

THE NATION BETWEEN THE EPIC AND THE NOVEL: FRANCE PREŠEREN'S *THE BAPTISM ON THE SAVICA* AS A COMPROMISE "WORLD TEXT"*

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382 In this article, I take as the point of departure two concepts produced by Franco Moretti: the concept of the "modern epic" as the "sacred/world text" of a given cultural tradition (*Modern* 1-39, 88), and the concept of "compromise" as the form and content of the interliterary contact between the center and the periphery ("Conjectures" 58-60; "More Conjectures" 78-79). As understood by Moretti, the modern epic is an important agent of the fracture between unified, class homogeneous "classical writing" and pluralist "modern writing" marked by class conflict—the process that, for example, Roland Barthes (17, 58-60) identifies in nineteenth-century French literature and its construction of the institution of Literature. Just when Literature had firmly established itself within the framework of classical writing, it immediately began to fall apart, as authors turned to modern writing under the influence of the bourgeois ideologeme of pluralism. In the absence of a common sociocultural framework, the styles of the mid-nineteenth century became equal, comparable, and interchangeable, which led authors to a frustrating engagement with the problematic nature of language as a literary medium (Barthes 60-61).

In contrast to the natural individuality of personal style and the spontaneous reality of the language system, Barthes conceives of writing as a social framework for the discourse consciously or unconsciously chosen by the writer. Writing is therefore a mode of "the relationship between creation and society," "the morality of form, the choice of that social area within which the writer elects to situate the Nature of his language" (Barthes 14-15). The transition from classical to modern writing is also manifest in the correlation between the genre system and the political processes participating in the construction of a nation in pre-bourgeois and bourgeois societies. While (semi)-peripheral European literatures, including, for example, German literature, seek to establish national identity with the aid of the epic as a privileged

form of classical writing, the central and well-established national literatures, such as English literature, demonstrate their identity with the novel as a popular form of modern writing distributed via the print media of the bourgeois society (see Moretti, *Modern* 50; Anderson 24-25).

The novel, which according to Benedict Anderson and Moretti is a key ideological factor in the conception of a nation, played its part more quietly and in the background compared to the epic, which functioned as an explicitly nation-building genre and had a lasting effect on a broader readership. The novel acted on the imaginary social ties between individuals immersed in their privacy with spheres of action that marked the living space of a nation (see Moretti, *Atlas*), with a language that sought to mimetically internalize the reality of contemporary heteroglossia and with plausible narratives about heroes with whom readers could identify, seeing themselves as the heroes' compatriots. As Moretti explains, the prosaic regularity of everyday life of the "serious century" was presented by the novel to its bourgeois readership through a subdued rhetoric of the effects of the real (see Moretti, "Serious" 368-70, 375-86, 391-92).

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The subterranean ideological agency of the novel, which, with its "prosaics" (Morson and Emerson 15-25), turned the idea of society based on a common language, traditions, habits, and space into something natural, everyday, and real, represents a modern alternative to the traditionally aristocratic and *poetic* monumentality of the epic. Thus, treating the arts that symbolically unite and represent nations (for example, monumental architecture, sculpture, patriotic music, and historical painting), Hegel, the metaphysicist of German cultural nationalism, provides a particularly extensive treatment of epic poetry in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, specifically mentioning "a national epic [ein nationales Epos]" (Hegel 1057). In "epic proper," Hegel sees the sacred book of a nation, its foundation and the expression of its history, spirit, and culture: "[T]he content and form of epic proper is the entire world-outlook and objective manifestation of a national spirit presented in its self-objectifying shape as an actual event" (1044). The monumental, heroic, and poetic form of the epic encompasses, in an encyclopedic fashion, the totality of an individual nation (its beliefs, character, habits, space), while at the same time, through the narrative on war and paradigmatic individuals (heroes), particularizing both the suprahistorical generality and each specific historical case of national essence. The novel, on the other hand, is, for Hegel, merely a modern, degraded form of representing such a totality. As a philosopher of the rising literary semi-periphery, Hegel declares the novel to be the "modern *bourgeois* epic [moderne *bürgerliche* Epopöe]," which still possesses "the wide background of a whole world [der breite Hintergrund einer totalen Welt]," while lacking "the *original* poetic situation of the world [der *ursprünglich* poetische Weltzustand]" because it presupposes "a reality already *prosaically* ordered [setzt eine bereits zur *Prosa* geordnete Wirklichkeit voraus]" (Hegel 1092; translation modified). If Hegel's formulation of the novel as a "bourgeois epic" is viewed from the perspective of Barthes's conception of writing, the change of the

mode of positioning literary form along the relation between its production and consumption becomes evident: the novelist, by submitting to modern writing, places his or her language in the heteroglossia of post-feudal bourgeois society, its demystified rationality, seriousness, and private routines.

If Hegel was so enchanted by the epic, the enthusiasm for the epic in many other parts of the (semi)-periphery, especially Central and South-Eastern Europe, should come as little surprise. The national movements of these countries strove for greater cultural and political autonomy within imperial monarchies, which is why, in accordance with Hegel's lordship and bondage dialectic (Hegel, *Phenomenology* 111-19), they showed the need for a national awareness formed—in conditions of dependence on the ruling Other—through the monumental narrative of the nation. This kind of heroic historical narrative was conceived of by national movements as an imaginary counterweight to the real political power of the Master. Epic mania erupted in the late eighteenth century, in the atmosphere of European cultural nationalism, and did not subside in the following century. As I have explained in detail elsewhere, the epic of Antiquity and the Middle Ages—be it the artistic or the folklore epic—was the object of historical and philological studies, and a model for a series of imitations and mystifications, while literary critics and aesthetes saw in the epic an authentic foundation and expression of the so-called national spirit (see Juvan, "Uvod"). The extensive historical retrospectives in Hegel's aesthetics symptomatically show that the modern nationalist conception of the epic looked to the distant past for models, to a time when different ideological forms of collective allegiance, such as kinship, dynastic, and regional allegiance, were in place. In Antiquity, the epic evolved from the need for a canonical consolidation of collective ties via mythological narratives. The nineteenth-century "national epic" modeled itself on its precursors from Antiquity and Early Modernity (such as Homer's *Iliad*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, Camões' *Os Lusíadas* [*The Lusíads*], Ronsard's *La Franciade* [*Franciad*]). Its ideological and poetic structure, however, was determined by historicism, nationalism, and fractures between classical and modern writing. The national epic, the heir to aristocratic culture, explained the contemporary state of the imagined community it was addressing and legitimized the aspirations of the nationalist bourgeoisie and intellectuals. Thus, in addition to editions and arrangements of medieval narrative cycles and heroic epics, many original historical epics, dramatic poems, and narrative poems were written that thematized major battles as well as religious, racial, and ethnic conflicts, such as Ernst Schulze's *Caecilie*, Jan Holly's *Svatopluk*, Jovan Popović's *Milošijada*, Adam Mickiewicz's *Konrad Wallenrod* and *Dziady* (*Forefathers' Eve*), Petar P. Njegoš's *Gorski vijenac* (*The Mountain Wreath*), Alexander Pushkin's *Poltava*, Mikhail Lermontov's *Poslednij syn vol'nosti* (*The Last Son of Freedom*), and France Prešeren's *Krst pri Savici* (*The Baptism on the Savica*) (see Juvan, "Uvod" xxix-xxx).

In *The Theory of the Novel*, Georg Lukács established a series of dichotomies between the epic and the novel: totality vs. fragment, transcendence vs. immanence, closed vs. process form, homogeneity vs. heterogeneity. Similarly, Mikhail Bakhtin

defined the novel as the antithesis of the epic, proposing these dichotomies: completed vs. developing genre, high and canonized literature vs. low and non-canonized literature, monologism vs. dialogism, absolute past vs. open-ended present, poetic language vs. heteroglossia. Lukács's and Bakhtin's counterpositions, along with the other distinctions between the genres—verse vs. prose, collective vs. individual, oral vs. written, public vs. private—owe a great deal to Hegel. Massimo Fusillo argues that, based on such differences, the epic can be understood as “a spontaneous and auroral genre,” and the novel as “the preeminent secondary genre” (34). Regardless of this binary opposition, Moretti (*Modern* 56) argues that both genres played an equivalent discursive role in the ideological process of nation-building: they organized the national space centripetally.

Moretti treats Goethe's *Faust* as the first modern epic. This dramatic poem resembles the classical epic in its scope as well as in its poetic tendency to substantiate in verse the existence and significance of the community in which it came into being. Much like the classical epic, it seeks to allegorically grasp the totality of the existence of the world, while occupying a position no less important than that of the classical epic in the canon. In fact, the modern epic has the status of a sacred text of its culture, which is why it is continually republished, interpreted, taught, adapted, and referred to (Moretti, *Modern* 1-88). According to Moretti, the modern epic is an attempt of the bourgeois epoch to demonstrate that it is on a par with the foundations of Western civilization (classical Antiquity and feudal Christianity) by means of an original and prestigious adaptation of the binding legacy of the magnificent epic form (36). Compared to a multitude of novels, modern epics are exceptional, even indigestible for the average reader, yet they function as masterpieces (6, 38-39). *Faust*, written by the cosmopolitan Goethe, a known adversary of young romantic nationalists, is interpreted by Moretti as a “world text”: rather than subordinating itself to the construction of national identity, it allegorizes the dominant position of the West in the world-system. In opposition to the novel, which represents the heterogeneity of contemporary society by internalizing its heteroglossia, Goethe's modern epic depicts the heterogeneity of the global space as a synchrony of historical periods (41-59). In the following paragraphs, I will try to demonstrate that, in addition to the monumental form of the cosmopolitan and allegorical encyclopedic material transpiring in *Faust*, the modern epic—at the turning point between classical and modern writing—developed many other varieties, including some that were much shorter and more emphatically integrated into nation-building processes. Just as Moretti permitted himself to generalize the essence of the modern epic from a handful of canonized Western texts, I will venture to point out the vast field of variants of the modern epic, a hybrid between the classical epic and the modern novel, by analyzing a key text of one of the semi-peripheral literatures.

The Baptism on the Savica (1836), a verse tale by France Prešeren, was printed thirty years before the first Slovenian novel, *Deseti brat* (*The Tenth Brother*) by Josip Jurčič. In the historical genre adopting *terza rima* and stanzas, Prešeren, the poet, outlines

the downfall of an epic hero, Črtomir, who trades the destroyed proto-national community of the Slavonic people of Carinthia for the supranational community of victorious Christianity, while in a prose representation of his time, Jurčič, the writer and journalist, depicts the rise of an unexceptional individual who manages to integrate himself into the ruling class of the proto-bourgeois society in the Slovenian territories. Set in the periphery that today is called Slovenia, both the poetic descent of an epic hero into universal Christianity and the prosaic ascent of a modern individual into universal capitalism unfold along the trajectory of a love story that ends, in the first case, with renouncement and separation, and, in the second, with the institution of marriage.

386 *The Baptism on the Savica*, the first printed long epic versification in Slovenian, establishes a relationship with the national epic genre conditioned by the cleft between classical and modern writing. Prešeren anchors his poetic fiction referentially in the sources of Carniolan historiography of the Baroque and Enlightenment, such as J.W. Valvasor's *Die Ehre des Hertzogthums Crain* (The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola, 1689) and A.T. Linhart's *Versuch einer Geschichte von Krain und den übrigen Ländern der südlichen Slaven Oesterreiches* (An Essay on the History of Carniola and Other Lands of the Austrian South Slavs, 1789-91). He interprets narratively the epochal events in world history that are worthy of a national epic, namely the universal process of the Christianization of the European pagan peoples, which, according to the Salzburg *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum* (see Kos, *Conversio*), included the Alpine Slavonic population of the independent Duchy of Carantania. The epic subject of Prešeren's poem is the rebellion of the pagan Carantanians against the bearers of the new Christian civilization—missionaries of the Salzburg and Aquilean Dioceses, as well as the military forces of the Bavarian nobility and the converted Slavonic peoples—and their final defeat in which the Alpine Slavs lost their cultural, religious, and state autonomy. *The Baptism on the Savica* is, paradoxically, a narrative of the origin of the catastrophic hiatus in which Slovenians as a collective subject vanished from the historical scene. However, it is precisely this fictitious invention of the continuity of the Slovenian ethnic group, its language, culture, and space as bases for a national history that was to nineteenth century tastes. This is a function that is consistent with that of the national epic since Virgil's *Aenēis* (*Aeneid*) via Camões's *Lusiads* to the romantic poems of Pushkin, Mickiewicz, and Njegoš. Seemingly, the role of the national epic is fulfilled by at least some features of *The Baptism on the Savica*, such as its formal-stylistic classicalness, the aetiological constitutive character of the historical narrative, and the representation of personal fate against the backdrop of world history, which is what the Schlegel brothers expected from *Nationalgedicht* or *Heldengedicht* (see Paternu 95-101).

With the assistance of his friend Matija Čop, librarian, philologist, aesthete, and the brain of Slovenian romanticism, Prešeren, the poet, was aware of the dawning of the space of Goethe's world literature in which the core of the most cherished European traditions—Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, English, and French—was

joined as an equal by the (semi)-peripheral literatures of Central and South-Eastern Europe, including German and Slovenian literatures (see Juvan, "World"). This is why with *The Baptism on the Savica*, dedicated to his recently deceased friend Čop, Prešeren, with emphasized reflection on his own discourse, entered the European genre system, which had become pluralistic in the transition from classical to modern writing as it abandoned hierarchies inherited from Antiquity and gave writers the possibility to freely chose form and topic from a range of places and historical periods. Prešeren followed in the footsteps of Schlegel, Schiller, de Staël, and other protagonists of the romantic aesthetic, who historically and typologically counterposed their modernity to classicism and its sources in Antiquity (see Furst 7-10; Rajan 260). Prešeren consciously chose forms and topics that originated in the epic tradition from Antiquity to the Renaissance, adapting them freely to his romantic message, which associated an elegiac personal confession with the narrative of a defeated but historically resilient Slavonic nation, and which was written in a minor literary language of a province that sought to establish its cultural autonomy within the predominantly German Habsburg Empire.

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Intertextually, *The Baptism on the Savica* evokes Western epics and topoi. It refers to Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Tasso with meaningfully selected strophic forms (terza rima and stanzas), Homeric comparisons, borrowed epic motives (laying siege, the rousing address before a hopeless battle with a stronger enemy, fratricidal massacre, the figure of a religiously haloed virgin), and, most importantly, the theme of the historical demise of a civilization and the birth of another (see Kos, *Prešeren in evropska* 39-52, 112-18, 139-40, 167, 183-209; *Prešeren in njegova* 143-60). Drawing on earlier studies on Prešeren, classical philologist Marko Marinčič (17-37) provides a penetrating insight into *The Baptism on the Savica*, defining it in terms of a palimpsest of Latin classics: through an allegiance with the classical symbolic power of the Latin world, the poet attempted to rid himself of the contemporary imperialism of German culture and establish himself as a Slovenian and Slavonic canonical author. According to Marinčič, with *The Baptism on the Savica* Prešeren programmatically created the Slovenian *Aeneid*, an epic that narrates the founding, aetiological myth of a nation-state. However, through the figure of the defeated Črtomir—the Slavonic double of the "pious" Aeneas and his spiritual self-portrait—Prešeren steered Virgil's patriotic model in the direction of the "antiphrastric epic" (Marinčič 47) and the Roman (Ovidian) elegy, that is, the genre of the "conceptual periphery of Augustan classics" (36), which, rather than a patriotic position, expresses the poet's personal lamentations on loss, exile, and renunciation (45-88).

On the one hand, then, *The Baptism* is a classical work, yet it is a romantic deconstruction of monumentality, a hybrid between the epic and the lyrical. On the other hand, with the work's subtitle ("verse tale") and text structure, Prešeren clearly forms part of the modern current of versified epic originating in Byron's "metrical tales," creating, at the point of the transition from the age of the epic to the era of the novel, a syncretic blend of genres (see Kos, *Prešeren in evropska* 190-209; Paternu

95-99, 145-52). Prešeren's dense epic story flows into elegiac lyricization, with the introductory sonnet dedicated to Čop characterizing the entire poem as "a touching poem" ("pesem mila" in Slovenian, the term for elegy at the time), while the story of Črtomir and Bogomila renouncing their love is interpreted self-reflectively as an autobiographical allegory on the resignation of the poet himself (Juvan, *Imaginarij* 103-10). In *The Baptism*, the epic fragment of the "Introduction," laid out in a mere 26 Dantesque *terza rima*s, is substituted by a hybrid of two genres in the main part ("The Baptism"), what is signaled by the architectonic switch to another strophic form: that of 53 stanzas modeled on Tasso and Byron. On the one hand, the narrative mode of "Introduction" is replaced by the dialogic form of drama, on the other hand, however, the "Baptism" evokes the structure of the novel: the hero withdraws from the sphere of the public into his private intimacy, while the narrative of love, the baptism, and separation of Črtomir and Bogomila is non-linear, progressing via ambivalent focalizations, digressions, inserted stories, and metafiction. With a lot more reserve than in Byron's poems (for which, see Žirmunskij 43-47), Prešeren's first-person voice in *The Baptism on the Savica* blends in with the narrative of the Middle Ages, characterized by the voice's subjective confession and addresses to the contemporary reader, incorporating this narrative into the political reality of the pre-March period and finding parallels between his own life and that of Črtomir. The narrative evaluation of the central character and action is excitingly ambivalent, intentionally inconsistent, full of contradictions, ambiguities, the unspoken and the indefinite, which undermine every possibility of a homogenous collective identification with the individual, problematic hero, who, as it seems, is far from the exemplary character of the national epic. The magnificent collectivist epic story in *The Baptism on the Savica* is narrated litotically in a mere 509 verses. It is interrupted at the point of defeat, which, unlike in the *Aeneid*, is not followed by a promise of the transference (*translatio*) of failed statehood to another location or a later time. Following the "Introduction," the epic discourse is transformed into a novelistic love narrative that, in terms of genre, resembles *Hermann und Dorothea*, Goethe's idyllic pastoral in verse that, together with Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz* (*Sir Thaddeus*), was considered by Matija Čop as "a true epic of our time," "eine wahre Epopöe unserer Zeit" (Čop 284). Unlike some forced national epics (145), Čop appreciated both works for their representation of everyday life against "a world-historic, action-intensifying background," "einen welthistorischen die Handlung hebenden Hintergrund" (284).

Črtomir, a variant of the torn romantic characters from Byronic poems, loses the attributes of the classical epic subject in a series of consecutive defeats: following the defeat of his rebel army in the beleaguered Ajdovski Gradec, he fails as a protagonist of the action and a sovereign of his people; when, due to his desire for a private life with the beloved Bogomila, once the priestess of the Slavonic goddess of love, he abandons thoughts of suicide, he also loses the features of a hero of stoicism. In submitting to Bogomila's wish to follow her conversion to Christianity, allowing to be baptized, and bidding farewell to her, Črtomir is extinguished as the subject

of desire, only to disappear completely from the text, at the end, as the subject of speech. In the closing stanzas of the poem, Črtomir is simply silent, with the psycho-narration ceasing to disclose his desires, emotions, and thoughts. Črtomir lives to see the end of *The Baptism on the Savica* as a hollow subject (Juvan, “Modernost” 356-58) and resigns hypnotically to the overpowering Other—the symbolic order of Christianity as it is emanated in the figure of Bogomila, the virgin, shining in God’s light, thus sublimating the erotic form of love (*éros*) into Christian *agápe*. In relation to the passive baptism of Črtomir as the subject alongside whom the national identity of Slovenians was formed, Slavoj Žižek concludes: “In *The Baptism*, Prešeren expounds in a pure, existentially radicalized form on the indicated fundamental feature of the symbolic economy of the Slovenian ‘national identity,’ that is, its failure to internalize the universal Law” (38). According to Žižek, the national identity of Slovenians “‘successfully avoids being captured’ by the universality of the Law,” so much so that “in a ‘Slovenian’s’ relation to the ideological discourse, that is, to the symbolic network constitutive of his or her ‘national identity,’ there lacks a ‘quilting point’” (34).

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The Baptism on the Savica is therefore a national epic, but constructed with an intentional flaw. This is why it had strengthened its position in the literary canon by the end of the nineteenth century—together with its author, the “national poet” Prešeren—not as a quilting point, but as a point of ideological and aesthetic dissensus. The dissensus produced by critical and ambivalent ideologemes is no less a factor of conflictual social cohesion than the consensus imposed by the ideological state apparatus; Prešeren always acted through both consensual and the dissensual channels. Thus, as early as the second half of the nineteenth century, the heroic “Introduction” to *The Baptism on the Savica* became part of the set curriculum of Slovenian schools, the leading ideological apparatus of the emerging bourgeois society. On the other hand, this “antiphrastic epic” dealing with a problematic subject matter and clad in the aesthetic perfection by the standards of world literature has throughout produced opposing interpretations, intertextual references, and derivations, as well as selectively reduced uses in public discourse filtered by individual interests. Since the 1860s, Slovenian newspapers, divided into Catholic-conservative and liberal-progressive camps, have appropriated proper names (the title, heroes’ names, settings) from Prešeren’s text, through which they arrogated sentences, motives, persons, and topics as well. Critical, journalistic, and literary metatexts have, according to the logic of antonomasia, turned these names into appellatives for general or recurring characteristics of the community—for understanding Slovenian history in the Biblical key of ‘a thousand years of servitude,’ for the worldviews of political parties, and for the constants of the ‘Slovenian national character.’ Through this recurrent use of antonomasia, politicians, essayists, journalists, and literary authors have transformed *The Baptism on the Savica* into a repository of interpretants that have served to articulate modern problems and to reflect on national identity in a historical perspective (see Juvan, *Imaginarij*). Transformed from a youthful heroic fighter for his pagan fathers’

faith and the freedom of his people into a calm Christian missionary reconciled with his fate who sets out to spread the new religion among his fellow countrymen and beyond their borders, Črtomir gave rise to controversial responses on the part of interpreters of the text, as well as literary and theatre writers: some saw this as an artistic deficiency of the poem, while others identified a praiseworthy conversion of Prešeren, the *freigest*, to a devout Catholic, along with an apologue of Christianity; some saw it as a depraved betrayal of the freedom-loving struggle for the national cause and a manifestation of the servile nature of the Slovenian people, while others perceived it as a modern and inevitable compromise with an overpowering force, enabling the poet and the nation to survive, albeit beyond romantic heroism.

390 In Slovenian culture, Prešeren's narrative, thematizing as it does the involuntary compromise of an epic hero and his renouncement of the fight for the national cause, was paradoxically canonized as a major or sacred text that defines 'Slovenianness' and as such gives rise to ever new critical, literary, and artistic reinterpretations. This is in contrast to Jurčič's *The Tenth Brother* (1866), the first Slovenian novel, which, through the school curriculum, numerous printed editions, and dramatizations, achieved much more widespread popularity among readers and has become standard reading for young readers; however, in Slovenian comparative literary studies—outwardly more cosmopolitan than its counterpart, the national literary history—this work was marked as a failed, belated, and aesthetically inferior adoption of a genre whose prototype originated in the major, more developed English literature (see Habjan 572-74). Applying Moretti's formula of literary evolution ("Conjectures" 58-60), one could say that Jurčič's novel comes across as an (unhappy) compromise between a foreign form imported from the core of the literary world-system (the English novel) and the local material (a Slovenian educated person) and narrator (who is committed to establishing a Slovenian-speaking social space).

Some years ago, while analyzing Jurčič's relation to Walter Scott, I myself succumbed to a typical peripheral (and postcolonial) defensive reaction to the imperial harshness of Moretti's systemic formula. I pointed out that, in the first paragraph of the first Slovenian novel, Jurčič himself revealed to his Slovenian readers, by way of metafictional self-commentary, his inferior, belated, and socially weaker implementation of Scott's genre model, seeking to level out, with a tinge of irony, the inequities between the originality of the writer of European stature (representing the leading, developed culture) and his unknown Slovenian imitator representative of a peripheral culture. Jurčič's sophisticated exordial rhetoric led me to believe that Moretti's formula—while it does in fact adequately describe the real relations of production and reception in the literary world-system, relations that reproduce the dependence of the periphery upon the shifting core of economic, political, and cultural domination—is too unrefined at the level of intertextual analysis. This led me to argue that talented authors from the periphery know that they are in no way poorer in terms of artistic power compared to the privileged leading figures, and that they know how to convey this to their readers (see Juvan, *Literary* 82-84). The recent intervention

by Jernej Habjan (675), who framed Jurčič's metafictional irony and my thesis about it in a Mannoni formula of negation ("*I know well that I'm no Walter Scott, but all the same I believe I am*"), reminds us, however, that a fetishistic disavowal of one's own peripheral position—such as that at the level of the intertextually imaginary—cannot replace the sociological and class analysis of this position at the level of the world-system. Only acceptance of the non-exceptional nature of the fact of one's own dependence and belatedness enables a criticism of global asymmetries that is unlikely to end in the discourse of guilt and inferiority, or in the discourse of deprivation and imaginary equality.

In our case, it becomes evident from this perspective that drawing exclusive parallels between *The Tenth Brother* and Walter Scott (and other top quality French, English, or Russian novels of the time that were consecrated internationally by European metropolises) leads to erroneous theses of literary history. Slovenian comparative literature has predominantly focused on the relations of the first Slovenian novel with the novels of European centers, while neglecting parallels with the works of the same genre from other (semi-)peripheries and with the popular production of the German-speaking world that also reached the Slovenian regions. It thus postulated the impossibility of the Slovenian novel: as an optimistically ideological text of the Slovenian national movement, *The Tenth Brother* by Jurčič supposedly concealed the ontological difference that is revealed upon the downfall of the main hero in great realistic novels, and therefore does not yet represent the *essence* of the novel as a genre; when, however, at the turn of the century, this essence is finally achieved in the Slovenian novel with the novelistic *œuvre* of Ivan Cankar, the traditional European novel is already in the process of self-abolition, making way for the modern novel (see Pirjevec, "Pri"; "Problem"). In other words, the embeddedness of the genre of the novel in the political agenda of the Slovenian national movement, which had not yet fully developed an autonomous and class-differentiated society, presumably prevented the fully-fledged aesthetic articulation of Lukács's "transcendental homelessness" (41) or Bakhtin's "dialogism" (279), both of which were crucial for the canonical European novels of the nineteenth century.

Here lies the answer to the question as to why, in the nineteenth century, the Slovenian nation was partly constituting itself on the "sacred text" (Moretti, *Modern* 1, 88) of a compromise but singular epic, rather than merely on the mass printing of compromise novels (as would follow from Anderson's thesis). The peripheral situation of a society acting as the emerging community of a nation, which, due to its weak bourgeoisie, had not yet developed a sociolectal differentiation sufficient for the establishment of the novel as a protagonist of modern writing, offered a better option for the revision of classical writing and the epic. Classical writing privileged poetic (verse-regulated) genres, while in the modern revision of the watershed romantic period the poetic was defined by the subjectivist conceptions of the aesthetic and the individual rather than by traditional classicist formal and stylistic attributes. Prešeren's *The Baptism on the Savica* is a distinguished literary work that,

in a peripheral, nascent literary space, through the treatment of a 'local' historical theme, internalized and established the universalism of European romanticism, including its historicism and global horizon, in the domestic scene. Prešeren developed his poetic language in Slovenian, a language saturated with the voices, stories, images, and forms of world literature. He gathered these from the European literary canon from Antiquity to modernity, allowing a single unique voice to be articulated through a language that internalizes a polyphony of historical periods, languages, and cultural spaces. This is the voice of an individual's modern experience, which, paradoxically, presents itself as both the singular and the generic at the same time. It was Prešeren's unique poetic individuality itself, repeatedly perceived as the general model, that became established as a voice that—to paraphrase Louis Althusser (261-72)—interpellates other individuals, its addressees, to become the subjects of Slovenianness as a collective individual in the world arena.

392 The lyrical variety of the Slovenian language that was to gain permanent access to the world canon was conceived by Čop and Prešeren as a strategy of compensating for the objective deficiencies of the community, addressed and ideologically co-created by Slovenian literature with the symbolic capital of its aesthetic universality and expressive individuality. The Slovenian national movement, located at the periphery of the expanding capitalist world-system, was economically and politically dependent, lagging behind culturally, and socially incomplete due to its weak bourgeoisie. In the spirit of European cultural nationalism, Prešeren and Čop programmed the transfer of the repertoires and norms of the universal aesthetic literature to Slovenian as a catalyst that, in the province of the Habsburg Empire lacking a Slovenian-speaking bourgeoisie, was to encourage the development of public discourse in the Slovenian language among intellectuals. Only then can a nation, in the post-Enlightenment sense of the word, be formed.

To sum up, *The Baptism on the Savica* is, after all, a "world text" of the kind that Moretti describes based on Goethe's *Faust*, in view of the fact that it stages local history and the hagiography of a converted national hero against the backdrop of world history and within the aesthetic discourse of world literature. It is a story about the inevitable compromise between the universalism of European Christian civilization and the ethnicity of Slovenians. As opposed to the cacophonous polyphony and the act of ascribing actual spaces to historical periods in the modern epic represented by *Faust*, the world's sacred text and the generator of a multiplicity of incommensurable interpretations (Moretti, *Modern* 45-50), Prešeren's poem, including its form and genre, is a compromise between epic and novelistic discourse. Prešeren's Byronic verse tale is a hybrid of the epic and the novel, of drama and elegy. But this generic compromise is so exceptional that it aesthetically empowers the depicted Slovenian-world story and, through a history of effects, transforms itself into a Slovenian sacred text. Metatextual and intertextual sequences attached to Prešeren's *The Baptism* have canonized Prešeren in the registers of literary and scholarly discourse as the indisputable national poet, the author of the (hybrid) modern epic about the constitutive past

of the Slovenian nation; at the same time, the fictitious Črtomir from *The Baptism* has, with the aid of controversial political interpretive appropriations, been made into a controversial symbol of the unprincipled national hero who repeatedly evokes the conception of Slovenian national identity as constitutively split in two.

The title of my essay, “The nation between the epic and the novel,” finally suggests a historical dimension. Almost exactly halfway between the year of the publication of Prešeren’s modern epic about the Christianization of the people whom the poet considered to be the predecessors of the Carniolan Slovenians, on the one hand, and the year of the publication of Jurčič’s novel about a young intellectual’s ascent in the emerging Slovenian bourgeois society, on the other, is the Spring of Nations of 1848, which brought the first demand for a “united Slovenia” signed by a great many Slovenian intellectuals. Taking into account Miroslav Hroch’s historical typology of Central and Eastern European national movements, I can conclude that, in the Slovenian territories, the aesthetically universal and poetic form of the national epic, albeit ambivalent and modernized in a hybrid fashion, is the prominent genre of the first, predominantly philological-cultural phase of the national awakening in which the inner circles of church and lay intellectuals addressed the inner circles of literary readership through almanacs, rare books of lyrical poetry, German periodicals, and the first Slovenian newspapers. The second, mass phase of the national movement, which, ever more explicitly political, in addition to intellectuals also attracted broader circles, including farmers, bureaucrats, craftsmen, and the lower bourgeoisie, relied on the mass production of the novel, a genre that circulated in the form of feuilletons in daily newspapers, literary journals, and regularly published book series.

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NOTE

* Translated by Mojca Šorli and Neville Hall.

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