

# Reflections on the Czech Slavistics After the First World War: Matija Murko and Jan Máchal

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*This article compares the positivist thought of two Czech professors of Slavic literature in the 1920s: the Slovenian Matija Murko (1861–1952) and the Czech Jan Hanuš Máchal (1855–1939). Comparative literary history, which in the Central European area focused on minor South Slavic literatures, was in its infancy at this time, and comparative literary historians primarily focused on surveying specific literary periods. The focus of this contribution is Murko's reflections on South Slavic literature in the period of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation in the book *Die Bedeutung der Reformation und Gegenreformation für das geistige Leben der Südslaven* (1927). I compare his view and methods with a short chapter on the same period in the monumental monograph by Jan Máchal, *Slovanské literatury* (1922). In the study, I emphasize their comparative methods, interpreting influences, and marking literary currents in this period. Reflections on the literary movements in two national histories were linked to the development of language, and the scholars tried to present social and historical development of that time and place generally. I focus on their approaches to national and supranational literary history and on their interpretation of personalities and literary works in the literary movement.*

Keywords: comparative literature / Slovenian literary historians / Murko, Matija / Czech Slavic studies / Máchal, Jan Hanuš / South Slavic literatures / Reformation / Counter-Reformation

In the nineteenth century, Czech Slavic studies made incredible progress, beginning with Kollár's scholarly work emphasizing Slavic reciprocity.<sup>1</sup> Until the collapse of the Habsburg Empire, Czech culture and science were part of Habsburg culture and the Habsburg myth echoed in the scientific endeavors of the First Republic (the newly established

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Czecho-Slovak Republic). The idea of Slavic unity was reinforced in scholarship as well as elsewhere in society, and Prague for years also represented the cradle of Slavic reciprocity for other nations. In Central European space, scientific attempts were mixed with political ideas and ideological notions, such as the myth of a great Slavic unity. From the very beginning, the development of Czech Slavic studies and Czech comparative studies was linked to attempts to see individual Slavic literatures in the Slavic world as a single unit, which required particular methods and approaches. Research in that period also supported the pursuit for national identity, which had become so decisive for all the “Habsburgian” small nations, especially at the end of the Habsburg monarchy. The quest for Czech national identity at the beginning of the twentieth century was acutely present in the bilingual space of Czech culture, where there was a strong German community working alongside the Czech one. The development of the Czech national idea—which also reflected the subversive character and demands of small nations in the already partly uncontrollable, increasingly diverse Austro-Hungarian monarchy, with its many nations—was also strengthened by the idea of a supranational, Slavic cohesion.

In this paper, I will compare the positivist thought and scholarly work of two literary historians, professors of Slavic literatures at Charles University in Prague during the 1920s in the newly founded Czecho-Slovak Republic: the Slovenian Matija Murko (1861–1952) and the Czech Jan Hanuš Máchal (1855–1939). I will concentrate on Murko’s 1927 German monograph on South Slavic literature in the period of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, *Die Bedeutung der Reformation und Gegenreformation für das geistige Leben der Südslaven* (*The Significance of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation for the Spiritual Life of the South Slavs*). I will then compare Murko’s views and methods with a short chapter on the same period for Slovenians and Croats in the monumental 1922 book by Jan Máchal, *Slovanské literatury* (*Slavic Literatures*; 196–207). I will examine their analyses of national and supranational literary history, reflecting personalities and literary works. I will also look at their comparative methods, interpreting influences in the literary works and movements, and marking literary currents. The primary focus will be on Murko’s work, with Máchal’s work used as a contrasting example.

During his Prague period Matija Murko turned his attention to the South Slavic epic, through which he became internationally renowned, but as I will highlight, he also enriched German, Czech, and South Slavic studies by continuing his work in comparative literary and cultural history.

## Context

Pascale Casanova points out that literary space is relatively dependent on political structures (Casanova 81), and—as previously noted—this was also true for the Central European space at the turn of the twentieth century. The study of minor Slavic literature in the Czech Republic was also politically colored: Prague, after all, was a city where Kollár's idea of Slavic reciprocity had been spread for decades, and literary historians were heavily influenced by the Romantic notions of the Slavs and the ideas initiated by Herder, who emphasized the essential link between nation and language. National identity was still connected to the national epic in the Romantic sense, which was also at the forefront of literary-historical interest. In this period, Czech comparative literary history (some of them focused on minor Slavic—that is, South Slavic!—literatures) was in its infancy, and literary historians focused primarily on the survey of literary periods. The research of literary history was related to the development of language, but above all to social and historical development.<sup>2</sup>

In the first half of the twentieth century, Slavic studies were well supported in Prague.<sup>3</sup> Drago Bajt noted that at the turn of the century, the Prague Comparativist School,<sup>4</sup> represented by J. Polivka, J. Máchal, V. Tille, and M. Murko, made a leap from philological criticism to positivist thematology and produced catalogues of materials, motifs, and genres, especially in folk and medieval literature; theoretically, it drew on Pypin, Veselovsky, Paris, Bedier, and Baldensperger (Bajt 41). During this period of Czech culture, enthusiastic Slavists with their enormous knowledge tried to become experts in the history

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<sup>2</sup> In the old monarchy, the first seminar on Slavic philology was established in Prague in 1880 (led by Jan Gebauer)—six years earlier than its counterpart in Vienna (founded in 1886 under Vatroslav Jagić). Czech Slavic philology also developed at the German University of Prague, which operated alongside the Czech Faculty of Arts, where Slavic philology began to be cultivated as early as 1896 (Murko, “Ausbau”). At the turn of the twentieth century, Czech Slavic studies had already seen the emergence of independent national disciplines, especially Bohemian studies. These began to take shape at the University of Prague in the 1880s and were divided into literary studies and linguistics. However, such a profiled view of the specialization of disciplines and the division along national lines had not yet been applied to the sciences of South Slavic languages and literatures.

<sup>3</sup> On the development of Czech and Slovak literary comparative studies in general, see Zelenka, “Češka in slovaška literarna komparativistika.”

<sup>4</sup> Here Bajt adopts Frank Wollman's definition from 1947 (see Wollman, “Naše pojeti”).

of all Slavic literature and they published monumental works in this field, for example, Lubor Niederle: *Slovanské starožitnosti* (*Slavic Antiquities*, 1900), Jan Máchal: *Slovanské literatury* (*Slavic Literatures*, 3 volumes, 1922–1929). Very characteristic are Frank Wollman's studies on South Slavic drama—three volumes on Serbo-Croatian, Slovenian,<sup>5</sup> and Bulgarian drama (1924–1926) and *Dramatika slovanského jihu* (*Drama of the Slavic South*, 1930)—and *Slovesnost Slovanů* (*Literature of the Slavs*, 1928).<sup>6</sup>

According to Miloš Zelenka, labelling these Czech scholars as part of the positivist school is not entirely accurate. While they had a profound philological and cultural-historical orientation and a strong sense of systematization and critical classification of facts, they also produced numerous syntheses based on both extensive material research and detailed analytical interpretations. However, the thoughtful emphasis on a predominantly genetic understanding of the literary process and the static construction of its developmental schemes led to insufficient consideration of the methodological issues of the discipline—a certain reduction of the aesthetic specificity of the literary text, which, on the contrary, was at the forefront of the interest of literary structuralism (Zelenka, “Češka in slovaška literarna komparativistika” 2).

## The Case of Jan Hanuš Máchal

Jan Hanuš Máchal was a Czech literary historian, ethnographer, ethnologist, folklorist, and prominent representative of Czech Slavic studies at the beginning of the twentieth century. From his initial research on Slavic mythology and the folk epic, he approached Czech literature from a comparative point of view, focusing mainly on the development of prose and drama in the nineteenth century. In the 1920s, he completed his work with a synthetic history of Slavic literature. In one of the chapters from the first book of his *Slovanské literatury*, published in 1922, he also dealt with the *Reformation and Counter-Reformation among the South Slavs, Slovenians and Croats* (Máchal 196–207).

In his comprehensive monograph, which his contemporaries called a “synchronic panorama” of Slavic literatures, Máchal treats individual

<sup>5</sup> For a long time, his monograph on Slovenian drama was also the only one in this field.

<sup>6</sup> In the nineteenth century, Czech scholars treated South Slavic literatures as a unified whole—for example, Pavel Josef Šafařík in his *Geschichte der südslawischen Literatur* (*History of South Slavic Literature*, 1864–1865).

national literatures with remarkable expertise, starting from the idea of a coherent Slavic unity. As a literary positivist, his primary interest is expected to lie in the study of influences. However, in the section on the “South Slavic Reformation and Counter-Reformation,” he redirects his attention to the diachrony of individual national literature, aiming to comprehend the literary histories of these two nations during the period under study. He concentrates on the emergence of key individuals and their significance within the literary and cultural movements, focusing on individual figures and their major works. In his examination of Protestantism, he begins with the history of Slovenian Protestant culture and continues with the Croatian Reformation. In doing so, he works systematically and with a positivist overview, first identifying the social and cultural situation that made the Reformation possible. He sketches only a glimpse of the contradictory period of the Slovenian Counter-Reformation. Similarly, he analyses the Reformation and Counter-Reformation among the Croats. He highlights the main literary works of the Counter-Reformation period, which the Jesuits are said to have spearheaded. In his overview, he draws on the available literature but mentions the sources only at the end. As a classic, informative overview of a positivist, it leaves no room for an in-depth study of the phenomenon.

### Murko's monograph

In his Prague period, Murko continued research and themes already started in his earlier scholarly periods, when he had established his achievements in the academic community in Europe, and when he was active at several key universities in Central Europe, including those in Vienna, Graz, Leipzig, and finally Prague.<sup>7</sup> His professional service included reorganizing the university curriculum for Slavic studies, editing the academic journal *Slavia*, presiding over the First International Congress of Slavic Philologists (1929), acting as the president of the Institute of Slavic Studies (from 1931), and promoting the field as a member of various academies and academic institutions around the world.<sup>8</sup> Research-wise, he published a book about the Reformation and

<sup>7</sup> Interest in him grew among Czechs and Slovenians at the turn of the twenty-first century, as reflected in the main collective monographs about him (see Zelenka, *Murková epocha*; Pospíšil and Zelenka; Jesenšek; Jesenšek and Stanonik). Studies in German-speaking regions also show a rise in interest (see Endler; Seehase).

<sup>8</sup> Today, he is known in classical studies, comparative literature, folklore studies, literary studies, anthropology, theology, musicology, and even philosophy and archaeology (see Zabel, “What”).

Counter-Reformation in South Slavic lands and continued working on South Slavic oral poetry.

The Prague period was his most productive period, during which he established himself as a scholar in the field of Slavic studies (see Jensterle Doležal, *Avtor* 75–95, “Arheologija” and “Znanstveno delo”). He wrote mainly in German, the *lingua franca* of the Central European scholars of the former Habsburg area. What is striking in Murko’s scientific work is “the tolerance of ideas, the interdisciplinarity of research, the openness, and the interdisciplinary excesses” (Pospíšil and Zelenka 5).

His greatest enthusiasm, erudition, and originality in the Prague period are evident in his research on Serbian and Croatian epics. In dealing with these subjects, he developed new theoretical postulates in ethnology and folklore studies. In his research methodology, he saw folklore studies as an interdisciplinary field, connecting history, ethnology, and philology. He is still regarded as a pioneer in the study of oral literature. His work on the theory of oral poetry inspired the American scholars Milman Parry (1902–1935) and Albert Bates Lord (1912–1991) (see Zabel, “Matija Murko”). This theory remains valid today in the study of ancient and medieval epics, especially in Homeric studies.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast, we now turn to another area of his work from the Prague period: the literary history of the South Slavs. This area has been somewhat overlooked in both Slovenian and the broader Central European literary history of the twentieth century, when considering this scholar (Jensterle Doležal, “Znanstveno delo” 84–88).<sup>10</sup>

Murko’s engagement with South Slavic literature had a long tradition—that of a professor who started and worked in Austrian culture and the Habsburg area. While still a professor in Graz, he began to work on older South Slavic literatures. In 1908, he published a book in Leipzig titled *History of the Older South Slavic Literatures* (*History of the Older South Slavic Literatures*), in which he wrote about the work of Cyril and Methodius, covering the period from the Proto-Slavic period to the extension of Turkish rule in the Balkans. The book was the result of his lectures in Graz. In it, he emphasizes the close connection between South Slavic literary and cultural history, linguistics, and folk

<sup>9</sup> During his Prague era, he continued his work on South Slavic oral poetry, undertaking five additional research trips. His research culminated in the lengthy two-volume publication *Tragom srpsko-hrvatske narodne epike: putovanja u godinama 1930–1932* (*In the Footsteps of the Serbo-Croatian Folk Epic: Travels in the Years 1930–1932*, 1951), which is still considered one of the most detailed studies of South Slavic oral poetry (see Zabel, “What”).

<sup>10</sup> The Czechs published his selected works in 1937 and 1947, the Slovenians later in 1962. On his place in Slovenian literary history, see Slodnjak; Dolinar.

literature. He explores South Slavic literature in their interrelationships, emphasizing Russian and Western influences. According to Dietmar Endler, Murko draws on a wealth of experience from the methodology of positivist authors, Russian Slavic studies, and European comparative studies in this synthetic study. In the book, he also notes the interweaving of cultural models and, according to Josef Páta, emphasizes the visible dependence of the Yugoslav cultural world on the Byzantine one. He further characterizes the situation in more recent South Slavic literature in the study “Die südslawischen Literaturen” (“South Slavic Literatures”) published the same year.

In 1927, in the preface to his book *Die Bedeutung der Reformation und Gegenreformation für das geistige Leben der Südslaven*, he wrote that in Graz he had begun to realize that the period of the South Slavic Reformation and Counter-Reformation had been underappreciated in both the German and Austrian scientific world and the Austrian Habsburg area.<sup>11</sup> His responsible attitude towards the research problem of South Slavic Protestantism and the Counter-Reformation is also expressed by the fact that during his work at the University of Leipzig in 1919, he visited all the towns in southern Germany where Slovenian and Croatian Protestants were active. He used material on this in his book (Murko, *Paměti* 160).

He published a study on the subject in Leipzig (*Über die Bedeutung der Reformation und Gegenreformation für das geistige Leben der Südslaven*, 1921) and in *Slavia* (“Die Bedeutung der Reformation und Gegenreformation für das geistige Leben der Südslaven,” 1925–1926). He also dealt with the topic of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation in his inaugural professorial lecture at Charles University, “O předchůdcích ilyristu: sjednocení Jihoslovanů” (“On the Predecessors of Illyrism: The Unification of the South Slavs,” 1920).<sup>12</sup> Later, he expanded his findings in the monograph (see Murko, *Bedeutung*).<sup>13</sup>

In the monograph, Murko describes literary development as a process, and he is interested in the movement and interplay of literary phenomena. His basis is historical thinking, within which he perceives

<sup>11</sup> “... zu wenig berücksichtigt und noch weniger richtig gewürdigt werden” (Murko, *Bedeutung* iii).

<sup>12</sup> The lecture was first published in the monthly *Nové Atheneum* in Prague in 1920 (see Murko, “O předchůdcích” and “O předhodních ilirizma”). As Murko points out in his memoirs, he also gave a lecture on the subject in Bratislava (Murko, *Paměti* 193). The manuscript is located in the Literary Archive of the Museum of Czech Literature in Prague.

<sup>13</sup> Only a part of *Die Bedeutung* was translated into Slovenian. The translation by Vilko Novak was published in Murko’s *Izbrano delo* (*Selected Works*) in 1962 (37–47).



literature in a broader cultural-historical context, always in flux, at the crossroads of mutual influences, in the refraction of different cultural models (Jensterle Doležal, "Znanstveno delo" 86). Jiří Horák emphasized that this is not a history of individual literatures but rather a "synthetic comparative study" (Horák 7). In this monograph, he explored literatures in their interconnections and in an interdisciplinary and cultural-scientific perspective. Here we can paraphrase Pascale Casanova that this represented Murko's attempt to present the only true history of literature in a given space and time, a history of common revolts, upheavals, manifestos, discoveries of new forms and languages, and subversions of the literary order that gradually shaped South Slavic literature and the literary universe (Casanova 175).

In the book, as in his opening lecture, Murko also discusses the significance and role of various Church orders, especially the Jesuits and Franciscans, in the spread of South Slavic cultures. He emphasizes the importance of the Bosnian Franciscan Order in achieving "Serbo-Croatian linguistic unity" (Murko, *Bedeutung* 35–45).<sup>14</sup>

In 1947, the Slavist Frank Wollman described Murko's emphasis on the importance of ecclesiastical lineages for the literary and cultural history of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation in this region as the greatest achievement of his monograph:

The mutual relationship of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation in the literary field of the Slavic Balkans had been explained by many before Murko, especially by Pavle Popović and Drag. Prochaska, who have shown the extraordinary importance of the Tridentine Counter-Reformation literary program. In contrast to the others, Murko has shown, in a broad and in-depth cultural-historical picture, how the Catholic traditions of the Church shaped certain segments of society, even under Turkish domination, and how these led to a single literary language: Serbo-Croatian. (Wollman, "Murkova vědecká osobnost" 11)<sup>15</sup>

Murko emphasizes in his study that the Balkan area was characterized by turbulent historical events that impacted the entirety of European

<sup>14</sup> In the linguistics of Serbs and Croats nowadays the belief in a common language no longer exists. This persuasion was even strengthened after the Balkan wars in the 1990s.

<sup>15</sup> In the original: "Vzájemný poměr reformace a protireformace na literárním poli slovanského Balkánu osvětlovali už mnozí před Murkem, tak zejména Pavle Popović a Drag. Prochaska ukázali už iniciativní význam tridentského literárního programu protireformačního. Murko však v širokém a do hloubky zasahujícím kulturně historickém obraze ukázal, jak církevní tradice katolické působily v určité společnosti, a to i v záboru tureckém, a jak vedly k jednotné spisovné řeči srbocharvátské" (11).



history. In his analysis, he depicts not just two national histories, but the Balkan of that time generally as a territory of different nations and religions, characterized by the richness and intertwining varied languages (Slovenian, Croatian, “Serbo-Croatian,” Latin, German, etc.) and different alphabets (Cyrillic, Latin, Glagolitic, etc.). It is in this space that Murko reveals the complexity and often contradictions of the Reformation and Counter-Reformations in the Balkans precisely in the interweaving of various phenomena and the convergence of various influences from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. The coexistence of different cultural identities and languages reveals the varied political and religious events in the Balkans, and the description of Slovenian and Croatian Reformation and Counter-Reformation evolves into a depiction of cultural events across the entire Balkans. In doing so, he pays special attention to the key personalities who mainly influenced “the spiritual life” of the area, highlighting the meaning of translations and the existence of the publishing houses.

For him, the Balkans *a priori* means a common spiritual space. He describes national events that are becoming transnational, where ideas and texts travelled across imaginary and real borders. Thus, in the monograph, Murko deals not only with Slovenian and Croatian cultural history, but more broadly with the history of the entire region—also with the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Albania.

In presenting his insights, Murko reveals an impressive knowledge of South Slavic cultures—a knowledge of history, cultural history, and comparative literary history. In his analyses, he uses all available scholarly sources of the time. He does not blindly adopt them, he does not just quote them, but he is also in dialogue with the ideas and findings. In his thinking, he polemicalizes against literary historians from Slovenia, Croatia, the Czech Republic, and, above all, from the German-speaking world, with wit and erudition.<sup>16</sup>

When citing sources in detail, Murko is positivistically precise. As a former Habsburg scholar, he cites not only written sources, but also presents archival discoveries from Central Europe libraries in detail. All this is, in his case, accompanied by a special kind of collecting passion and memoir precision and consistency in labelling and structuring phenomena.

The book is a cultural-historical fresco, in which Murko is particularly concerned with the question of the founding of the “Serbo-Croatian”

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<sup>16</sup> In Chapter 4, he was assisted with the Slovenian material by France Kidrič and Fran Ramovš (Murko, *Bedeutung* iv).

language. He explains in particular detail the significance of the development of the Slovenian and “Serbo-Croatian” languages, which also stems from the fact that in the Prague period, Murko was primarily obliged to lecture on the history of languages, more than on the history of literature (Murko, *Paměti* 166). It was, according to Murko, precisely the developments during the Counter-Reformation and the formation of “Baroque Slavism” that led to the formation of the common “Serbo-Croatian” language. In this movement, he particularly highlights the figure of Juraj Križanić, who emerged from the Croatian Counter-Reformation of the seventeenth century.

In this book, he is also aware that the South Slavic space has been a crossroads and a meeting point of different influences. He pays particular attention to the German influence; for him, the Reformation also represents the culmination of German influence on the Slovenians (Murko, *Bedeutung* 127). In this book, as in his previous works, he strives to be a comparative literary historian, focusing on the question of the influence of Oriental, Western European, and Central European tendencies in the South Slavic literatures of the period. In particular, he points out the positive characteristics of the Counter-Reformation for the South Slavs, which was to be divisive only for the Slovenians, while for the others the movement was creative. The events and the situation in the Balkans led to the deprivation of the sharpness of the Counter-Reformation efforts among the South Slavs and to a greater assertion of their positive creations (119). In particular, the unified Serbo-Croatian language was created, as “the Counter-Reformation created the basis for the linguistic unification of Croats and Serbs in the 19th century” (24–59). It is in these ideas that Frank Wollman outlines the main advantage of the new findings: in his work, Murko reevaluates the negative perception of the Catholic Counter-Reformation and Baroque literature in the literary history of the South Slavs (Wollman, “Murkova vědecká osobnost” 11–12).

From today’s point of view, the monograph can also be observed critically. Vincenc Rajšp, for example, accused Murko’s views on the South Slavic Reformation and Counter-Reformation of a lack of connection with the German cultural milieu, a lack of reference to Luther’s Protestant developments in Germany. He finds this particularly unacceptable, since at the time Murko was lecturing in Leipzig. It was also the jubilee year of 1917, the year of the 400th anniversary of the German Reformation, the year of the charging of Luther’s 95 theses. Many monuments were unveiled, foundations for new churches were laid, many of Luther’s writings were published, etc. (Rajšp 148).

Murko does not even mention this in his memoirs. According to Rajšp, Murko also overlooked the importance of the Habsburg monarchy for the movement. The Slovenian and Croatian Reformation was part of the monarchical culture, and the Counter-Reformation triumphed in part due to the Habsburg rulers (147).

Since the publication of the monograph nearly 100 years ago, the discipline has continued to evolve, and some of the findings in Murko's study of both literatures have changed and been updated. For example, Alojz Jembrih points out that the Croat Antun Vramec did not belong to the Protestant circle, as Murko claimed (Jembrih 171).

In this book, Murko clearly defended the neo-Illyrian belief, which was strengthened during his Prague period (see Murko, "Myšlenka").<sup>17</sup> He even used the myth of South Slavic reunification to defend the phenomena of his time. In his view, the Counter-Reformers were also the pioneers of the South Slavic political entity in the twentieth century. Frank Wollman had already warned in 1947 that Murko's efforts to trace the roots of Illyrianism had led him to overemphasize the importance of Trubar's South Slavic Bible Institute. Murko attributes the development of the so-called South Slavic program solely to the Counter-Reformation (Wollman, "Murkova vědecká osobnost" 11). The reception of Murko's book was prominent in the German and Czech spheres, but it also resonated in the South Slavic sphere.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we can first point out that the essential difference in the purpose and scope of the two reviews of scholarly works by the Slovenian Matija Murko and the Czech Jan Hanuš Máchal, which is also reflected in the choice of language and the "first" readership, is a reflection of the major historical changes in the Central European area. Although both scholars were active in the Czech Republic, Máchal primarily wrote in Czech for a Czech readership and, to some extent, for a broader Slavic audience. In contrast, Murko, as a former Austro-Hungarian scholar, wrote in German for German and Austrian scholars

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<sup>17</sup> During his Prague period, Murko, based on Kollár's Slavism, formulated the myth of South Slavic unity, or the neo-Illyrian idea; for him, the Illyrian movement represented the highest form of integration of Serbs and Croats in terms of value, since it achieved the goal of all efforts to unify the "South Slavic tribes." South Slavic unity was for him the unity of Slovenians, Serbs, Croats, and Bulgarians (Jensterle Doležal, "Znanstveno delo" 88).

and Slavists, while also addressing Czech, Slovenian, and other former German-oriented scholars from the Central European area. In his research on the literary-historical period, he developed his own methodology and view of literary-historical phenomena during a time when research on minor Slavic literatures was in its infancy.

The comparison between the two works can only be made conditionally: in Máchal's case, we are dealing with a brief, isolated excerpt from an extensive survey; in Murko's case, we have an in-depth monograph on the period. If we briefly characterize the two surveys, a metaphorical definition is unavoidable: Máchal's survey is a typical, focused, erudite overview of a segment of national history, covering all the main points of individual Slavic literary histories, Murko's monographic study, on the other hand, is more dynamic and complex, reflecting true imagination. He, too, is aware that literature emerges from a specific time and place and is interested not so much in biographies or literary achievements as in the complex picture of events and, above all, in influences. He provides a synchronic and diachronic view of literary historical developments at a certain time. Unlike Máchal, he also emphasizes dialogue with other comparative historians, considering the achievements of Slovenian, Croatian, German, and even Czech scholars, and he polemicizes with them. The monograph itself also reflects Murko's efforts to open up German Slavic studies to other Slavic studies, to link them as a common cultural place.

We can conclude by admiring the work of two Slavists who, with their idealism and ideology of Slavic reciprocity, published monumental scholarly monographs in the context of the inspiring and prosperous postwar Czecho-Slovak Republic, thus pushing the boundaries of scholarship in the study of Slavic literature.

Both Murko and Máchal reflect on the categories of the nation and the supranationalism in the literary sphere. Both started from the idea of Slavic reciprocity and the belief in Slavic and South Slavic coherence and thus in the existence of supranational units, which was also a political idea at the time. In comparison to Máchal, Murko's view was even more political, as he advocated neo-Illiryanism, an ahistorical romantic view of South Slavic reciprocity, which prevailed especially among Serbian and Croatian intellectuals from this South Slavic area after the establishment of the Kingdom of Serbs, Slovenians, and Croats. Today, some of their ideas, particularly the question of Slavic and South Slavic interconnectedness, seem like an artificial construct and an ideological product of a time that has lost its historical meaning. However, it was in the shadow of these ideas that both scholars wrote their great scientific

works, and it was these ideas that motivated their research. Both were highly influential in the comparative literary history of Central Europe in the 20th century, and their work has been carried forward by later generations of Czech, German, and South Slavic literary historians.

In summary—and unfortunately—Murko and Máchal are frequently cited in Slavic sources but rarely read, a common characteristic of so-called “semiperipheral” scholars and their work (see Zabel, “What”). Nevertheless, the story of these two comparative literary historians reveals the enthusiasm and idealism of two scholars who, in the postwar period, researched minor Slavic literatures, starting from the myth of Slavic cohesion and, in Murko’s case, from the myth of South Slavic unity. Both explored the role of small Slavic literatures and literary culture during the great changes following the pan-European phenomenon of the Reformation. Today’s relevance of their approach (especially Murko’s) can be seen not only in the exploration of Central European literatures but also in the beginnings of interculturalism and the theory of cultural memory. In both cases, their research remains a starting point for all researchers in this field and they encourage further reflection and study.

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## Razmišljanja o češki slavistiki po prvi svetovni vojni: Matija Murko in Jan Máchal

Ključne besede: primerjalna književnost / slovenski literarni zgodovinarji / Murko, Matija / češka slavistika / Máchal, Jan Hanuš / južnoslovanske književnosti / reformacija / protireformacija

Razprava primerja pozitivistično misel dveh čeških profesorjev slovanskih književnosti v dvajsetih letih 20. stoletja: Slovenca Matije Murka (1861–1952) in Čeha Jana Hanuša Máchala (1855–1939). Primerjalna literarna zgodovina, ki se je v tedanjem srednjeevropskem prostoru ukvarjala z manjšimi južnoslovanskimi književnostmi, je bila v tem času še v povojih, primerjalni literarni zgodovinarji pa so se osredinjali predvsem na preglede posameznih literarnih obdobj. V fokusu tega prispevka so Murkova razmišljanja o južnoslovanski književnosti v obdobju reformacije in protireformacije v knjigi *Die Bedeutung der Reformation und Gegenreformation für das geistige Leben der Südslaven* (*Pomen reformacije in protireformacije za duhovno življenje južnih Slovanov*, 1927). Njegov pogled in metode primerjam s kratkim poglavjem o istem obdobju v monumentalni monografiji Jana Máchala *Slovanské literatury* (*Slovanske književnosti*, 1922). V študiji poudarjam njune primerjalne metode, interpretacijo vplivov in označevanje literarnih tokov v obravnavanem obdobju. Znanstvenika povezujeta analize literarnih gibanj v dveh nacionalnih zgodovinah z razvojem jezika, oba pa predstavita tudi družbeni in zgodovinski razvoj časa in prostora na splošno. Osredotočam se tudi na njuno razumevanje nacionalne in nadnacionalne literarne zgodovine ter na njuno interpretacijo osebnosti in literarnih del v literarnem gibanju.

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