

Review of: "The Baptism on the Savica – The Slovene National Epic With a Question Mark"

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The beginning of the 21st century is marked by dynamic transformations of structures and forms of social life. There is an observable rapid depreciation of values and authorities. Considering the socio-cultural changes taking place, the article by Professor Marko Juvan entitled "The Baptism on the Savica - The Slovene National Epic with a Question Mark" holds a special value because it refers to the essence of national identity and the axiology of cultural heritage. Literature is an integral element and a bond of heritage both in the tangible and intangible dimensions. Hence, the author's presentation of the genesis of the formation of the classical epic in his article, drawing back to the works of Horace and Virgil, is especially pertinent. The author's analysis is embedded in linguistic and lexical grounding as well as sociolinguistics and comparative literature. The arguments are centred around the work of the poet of the Romantic era, France Prešeren (1800-1849), who is considered the Slovenian national bard. It should be noted that F. Prešeren lived at a time when the Slovenian lands were a part of the Habsburg Empire. Instead of writing in German, the poet decided to write in Slovenian. In this way, he referred to the essence of the ethos of the people who identify with the tradition and culture of the Slovenian nation. The framework of "Krst pri Savici" (The Baptism on the Savica) [1836], drawing on vernacular language, became the basis of the metadiscourse between the concept of the literary canon, intertextuality, and the values of national culture, which merge into a whole. Marko Juvan, referring to Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855), the Polish national bard who wrote the national epic "Pan Tadeusz", points to the role of dialogue between people, states, and nations, which should be considered a value of the article. Recalling literary works from other countries that became the cornerstones for their national canons, the author also references the concept of Slavic drama. The author showed the evolution in the canon of national literature of the role of the novel and epic associated at that time with the peripheries of literature, which surely explains why the article mentions the deconstruction of the genre of the national epic. Despite the traits characteristic of the culture of a given nation, Slavic drama has a universal significance that connects people in the sphere of emotions, memories, and remembrance. France Prešeren became a kind of Slovenian Orpheus, carrying a beacon of hope and awakening a power of the spirit that leans to generosity and self-sacrifice for the common good. As a result, the poet's word began to function as a social binder, abolishing historical, regional, and administrative divisions. The work takes on byronic characteristics and, through a historical narrative (the fall of the Principality of Carantania, German rule), speaks to the identity and the aspirations of the Slovenian people of having their own state. The figures of Črtomir and Bogomila embody the features of the narrative poem of the Romantic era, which follows the story of a love marked by suffering due to the separation of the two protagonists. Simultaneously, the poet conveys that the adoption of Christianity through consecration and baptism means rebirth not through blood and sword, but through the spirit of peaceful coexistence. The poet thus expressed the hope that the Slovenian nation would also be reborn and return to its "home".

Marek Juwan's arguments are needed and up-to-date, as they indicate that both in language and in literary research, values play a role of an intergenerational binder. The article is of high value due to its substantive content and as a piece of literary research. The author's message to build state identity on an axiological basis with respect for a nation's roots, traditions, and cultural heritage remains valid.