Early Literary Representations of National History and the "Slovene Cultural Syndrome"

Marijan Dović

Scientific Research Center of the Slovene Academy of Sciences and Arts, Ljubljana
Marijan.Dovic@zrc-sazu.s

The paper deals with the early representations of national history in Slovene literature. Two cohesive stories, "Illyric" and "Carantanian", proved to be most characteristic and appealing in poetical works before 1848. From a historiographical point of view, both were deficiently documented or even problematic, and in literature they gained mythological features. These historical fragments have to be observed in the light of the later thesis of the "Slovene cultural syndrome", which was often used to describe the relationship between Slovene literature and the political project of national emancipation. The paper tries to ascertain in which way literature actually "replaced" politics and attempts to revise some elements of the popular thesis.

Key words: literature and ideology / historiography / sociology of literature / Slovene literature / historical themes / cultural identity / national identity

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From the very beginning of Slovene artistic literature, a certain notion of the past has existed in literary texts. In this respect, the fragmentary presence of what could be called "Slovene national history" in the works of the first important Slovene poets from the end of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century (Dev, Vodnik, Zupan, Koseski and Prešeren), seems to be especially intriguing. Of course, it cannot be said that the idea of Slovene national history was actually *produced* by literature or by literary authors.[1] Its origins can be traced in the age of Reformation (16th century), and the idea probably did not reach maturity before the end of the 18th century, the period of the early Enlightenment, when it was adopted and set forth by a group of intellectuals in Ljubljana, known as the *Zois's circle*.[2] Nonetheless, since its appearance, Slovene *literature* has represented a privileged space where the idea of Slovene national history – together with its political implications – has been continuously articulated. This seems to be a good reason to scrutinize especially the earliest ap-

pearances of the idea in literary texts; texts that had an important impact on the future literary, as well as non-literary, perspectives on the subject.[3]

One of the first things that an apt observer can notice concerns the *significance* of what I have designated as "early literary representations of (Slovene) national history". This significance transcends the level of literature, although not necessarily from the start. At first glance, the importance of early aesthetic products in Slovene language might not really seem significant: at least at the time of their publishing, from the point of view of a positivistic sociological approach, they seem to be *marginal*. The number of potential recipients was extremely limited, and the print runs were minimal – one can never speak of more then a few hundred copies circulating. In the course of time this changed: some of the texts became *fundamental;* they gained a status of so-called "key-texts" of the social (national) community. This is why we always have to keep in mind that what we are dealing with are fairly complex entities: "the value" or "the significance" of a certain historical representation should not be measured only from the point of the literary system. The "surplus" value, produced by reproductive discourses and canonization processes, has to be investigated most seriously. If one says, for example, that Prešeren's well-known poem *The Baptism on the Savica* is a fundamental text for Slovenes, this is not precise enough: it can only become a fundamental text when we add to it the history of its reproductions, its intertextual impact, its contradictory interpretations, the cultural and political conflicts connected to it, in short: the history of its canonization; as well as considering its various uses (perhaps also "abuses") in other contexts until the present time.

The presence of history in literature directs the observer's attention towards the social dimensions of the phenomenon. In the Slovene case, this consequently leads to a re-examination the interesting thesis of the "Slovene cultural syndrome". As the authors of the invitation text for the Vilenica Colloquium on History and its Literary Genres have justly observed, literary coverage of past events in the period of the cultural and political emancipation of nations strengthened the consciousness of national identity among the increasing number of readers; and many authors were personally engaged in establishing national emancipation. In the (increasingly) Slovenian cultural space, the crucial period of national emancipation was the second half of the 19th century, when the cultural opposition Slovene / German became the most important cultural background, being more decisive than, for example, political beliefs (conservative, liberal, social-democratic), at least in the first few decades after the year 1848. The outcome of this cultural "struggle" was the dominance of the Slovene fraction towards the end of the century.[4] What is interesting here is the decisive role ascribed to literature in the process of the forma-

tion of national identity. One of the reasons (but not the only one) for this was, I believe, the special ability, or "power", of fictional texts to deal with the past in such a way as to suit the needs of the national movement.

Therefore, to understand and evaluate the significance of the early literary representations of national history, one has to observe them in the light of what occurred later, in the second half of the 19th century, when the emerging literary system was locked in the opposing demands of aesthetic autonomy, on one side, and those of national politics, on the other; a strained situation that was only gradually resolved in the 20th century. This is why we first need to devote some attention to the "Slovene cultural syndrome" thesis.

The "Slovene Cultural Syndrome" Thesis

To a certain extent, establishing national literatures was connected to national identity formation all over Europe, but this was even more decisive in small and dominated cultures, where one could really conceive of "national identity formation through literary texts". To delve into this problem, I would first like to quote a writer and essayist from the second half of the 19th century, Josip Stritar, who initiated the triumphant inauguration of France Prešeren as the "national poet":

> If the nations were assembled on the Judgement Day to prove how they had managed their talents and how every one of them had participated in universal, human culture, the small Slovene nation could fearlessly prove itself among others with one small book, entitled Prešeren's 'Poezije'. (48)[5]

This passage was later quoted very often, becoming canonical itself together with the aesthetic object that Stritar's critical discourse attempts to canonise in a skilful mythographic

operation.[6] Its intention is obvious: to argue that Slovene culture and literature are, although small in scale, aesthetically equivalent to those of larger nations, and therefore worthy of being included in the group of important European cultures. What is crucial here is a kind of presupposed equation between literature and nation (which, as we know, is time-specific, connected to Pre-Romantic and Romantic ideas). This kind of argument implies an assertion that the nation can be endorsed, legitimated, through poetry; a thesis that has been endlessly recycled and has become part of the view of Slovene history. It was formed in the last third of the 19th century and has been reproduced until today, when the "ancient dream" has been realised: Slovenes living in an independent, sovereign

and democratic state. Stritar's statement (17 years after Prešeren's death) is a kind of introduction to a series of texts and argumentations that led to the sociological thesis of the so-called "Slovene cultural syndrome".

A book by literary sociologist Dimitrij Rupel, *Free Words* (1976), gives this thesis one of its most precise articulations.[7] He argues that because of the lack of other institutions (politics, state) Slovene literature took upon itself the function of national emancipation. Therefore, the literature of that time is not only a simple sector of social production but also tends to perform other functions that should actually be performed by other social sectors (law, politics, education, science), sectors that were, of course, present, but were strongly dominated by German culture. So literature, taking language (already codified) as its basis, was the first relatively developed social subsystem.[8]

Rupel's thesis is actually based on a specific *commonplace,* something that has been "in the air" all the time, something that has been "known" by Slovene poets, historians and politicians since the middle of the 19th century. Prior to Rupel, in an essay *The Question of Poetry* (1969), the charismatic Slovene comparativist and philosopher, Dušan Pirjevec, presented similar ideas: "In all of us the idea that without Prešeren and his poetry we as a nation would have a different fate, that we would be much less solidly grounded or even nonexistent, is present in one way or another"; and also: "Poetry is the only self-consciousness of the Slovene nation", "a personality that has created us and does not cease to control us", "our super-ego", "our superior value and, if so, also the 'goal' of our national existence" (55–57). All of these ideas are already implied in Stritar's essay on Prešeren: his poetry is an argument for justifying the existence of Slovenes: poetry actually became a means to legitimise a nation as a historical fact.

Furthermore, this is exactly the way that Slovene poetry understood itself within the literary texts themselves: poetry's role in national awakening became a topic of poetry – starting from Prešeren's vision of the Orpheus who will wake Slovenia with his singing. Pirjevec agrees with this idea, stating that until the beginning of the 20th century poetry had been "the centre of our culture, the only organ of our consciousness, our self-grounding and legitimatisation" (58). This is exactly the point from which Rupel is able to articulate his thesis. A nation without a state is reduced to a movement, and due to the position of being dominated it can only be a "suppressed movement": as such, its interests can only be pursued through art, and especially through literature in a national language. At the same time, such literature as an "instrument of national struggle" cannot really be congruent with its real essence, it cannot be "poetry as such".[9]

The thesis of the Slovene cultural syndrome is, as we can see, rather obstinate, yet it has already been subjected to scrutiny. What attracts one's

attention might be the fact that the thesis, "the time has not yet come for real politics, so literature is the only possible ground for national emancipation", had already been formulated in the 19th century and was employed extensively by Slovene politicians, literary and cultural historians, etc. It is, of course, contradictory: literature being at the same time the supreme manifestation of a Slovene spirit and an asylum for poor and frightened politics. The thesis was labelled as an "ideological fossil" by leftist sociologist, Rastko Močnik, who was interested in tracing ideological operations that helped the emerging Slovene economic and political elite to legitimate itself: he did not fail to observe that in this way the bourgeois ideology successfully subordinated the producers of literature (Močnik, *Raziskave za sociologijo književnosti*). Literature provided "great men", and through the glorification of national greats nationality, already class-represented, was established. Literature as an ideological form imposed itself on Slovene bourgeois ideology as an authentic focal point through an ideology that states that language is the basis (glue) of national community (and also demonstrates this cohesiveness), even if the evocation of language alone would not suffice in producing this effect. Literature was indispensable for the nationalistic movement in that phase, but this connection castrated the artistic dimensions of literature.

Močnik's contribution to the understanding of the thesis is invaluable since, by analysing ideological and rhetorical mechanisms, it reveals how politics used literary strategies to establish the nation, while at the same time suppressing both the class dimension of its project and its autopoetical, "münchhausen"-like features (producing the basic conditions for its own existence). Močnik's critique of Rupel should be seen more as a correction, since their views are not as far apart as it may at first seem. The skeleton of the thesis is actually hard to refute: Slovene literature definitely emerged under the strong pressure of the national idea and in circumstances when fully differentiated national politics was impossible. Literature has indeed produced cohesive effects in texts, and has at the same time been used as a means of affirmation of national politics – as a representative of a nation that was formed and legitimated through literature. That this mutual interdependence has had a considerable influence on the production of texts is impossible to deny: since Prešeren, national emancipation has remained an important motivation for literature. A good question is, then, perhaps the following:

> to what extent did literature actually *give rise to* politics, and to what extent did the emerging politics instrumentalise literature and its "glorious men"? In other words: to what extent were the "glorious men" actually "glorious" before the nationalistic discourse proclaimed them as such?

To Močnik's lucid observations some findings can be added that should supplement or revise the image of the "Slovene cultural syndrome".[10] The great self-confidence of literature, namely that it alone can "change the world", that it can give ground to the national movement project, which culminated in a strong conviction that "Slovenes" would not exist without literature, is misleading and exaggerated. As some of my recent research shows, if we try to take into account broader cultural, political and economic contexts – especially before 1848, in Vodnik's and Prešeren's era – it becomes perfectly evident that poetry itself never had enough strength to distribute and disseminate its (political) ideas into its environment. One of the main reasons for that was the underdeveloped nature of national institutions; more precisely, the whole media and artistic system: for instance, newspapers, (specialised) reviews, the book market and publishers (Dović, *Slovenski pisatelj*). In such circumstances, literature, which already thematised and articulated national issues and ideas, had no chance of really succeeding.

A breakthrough was only possible when literature was adopted and appropriated by the emerging Slovene nationalistic middle class in the second half of the 19th century, an era accompanied by the rapid evolution of the media system (after the revolutionary year 1848, which also loosened the firm grasp of the "Vormärz" censorship system), exponentially increasing the number of Slovene newspapers, magazines and publishers (Dović, *Literatura in mediji* 545, 55). At the same time, the Slovene political and economic elite, which had a strong need for legitimation, took upon its shoulders the national emancipation project, using poetry as a tool to achieve its political aims. So the "Slovene cultural syndrome" thesis actually needs at least one small correction: it is not that the rise of the nation was made possible by poetry itself; it was made possible by the rise of poetry, instrumentalised by the powerful nationalistic middle class, which already dominated Slovene public discourse through the emerging mass media. The Slovene cultural syndrome thesis is, therefore, a kind of *amphibian* – simultaneously valid and invalid.

Another question is whether such a "cultural syndrome" can be denominated "Slovene", and to what extent similar features can be traced in cultures that found themselves in similar environments. The accentuation of the specifically Slovene character of the "syndrome" in Pirjevec's theories, and even more in Rupel's, definitely awakes a certain amount of scepticism, especially since neither of them provides any evidence. Slovene development is definitely not a "syndrome" with unique features, as we can quite easily learn from a newer comparative survey of literary cultures of East-Central Europe. When we place the thesis in this context, the

"syndrome" ceases to be something *specifically Slovene*. In general, we can agree with Cornis-Pope and Neubauer in their statement regarding most cultures in the area that there are "striking similarities, indeed, structural interrelations, between the emergence of nineteenth century nationalism and the birth of national literatures and literary studies" (*History* 7). According to Ernest Gellner, nationalism invented nations even where they did not exist. This process was much more intense in communities (nations) that had no "robust self-image" (unlike France or England) and "wanted to further their national identity" (8). The "invention of nationality" regularly took place in texts, and literature was of the utmost importance in this process. Besides writing dictionaries and grammars, and national (literary) histories, as well as reviving oral, medieval and baroque vernacular literature, the core of the project was the *production* of national literature. A very special place was reserved for writing historical fiction.[11]

Representations of National History in Early Slovene Literature

In spite of the partial revisions to the thesis that we propose here, the Slovene cultural syndrome does seem to be an appropriate vantage point from which a specific reading of the historical fragments in the pioneer works of Slovene literature can be justified. Before we actually start to read, we should briefly examine a scheme that can help us conceive of different types of "structural joints" between national politics and literature. The basic difference here is whether national questions are raised *inside* the literary text or the literary text is *used as a means* of political argument.

Inside the literary text we can distinguish:

– thematisations of *nationalistic elements*, ranging from daily pamphlets and polemics to "coining ideologies" or historical constructions – all of these can serve to legitimate the existence of a distinct Slovene culture and nation; and

– thematisations of *literature as a self-grounding of the nation*: articulations of the idea that literature will unite the nation and bring it to a higher level of self-consciousness, to an equal existence among the great cultures of Europe.

At the same time, *outside* literature (in other discourses), two basic modes can be distinguished:

– argumentation emphasising the fact that the *existence of aesthetically successful literature* itself *legitimises the existence of a distinct nation*. This idea can usually be traced in the correspondence of the authors, programme essays, and theses of literary critics, historians and theorists. From meta-lit-

erary discourses the thesis enters political discourse as a simple equation formula: elaborated language and literature = culture = nation = political sovereignty;

– the *use of literary myths in the political struggle*; this option includes, for example, referring to literary thematisations of glorious past events, ancient sovereignty, etc., as an argument in claiming more political autonomy in the present time (the administrative unity of Southern Slavs or Slovenes, ideas of trialism within the Habsburg empire, claims for appointing Slovene as an official language in administration, education …).

This can be illustrated with some historical examples from Slovene literature. Prior to the period of the Enlightenment it is actually hard to find a Slovene text that could be conceived as "literary". Nevertheless, the ethnic idea – which in the first phases does not demarcate clearly what is (generally) Slavic (or South Slavic), what is (distinctly) Slovene and what is Carniolian[12] – was reflected in other kinds of texts, such as prefaces to Slovene Protestant books in the 16th century. In a preface to Adam Bohorič's Slovene grammar, *Arcticae horulae succisivae* (the book was written in Latin), from 1584, we can for the first time trace the idea of the great and glorious past of Slavic nations. History in this narrative is often deformed according to its basic intention: to give the community the confidence of belonging to an important and prolific group of Slavic cultures (the bottom line being that they are *not* German). The same is true of the preface to Marko Pohlin's grammar, *Kraynska grammatika*, published almost two centuries later (in 1768, written in German, although its *tendency* is actually anti-German). This short text is full of historical and etymological insipidities, one of the most noticeable being the implied connection of the contemporary Slovene population with ancient Illyricum. Shortly after Pohlin's grammar, a far more historically credible view on the local history was produced in a scientifically conceived attempt of Anton Tomaž Linhart, a poet, dramatist and historian who belonged to Zois's circle. Even though in his *Versuch einer Geschichte von Krain und den übrigen Ländern der südlichen Slaven Österreichs*, a work which remained incomplete (two volumes came out in 1788 and 1791), the idea of the great Slavic nation and the importance of the Slavs is also emphasised.

Again, the idea of Illyricum, this time connected to more realistic (contemporary) political expectations, is cautiously tackled in Linhart's work. As has been discovered more recently, the aims of Zois, Linhart and their colleagues were political as well as cultural – to argue for more recognition of the South Slavic nations inside the monarchy (Vidmar, *"Et in politicis"*). Dealing with the Slovene past obviously became an important issue of the Slovene Enlightenment movement towards the end of the 18th century.

This question was reflected in the literary texts of the period more explicitly than in other discourses.[13] It was probably not only a consequence of the rigid institution of preliminary censorship in the monarchy, which was enforced until the revolutionary year 1848. Another reason for this was that national questions could enter literature in the ways that were no longer possible in historiography, which tended to develop in accordance to the scientific paradigm. The differentiation of the two evolving social systems, science and literature, would not allow such odd constructions as can still be observed in Pohlin's preface just a few decades earlier.

The first important figure linked with the beginnings of Slovene literature is *Janez Damascen Dev,* an Augustinian monk, editor and the most productive poet of the first Slovene poetry almanac *Pisanice* (Writings), published in the years 1779, 1780 and 1781. National history is mostly absent from his poetical texts. At first glance, they manifest complete political loyalty to the Habsburgs. In the opening poem of the 1779 volume, entitled *The Love of Joseph II for his Fellow Man* (a pamphlet against men avoiding military service) the Emperor himself bandages a wounded soldier. On the other hand, Dev's tendency towards Slovene cultural autonomy is obvious: he thematises the problems of Slovene language, calls for a dictionary of the "Carniolia", and calls the muses to come to Slovenia (Carniolia) and raise its literature and culture to a higher level. This self-referentiality, which is not unusual in early Slovene poetical products, played an important role in the process of literary canon formation, as Marko Juvan has pointed out (*Literary Self-referentiality* 119–123).

If distinct national awareness, coupled with loyalty to the monarch, is undoubtedly characteristic of Dev's poetry, a notion of national history is hardly noticeable in his works (except for the lament for the poor Slovene cultural tradition). Yet some poems by *Valentin Vodnik*, another poet of the Enlightenment period and also a member of the Zois's circle, show different picture. Of particular interest are his two odes on Illyricum. Their basic idea is the glorification of the historical territorial unity of the Roman province Illyricum, which in fact provides a kind of legitimation for the territorial unity of the South Slavic nations within the empire. The ode *Illyricum Revived* was written in 1811, during the short period when the central Slovene lands were not subordinate to the Habsburg Empire (under French jurisdiction, a new administrative entity, called the "Illyric provinces", was actually formed). In his poem, Vodnik recalls the great past of Illyricum and equates its ancient population with contemporary Slovenes, foretelling a great future for them. The Illyrians were, according to Vodnik, a superior civilization:

Skilful on sea
Illyrian was sailing,
When galleys to hew
the Roman was learning [14]

At the end of the ode, ancient Corinthos is compared to the new Illyricum: as Corinthos was once known as the "Hellenic eye", the new Illyricum in the future would become "the ring of Europe".[15]

Vodnik used this historical fiction, even though he probably did not take it so seriously himself. A prominent Slovene literary historian, Janko Kos, thinks that for Vodnik this was only a *licentia poetica*, a means to express a provocative and contemporary idea. After all, it is well known that the evoked genetic link was highly problematic for Vodnik's colleague from the Zois's circle, the playwright and historian Linhart[16], already mentioned above. Nevertheless, Vodnik's odes remain the most unequivocal articulation of the Slovene national idea up to that time: from here, it is just a short step to the idea of a culturally independent, or even sovereign, entity – "Slovenia". What seems to be important here is that this was acquired by using "history" in a poetical text to construct a myth that is itself – a *falsification*. In the time when historiography was striving to become more scientific, poetry was allowed to take this role.

After Vodnik, historical themes were also tackled by Jakob Zupan, one of the leading poets of the next important poetic almanac *Krajnska čbelica* (Carniolian Bee), published annually from 1830–1833 and in 1848. Zupan wrote a few cycles of short poems, entitled *Krajnski Plutarčik* and *Krajnski Nestorčik*, which refer to the ancient historian Plutarch and the medieval Russian chronicler Nestor, a monk from Kiev. In these cycles, he praises the glorious men from the local history of Carniolia (barons and bishops), and depicts important historical incidents – ranging from the ancient (Illyric) city of Metulum fighting against the Roman emperor Augustus to the independent Slavic state in the early Middle Ages and medieval Turkish battles. Even though Zupan sometimes uses the adjective or noun "Slovene" instead of "Carniolia" or "Carniolian", his treatment of history should largely be explained as a strengthening of the local identity (the province of Carniolia), especially since the relation between Slovenian and Slavic is not clearly demarcated in his short versifications.[17]

To a certain extent, Zupan's historical interventions do imply both the "Illyric idea" as well as another story that was growing in importance (the early medieval independent Slavic states), but they do not emphasise their national-cohesive potential. The same could not be said for the poetry of Zupan's colleague, France Prešeren, the great romantic poet from the first half of the 19th century who later gained the status of "the national poet"

– a status that has remained unchallenged up to the present day. In the second volume of *Kranjska čbelica* (1831), Prešeren published a sonnet in which he leaves the topic of the "great deeds" of our ancestors to other poets, claiming ironically that his Muse is too weak to praise the "glorious fights". As some of his later works show, however, he did not persist with such an attitude; historical fragments did, in fact, enter his poetry, but the relations among poetry, history and nationality became far more complex.

Prešeren's work is impressive, even astonishing: both as a really good poetry as well as regarding the Slovene national project. He deliberately and systematically broadened the literary repertoire through the introduction of new, complicated poetic forms (the sonnet, the wreath of sonnets, terza rima, ottava rima, Spanish romance with assonances, oriental ghazal, nordic ballad). Many of his literary texts are highly self-referential: we can find an unusually consistent thematisation of poetry's national awakening and cohesive role throughout his poetic opus.[18] But what is most interesting is a transgression of fiction into politics, again by using "quasi-historical" narrative. This textual strategy is most visible in the lyrico-epic poem *The Baptism on the Savica (Krst pri Savici*, 1836), especially in its Introduction. In *The Baptism*, Prešeren evokes the early feudal state of Carantania (7th-9th century) and the old, heroic and pagan times of Slovene national sovereignty. This model is far more historically credible than that of Vodnik's Illyricum. However, the historical background, the Christianisation of the Slavs, is still used to skilfully form a myth. Some of its elements are:

– the (former) glory and fame of the Slavic people;[19]

– an evocation of the early democratic principles in the state of Carantania;[20]

– by establishing Christianity, the foreign rulers took the ancient glory and freedom away.

All of these elements can be traced in the following verses from Prešeren's *The Baptism*:

> Most of this world belongs to Slavdom's races;
> We'll find a path to where each blood relation
> is trust in faith and justice freely places (115). [21]
> /…/
> Old pillars of Slovenedom are cast down,
> And all our laws on ancient habit based;
> All bow before Bavarian Tesel's crown, [22]
> The sons of Slavdom 'neath his yoke are placed,
> And haughtily the aliens strut and frown
> Within our homeland, by bright fortune graced (119). [23]

The first verse, which is the climax of a dramatic speech by Črtomir, the pagan army leader, to his fellow men, is the only verse in the whole poem that was emphasised by the author (it was printed in italics). At the same time, it evokes the *widespreadness* of Slavic nations, as well as (at least in the original Slovene text) their glory. The next two verses evoke the supposedly democratic social order of ancient Slovenes (Carantanians). The following stanza describes the unbearable consequences of Christianisation, which at the same time brought the aliens to power.

Similar ideas are characteristic of Prešeren's other poetical masterpiece, *Sonetni venec* (A Wreath of Sonnets).[24] In this work, the national idea is central; in the middle of the "wreath", in the 7th and 8th sonnets, Slovene history is depicted. The idea is simple: since the glorious age of King Samo, ruler of the tribal alliance of Alpine Slavs (in the 7th century), everything that Slovenes had experienced in the course of history had been unpleasant: constant subjugation to foreign rulers, destructive internal quarrels, medieval peasant risings suppressed in blood, Turkish invasions … It is therefore no surprise that:

> The joyful years of glory long ago
> Through valiant labours never were regained,
> And songs' sweet voices we no longer know (95).[25]

In *The Baptism* and *A Wreath*, Prešeren skilfully handles the historically deficiently documented myth of the ancient sovereignty of Slovenes, who lived in independence and glory. His main source on the Christianisation of Caratanians was a 17th century historian, Janez Vajkard Valvasor, and his work *Die Ehre des Hertzogthums Crain* (*The Glory of the Duchy of Carniolia,* 1689); a source which, as we know today, is not very reliable.[26] The scarce data were, of course, coupled with Prešeren's lively poetic imagination and a touch of the thought horizon of the poet and his era; procedures that are a normal part of the creative process. What is important here is that a result of this process in a specific historical moment could become a useful ideological framework – a possible basis for a programme – for how the Slovene cultural community could defend itself against the foreign oppressor. Nationalists now do not have to create "Slovenedom" as something new, but simply have to reconstruct what was once already there and was taken away unjustly: the power and glory of the past. This is achieved by a convincing fictional presentation of the heroic battle that marked the end of the glorious period. Fictionalisation, again with serious historical errors, transgressed literature – this way of seeing Slovene history had a real manipulative power, which was by no means only fictional. It is no wonder that Prešeren's *Zdravljica* (A Toast), an extremely popular drinking

song that also evokes the "power and the glory" of the past (according to the Caranthanian myth), became the national anthem of independent Slovenia.[27]

As is quite obvious, there were two basic narrative lines that were characteristic of the "invention of national history" in the works of Slovene poets before 1848. It is not too tendentious to designate them as the two myths: *Illyrian* and *Carantanian.*[28] An interesting fusion of the two can be found in the work of Jovan Vesel Koseski, another of Prešeren's contemporaries. His fate is most interesting: his patriotic and nationalistic rhymes were extremely popular and he was considered the best Slovene poet since the late 1860s, when young liberal intellectuals inaugurated Prešeren as the national poet. By 1900, Koseski was clearly almost forgotten, but in his time he was widely read, quoted and recited. Most instructive in this respect is his ode *Slovenja carju Ferdinandu* (Slovenia to Tsar Ferdinand), written for the occasion of the visit of the Habsburg emperor to Ljubljana in 1844. Although it manifests monastic loyalty, a new entity (nation) actually rises under the surface (Austroslavism). The whole song is full of historical allusions. The subject of the ode is an allegorised *Slovenia*, and this term was actually promoted publicly for the first time in Koseski's text. At the beginning of the ode, Slovenia rhetorically poses the question: is she worthy of being the servant of the empire? The answer, given by the muse Clio, is: *yes,* because the history of Slovenia proves its exceptional value.

We are, of course, curious: what kind of constructions does Koseski use in his three-part historiographical "overview"? Again the idea of the great Slavic past is accentuated: the sons of Slovenia produced steel for the Trojan wars, its arrows were familiar to Alexander the Great, and many Roman or Byzantium emperors were (supposedly) of Slavic origin. In the centre of the first part of the ode we can trace the *Illyrical* myth: mentioning the "famous" rulers and heroes, such as Teuta, Agron, Pinez, Brem, Bolk, Pleurat or Baton; and the brave resistance of the ancient Illyrical city of Metulum.[29] The second part begins with the fall of the Romans and the bloody chaos that followed, in which Koseski obviously does not know exactly who is Slav (Illyrian?) and who is "barbarian". But finally, from the "darkness of the ages", a six-pack of Slavic heroes appears: Samo, Borut, Ketumar, Privina, Bojnomir and Kocel; all of them *Carantanian* or Lower Pannonian dukes from the 7th, 8th or 9th century. The third part of the ode describes the uprising of the Slovene lands under Habsburg rulers and the hard times of the medieval Turkish invasions, in which Slovenes function as a kind of "live shield" of the civilised world. Koseski praises the braveness, education, skills and especially the complete political loyalty of Slovenes.

There is no lack of historical material in Koseski's ode; as a matter of fact, the poem could be read as a programme, almost a *matrix*, for the later production of appropriate historico-patriotical literature. If the loyalty to the monarchy seems to be unconditional, the fact remains that a clear and distinct national awareness has arisen. Historically bizarre and tendentious, Koseski's constructions are politically radical and powerful. Slovenia is set side by side with the Czech lion, pretending to the same level of "coherence" and validity. Therefore, the ode is not at all simply dynastically legitimistic, as it glorifies the idea of a "united Slovenia", an idea that the old regime definitely did not accept. In contrast to the beginning of the century, the demarcation of "Slovenian" is evidently solved: it is the united territory of Carinthia and Carniolia, clearly separated from what is Croatian. The revolutionary year 1848 is at the doorstep: the nationalistic *show* is ready to begin.

* * *

We can now try to summarise some of the more notable conclusions concerning the early literary representations of Slovene national history. The invention of national history in literary texts was synchronic with the gradual shift from a provincial (Carniolian) identity towards a more modern, national identity. Literary fiction had a special power in articulating the past, and it was allowed – due to the conventions that were already accepted – to transgress or bypass the reality code (true/false) which was obligatory in other discourses, for example in historiography. It is very obvious that since its appearance literature in Slovenia has represented a privileged space for the articulation of national ideas; in the process of which it has also produced phantasms, half-credible historical constructions and supplementary mythologies. In the period that I have examined, two mythologised narratives were predominant: Illyrian and Carantanian; the latter being slightly more credible from the historiographical viewpoint. Both stories had important national-cohesive effects. Consideration of their real impact, however, has to be subject to the constraints that have been exposed in the discussion on the Slovene cultural syndrome thesis. It is important to realise that the expansion and dissemination of the national idea was not possible through the poetry itself, or to be more precise, through the means that were available in the deficiently developed literary system. This possibility opened up in the historical "adoption" of literature, its instrumentalisation, carried out by a particular social fraction especially after 1848, which was coupled by an expansion of the media system. Even more significant might be the ascertainment that this process was not "syndromatic" or "specifi-

cally Slovene". As much as the rises of national and ethnic identities in the region ignited mutual conflicts and friction (as well as the erasure of different identities), and in so doing contributed to *diversity* (sometimes also in the negative sense), structurally they were surprisingly *similar*.

NOTES

[1] The proper context for the analysis of this highly complex phenomenon is broader: it includes the study of the history of the wider area, cultural relations, political struggles and much more.

[2] The informal group was (later) named after its leader, aristocrat Baron Žiga Zois (1747–1819). Zois was a prominent European scholar of his time and an enthusiastic lover of fine arts. He was also an indispensable financial sponsor of the cultural activities of his colleagues (writing poems, dramas, publishing the first Slovene newspaper and books for rudimentary readers, writing scholarly works, etc.).

[3] In Slovene literature, the earliest articulations of the idea of national history did not coincide with the immediate development of distinct historical literary genres; nevertheless, their impact on the latter is easily demonstrable.

[4] Politically, Slovene speaking territories were, of course, still dominated by the Habsburgs until 1918.

[5] The English translations are the author's (unless otherwise indicated).

[6] Its institutional context is also specific: it is the first attempt to publish a canonic literary collection that would bring to the fore the "gems" of Slovene literature.

[7] Its subtitle is quite characteristic: *A sociological study of Slovene literature as an initiator of national emancipation in the second half of the 19th century.*

[8] The notion of a "social system" in Rupel's book is not based on contemporary systems theoretical models, such as Niklas Luhmann's.

[9] Pirjevec understood literature in the Heideggerian manner. Only when the instrumental use of literature is abandoned can it really come to be itself: a game which lets things *be* in the first place.

[10] The arguments cannot be fully presented here, so I refer the reader to my more extensive research into the Slovene literary system and the evolution of the role of the literary producer (Dović, *Slovenski pisatelj*).

[11] The other side of this enthusiastic process was the suppression of elements that threatened the integrity of the story: collective amnesia is as important to a nation as shared memories.

[12] An administrative name for the area around Ljubljana, most usually used before the 19th century. In public discourse, the denomination Slovenia was not widely used before 1848, while in practice the foundations of the demarcation between Slovene and South Slavic were laid in Protestant books of the 16th century, which used the language actually spoken in "Carniolia". The next strong point of confirmation of this demarcation was probably the success of Zois and his colleagues against attempts to impose Dubrovnik's dialect as an official language of the Illyric provinces (Vidmar, *Et in politicis* 759).

[13] Even the private correspondance between two important intellectuals of the era, he already mentioned Zois, who lived in Ljubljana, and the Vienna-based Slovene linguist Jernej Kopitar, becomes hermetic and full of ciphers when political issues, such as "Illyricum" come to the fore (Vidmar, *"t in politicis propheta* 754).

[14] The English translation of the strophe is author's. The Slovene original reads: "Že močen na morju / Ilirjan je bil, / K' se ladie tesat / je Rimic učil."

[15] In Slovene the final lines are: "Korintu so rekli Helensko oko, / Ilirija prstan Evropini bo."

[16] At the time of the publication of Vodnik's ode Linhart was no longer alive.

[17] Historian Igor Grdina thinks that one of the most influential promotors of the idea of the national unity of the people who lived north and south of the Karavanke mountain range was the above-mentioned Linhart.

[18] This would, of course, suit the second mode of intratextual strategies according to my scheme.

[19] The etymology of the word Slav was connected with "glory", since both words have the same root. Sometimes this ambiguity was used in literature; it is not translatable.

[20] The inauguration procedure for Carantanian rulers was actually unusually democratic, as was described in *Six livres de la République* of Jean Bodine, a book that also influenced Thomas Jefferson.

[21] In Slovene, the translated passage from the Introduction to *The Baptism on the Savica* (written in perfect iambic terza rima strophes) sounds like this: "Narvèč sveta otrokam sliši Slave, / tje bomo najdli pot, kjer nje sinovi / si prosti voljo vero in postave."

[22] Bavarian ruler Tassilo.

[23] The main part of *The Baptism* is written in iambic ottava rima stanzas. In Slovene: "Na tleh leže slovenstva stebri stari, / v domačih šegah vtrjene postave; v deželi parski Tesel gospodari, / ječé pod težkim jarmam sini Slave, / le tujcam sreče svit se v Kranji žari, / ošabno nós'jo tí pokonci gláve."

[24] This complex poetic form consists of 15 sonnets, the last (Magistrale / Master theme) being composed of the initial verses of all of the sonnets; besides that, their initial letters form an acrostic "Primicovi Julji" ("To Julija Primic"), a dedication to Prešeren's muse.

[25] In Slovene: "Minuli sreče so in slave časi, / ker vredne dela niso jih budile, / omólknili so pesem sladki glási."

[26] As historian Igor Grdina has pointed, Valvasor's writing should not be observed in the terms of nationalism: his work is *patriotic* in the sense of the province of Carniolia (Kranjska) (Grdina, *Vladarji* 21). Prešeren modified this original context of Valvasor's report.

[27] The verses in *Zdravljica* that evoke the past are not very explicit, but it is not hard to guess what they are about: "Henceforth, as were our forebears', / May Slovenes' homes be truly free /…/ That again we may reign / And honour, riches now regain!" (Prešeren, *Poems* 159)

[28] Later, together with the more differentiated historical literary genres, some other topics also came to the fore, such as *the counts of Celje* or *the battles against Turks*.

[29] The settlement was probably situated in Lika, part of today's Croatia. In the 19th century in Slovenia it was enthusiastically (but falsely) supposed that its location was in Carniolia.

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