

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

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Building on the platform of Virgil Nemoianu's theory of Biedermeier Romanticism (though not explicitly mentioned in the article) and of Thomas Taterka's concept of *Eposstelle* as a "systemic slot" within the long nineteenth century European literary systems, Marko Juvan provides an excellent re-interpretation of the Slovene "national epic" *Krst pri Savici* ("The Baptism on the Savica", 1836) by France Prešeren. The main strength of this approach lies in the researcher's ability to export an issue of Slovene "national literature" to a transnational audience, combining an astute textual analysis with a bird's-eye view of the historical, political, and cultural contexts in which the epic was enmeshed. Tropes like allegory, metalepsis, antonomasia were instrumented by 19th century authors of the genre, particularly in the (semi-)peripheries of the continent, to meet the political ends specific to the period's *épistémè*, i.e., related to the project of nation building. Literary practices of the time went as far as counterfeiting "old" folk epic poems (see, in this respect, Mircea Anghelescu's book *Mistificațiuni* [Mistifications], Bucharest: Spandugino, 2016). It is reassuring to find the same patterns, with some local variations, spread in all Central-East Europe, confirming once more the need for a regional approach to literary cultures. For instance, the author singles out the semiotic process of "antonomazing" characters from "The Baptism on the Savica" to imagine the "Slovene identity", which aptly validates Balázs Trencsényi's contention that the politics of national character was forged mostly in the ateliers of the artists, in the histories of Central-Eastern European "young nations": the same thing happened in the Hungarian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Romanian cultures at approximately the same time. If there is one thing a non-Slovenian reader could regret after finishing this paper, it's that the author spends only one final paragraph to treat the 20th century re-readings and re-adaptations of Prešeren's epic poem. The matter definitely deserves more than that, and it will probably be developed in another paper, with more surprises to share. What we have here is not necessarily a surprising, but a very solid research, which reasserts the fruitfulness of the theoretical paradigm of transnational cultural studies.