian tradition of *Leben Antichristi* was published in the mid-twentieth century by France Kotnik, who reported on over thirteen manuscripts that he witnessed himself (Kotnik). Of these, only one is presented in the Register of Slovenian Manuscripts.<sup>4</sup> The fact that this dramatic medieval Baroque narrative was reworked into a series of manuscript versions that differ in terms of both textology and the influence of Slovenian dialects proves the great interest and fascination that this book aroused among Slovenians during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The book elaborates in a narrative form on the old theological theme about the invasion of overwhelming evil into human history and the final victory of supreme good in the face of the end of the world and final divine judgment. Like many other things, the reading of this exciting Baroque literature in the form of a printed book among Slovenians was prevented by the Enlightenment with its narrow, apodictic conceptions of what is rational and suitable for people to read, and what is superstitious and immoral. Late-eighteenth-century

<sup>4</sup> Labeled RRSS Ms 17; on Kotnik's list this is manuscript no. 3. It seems that Kotnik must have overlooked the beautiful hand-colored manuscript RRSS Ms 15 in the register, written between 1823 and 1824, even though it was also created in Carinthia.

Slovenian manuscript culture was sufficiently developed to display its effectiveness, diversity, and resilience in the case of this Slovenian folk book.

- 5) The next very important group of Slovenian Baroque texts that were affected by Enlightenment censorship, which prevented their transition to printed books, comprises theological and pastoral texts by Slovenian monastic writers. The Enlightenment authorities' attitude toward monasticism was conflictual as it is, and so this topic by far exceeds the issue of censorship, even though it does include it (both formal censorship and, even more, its informal form). In an atmosphere in which monks feared seeing their monasteries being dissolved and bishops limited their freedom in every possible way, hindered pastoral work, and made their lives more difficult on a daily basis (Papež), it was of course impossible to even think about their books being printed and published, and so no form of formal censorship even took place. Any small monastic work that managed to avoid this and could not justify its existence with usefulness as conceived by the Enlightenment still had to be suppressed through formal censorship: when the Capuchin friar Seraphin of Montegranaro was canonized by the Catholic Church in 1767 and the Capuchins published the booklet *Kurzer Lebens-Begriff des heiligen Seraphin von Monte Granario* (1768) about him in Bratislava, the state censorship included it in the very next edition of the index of prohibited books (*Supplementum ad Catalogum*: 28). Venerating saints, reflecting on their lives, and praying to them were undesired and even prohibited in practice. The energetic and inventive Slovenian Discalced Augustinian Marko Pohlin (1735–1801) nonetheless published a series of shorter printed texts, even though not without difficulty. Most of his works

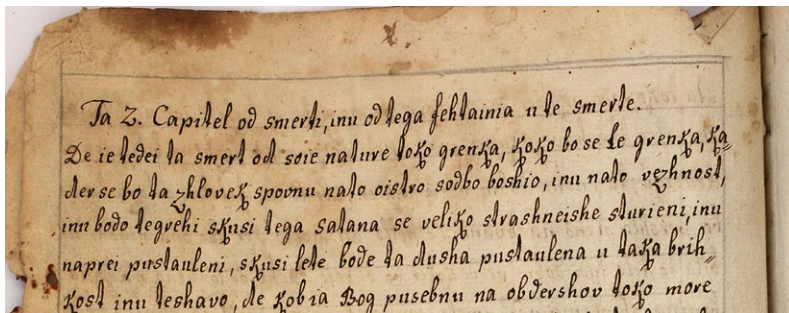
remained in manuscript form, as was proven by France Kidrič with his list of Pohlin's works (Kidrič). However, the dexterous Pohlin was an exception in many ways; during that same period, many Slovenian monastic authors wrote high-quality theological and pastoral-meditative works, but they all remained in manuscript form. Even though many of them unfortunately deteriorated, quite a few have been preserved but cannot be examined here. Mention can be made of two unknown monastic authors that created an impressive oeuvre, which, however, could not be printed. The first one is the Franciscan friar Konrad Branka (1737-1789), a first-rate writer of meditative prose and theological-speculative essays, who was excellent at expressing, stringing together, and building up, in nuances, various aspects of the spiritual topics of religion, sacraments, the passion of Jesus, and so on, either in sermons or contemplative texts, all of which have been preserved in manuscript form or lost (Ogrin 2015).

Another excellent yet almost completely unknown representative of late Baroque rhetorical prose, worth highlighting in the group of overlooked monastic authors, is the Capuchin friar Angelicus from Kranj (1735-1790). He left six manuscript books behind, featuring over three hundred carefully composed sermons for Sundays, holidays, Lent, and various occasions (Senica) in a very clear, harmonious, and moderately rhetorical style. During the period dominated by Enlightenment reason and care for citizens, the Slovenian Franciscans and Capuchins were practically unable to convert even a single manuscript into a printed book.

- 6) The last group of Slovenian texts, for which it was impossible to think that they would come even close to a printshop, includes manuscripts that at the end of the eighteenth century and even



**FIG. 5** →  
The numerous works of the Franciscan friar Konrad Branka include an extensive series of sermons with a theological explanation of the sacrifice of the mass. Source: FSNM.



until the mid-nineteenth century helped revive the life of Slovenian Baroque printed books that had remained very popular for a long time, but it was impossible to reprint them due to the aversion of the Enlightenment authorities to Baroque forms of devotion. Of course, this was not part of formal censorship, but informal censorship as a broader category of spiritual and cultural differences with practical implications that prevented some works from being printed as books. For example, the fact that Matija Kastelec's 1688 book *Navuk christianski, sive Praxis cathechistica* was exceptionally popular, so that various authors copied it for a long time, is confirmed by two preserved and accurately produced manuscript copies of the entire book: the Črni Vrh manuscript (RRSS Ms 124; Ogrin 2018) from around 1800, and another, graphically even better crafted manuscript from 1843 (Ogrin 2017a: 50–51). Even though there must have been other manuscripts that have not been preserved, these two manuscripts and other similar late copies prove that the best works of Slovenian Baroque literature fulfilled certain deep spiritual needs and desires of Slovenians, not only in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but well into the nineteenth century and even later. This reflects the existential human

tendency for a created human being to fully enter into a relationship with his Creator, or the need for human relationship with the transcendental. Baroque literature drew the individual as a whole, as a composite physical and spiritual entity with a single being, into this relationship. Specifically, this literature intensively catered to both: human sensations and fantasy on the one hand, and human mind and will on the other (i.e., both the body and soul). From this comprehensiveness, Baroque literature drew its life-creating force, thanks to which Kastelec's works continued to be copied even a century and a half after the prior of the Novo Mesto Fraternity of the Holy Rosary passed away. ♡

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*Kerſhansku Poduzhenie Zhel Offer ſvete Maſhe S' red nekaterim'  
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ſ. Franciſka*

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## Povzetek

Slovenski rokopisi poznega 18. in zgodnjega 19. stoletja dokazujejo, da avstrijski cenzurni sistem nikakor ni bil le sredstvo oblasti v boju proti liberalnim idejam, panslavizmu in podobnim politično nevarnim gibanjem. Nasprotno, cenzura je bila tudi močno orožje v boju razsvetljenstva proti katoliški tradiciji – še zlasti proti baročnim oblikam verskega življenja, kakor so bile verske igre, pasijonske idr. procesije, romanja, češčenje svetnikov, pobožnost do Matere božje, križev pot, pobožnost svetih stopnic idr. Te oblike verskega življenja so bile med ljudstvom zelo priljubljene in ukoreninjene v izročilu. Razsvetljenski ukrepi cesarja Jožefa II. so to tradicionalno versko življenje močno prizadeli in večidel zatrli, ne brez rabe nasilja. Avstrijska cenzura pa je poskrbela, da so besedila, iz katerih je ta duhovnost rastla, bila bodisi prepovedana bodisi so jih morali avtorji v cenzurnem postopku predelati.

Za slovensko književnost, ki jo je vse od začetka spremljal problem velikih stroškov zaradi zelo majhnega knjižnega trga slovenske knjige, je razsvetljenska cenzura v praksi pomenila, da je slovenska rokopisna kultura zgodnjega baroka dobila nov zagon še za skoraj sto let. Besedila prepovedanih baročnih duhovnih pisateljev je bilo moč posredovati in razširjati zgolj v rokopisni obliki.

V članku predstavim šest skupin slovenskih rokopisov, ki so dajali obstoj in recepcijo baročnim besedilom, v Avstriji prepovedanim ali onemogočenim na razne načine, formalno ali neformalno. Koroški hagiografski rokopis *Dober Legent teh Suetnikov*, najboljšežnejši slovenski rokopis, in *Poljanski rokopis*, prvovrsten predstavnik tradicijske zvrsti vita Christi, kot priredbi ali baročni predelavi oba izvirata iz opusa kapucinskega patra Martina Cochemskega, ki ga je indeks prepovedal

za vse avstrijske dežele. Na drugi strani pa denimo meditativna besedila, ki jih je napisal doslej neznani frančiškanski pisatelj p. Konrad Branka (1737–1789), prvovrsten pisec meditativne proze in teološko-spekulativne esejistike, seveda niso bila uradno prepovedana, saj frančiškanski red, ogrožen z razpustitvami samostanov ipd. ukrepi (mdr. dlje časa niso smeli sprejemati novincev), ni mogel niti pomisliti na tiskano izdajo spisov.

Tako je slovenska rokopisna kultura reševala baročno katoliško tradicijo; s skromnimi sredstvi, toda vendar: piscem slovenskih baročnih rokopisov je uspelo besedilo ne le prevesti, marveč tudi preoblikovati in prilagoditi svojemu jezikovnemu in socialnemu okolju. Zato ni pretirano reči, da tekstološko gledano nastopa v ustvarjanju slovenskih rokopisnih besedil določena sinteza posredovanja in poustvarjanja besedila, sinteza preoddaje in kreacije teksta. Z literarnega gledišča pa smemo reči, da v teh besedilih prihaja do vznemirljive in estetsko zelo slikovite pripovedne sinteze med bibličnim in parabibličnim, med svetom dogme in ljudskega izročila, med teološko razlago in legendarnimi prvinami – s tem pa so baročni rokopisi izrazili, pa tudi ohranjali in utrjevali duhovno substanco slovenskega človeka dolge baročne dobe v spoprijemu z nasilnimi posegi razsvetljenstva v duhovno življenje.



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