


## The Construction of the Image of Italy in the 19th Century on the Example of Travelogues Published in the Slovak Period Press



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### Annotation

*The paper analyses how Italy is depicted in selected 19th-century Slovak travelogues. We chose this period because the travelogue genre was established in Slovak literature in the 19th century. Second, the travel reports to Italy that appeared in the Slovak context in the 17th century had a different nature since the Counter-Reformation and the condemnation of Protestants to the Spanish galleys in Naples conditioned the journeys. These accounts focused more on personal suffering than the peculiarities of the countries. 19th-century travel writings had a different character. Magazines tried to meet readers' interests by publishing documentary and factual literature. We chose the travelogues of two important cultural figures who visited Italy during the same period and had the opportunity to perceive the same cultural, social, and other circumstances. The emphasis is on the travellers' interests, the construction of their image and how nature, climate, and other characteristic country features are reflected in their landscape image. In addition to a re-examination of the text-creation mechanisms and the different rendering methods of the same aspect, the description of natural, cultural and social realia, the paper reveals their relationship to the depicted country and how their interest was influenced by their theological education and involvement in the Church. The paper outlines the genre form widespread in 19th-century Slovak journalism considering the then atmosphere and cultural events. After studying subject-related period documents and scientific works, we used the interpretive method, which pointed out ways of depicting the visited country and its specifics. This is reflected in how the issue is treated: from a generalising view of the period, the significance of the period press, and the place of the authors to an interpretation of their works. In the conclusion, we seek to generalise the existing parallels and differences in the modes of imagery.*

**Keywords:** 19th century, Slovak period press, travel writing, Italy, Venice, religious symbolism

## Introduction: starting points, objectives and research methods

The nineteenth century was crucial in forming Slovak national identity and the preferred ideas that became the mainstay of the efforts to establish a sovereign and later politically independent nation. The ascending tendency of cultural life was related to creating unity through a program focused on commitment to the nation's defence and efforts to raise national awareness<sup>1</sup>. For this, however, it was necessary to choose – even under the existing circumstances and the status of the Slovak commonality – the most appropriate means and modes of cultural activity. Thus, one of the feasible ways to achieve the intended goal seemed to be enlightenment, in synergy with efforts to develop the national language, but also by publishing a periodical press in the Slovak language. Vienna and Budapest did not look favourably on these cultural activities of the Slovak intelligentsia. They were aware of its significance in spreading and developing national emancipation activities. The publication of newspapers and journals was strongly determined by the socio-political conditions in the Habsburg monarchy, including the Hungarian press law, the difficulty of obtaining a concession to publish periodicals, strict control/censorship, the financial possibilities of the population, and the number of subscribers to newspapers and journals. The number of Slovak periodicals published in this period was not extensive<sup>2</sup>. Still, the existing ones fulfilled their “functional role” – they sought to raise literacy in various areas of everyday life through their thematically diverse content. Travel also contributed to this, which, by getting to know the “Slavic world”, helped strengthen Slavic mutuality and develop political and personal contacts. Although, following the pan-Slavic idea, they travelled mainly in the Slovak countryside and Slavic countries, Slovak travellers did not shy away from travelling to other lands, including Italy. The appeal of Italy in the Slovak context is evidenced by the travelogues and travel writings of several authors, of which the Slovak period press published, for example, the travel records of Karol Kuzmány, Gustáv Zechenter-Laskomerský, Štefan Nemeckay, Martin Leo Čepka, Jozef Karol Viktorin, Andrej Kubina and others.

Although the motives for travelling were varied, descriptions of travel experiences became a popular item in the “Slovak” press of the time. The interest in the genre of travel writing in the observed period and environment was conditioned by the popularity of the genre in the German language area in the second half of the 18th century (Kiss-Szeman, 2014, p. 155), where some Slovak scholars studied, but also by the programmatic contribution of the Travellers' Association to the development of travel and travel literature (Klátik, 1968, p. 117; Molda, 2014, p. 259), founded at the Department of Czech-Slovak Language and Literature of the Evangelical Lyceum in Bratislava (1838)<sup>3</sup>, thanks also to a fund for financing students' travels. However, the terms for

<sup>1</sup> Ján Gallik, in his study *Predvoj slovenskej a českej katolíckej moderny* [A Preface to Slovak and Czech Catholic Modernism], mentions in this context the importance of the development of Christian thought, which to a large extent shaped the history and culture of Europe, creating in many nations the principle of the inseparability of the link between national sentiment, culture and faith (Gallik, 2018, p. 96).

<sup>2</sup> At the beginning of the 19th century these are only 2 titles, J. Palkovič's *Tatránka* and L. Kuzmány's *Hronka*. The *Spolok Vzájomnosť* [Solidarity Association] (1837), founded by A. B. Vrchovský, B. P. Červenák and P. V. Ollík, sought to activate supporters of cultural and national work not only at its meetings but also by publishing *Vzájomnostné listy* [Solidarity Letters], of which Červenák was the editor-in-chief. Contributions published on the pages of Štúr's *Slovenské národné noviny* [Slovak National Newspaper] with a literary supplement *Orol Tatránki* [Tatra Eagle] (1845-1848), Hurban's *Slovenské Pohľady na vedu, umenja a literatúru* [Slovak Prospects on Science, Art and Literature] (1846-1847), *Prjateľovi ľudu* (1848-1849), in *Slováckich noviny* [Slovak Newspaper] (1848), *Noviny pro ekonomiki i remeslá* [Journal for Economy and Crafts] (1848), *Poklady kazateľského rečníctva* [Treasures of Preacher's Oratory] (1848-1853), *Slovensky pozorník* [Slovak Observer] with the supplement *Žitva* (1849). As a matter of interest, we can cite the example of Košice, where, thanks to the printing presses and, of course, the cultural awareness of the inhabitants, we can record 70 periodicals during the 19th century, although their publication was often short-lived. Of the 70 periodicals, 35 ceased to exist immediately after their establishment.

<sup>3</sup> Any student could become a member of the Association, but the condition was a financial contribution. Based on the amount of the contribution, students were divided into three groups, each of which had certain obligations. Rastislav Molda points out those circumstances (2014, p. 252).

financial support were set, which included, among other things, the publication of the description of the journey in print or as a separate title.<sup>4</sup>

While the period press published several travelogues<sup>5</sup>, due to the need to narrow down the established framework in this paper, we will discuss only two authors, namely Karol Kuzmány and Štefan Nemeckay, who visited Italy around the same period.

Insights and observations from northern Italy are part of Kuzmány's notes published immediately after the trip and as a sequel<sup>6</sup> under the title *Z cestovního denníka záletu z Vídně do Benátek* [From the travel diary of a voyage from Vienna to Venice] (1852) (see Bujnák, 1927) in the Slovak Newspaper<sup>7</sup> published in Vienna.

The activities of Kuzmány were diverse. He was not only a poet, prose writer, literary theorist, priest, founder of the Society of General Edification in Banská Bystrica, professor of the history of church law in Vienna, vice-president of Matica slovenská [Slovak Matica] in 1863-1866, but also the publisher and editor of the magazine *Hronka* (1836-1838). A source for the study of Kuzmány's travelling activities and, consequently, the publication method is Kuzmány's biography compiled by P. Bujnák (who writes: "First the mother left with her daughter Ludmila and the youngest son Peter, then the father went, followed a few days later by the second son Pavel, who also described this trip.", Bujnák, 1927) and also the research of Milan Pišút, who also points to the influence of Ján Kollár in connection with Kuzmány's travelling activities (see Pišút, 1967, pp. 11-33). Kuzmány decided to travel to Italy to visit his son Karol Ladislav, a naval officer in Venice who also lived in Trieste (Bujnák, 1927, p. 135). In his text, he shares his personal experience and adventures from his short stay in Trieste and Venice from 17 August to 29 August 1852, providing information about the landmarks of the cities he visited (Graz, Ljubljana, Trieste, Venice), mainly historical and artistic sights. He speaks enthusiastically about the Slovak character of diligence, which he also reveals through meeting his compatriots, who, thanks to their resilience, are among the leading personalities of Italian life. His remarks about scientific and technical progress, which together with education may be the opportunity to bring the expected social change and improvement of Slovak conditions (Kuzmány, 2014, p. 486), can also be considered remarkable. Kuzmány's awareness of "journal" publishing limits is evident from the attitudes that are part of his travelogues: "Don't expect me to describe it all to you. A superficial description is worth nothing, and a more thorough description of these things your newspaper could not possibly render would grow into a whole book, for there are hundreds and thousands of these things. Each has a history or intrinsic worth so great that it is impossible to briefly speak of it" (Kuzmány, 2014, p. 488).

Catholic priest Štefan Nemeckay (1792 - 1884; on his life and work, see Hofierka, 2014, pp. 13-18) undertook several exploratory journeys (Italy, France, Germany, the Netherlands and

<sup>4</sup> Among the requirements was a description of the country from various points of view (geographical, historical, political) and a presentation of the report to the other students of the Lyceum.

<sup>5</sup> For example, M. L. Čepka published his experiences in Italy in the journal *Cyrrill a Method* [Cyrrill and Method] in 1853, F. V. Sasinek in *Katolícke noviny* [Catholic Newspaper] (1881), Andrej Kubina in *Pútník Svätovoješský* [Pilgrimage of Saint Adalbert] (1889), Jozef Karol Viktorin published his travelogue in *Lipa - narodný zábavník* [proceedings Lipa - a national entertainer] (1862).

<sup>6</sup> As Bujnák points out, they were published in 1852 on the pages of *Slovenské noviny*, in issues 105, 113, 115, 116, 118, 119. Bujnák retrieves some parts and presents in the context of Kuzmány's biography. The language of the travelogue also documents the Czech language preferred in the given period in *Slovenské noviny*. In the present paper we prefer to work with the book and language form of the travelogue, which is part of Kuzmány's complete work edited in 2014.

<sup>7</sup> *Slovenské noviny* began to be published from 10 July 1849, first twice and later three times a week, and ceased to exist at the end of 1861. Their editor-in-chief was D. G. Lichard. Several published articles were taken from foreign-language periodicals (e.g. *Wiener Zeitung*, *Journal des Débats*, *Pesti Hírlap*, *Srbský dnevnik* and others), so they were translated from individual languages, first into Štúr's Slovak, later (from 1850) into Old Slovak or modified Czech, and finally (from 1858) the language of the newspaper was Štúr's standard Slovak, modified by Hodža and Hattal. However, it is at least worth mentioning that this periodical initially advocated the independence of the Slovak country and Slovak education, but from November 1852 it became an official organ of the Viennese government supporting Bach's absolutism. For more details see Duchkowitzsch, Serafinová, & Vatrál, 2007, pp. 143–145, Serafinová, 2011, p. 280.

England). He visited Italy three times. In 1835 and 1864, he merely passed through Italy, and in 1852, he accompanied Bishop Domonkos Zichy (1808 - 1879). Zichy asked Nemeckay for his company on the journey in early March 1852, and they set out in early April by train from Vienna via Graz to Ljubljana, from where they continued their travels to Trieste, Venice and other cities. They returned home in early June 1852 (see Hoferka, 2014, pp. 16-17). Juraj Slotta, the administrator of the Saint Adalbert Association, selected, translated and published the notes from Nemeckay's 1852 Italian journey from the author's Latin manuscript *Memoriale ex meis peregrinationibus in extraneis Regnis*, containing records from other journeys as well, in Bernolák's Slovak language in *Pútnik svätovojeťský* [Saint Adalbert Pilgrimage] in 1875, 1876, 1878. Nemeckay's journey aimed "to see the blessed land and to visit the tombs of the holy apostles Peter and Paul" (Nemeckay, 1875, p. 47). In addition to the biblical sites and others (relics, statues, places of Eucharistic miracles, heavenly apparitions), the tombs of the saints, especially those of the apostles Peter and Paul in Rome, were also popular destinations for pilgrims. The impetus for seeking such pilgrimage sites was religious veneration, cultic purification, the bestowal of spiritual riches, and thanksgiving for hearing prayers or salvation (Dancák, 2005, p. 17). However, we find Nemeckay's destination choice of "sacred mobility" remarkable also for the very symbolism of the holy apostles: transformation (Paul), persistence, or permanence (Peter, the head of the apostles and the one entrusted with the keys to the kingdom of God, see Fouilloux et al. 1992, pp. 172-173, 176-178; Lurker, 1999, p. 236).

In the country image structure of the selected travelogues, we will be interested in depicting the land's natural features and the image of Venice as part of this picture. The choice of the image of a particular Italian city, i.e. Venice, in the textual strategy of Kuzmány and Nemeckay, was conditioned by two factors, namely the city's close connection to the natural element, water, but also the tendency to perceive Venice as a symbol of Italy.

### **The peculiarity of Italian nature through the eyes of «Slovak tourists»**

In Kuzmány's work, natural landmarks are given their place, although the author mentions the natural peculiarities of Italy only in a marginal way. Kuzmány associates nature with colours and sounds, evoking all kinds of emotions. The natural environment becomes a personification of strength and greatness, an asylum and a cure for the soul. Still, at the same time, it also symbolises something sinister, dark, and demonic - mainly because of its mysteriousness. It is against the background of these antagonisms that Kuzmány's "perception of the sea" is born – silent and infinite, deep, dark white, blue, green (Kuzmány, 2014, p. 485), which, despite its changeability, does not lose its essence, "for it is something complete and indivisible, a unity that holds together everything that is disparate, heterogeneous and diverse" (Tomášek, 2016, p. 30). It is a space revealing the infinite and the monumentality of nature. It appears as something sublime that transcends the subject, something whose essence is obscured and can only be suspected. The symbol of the sea's infinity interlinks with the semantics of the mountain: "But the sea rises to a mount, and into what a wide, long one. Oh, may I not have a hundred eyes, may I be nothing but an eye, O Lord!" (Kuzmány, 2014, p. 482). The horizontal aspect is here augmented by the vertical. The mountain, or hill, represents a kind of intermediate link, a connection between the material and the spiritual, the earth and the sky, the meeting of two worlds, but also the place of God's presence, thus "the path to the top of the mountain [...] symbolises the path to God" (Janiec-Nyitrai, 2012, p. 29). Kuzmány, intensely relishing the sight of the sea in Trieste harbour, refers to the "transcendental reality", the "reviving" power of the "word of God". We are led to this assumption

by the fact that already in his first travelogue, he incorporates the image of the eruption of the volcano Vesuvius, symbolising the destructive forces of nature and the doom of Pompeii, as well as the image of water as a source of life, into the image of the country/world (Kuzmány, 1968, p. 99) to highlight both the universal law of evolution, birth and death (Eliade, 1958, p. 154) and the sense of human destiny, “life in humanity, regardless of time and place, regardless of happiness and its degree of perfection” (Kuzmány, 1968, p. 16). In the tectonics of his prose, the use of spatial imagery establishes a strong bond between the traveller/pilgrim and God. It embodies the idea of an anticipated rebirth – grounded in religion and moving towards humanity. The confrontation of man and nature, man and eternity, is revealed through landscape painting, and the idea of a new age man penetrated by the “mystery of nature” is born.

Nemecskay records for his readers “grand and magnificent” (Nemecskay, 1875, p. 54) views of “unheard-of and unprecedented wonders of nature” (Nemecskay, 1875, p. 54), but his picture of idyllic landscapes is mainly fragmentary. It reveals little of the individual traits of the traveller<sup>8</sup>, although, in some places, Nemecskay’s passenger resembles a romantic wanderer who enters into a close relationship with the landscape (Faktorova, 2012, p. 258). Although his enjoyment of exploring a foreign land is limited primarily to describing the cities and “their tourist attractions,” his emotional experience of the landscape is manifested when he climbs a mountain, hill, or “the highest pavilion of a tower” (Nemecskay, 1875, p. 54), which not only provide “a most splendid view” (Nemecskay, 1876, p. 56) of the city, the surrounding countryside, of “the Mediterranean Sea stretched out to infinity” (Nemecskay, 1876, p. 56), but “Here the divine power and glory in the unheard-of and unprecedented wonders of nature are only yet revealed to you!” (Nemecskay, 1876, p. 54). Nemecskay thus refers to the incomparable power of God and man’s position in the world, to the fact that nature bears traces of the infinite, the divine, thus stimulating a religious sense of transcendence. The chosen natural images (mountain, water) create, as Mircea Eliade points out in the context of Taoism, a spiritual idea of “a perfect place, combining completeness (mountain and water) with solitude, and thus perfect because at once the world in miniature and Paradise, a source of bliss and place of immortality” (Eliade, 1963, p. 153).

In describing the lived space, the traveller emphasises not only the presence of God in all of nature but also the possibility of contemplation and connection with God. Thus, in Nemecskay, as in the Romantics, a higher symbolic meaning of nature can be identified by a premonition of the spiritual nature of the world (Procházka, 2010, p. 522). Nature and its omnipotence thus serve to reinforce the awareness of human determination (Hrbatá & Procházka, 2005, p. 29); it stands out as something sublime, as something that transcends the subject, something whose essence is obscured, but it is also a force, a way of cognition. Nature is the personification of power and greatness, an asylum and a cure for the soul. Still, at the same time, it is also a symbol of something terrifying, dark and even demonic, which awakens ambivalent feelings of horror and admiration (Hrbatá & Procházka, 2005, p. 28). In addition to the metaphysical and transcendental experience of natural space, an analogy between discovering a foreign land and life’s journey is also revealed. For the religiously minded, however, the ascension may symbolise the rise to heaven<sup>9</sup>, the longing for the transcendent, and the quest for the supreme truth that merges into one with the “Hidden God, the *Deus absconditus*” (Eliade, 1963, p. 184). Contrasting the disconcerting vastness of the world

<sup>8</sup> Antošová, for example, draws attention to another type of traveller, whose journeys, descriptions and philosophical contemplations fundamentally reflect his personality and worldview approach to life/the world as such (2015, pp. 289–302).

<sup>9</sup> Within various religions, what is high-placed represents the transcendent (Eliade, 1958, p. 124). Transcendence, as stated by G. Marcel in his essay *Mort et immortalité* (Death and Immortality), is without a doubt the highest to which the human spirit is capable of rising, and heaven/heavens a symbol of the spiritual reality in which it is embedded (2013, p. 227).

(Eliade assesses the vastness/infinity of space as a hierophany of the transcendent, on which see Eliade, 1958, p. 122) and the “God’s greatness” also brings the traveller a romantic enchantment that results in natural impressions: “from a range of rounded hills and wild, fat pasture-covered heights; summer streams often incise the slopes, chestnut on the top, olive-studded on the bottom” (Nemetskay, 1876, p. 48). The portrayed world/nature/land represents a supernatural value, a unique structure of existence/sacredness, a kind of “heavenly” universe in which the religious symbols of sacred trees are remarkably embedded.<sup>10</sup> However, the inner states of the subject are not further developed; the emotional experience of the landscape is reflected only by the accumulation of adjectives expressing the positive emotions of the pilgrim: “the most beautiful” (Nemetskay, 1875, p. 57), “clear sky”, “gentle climate”, “golden rays” (Nemetskay, 1876, p. 52), “healthy air” (Nemetskay, 1876, p. 58), or by anthropomorphising: “these pontis marshes (...) feed on several Apennine streams” (Nemetskay, 1878, p. 35). Otherwise, the reader is confronted with a factual description of geographical realia, which he tries to embellish with some lesser-known information (e.g. etymology of the name, legend).

Travel writers also reflect the country's favourable climatic conditions in creating the image of an idyllic landscape. For Kuzmány, Italy, thanks to its climate, is also “pleasing; it can be called the paradise of Europe” (Kuzmány, 1968, p. 88). Nemetskay also noted the difference in the country’s vegetation and climate.

### **Venice – the city «sui generis»**

The American urban theorist Kevin Lynch, who put forward a specific methodological procedure for researching the image of the city, evaluates Venice as an environment of high imageability. This characteristic refers to a feature that evokes a strong image in the minds of observers of a given environment (2004, p. 9). The image of the city is a configuration of its identity, structure, and meaning. Lynch considers these aspects essential, as they are reflected in the mental map of the city or the cognitive representation of the environment in the percipient’s mind. From the point of view of grasping the perception of the selected city, the definition of the three essential parts of the city image by Radványi (1983) – natural, artificial and social – is equally stimulating for us. We will use the approaches of these two authors to uncover the idea of Venice as a city portrayed in the travelogues of the selected authors.

### **Venice – City on the water or queen of the Adriatic Sea**

The natural features - primarily the location, which is very different from other Italian cities - make Venice a unique city, a “city of miracles” on the water. Kuzmány also focuses on this particular feature, the close connection with the water element. His first impression of Venice was of the sea. The problematic access to the city across the sea and the length of the cruise itself signal the city’s isolation from the rest of the world. However, the city interacts with this water element, merges with it, or rises above its surface. The whole image, the comparison of the city to a “queen of the sea” (Kuzmány, 2014, p. 486), a “mistress of a certain place”, has a solid spiritual charge. It contains the idea of the woman-earth-mother and the religious symbolism of water, embodying a wide range of potentialities, the basis of the whole world, of all cosmic manifestations, the

<sup>10</sup> According to M. Eliade, this idea of sanctity is conditioned by the discovery of the coexistence of nature and symbol: "No tree was ever adored for itself only, but always for what was revealed through it, for what it implied and signified." (Eliade, 1958, p. 268).

primordial substance that preceded all forms, facilitating the emergence of life (Eliade, 1958, pp. 188-190). Kuzmány's perceptual sensations anchored the synergy and differences between the primordial essences: „The waters are there at the beginning and end of every cosmic cycle; the earth is there at the beginning and end of every individual life. Everything emerges into being above the surface of the waters and is once again reduced to its primeval formlessness as a result of a historical disaster (like the flood) or a cosmic one (mahapralaya). Every expression of life is the result of the fertility of the earth; every form is born of it, living, and returns to it the moment its share of life is exhausted; returns to it to be reborn, but before being reborn, to rest, to be purified, to be regenerated. Water precedes every creation, every form; earth produces living forms. While the mythological destiny of water is to open and close cosmic cycles, the destiny of the earth is to stand at the beginning and end of every biological form and of every form sharing in the history of the place (“men of the place”) (Eliade, 1958, pp. 254). Water can symbolise the depth of the human soul, the subconscious, which carries various desires and visions, but it can also be disconcerting, a threat to the end. We believe that Kuzmány contours the functions of water through natural phenomena (the function of creation and the function of decay, 2004, pp. 210-211 and thus the cyclical conception of evolution. Along with this motif of the woman and the water, the moon symbolises evolution, death and resurrection (Eliade, 1958, pp. 210-211).

Kuzmány does not build his description only on the associative nature of the images, but through the visualisation of space, he also expresses his relationship to particulars. Concerning the sea, he mentions characteristics such as changeability, “iridescence”, or “brilliance” (Kuzmány, 2014, p. 489). Therefore, it is not about its celebration; he does not associate its purity with beauty or the “intoxicating play of waves”, but the idea of something mysterious, dangerous or deceptive is present. The duplicity implies a particular concern<sup>11</sup>.

Like Kuzmány, the sea offers Nemeckskay a magnificent view of Venice, “A truly magnificent spectacle!” (Nemeckskay, 1876, p. 48). As is evident from the scope and content of the text, the description of natural realia is not at the forefront of his interest. The reader has to suffice with a short factual description of the city lying in the middle of the sea, the so-called lagoons, spread over 136 larger and smaller islands and interwoven from a “labyrinth of 136 channels” (1876, p. 48). According to Nemeckskay, it is also a city sui generis, incomparable and peculiar, a city “built in the middle of the sea”, a city “on trees” and “stone supports” (Nemeckskay, 1876, p. 48).

### Venice – the symbol of culture and art

The dominant feature of Kuzmány's account of Venice is the tower of St. Mark's, which is accessible ‘by a sloping floor’ (Kuzmány, 2014, p. 487) and from which one can view the whole city, ‘all the beauty of Venice’ (Kuzmány, 2014, p. 488). By highlighting its place in the context of other landmarks, Kuzmány seemed to indicate that the cult of St. Mark is one of the most important symbols of Venice. This tower reveals valuable views of the peculiar city and its diverse architecture to visitors. He attributes a prominent place to the Church of St. Mark. Its size and the style of its erection evoke a sense of infinity: “Already in the magnificent anterooms you are captivated by an unknown, never before suspected emotion. [...] I thought I had entered some

<sup>11</sup> The way of depicting space offers a comparison with the Czech writer of the second half of the 19th century and one of the most travelled poets of his generation, Julius Zeyer (1841-1901), who also repeatedly visited Italy. His restored and dramatised images represent „a kind of narration that can be segmented into a sequence of many successive concrete images. The resulting figurative metaphors comprise a loosely interconnected entity, while acquiring independent meaning“ (Schacherl, 2021, p. 195). Understanding, which in Zeyer's writings is always tendential, „typically assumes the form of visually sensual rendering of reality“ in the poet's narrative (Schacherl, 2021, p. 196).

African catacombs” (Kuzmány, 2014, p. 487). The cathedral is thus a space that allows us to perceive a higher, spiritual dimension of existence. He seems to consider emotion as a natural tool/means of perceiving “immaterial, supersensible” reality. Perhaps this is why his description/characterisation of the city is, in many ways, abstract and vague, based on a generalisation of what impressions it evoked in him.

In addition to St. Mark’s Cathedral, Kuzmány also emphasises other landmarks, whether by mere brief mention, as in the case of the “antique palaces from centuries past” (Kuzmány, 2014, p. 486), or in connection with their function, as in the case of the “miraculous” or “most memorable” Ponte Rialto Bridge (Kuzmány, 2014, p. 489). He seeks to impress the reader and win over the city by enumerating important cultural and artistic monuments of different styles and periods and accentuating their number and dimensions. Venice thus appears as a city of accumulated objects and materials, a prime example of a grouping of diverse elements (Gothic, Roman, Byzantine, Renaissance) that is difficult to compress into a single description (Kuzmány, 2014, p. 488). This may be why they tend to be tiring for the visitor: “But that I sailed all day from palace to palace and saw a thousand things never seen before... I’m either drunk or in a trance. In a word, I can ‘neither slumber nor sleep’ because of the kaleidoscope in my head (Kuzmány, 2014, p. 485).

An essential part of the image of the city becomes the description of the architectonic design of the city, its subdivisions and connections (see Kuzmány, 2014, p. 486-487), expanded by the image of an earthly paradise, which in Kuzmány’s travelogue is also connoted by the only public garden (Kuzmány, 2014, p. 489). Even though it is an artificial space, its importance can be seen in its growth. In connection with water and trees, it evokes the Persian garden, representing the garden of paradise, which “later influenced greatly the ancient culture of the Mediterranean, especially Rome” (Hendrych, 2005, p. 24). The garden size described by Kuzmány creates the impression of a park. The park “is a forest condensation, where what man finds useful is improved and what he finds troublesome is removed and destroyed” (Janiec-Nyitrai, 2012, p. 26). This way of conducting again refers to the Christian tradition: “The park environment is an extension of the natural space of the forest. This space was created against the backdrop of the original natural space and carries within it a reflection of that original preimage” (Frye, 2000, pp. 126-127). It is also noteworthy that it draws attention to plane trees among the trees. They can be seen as trees of the divine garden that bring verticality to space and create the idea of both permanence and “eternal renewal” (Biedermann, 1992, pp. 287-288). All these visual phenomena tend to highlight art that originated in the heart of Christianity and further developed in the service of religion (Kuzmány, 2014, p. 305).

Similar is the case with Nemeckay. We assume that Nemeckay deliberately incorporates the symbol of the pear into his image. “The whole city is laid out in the form of a pear and is divided into two unequal poles by a large strait, winding like a snake” (Nemeckay, 1875, p. 48). In addition to immortality, the pear also connotes the meaning of fertility/abundance (Biedermann, 1992, 96) because of its shape and resemblance to a woman’s pelvis. He seeks to support this aspect through the richness and the naming of Venetian cultural and artistic monuments. In Venice, he describes St. Mark’s Square in more detail, lying “in the heart of the city” (Nemeckay, 1875, p. 48), while for other monuments, he is sparing in expression, or limits himself to listing the well-known sights, or those that stand out in some way among the others, “the patriarchal church of St. Mark, the antique space palace of the Doge, as the first official or prince of the Republic of Venice was once called [...], the former imperial palace, the theatre of la Fenice, the Rialto bridge over the great canal with one vault (arched vault), the naval armoury, the largest and most magnificent in all Europe, etc.’ (Nemeckay, 1875, p. 48). Along with a staggering number of sacred buildings, it also highlights Venice as a “crossroads of East and West”, revealing its religious diversity.



The city's luxury and the decoration of Catholic churches are also unveiled through the lavish use of ornamental materials – gold and marble. He illustrates this with the example of St. Mark's Cathedral, which surpasses "the others, not indeed in beauty and grandeur of construction, but in greatness and splendour of interior - for it is all gilded inside and full of pictures and pebble-paintings (mosaics)" (Nemecskay, 1875, p. 49).

However, Nemecskay does not leave unnoticed the mode of transport (sailing "in black boats", gondolas) (see Nemecskay, 1875, p. 48). Narrow streets and narrow canals create the impression of cramped conditions as if centuries were "layered before us" in one place with their artistic monuments, "historical ups", and downs. It also outlines the period of annexation to Austria-Hungary and the suppression of revolts in the revolutionary years. "Venice was once powerful, prescribing to emperors and kings the exceptions of peace; now it is deserted, sad and inhospitable; its splendid palaces are in danger of collapsing, its arches are faded and boarded up, its appearance is pitiful" (Nemecskay, 1875, p. 48). With the above image, Nemecskay explicitly draws attention to the reach of the politics of the "Vienna court" and creates a contrast to the period of its "great power status" (Nemecskay, 1875, p. 49).

### Venetian – «a new kind of creature»<sup>12?</sup>

In a series of Slovak travelogues from Italy, we can encounter a stereotypical definition of the Italian temperament. In capturing the character traits of the Venetians, the authors were inspired by J. W. Goethe's travelogue and, of course, by observing the everyday atmosphere of the city, which differed in many ways from that which they knew from their home environment. Kuzmány's work resonates with the social life of the city's inhabitants in close connection with art: "Venice is in its light only in the evening, especially in St. Mark's Square. Three or four bands, people by the thousands, and everything with a better position in Venice sits on thousands of chairs under the colonnade on three sides of the square. Moreover, there you hear all the languages of the world and see all the beauty of Venice, and the poly-cellists, the theatre-goers, the reciters, the singers, and everything from the God of the world" (Kuzmány, 2014, p. 488). Although the author associates Venice with theatre and music, his observation/description makes art a form of social life and the city, or instead its square, both a "zone of enjoyment" and a "zone of contact". In this sense, one can see the crossing of the boundary between public and private, between the "cold north and the warm south", the blurring of confessional differences or differences resulting from the social hierarchy. Kuzmány thus characterises the city as a space in which one can find not only "traces of others", of foreign countries and cultures, but also a city whose essence inherently includes "thousands" of views. Kuzmány is not only impressed by this conviviality/unity, completing the local colour, but also finds other positive character traits: "Italian people in Venice are very good-hearted and polite, and, as everywhere, prone to jokes and laughter" (Kuzmány, 2014, p. 488). Other aspects resonate with Nemecskay. However, we should note that he is not primarily concerned with depicting the nature of the local population or its lifestyle; instead, he articulates typical national or social characteristics through some detail - clothing, behaviour, and style of living. They serve to illustrate the atmosphere of a region or place. Concerning the character or appearance of the Venetians – as he did in the case of the Genoese or Neapolitans<sup>13</sup> – he makes no

<sup>12</sup> An attribute credited to J. W. Goethe. See Goethe, 2017, p. 63.

<sup>13</sup> Nemecskay's Genoese women are "white (feminine)", "beautiful and comforting" and "stand out in their white veils that hang down from their bare heads" (Nemecskay, 1876, p. 50), the inhabitants of Genoa are "diligent and hardworking" (1876, p. 53), he mentions inactivity in Naples only as a basic attribute of "the so-called Lazarones, i.e. the burden-bearers, poor people" (1876, p. 53).

observations of his own. We assume that, due to the author's aesthetic attitudes, he was more interested in the 'religious spirit' of the Italians than in their physical appearance (1875, p. 75). This generalisation of Nemeckay and its validity concerning the inhabitants of Venice can only be deduced from the declaration of the number and variety of churches: "In all, there are 99 Catholic, 1 Greek Catholic, 1 Armenian, and 1 Evangelical, German prayer house. The Jews have seven synagogues" (1875, p. 49). To portray Italy in as positive a light as possible, he takes a hostile stance against traditional images of Italian "character", assessing the work ethic of Italians. In addition to character traits, it reflects, at least in hints, the social stratification of society, even that which is exemplified by other cities, not Venice.

### Conclusion

Travels to Italy in the Slovak context were mainly inspired by the need to know this cradle of European culture, history and education, valuable artistic monuments, holy places and aristocratic courts. Despite the "marginalised position" of Kuzmány's and Nemeckay's travelogues, their importance lies in developing travel literature and the phenomenon of the Italian journey. Travelogues need to be seen in the context of the times. They show us the author/traveller as a "scholar, a rational researcher", and a person "sensitive to the malleability of the world", contemplating both objects and the meaning of everything existing. They are a journey "to knowledge, to discovery", a kind of *fateful 'geography' of the subject, of humanity, of their dreams and desires*" (Hrbata & Procházka, 2005, p. 76).

While Kuzmány has a pragmatic reason for the journey, Nemeckay's journey manifested the spiritual life. It was intended to strengthen personal religiosity and expand religion's ideas. Nevertheless, they both see Italy's appeal in the intoxicating beauty of nature, complemented by lakes, forests, valleys, and climate. The vision of both authors is religiously motivated; nature and the city are sacred spaces with many references to the spiritual world, and Venice is a place where the divine meets the human. Kuzmány chooses details (e.g. shapes and colours on buildings, colour, emotional experience/impression, customs, people's character) and thoughtfully "conceives" them into his image of the country when rendering a particular section of reality or image. He enhances the educational value of his travelogue by his ability to discover and introduce peculiarities with the help of different motifs. Nemeckay's travelogue, in turn, like the travelogues of Catholic travellers, adopts the imperative of the Enlightenment travelogue, i.e. it strives for the most objective presentation of accurate information based on unbiased judgement (See, e.g., Moyšová, 2022, pp. 51-53). While Nemeckay does not evaluate the world "presented" in his travelogues (nature, history, art, people) "through the lens of national ideology", Kuzmány compares "new" and "unusual things, objects, people" to domestic (Slovak) realia. Despite their greater or lesser inclination towards objectification, probably conditioned by the author-traveller's acquired education and profession, both travelogues are inspiring. They document the development of Slovak journalism and the travelogue genre (in Nemeckay's case, we can observe the predominance of the informative style; in Kuzmány's case, the narrative style).

Despite these differences, both authors left it to the reader to assemble and (aesthetically) evaluate the presented image of Italy. Although the view we have outlined is fragmentary, the examples given highlight the image of Italy as a country with an admirable Mediterranean nature with rural and urban panoramas and buildings, a particular national character and physiognomy, which also corresponds to the specificities identified by the comparatist M. Beller, based on his analysis of travelogues to Italy (2007, pp. 194-199).

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#### Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest.

#### Ethics

The material presented in this article meets all the points and requirements put forward by the Ethics Commission of Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia.

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### **Конструювання образу Італії ХІХ ст. на прикладі тревелогів, опублікованих у словацькій періодичній пресі**

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(Словацька Республіка)

#### **Анотація**

Стаття зосереджена на аналізі того, як Італія зображена у вибраних словацьких подорожніх оповіданнях ХІХ століття Кароля Кузьмані та Штефана Німецького. Кузьмані та Німецький відвідали Італію одночасно, і звіт про їхню подорож опублікувала словацька преса того часу. Основний акцент зроблено на інтересах автора/мандрівника, побудові авторського образу та способі вираження, а також на тому, як природа, клімат й інші характерні риси країни відображені в їхньому пейзажному образі (думки автора, почуття, роздуми). На додаток до повторного розгляду механізмів створення тексту й відмінностей у методах передачі того самого аспекту, опису природних, культурних і соціальних реалій стаття розкриває зв'язок із зображеною реальністю/відвіданою країною, а також вплив на інтерес мандрівників/авторів їхньої богословської освіти й причетності до (євангельської чи римсько-католицької) церкви. Стаття окреслює форму жанру тревелогу, поширеного в словацькій журналістиці ХІХ століття, у контексті сучасної атмосфери та культурних подій. Кілька репортажів про подорожі було опубліковано в літературних журналах або увійшло до літературних додатків тогочасної преси. Як і тогочасна преса, вони виконували інформаційно-пропагандистську функцію, прагнучи зміцнити слов'янську національну свідомість, відповідно висвітлити позитивні якості слов'янської природи. Мотивацією для подання цієї статті було те, що подорожі ХІХ століття стали маргіналізованими щодо досліджень історії літератури ХІХ століття. У зв'язку із цим історична преса є багатим і досі маловикористаним джерелом для пізнання життя (не лише) словацького народу, незважаючи на те що період (природні, культурні) реалії представлені крізь призму суб'єктивного погляду автора-мандрівника.

**Ключові слова:** ХІХ ст., преса словацького періоду, подорожі, Італія, Венеція, релігійна символіка.

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