

THE LANGUAGE REVOLUTION IN SLOVENE

ROMANTIC POETRY

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The set of problems posed in the evolution of modern literary Slovene during the first half of the nineteenth century consists of two aspects of the classical model of the questione della lingua: one concerns the formation of a written Slovene landsmaal; the other the creation of its refined poetic language. Conceptually, both aspects called for the resolution of the same options which confronted the Italian humanists of the early Renaissance: (1) a one-single-dialect vs. an integrated-superdialectal type of written language; and (2) a poetic language rooted in the vernacular vs. perpetuation of a non-native learned language tradition. In the atmosphere of poetic romanticism of this period, an additional insistence on the poetic function of a literary language and on the role of artistic language in society helped to hold what we would be inclined to term the "language question of modern slovene." To outline the controversy, to analyze its issues, and to account for its evolution in terms of modern sociolinguistics is the subject of this article.

The "language question," as it has been defined (Picchio 1972), belongs to the sphere in which language and society meet and interact. For that reason we propose to approach our topic from the vantage point of modern sociolinguistics. We intend to discuss it, first, in terms of the primary constitutional properties of a literary standard (inherent functions as well as questions of norm, flexible stability and intellectualization) and secondly, in terms of its social roles (the unifying, separatist and prestige functions of a

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literary standard in a society).¹ These latter, essentially symbolic functions promote the evolution of the "language question" in modern societies. It seems reasonable to assume that these same forces were acting one hundred fifty years ago in the essentially non-urban societies of East Central Europe as well.

1.

It is known that the linguistic premises of the evolution of modern Slovene were laid out by Jernej Kopitar (1780-1844), and that the course of its subsequent cultural development was defined and induced by Matija Čop (1797-1835) and Francè Prešeren (1800-1849). The life span of these three men determines the limits of the period under discussion (1800-1835); the generation gap between Kopitar and Prešeren is reflected by their differing attitudes towards defining the role and functions of a written viz. literary language in the society of the time. It should not be overlooked, however, that in final analysis these differences could have been first comprehended only by the very earliest heralds of a new middle class in the socio-economic evolution of the Slovene lands. This fact should help us to understand the sociolinguistic background of Čop-Prešeren's formula for the solution of the Slovene language question.²

Kopitar's Grammatik der slawischen Sprache in Krain, Kärnten und Steyermark (1808), which opens the period, was a historical turning point in the growth of written Slovene. This grammar stipulated the evolutionary coordinates of the language, both the spatial and the historical. It delineated the speech area of Slovene, accepted the sixteenth century Protestant tradition of Lower Carniolan as the basis of its written norm, and linked the further linguistic evolution of Slovene to a healthy interaction between vernacular and etymology. The Grammatik codified an equilibrium between both central dialects in the norm which was in the making in Kopitar's generation; the substitution of the clear monophthongal value of vowels for the Lower

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Carniolan diphthongs was one of its most auspicious phonemic reforms. Kopitar's insistence on the role of peasant speech and of the Church Slavonic model in building the norm was linguistically warranted and positive (Čop 1830: 38-39), but when transferred to the sphere of society, its culture and prospects of its progress, his principles became objectionable and unacceptable. It is this, not the questions of language as such, that led to the confrontation between Kopitar and the younger elite dedicated to a more sophisticated literacy for a prospective urban culture, and opened up the Slovene "language question."

Indeed, in terms of standard language theory, Kopitar's grammar gave a scholarly normalization of written Slovene. Yet, its author was not aware of the problems presented by the flexible stability and intellectualization of a language functioning in a literate society. On the contrary, Kopitar's concern with an ideal uniform Slavic alphabet, miscarried in the spelling reforms of his pupils, defied the logic and basis of flexible stability. And there was, of course, no room for intellectualization in his concept of a literary language. Kopitar accepted the range of thematic and functional expansion Slovene had during the Enlightenment (in religious and popular-didactic subjects and genres, for textbooks, newspapers, even for non-sophisticated poetry), but this meant in practice that he was limiting the inherent functions of Slovene to the level of an uneducated speaker. In sociolinguistic terms, Kopitar, who practically created the Slovene language, must have been conscious of the unifying and the separatist functions of its written form, but still looked at its prestige function with the eyes of a sixteenth-century linguistic codifier. There was no room for Dante's concept of the dignitas of the volgare illustre in Kopitar's understanding of a literary language in Slovene society.

One may understand why, from Vienna, Kopitar could see nothing beyond the rural countryside of his home, and could hear nothing but its peasants and their dialects, whose lexical purity and grammatical

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correctness were reflected in their speech. One cannot but wonder, however, why the contemporary wave of ideas so popular in Vienna, concerning the poetry of genius and taste and its role in the evolution of national literatures did not register on him:

The poet does not need to write for everybody [argued August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767-1845) in his Berlin lectures (1801)], in particular not in the periods of a low ebb of general knowledge and education in a society.... A poet can limit his audience as he pleases and one has no right to reproach him with unintelligibility when he is understandable only to those for whom he writes. (Schlegel A.W. 1884:285)³

Or:

It is clear that a language and the genius of a nation is so much more poetic, the farther the sphere of its intelligibility extends and the stronger the deviations from the speech of ordinary life are possible, without becoming unintelligible to the masses. And in this respect the southern languages are far superior to the North-European languages, where poetry is cultivated as in a greenhouse and therefore to most people tastes as a foreign fruit... (Schlegel A.W. 1884:286).

Or his brother Frederick (1772-1829), already in the programmatical Das Gespräch über Poesie (1800):

Translations of poets and imitation of their rhythms have become an art, and criticism a discipline which annihilated old errors and opened new vistas in the knowledge of antiquity whose background reveals a perfect history of poetry. Nothing further is required but that the Germans continue using these methods, that they follow the example set by Goethe, explore the forms of art back to their sources in order to be able to revive or combine them, and that they go back to the origins of their own language and poetry, and release

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the old power, the sublime spirit which lies dormant, unrecognized, in the documents of the fatherland's prehistory... (Schlegel F. 1968:74).

Or later, in his Vienna lectures of 1812:

Let us add to the lofty characteristics of national poesy and traditionary lore - the gifts of eloquence, wit and a cultivated language adapted to the purposes of polished society - and we shall have a complete picture of a really refined and intellectual people, and at the same time a just conception of a national literature (Schlegel F. 1889:10).

And Frederick again:

Every free and independent nation may claim the right to a native literature - that is, an idiomatic literary development of language. Without a native literature, the national genius will never be self-possessed, or enjoy an immunity from barbaric associations... (Schlegel F. 1889:225-226).

On the other hand, and in all fairness, one has to admit that there was a time when Kopitar must have understood the fundamental sociolinguistic factor in the evolution of great literatures in the vernacular, as it had been raised by German romantics of the period. A footnote in his Grammar (1808), in reference to Russian literature of the pre-Pushkin time, reads as if it were taken from one of August Wilhelm's essays on modern poetry; indeed, it reproduces a quote from Schlözer (1802-1809), a fact which speaks for itself about the tenacity of the idea of Dantean dignity in language and literature for centuries, and about the channels through which this idea might have entered Čop-Prešeren's generation even before the latter came in contact with the romantic movement:

Not mathematics, but the historical sciences should be cultivated in Russia first. And to be

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able to cultivate historical sciences, one must begin with the belles-lettres... Not a single nation of the world has liberated itself from barbarity with mathematics: nature does not change its course, and it is only with fine arts and scholarship, through writers of belles-lettres and poets that Greeks and Romans, Italians, French, English and Germans have educated themselves (Kopitar 1808: XVIII).⁴

The answer to the question why, during his years in Vienna, Kopitar "defied" Schlözer, as it were, or why he narrowed his vistas, toughened his principles (Slodnjak 1956), and stirred up the "question" into a "war," should perhaps be sought in the specific and the particular of the evolution of the "language question" in Slovene society of that time.

2.

Among the documentary material which gives a firsthand insight into Čop-Prešeren's understanding of the Slovene language question, two items are of primary importance: Čop's philological articles on Kranjska Čbelica in Illyrisches Blatt - a discussion of the problems of alphabet, language and poetic style, known as the Nuovo Discacciamento di lettere inutili (Čop 1833);⁵ and secondly, Prešeren's literary pendant to this debate, the witty poetic satire "Nova pisarija" (1831; Kidrič 1936:96-102). Conceptually, both documents reflect the same position; they complement each other to such a degree that they cannot be separated in our discussion. So far, they have been thoroughly and accurately analyzed in Slovene literary historiography (cf., Žigon 1914, Puntar 1921, Kidrič 1938, Slodnjak 1956, Paternu 1976). We should like to examine them from the standpoint of language and society, and the evolution of this relationship in the history of modern Slovene.

It is gratifying to see that recent Slovene literary scholarship once again accepts the influence

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of August Wilhelm Schlegel and his brother Frederick on Čop-Prešeren's view of language and poetry, language in literature and society (Paternu 1976). Although the Schlegel brothers had formed their romantic theories before 1800, their aesthetic doctrine and, in particular, Frederick's linguistic nationalism, popularized in his collected works, made themselves felt only in the twenties in that same Vienna where Čop and Prešeren matured before their return to Ljubljana. Thus one should not be surprised to find the Schlegels' works mentioned and discussed in Discacciamento (Čop 1833: IB 8, 30) and in his 1828 correspondence with Savio in Padua (Zimmermann 1914). Prešeren's pragmatic statement on the poetry question, "Nova pisarija," on the other hand, must have been inspired by Schlegelian discussions of poetry and poetic language, and his postscript to the Discacciamento explicitly linked his satire with the name of one of the two brothers.⁵

Čop's position on the role of cultivated language in the evolution of society and its application to the Slovene situation, cannot be separated from Frederick Schlegel's understanding of the same problem. Čop formulated it thus:

As long as a language is limited to the conceptual world of the simple peasant and cannot express higher life and scholarship, it cannot claim to be considered a cultivated language. A language can achieve an adequate cultivation only by a continuous usage in these two areas... (Čop 1833: IB 7, 25-26).

And further:

Let Mr. Kopitar try to translate into Carniolan a comedy by Aristophanes, or a dialogue by Plato, and he would immediately feel what we understand by the cultivation of language (ibid., 30)... The peasant, of course, does not understand what high style consists of, on the other hand, even the style of the books intended for the peasant is to be cultivated, and as Prešeren has so brilliantly

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shown in his "Nova pisarija," a cultivated Slavic book-style should not be based only on linguistic purism (ibid., 26).

Čop requires much more from "der höhere Styl," by which he means the language of a "gelehrte Dichtung," i.e., the poetic language of a higher aesthetic quality:

Our dialect is not yet as cultivated as are other Slavic languages, spoken by more people; much more, however, could be achieved if the educated man took an interest in its cultivation, and the writers themselves made an effort to comply with his higher expectations. This would not fail to influence even the style of books for the people which will, of course, remain an essential part of Carniolan literature... The specific merit of Kranjska Čbelica is that it offers something which might attract the interest of the educated, on whom - as we think - a higher cultivation of the language depends (ibid., 26)... Poetry is most suitable for this and also least dependent on external circumstances. If these circumstances make it almost impossible to think of the cultivation of real scholarship in our provincial language, there is nothing to prevent our poet from competing with the poets of other Slavs (Čop 1833: IB 8, 31). The greatest benefit we may expect from Čbelica and from similar ventures, is to attract the attention of the educated man for his nature language and to arouse his concern over its cultivation; and only if we try to please the educated will we be able to accelerate the cultivation of our language... I highly respect our peasant, in particular the Carniolan peasant - I myself am one among them - but I think we should not bother him with literature, in particular not with poetry... Save some rare exceptions, the poetry of the educated remains foreign to the peasant... (Čop to Kopitar, May 16, 1830) (Pirjevec 1935:34).

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It is remarkable how consciously Čop and Prešeren occupied themselves with the problem of poetic form, including questions related to rhythm and metric form. It is known that A. W. Schlegel's poetic theory related these concepts to a regeneration of poetic language and ultimately to a generation of a cultivated language in society. This theory claimed that the degeneration of a language can be reversed only by the conscious effort of a poet to create schöne Prosa and above all Kunstpoesie (Schlegel A.W. 1884:283-284); and this can be done only by training and discipline in imitation of the most noble South-European poetic forms. How else could we understand Prešeren's observation to Stanko Vraz: "With our Carmina... we want nothing more than to cultivate our mother tongue" (Kidrič 1936:321); or his remark to F. Čelakovský: "Kerst per Savizi, my latest product, should be regarded as a metric exercise" (Kidrič 1936:309). That metric exercise should not be read as the mock humility of a great poet is indicated by Čop's testimony vis-à-vis Čelakovský's review of Kranjska Čbelica 1. Here Čop explicitly links the poet's preoccupation with poetic form to his concern for language:

The Carniolan poet is much freer to choose among metric forms since we in fact do not have our own folk-verse... Why then would he not select those forms which are among the newer..., universally recognized as the most beautiful, i.e., the South-European? Among these in particular those of our Italian neighbors which cannot easily be imitated even by those peoples whose languages are by far less suitable for them than the Carniolan... These forms... the sonnet,... the ottava rima,... the terza rima,... the Spanish assonance... Among all Slavic poets whom we know, Prešeren was the first one to attempt the Spanish assonance (the recurrent rhyme of bare vowel sounds in every second line) in the entire poem... One scarcely needs mention that for the time being Prešeren wants us to see in his assonances, etc., only exercises and experimentation... (Čop 1833: IB 7, 27-28.

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The point is clear: Čop-Prešeren's concern with poetic form - and the list of formal patterns which the poet Prešeren used as "metric exercises" is quite long: the Nordic literary ballad, the Italian endecasillabo, terza rima, stanza, the sonnet, the "sonetto a corona," ottava rima, Spanish romance with the assonance, ghazel, decima, glosse, epigram, elegy, hexameter, Alexandrine - must be, aside from the role the artistic form assumes in poetry itself, associated with the romantic testing of language for its expressive power. This is what the theoretician Čop had in mind when he expressed hope that Čbelica also would remain in the future "ein Vereinigungspunkt für die Übungen unserer jungen Talente," which could contribute to a further cultivation of language. "Poetry is most suitable for this and after all - least dependent on external circumstances..." (Čop 1833: IB 8, 31).

In his commentary to Čelakovský's review of Kranjska Čbelica 1, Čop discussed three aspects of poetic language: elision, euphony, and meter. Similarly to A. W. Schlegel - and one should stress that all three topics were central to the artistic experimentation with language which characterized the Romantic movement - Čop searched for solutions to these issues in the linguistic properties of the language for which they were to be formulated. This formulation was scholarly and, for the poetic language of the Slovene, final.

Čop stressed that elisions in poetic language are acceptable, but that whenever they are used, they should be marked in the text to avoid confusion with vowel reduction, which Čop considered "barbarisch" in Slovene pronunciation (Čop 1833: IB 8, 31). The euphony of poetic language, which in Slovene represents a long-range proposition for unification of divergent dialects into an integrated written language, should be assisted by introducing a broader phonemic spelling system which would counteract the tendency toward vowel reduction (Čop 1833: IB 17, 15). And on the question of meter: prosody in a language is inherently conditioned by the character of the language itself; and its meter by its

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supersegmental features. Čop censured Šafařík's opposition to the use of a stress principle in Slavic versification. Granting that Czech stress is fixed and unchangeable on the first syllable, and that Polish stress is consistently on the penultimate syllable, he considered hexameters in Czech and Polish difficult if not impossible. He did not see, however, such difficulties in Slavic languages which do not have fixed stress ("a characteristic feature which nobody has observed so far," as he says). Thus in the metrics of a language with mobile stress, such as Slovene, the stress principle should be observed (Čop 1833: IB 8, 28-29).

At the heart of Čop-Prešeren's concept of the cultivation of a literary language was the rejection of Kopitar's misguided formula for the Slavization of written Slovene. The Slavization of a language, which for centuries had evolved in almost complete isolation and reached relatively late a cultural level which could not be nourished by the linguistic resources of a basically non-urban society, was in Kopitar's view possible only with a retrieval from the dialects of lexical and grammatical authenticity and relative purity (Lencek 1976:128). The fallacy of lexical purism and formal archaization of a language became obvious when Kopitar's pupils, Matevž Ravnikar in prose (1815) and Frančišek Metelko in grammar (1825), began to point the way to a linguistic and cultural withdrawal to the provinces, a process altogether in opposition to the philosophy of the times.

This philosophy, as we have seen, predicated that the language and the genius of a nation are that much more poetic, the further the sphere of the intelligibility of a language extends and the stronger the deviations from the speech of ordinary life are possible. It is obvious, of course, that Čop and Prešeren must have shared this philosophy with August Wilhelm Schlegel, and more importantly, that they themselves must have been in agreement on its propositions. Prešeren's "Nova pisarija" (1831) and Čop's philological argumentation (1833) differ only in genre and style;

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their message is the same. In Čop's concise formulation: "lexical purity and grammatical correctness" are two fundamental properties of literary languages, yet

by far not representative of the entire make-up of a language. As long as a language is limited to express only the conceptual world of the simple peasant and is not suited to serve as a tool of communication in higher life and scholarship, it cannot lay claim to the name of a cultivated language (if it were only for purity, many a language of savage peoples would deserve this name). A language can achieve cultivation only through a continuous and repeated usage in these two areas. Such a cultivation has been, however, lacking in the Carniolan-Slovene language much more than in other Slavic languages (except, perhaps, for that of the Sorbs or the Lusatians); one can see this if one tries to write, not a scholarly work, but a simple letter in a more educated style which, for instance, can be done without difficulty even in Croatian... We, however, seem to think that everything has been done if we transfer our peasant speech to the book such as it is and as faithfully as possible. Thus we use in writings expressions and phrases about which even our peasant understands that they are far from the dignity of the subject. The peasant, of course, does not know what the high style consists of, although he feels that it is needed wherever required by the subject (cf. Kopitar's Grammatik, page 55, note). Should we give him something better than the Germanizing phrases of the older Carniolan writers and the bare grammatical and lexical mannerisms of some new writers, his recognition will not fail to appear... The erroneous opinion that the peasant's speech itself may be already the "style," has been rebuked by Dr. Prešeren in his satire "Nova Pisarija" (Kranjska Čbelica 2), a poem in many respects remarkable... (Čop 1833: IB 7, 25-26),

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and as stated somewhat further, a satire, in its mastery of wit and ridicule - "to be compared with I pendanti by Vittorio Alfieri" (1749-1803).

"Nova pisarija" indeed deals with the same problems of language and style as Čop's article. Moreover, it dramatizes the long range dangers of linguistic purism and literary utilitarianism as professed and practiced by Kopitar's followers. The ultimate result of such a cultural policy might be a reduced literary language and a literature brought down to the level of the needs of a rural, essentially non-urban society. In linguistic terms, however, Čop-Prešeren's argument aimed at one aspect of literary language which involves modification of language-means to new intellectual horizons and to new functions in speech communities, known in the theory of modern standards as the intellectualization of language. Reducing the vocabulary of a language to the conceptual world of the uneducated, leads to decreases of the capacity of a language to serve urban and higher culture. A consistent linguistic purism, confining grammatical and particularly lexical means of a language into a close system, would do just that. The syntax, grammar and lexicon, on the other hand, represent an open system of language. If language is to project human thought accurately and systematically, these three areas, and in particular lexicon, must remain open to the extension, adaptation and specialization of our expression. This is what modern standard language theory considers the problem of a standard (literary) language. It is surprising how well romantics in general understood this problem - in their own way. It is amazing how well Čop and Prešeren understood it - in our modern way.

Kopitar's lifelong search for an ideal uniform spelling system to be introduced in Slavic languages written in Latin script called to life two spelling reforms of written Slovene, those of Peter Danjko (1824) and Frančišek Metelko (1825). For a short while, 1825-1833, their respective alphabets, danjčica and metelčica, competed with the traditional bohoričica

(the second one, *metelčica*, was banned in 1833, *danjčica* in 1838; *bohoričica* was abandoned during the forties). Afterwards, these centrifugal tendencies provoked the Čop-Prešeren reaction, and in particular Matija Čop's philological intervention. In the series of articles in Illyrisches Blatt specifically (Čop 1833: IB 13-15 and 17; and again: IB 23 and 30), Čop attacked Danjko and Metelko's spelling reforms, refuted the principles underlying Kopitar's proposition for such reforms, and formulated the premises for the evolution of a modern standard Slovene.

The main thrust of Čop's argumentation was directed against the basic rule of the Theorie der Buchstabenschrift which had been adopted by Kopitar and his pupils: "Write as you speak." It was in the name of this rule, which had just begun to be contested in contemporary German scholarship, that Danjko's and Metelko's spelling reforms were made. The senselessness of the proposed reforms, argues Čop, is obvious: any codification of narrow dialectal sound features is inconsistent with efforts to create a broader common base for a literary language.

It is amazing with what philological apparatus Čop operates in his discussion of the phonemic features of the sounds in Slovene dialects, e.g., of the varieties of e and o vowels in Upper Carniolan, of their phonemic values in grammatical endings; of the distribution of schwa in Slovene dialects, its essentially anti-euphonic character and its place in Slovene poetic language orthoepy; of the Styrian and Lower Carniolan ü, of the Carinthian y sound, of the Carinthian nasal vowels; of the differences in consonantal sounds in the dialects, e.g., of the Upper Carniolan š, ž, č; of its voiceless bilabial fricative ϕ ; of the Carinthian glottal stop; of l', n', h and x varieties in Slovene dialects. Should indeed special letters be used for a common written language for each of these sounds to satisfy the "write-as-you-speak" rule? Not at all, answers Čop:

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Adelung formulated this rule for written German in more specific terms: "Man schreibe das Deutsch mit den eingeführten Schriftzeichen, so wie man spricht, der allgemeinen besten Aussprache gemäss, mit Beobachtung der erweislichen nächsten Abstammung, und des allgemeinen Gebrauches" (see Lehrgeb. d. deutsch. Spr., vol. 2, p. 658). Should we not then ask ourselves: How many words would indeed one dare to write as one speaks, if he were to take into consideration the common best pronunciation, the derivation, and finally the common usage in a language? Do not these stipulations already cancel the rule? And yet, it is obvious that such qualifications are necessary, indeed. As a common book-language of a people can be created only so that everything specific to individual places be disregarded, and the most commonly used be accepted, the same applies to the pronunciation in relation to writing. And that is why neither the Schriftsprache nor the corresponding pronunciation can be sought in any individual location; they are both conventional. Thus, the writing should not aspire to express all sounds or all their varieties; the writing must remain somewhat general, the limitations of generality being defined by the boundaries of the extent of the area for which one would wish to write. The more specific one wants to be in description of a sound, the more restricted is this area. (Čop 1833: IB 17, 13-14).

And further:

If we want to achieve a common Slovene writing, let's write what is more common, etymologically more correct, and more euphonic. These considerations must be observed in our language so much because we don't have any 'common best,' i.e., cultivated pronunciation which might be taken for a basis of writing. Our educated men (in particular those in the towns) do not speak Slovene at all, or -- as a rule -- much worse than Slovene is spoken and pronounced by the uneducated. An additional factor

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making the application of the "write-as-you-speak" rule still less warranted in our language than in any other Slavic dialects, is the following: In Slovene, as we have seen, the sounds, particularly vowels, are by far more unstable than in other Slavic dialects... If we want to have an orthography to be used by all Slovenes, we must relinquish all the peculiarities in the notation of sounds... Thus we shall obtain an etymological writing... which has several advantages. Firstly, the etymological principle will bring our language closer to other Slavic dialects... Secondly, ... it will condition its euphony ... and thirdly, it is easier than Metelko's writing... And above all, it can offer a convenient way to unite our speaking differences at least in writing... (Čop 1833: IB 17, 15).

The theory of standard language orthography, used by Čop, can be easily traced, by his own reference, to Bauer 1827-1833. The second volume of this five-volume Grammar of the New High German in which problems of Rechtschreibung are discussed, appeared in Berlin in 1828. Čop's quotations from this volume clearly show how timely and welcome the acquisition of this book must have been for his encounter with Kopitar's doctrine. In fact, Čop's entire argument against the reform, and in particular against the "write-as-you-speak" rule, rests on Bauer's authority (Bauer 1828: 1-17).

On the other hand, it is not fortuitous that the title of Čop's "Slowenischer ABC-Krieg" includes a paraphrase of the title of a famous sixteenth century treatise on the known Italian "war of alphabets": Discacciamento de le nvove lettere, invtilmente agivnte ne la lingua toscana, by Agnolo Firenzuola (Rome, 1524). It is through Firenzuola's treatise that the Slovene "war of alphabets" is related to Gian-Giorgio Trissino's spelling reform of 1524 and to Trissino's edition of Dante's De Vulgari Eloquentia (1529).⁶ This fact is so much more significant because Čop found in Trissino's introduction of Greek epsilons

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and omegas in the Italian alphabet and in his justification of their use, the very same arguments used by Kopitar and Metelko. Moreover, Dante's De Vulgari Eloquentia, which Čop, by his own admission, had known in Latin fifteen years earlier (1817) and now re-read in Trissino's Italian translation, must have been an important source of inspiration in his thoughts concerning the evolution of a new poetic language of written Slovene. Dante's discussion of the volgare illustre and his dolce stil nuovo, epitomizing, as it were, the essence of the language question for every modern culture, are - in final analysis - not far from what we find in Čop's realization of a Slovene literary landsmaal based on a cultivated poetic style, and in Prešeren's concern with his "sladka govorica" (Sonetni venec, 13; Kidrič 1936:151) growing out of the new illustrious vernacular of his native Upper Carniolan dialect.

3.

One of the characteristic traits of the debates on the language question in those Slavic cultures which developed without an ethnically conscious aristocracy or middle class, as was the case with the Slovenes, was that for a long time the evolution of their literary standard did not touch the level of their narrower social communicative functions. Thus in the Slovene lands the dilemma of German vs. Slovene stood for a social and cultural differentiation; and, in the given social structure, there was very little need for the development of a Slovene administrative and cultural language. Kopitar, Čop and Prešeren corresponded in German and, as did their contemporaries, probably used German in oral communication as well. The communicative function of Slovene, except for the vernacular in dialects, was limited to its use in books. Primož Trubar's Schriftsprache (1550) for centuries remained a Slovene Büchersprache, book-language (Čop 1830:38). Thus, we are using a misnomer when we call it a literary language, since the existence of a literary language presupposes a qualitative yardstick. In this respect,

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then, the Slovene situation differs strikingly from the Italian "language question" model. In Florence, the language of the book, which was the language of literature, was based on the illustrious vernacular of Florentine society. Conversely, the tool of communication of that society which read the book, was modeled on the language of the literature.

Since no prose language existed in the vernacular in Dante's time in Italian (Kristeller 1946), literature in the Florentine case meant poetry, "the worthiest genre of the illustrious vernacular" (De Vulgari Eloquentia, book 2, chapter 2). And, si parva licet componere magnis, here emerges a further specificity of the Slovene situation: at the moment when the Slovene language controversy erupted, there already existed a Slovene prose language. Čop himself judged the language of T. Linhart, J. Japelj, V. Vodnik, and in particular M. Ravnikar's prose to be "clear," "pure and tidy," "solid and vigorous," although still inside the boundaries of the topical and stylistic limitations of an unsophisticated reader (Čop 1830).

On a social level, the specificity of the Kopitar vs. Čop-Prešeren confrontation concerns the ideology of two different cultural programs and what they implied for the evolution of the Slovene language. The basic position of both sides was the same: there was practically no significant middle class in Slovene society at that time. If in the twenties its numbers were increasing (Gestrin-Melik 1966: 69-89), Kopitar in Vienna did not recognize this change. And the conclusion he drew from his position was pessimistic:

Athens, Rome, and Florence were the ruling, or at least the prominent cities as they began to exert literary influence; their language was spoken by a population of several millions to whom these cities passed on taste (Geschmack); in Athens one spoke only Greek, and in Rome Greek had an entirely different status as German has in our towns. Education, however, proceeds from the cities, and can one expect more from our cities for the

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improvement of our provincial language than Athens, Rome and Florence were able to radiate? (Kopitar 1833:2).

Thus Kopitar's realistic program was low-culture-oriented: Let us first create an all-Slovene written language for the people, then study its dialects, restore its original Slavic character and recover its lost purity and correctness.

On the other hand, Čop and Prešeren were already part of a new Slovene middle class generation with the Schlegelian vision of the role of a cultivated urban language in society and the mission of urban society in the evolution of modern nations. This generation, aiming at a Slovene high culture of the future, belonged to visionaries; they were preoccupied with the poetic function of Slovene, with the elegance and refinement of language to be used by a middle class of tomorrow. Sociolinguistically, the case made by the new generation for a Slovene poetic language meant a conscious effort to implement the prestige function of literary Slovene. This perception of the dignity of written Slovene was far beyond P. Trubar's understanding of his decision to raise his native dialect onto the pedestal of a written language. Čop and Prešeren stipulated this dignity in the name of romantic tenets on the highest functional nobility of poetic language in modern national societies. Hence, their preoccupation with the problems of euphony, which are the central problem of poetic language.

A linguistically most relevant characteristic of the Slovene language question was that it helped resolve two existential problems of the literary language: in principle, the relation of a literary language to its dialects, that is, the problem of the theoretical basis of a literary language of the integrational type; and two, from a practical point of view, the unification of the literary traditions of different dialectal bases, notably of the unity between central and eastern, Carniolan and Styrian dialects.

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The theoretical side of these problems was solved by Matija Čop. Due partly to Kopitar's teaching on the need for an improved alphabet, and partly to the traditional particularism of the Slovene provinces at that time, two attempts were made to reform the Protestant spelling system: Danjko's and Metelko's, each with a series of new graphemes from the Cyrillic alphabet and with a new set of dialectal restrictions. When it became clear that these innovations might jeopardize the evolution of the young Slovene literature, Čop intervened with a theory of literary languages and dialect integration within the bounds of reason and reality. He proposed that a literary language must be based on features which are above local and dialectal differences. Only norms which tend to be as general as possible, which promote what is etymologically correct and acceptable to all dialects, and which are capable of resolving the inherent problems of euphony of a language, could create an expedient and refined literary language to serve the cultural needs of a nation. These principles, formulated at the peak of Slovene romanticism, have guided the evolution of the Slovene literary language ever since.

The solution of the practical side of the existential problem of literary Slovene was, however, more complicated. It demanded the resolution of contradictions in the concept of literary language proposed by Čop and Prešeren, which, in the final analysis, seem to be very similar to those discussed and resolved in Dante's *De Vulgari Eloquentia*: a literary language of the landsmaal type is supposed to guarantee equality of dialects in a speech area, and unity of the language which is derived from them. On the other hand, the existence of a volgare illustre negates, as it were, the very notion of the ideal linguistic structure demanded by the concept of a landsmaal.

In the case of Slovene, the question of acceptance of an essentially Carniolan literary language in Styria and Carinthia arose long before the first wave of the Illyrian movement swept over Styria and Carinthia. It grew stronger with Prešeren's illustrious usage of his

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Upper Carniolan vernacular, and became still more powerful after the first overtures to join the Illyrian movement crossed the Sotla River.

In a language as dialectally differentiated as Slovene, insistence on a dialectal basis favoring Upper Carniolan in the west, could not but widen the gap between the central-dialects norm and the literary practice of Styrian writers in the east. In this light Danjko's attempt to create an East-Styrian literary language, and Vraz's departure to Zagreb become more understandable. Prešeren's poetic language, or by the same token, the language of Kranjska Čbelica, were indeed not easily understood in contemporary Styria, and Čop and Prešeren might have realized this problem when they discussed it with Vraz (1834). Čop himself, observing Vraz's speech and seeing some logic and consistency in his pronunciation of Prešeren's language, was presumably prepared to concede to the Styrian dialect some therapeutic role in regulating the orthoepy of the literary Slovene of tomorrow (Čop 1833: IB 17, 15).

Yet it would have taken more than a philologist, and more than a poet to comprehend at that time the significance and advantage of accepting a literary norm of a remote dialectal base for the sake of the linguistic unity of the Slovene speech area. This is what Anton Murko (1809-1871) did with his grammars (1832, 1843) and dictionaries (1833) at the time when his fellow-countryman Stanko Vraz left the Slovene cause. The dilemma facing Murko and Vraz was very similar; the decisions they took were opposite and irrevocable. Under the circumstances, the decision to accept and to join the central dialects norm was a most significant integrational move, and - as it already has been shown elsewhere - I would venture to say that the sacrifice of the Slovene peripheral literary tradition for a central literary language was of no less magnitude than the sacrifice of the Croatian kajkavian tradition in favor of the štokavian language. This is how the Styrian dialect was unified, symbolically as it were, for the integration was finally and fully

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implemented only much later, in 1860-1865, when, together with all the remaining Slovene periphery, Styria finally opted for unity with the Carniolan tradition. In this way literary Slovene in the process of its "language question" evolution and most probably because of it, assumed two other symbolic functions literary languages play in modern societies, the unifying and the separatist.

In a nutshell then, the Kopitar-Čop-Prešeren discussion of the Slovene language question involved the full range of existential sociolinguistic problems a written idiom faces in the moment it begins to evolve into a tool of communication for an essentially urban culture. The particular and the specific in this discussion was Čop-Prešeren's concern with the prestige function of a poetic language, in which the romantic age saw the highest dignity of a language belonging to a cultivated society. It is the assymetry of this proposition which a pragmatic, practical-minded Kopitar, the realist, was unable to comprehend. All other aspects of the language controversy, although they are intrinsically part of the Slovene "language question," were in one way fortuitous, incidental, and therefore marginal.

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NOTES

¹Our conceptual frame of reference is based on the theory of standard languages used by the Prague School of Linguistics. Cf., Havránek 1963, Vachek 1960, Garvin 1959.

By inherent function of standard languages we understand the communicative and the poetic (aesthetic) functions they perform in a society; by norm, a codified set of rules of language use, contained in formal grammars and dictionaries; by flexible stability, an

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appropriate codification of a standard which provides for a systematic modification and expansion of changeable parts of grammar, style and lexicon in line with culture change (Mathesius 1932); by intellectualization, the development of grammatical and lexical means of a standard which allow greater accuracy and definiteness of our expression (Havránek 1932).

The sociolinguistic functions of literary standards are, of course, entirely symbolic: the unifying function arises as a consequence of the fact that usually a standard unites several dialectal areas into a single speech community; the separatist function, as a result of the fact that normally a standard sets off a community as separate from other speech communities. Since prestige is always attached to the possession of a standard language, the prestige function reflects the consciousness of pride derived from possession of such a language.

²The facts of the Slovene "language question" are taken for granted in our discussion. For the sake of reference we offer them here in a chronological survey:

- 1784-1802 J. Japelj (& others), a new edition of the Bible, based on the language of Dalmatin (1584), with some Upper Carniolan innovations
- 1790 T. Linhart, Županova Micka, Veseli dan ali Matiček se ženi
- 1795-1797 V. Vodnik, Velika Pratika
- 1797-1800 V. Vodnik, Lublanske Novize
- 1806 V. Vodnik, Pesme za pokušino
- 1808 J. Kopitar, Grammatik der slawischen Sprache in Krain, Kärnten und Steyermark; stress on Protestant tradition, dialects, and spelling reform
- 1808-1844 Kopitar in Vienna
- 1815 Chair of Slovene language at lyceum in Ljubljana

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- 1815-1816 M. Ravnikar, Zgodbe svetiga pisma za mlade ljudi
- 1820 Kopitar, Dobrovský, Metelko, Ravnikar discuss the problem of the reform of alphabets in Vienna
- 1824 P. Danjko, Lehrbuch der windischen Sprache; introduction of danjčica
- 1825 F. Metelko, Lehrgebäude der slowenischen Sprache; introduction of metelčica
- 1827-1835 M. Čop active in Ljubljana
- 1828-1849 F. Prešeren active in Ljubljana and Kranj
- 1830 Prešeren: "Slovo od mladosti," "Povodnji mož," "Leonora"; Kranjska Čbelica 1
- 1831 Prešeren: "Nova pisarija," "Hčere svet," Sonnets; Kranjska Čbelica 2
- 1832 Prešeren: "Turjaška Rozamunda," "Soldaška," "Črkarska pravda"; Kranjska Čbelica 3;
A. Murko, Theoretisch-praktische slovenische Sprachlehre; an East-Styrian grammarian accepts the idea of linguistic unity with the Carniolan
- 1833 Prešeren: "Gazele," "Sonetni venec"; Illyrisches Blatt: "War of Alphabets"; metelčica is forbidden
- 1834 Prešeren: "Soneti nesreče"; Kranjska Čbelica 4
- 1835 S. Vraz begins to hesitate between Slovene and "Illyrian"
- 1836 Prešeren: Krst pri Savici
J. Kollár, O literarnéj vzájemnosti;
J. Cigler, Sreča v nesreči, first Slovene literary prose
- 1836-1851 first wave of Illyricism in Slovene lands
- 1837 Vraz joins the Illyrians in Zagreb;
J. Kollár, Über die literarische Wechselseitigkeit;

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1838	<u>danjčica</u> is forbidden
1840	Prešeren rejects Illyrianism
1843	<u>Novice</u> , the first non-literary periodical in Slovene
1846	<u>Novice</u> accepts <u>gajica</u> Prešeren, <u>Poezije</u>

³Our discussion of A. W. Schlegel is based on a collection of his essays on language and poetry, viz., "Briefe über Poesie, Silbenmass und Sprache" (1795), "Betrachtungen über Metrik," and "Der Wettstreit der Sprachen" (1798), in a recent edition of his critical works: Schlegel A. W. 1962. - For his Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur (given in Vienna, 1808-1809; published in 1809-1811), we use Schlegel A. W. 1894; for his Vorlesungen über schöne Literatur und Kunst (given in Berlin, 1801-1804), the original edition in Schlegel A. W. 1884.

F. Schlegel's "Das Gespräch über die Poesie" (1800) is cited from an English translation in Schlegel F. 1968; his Vorlesungen über Geschichte der alten und neuen Literatur (given in Vienna, 1812; published in 1815), after Schlegel F. 1889.

⁴The italics, typically, are the ebullience of J. Kopitar.

⁵The articles in this series were published in Illyrisches Blatt between February 9 and July 27, 1833; their central part appeared under the title: "Slovenischer ABC-Krieg." The entire collection was reprinted and published as a Supplement to Illyrisches Blatt under the title: Nuovo Discacciamento di lettere inutili, Das ist: Slowenischer ABC-Krieg. Eine Beilage zum Illyr. Blatt. (Vom Bibliothekar Zhóp.) Laibach, 1833. - Our references to this source read: Čop 1833: IB number, page.

Čop's articles in this series are: (a) a commentary on Čelakovský's review of Kranjska Čbelica 1 (IB 7, February 16, and IB 8, February 23); (b) a reaction

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to J. Burgar and F. Metelko's response ("Slowenischer ABC-Krieg," IB 13, March 30; IB 14, April 6; IB 15, April 13; IB 17, April 27); (c) an answer to Metelko's group's response ("Slowenischer ABC-Krieg N^{ro} 2," IB 23, June 15); and (d) a reply to J. Kopitar's attack ("Slowenischer ABC-Krieg N^{ro} 3," Ausserordentliche Beilage zum IB 30, July 27).

Čop's last article appeared with a special addition by F. Prešeren: "Literarische Scherze in August Wilhelm v. Schlegel's Manier. Vom "Doctor-Dichter P.", consisting of five satirical texts on J. Kopitar.

⁶As we learn from M. Čop's correspondence with F. L. Savio, - Savio (1801-1847) was a student at the University of Padua at the time -, Čop inquired after Dante's De Vulgari Eloquentia in the beginning of 1828 (Zimmermann 1914:114). In a letter dated somewhat later, Čop tells Savio that he came across "an old Latin edition of this work in the Imperial Court Library in Vienna" in 1817, and that now he would wish to consult it in Trissino's Italian edition. Čop would wish to see it because of the spelling reform Trissino introduced in the 1524 edition of Dante's work, "all the more since our Carniolan philologists are also very busy with new letters these days" (March 7, 1828; Zimmerman 1914:252-3). As it is known, Gian-Giorgio Trissino (1478-1550) attempted a reform of Italian spelling by the introduction, among other things, of the Greek epsilon and omega in the alphabet for the Italian open e and o. Trissino's reform provoked harsh reactions among contemporaries: several essays were published against it, among them A. Firenzuola's Discacciamento. In December 1831 Savio sent to Čop Trissino's edition of De Vulgari Eloquentia in the famous Epistola del Trissino de le lettere nuovamente aggiunte ne la lingua italiana (Vicenza, 1925; first edition in Rome, 1524), and A. Firenzuola's Discacciamento (1524), so that he was able to give an exhaustive bibliographic reference to the "Italian ABC-War" in the Supplement to Illyrisches Blatt No. 15 (page 9, ftn. 5). After Kopitar's attack in IB 27, Savio copied the data from a number of other Italian sources and sent to Čop

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this material as well.

The Čop-Savio correspondence consists of 31 Savio letters to Čop (unpublished), and 13 Čop letters to Savio (Zimmermann 1914).

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