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In onore di Darja Mihelič
In honour of Darja Mihelič

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SLOVENIAN NATION-BUILDING MYTHMAKER: FRAN LEVSTIK'S *MARTIN KRPAN*

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ABSTRACT

On the case of the literary tale of Fran Levstik, Martin Krpan *(1858), the article illuminates Levstik's political agenda and literary implementation of the outlaw hero, Martin Krpan, for the needs of Slovenia's nation-building process, a phenomenon that was characteristic of almost all emerging European nations at the time. An analysis of Levstik's* Martin Krpan *reveals a unique phenomenon that was tailored to a specific program: namely, the conscious desire to create a national literary character that would constitute a foundation for both further literary creation and the national political struggle. Levstik was the most prominent writer among the emerging Slovenian intellectual class in the second half of the 19th century. The value of his tale resides in its merging of mythical and literary narratives into a functionally connected organism, the simultaneity of "historical" and "non-historical" elements, and the interaction between symbolic and real ambiguities. Levstik's structure for both his literary-political program and his tale about Martin Krpan originates in historical realities and cultural memory of the 15th and 16th centuries: economic (transportation), social (peasant revolts), and political (defense against the Ottoman Turks). Levstik combines these elements with the fundamentals of folkloric and ethno-symbolic cultural heritage of that period. In* Martin Krpan, *Levstik skillfully conceals "historical realities" behind metaphors and symbolism, which is typical of myths. In this way, he provides a path toward the realization of national political ambitions. But the "real" myth Levstik created was more than simply that of Martin Krpan and his adventures. It was more than an argument for the historical origin or vocation of a nation, the defense of the civilization, or the demand for political rights or mimetic narrative prose, i.e. the ability to create a virtual real world. The "real" myth of the literary tale was the elevation of the Slovenian language to the essential distinguishing and constitutive element of the Slovenian nation-building process in comparison with the "Other(s)."*

Keywords: Fran Levstik, Martin Krpan, mythmaker, outlaw hero, national myths, nation and state building, cultural memory, slovenian language, 19th century

CREATORE DI MITI DELLA FORMAZIONE NAZIONALE SLOVENA: IL *MARTIN KRPAN* DI FRAN LEVSTIK

SINTESI

Basandosi sul racconto letterario sloveno Martin Krpan z Vrha *(1858) di Fran Levstik, l'articolo si propone di far luce sull'agenda politica dell'autore, sul suo tempo e sulla creazione letteraria di un eroe originario sloveno ai fini della formazione nazionale, non diversamente da quanto stava avvenendo in quel periodo in molte altre nazioni emergenti europee. L'analisi di quest'opera documenta un processo storico e culturale significativo: una volontà programmatica e consapevole di realizzare una figura letteraria nazionale che possa fungere da base sia per la creazione letteraria che per la lotta politica (nazionale). Levstik fu tra i primi e più importanti letterati dell'emergente classe intellettuale slovena della seconda metà dell'Ottocento. Il merito del suo racconto sta nell'unione della narrazione mitica e di quella letteraria, in un insieme organico che rende possibile una stretta contiguità tra lettura «storica» e «non storica», un intreccio di polisemia simbolica e reale. Levstik traeva ispirazione per l'intera struttura del proprio programma letterario-politico e per il racconto dell'eroe fuorilegge* Martin Krpan *dagli eventi storici e dalla memoria culturale del Quattro e Cinquecento, dalla storia economica (trasporto), sociale (le rivolte contadine) e politica (la difesa dai turchi ottomani), amalgamandoli con talune caratteristiche del patrimonio culturale folclorico ed etnico-simbolico del periodo. Le «realtà storiche», tipiche dei miti, e le «verità storiche» sono nel suo racconto abilmente celate dietro il velo della metafora e dei simboli, indicando la strada verso la lotta politica (nazionale). Ma il «vero» mito che Levstik voleva creare fu la lingua slovena stessa. E infatti, la lingua e la cultura a essa associata furono due essenziali elementi distintivi e costitutivi del processo della costruzione della nazione e dello Stato sloveni rispetto «all'Altro (agli Altri)».*

Parole chiave: Fran Levstik, Martin Krpan, creatore di miti, eroe fuorilegge, miti nazionali, formazione nazionale e statale, memoria culturale, lingua slovena, Ottocento

INTRODUCTION

This paper[1] will reveal how cultural memory of smuggling and peasant revolts, and their historiographical traditions, influenced the emergence of a literary tale that over time has been transformed into a national myth with which the Slovenian people have identified since its emergence in the mid-19th century. I'm referring to *Martin Krpan z Vrha* by the Slovenian writer Fran Levstik (1831–1887) first published in 1858.[2] The intention of this paper is to put forward a complex interpretation of this literary work that still stirs the imagination thirty years after the creation of the independent Slovenian state (1991) – an event that also included revolt as one of its constitutive elements. However, we will not bring contemporary symbols of nation building into the discussion at this point. Rather, we will first discuss how Slovenian writers participated in the nation-building process during the second half of the 19th century. Levstik created a national myth was more than simply outlaw hero Martin Krpan and his adventures, the creation of an original hero of the Slovenian nation as an argument for the historical origin or vocation of a nation (the defense of the civilization, or the demand for political rights), but especially the elevation of the Slovenian language to the essential distinguishing and constitutive element of the Slovenian nation-building process.

The Slovenian social sciences and humanities have already dedicated much attention to Lestvik's legendary tale about Martin Krpan. As with any other recognized and established literary work, this one – with its particular interpretive power and symbolism – also supports a range of interpretations and reinter-

1 This paper is the result of research carried out in the research project *Cultural Memory of Slovene Nation and State Building* (ARRS, J6-9354), in the research project *Social functions of fairy tales* (ARRS J6-1807) and in the research program *The past of North-eastern Slovenia among Slovenian historical lands and in interaction with the European neighbourhood* (ARRS, P6-0138), funded by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS). My thanks to Edward Muir, Nancy Wingfield, Furio Bianco and Vanesa Matajc as well as the anonymous reviewers for their comments.

2 In recent years, characters and metaphors related to Martin Krpan have been used for various marketing purposes in Slovenia. The competition for the strongest Slovenian man (http://www.martinkrpan.si/default.asp) is named after Krpan along with companies, pubs, shops, streets, an elementary school, a gallery, a fitness club, a sports program, a pop ensemble, and a number of products ranging from pâté to a bus, a snow cannon, and even a dredger in the Port of Koper. Translations into: English: Martin Krpan, 1960 (http://www.dedi.si/virtualna-knjiga/15512) and 2004 (translated by Erica Johnson Debeljak); Esperanto: Martin Krpan z Vrha, 1954; Croatian: Martin Krpan, 1949; Italian: Martin Krpan, 1983; Hungarian: Martin Krpan, 1963; Macedonian: Martin Krpan, 1965; German: Martín Krpán, 1960; Russian: Martin Krpan : slovenskaja narodnaja povest´, 2001; Slovakian: Martin Krpan z Vrhcu, 1950; Serbian: Martin Krpan, 1939; Swedish: Martin Krpan från Vrh, 2004. In 1954, the expressionist painter Tone Kralj created a series of large full-page color illustrations of the story. His picture book, reprinted thirteen times, is now the most recognizable image of Martin Krpan. The 1954 edition is quoted in this article (translated by Luka Hrvatin and the author). Cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Krpan and https://sl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Krpan_z_Vrha.

pretations, including historical, literary-historical, and other interdisciplinary interpretations that sometimes contradict each other.[3]

Arriving on the heels of the romantic poet France Prešeren (1800–1849) who already laid strong foundations in the field of poetry, Levstik belongs to a generation of Slovenian writers who made significant accomplishments in terms of increasing the recognition of Slovenian prose. Just as Prešeren followed contemporary European artistic trends of his time, so too did Levstik in his literary creation. In this sense, his artistic program was closely in line with Slovenia's first organized politic movement known as *Zedinjena Slovenija* (United Slovenia), which began in 1848. This movement was part of simultaneous German, Italian, Hungarian, Southern Slav – and indeed pan-European – political efforts to establish national states.[4]

The literary tale includes both historical facts and the mythical and symbolic analogies of a multi-layered archaic folk tale, which combined, became both a national mythical image and part of the literary-political program of a national awakening in accordance with the author's intentions. This work was followed by those of the most important Slovenian writers of the second half of the 19th century – Josip Jurčič, Ivan Tavčar, Janko Kersnik, Anton Aškerc,[5] Fran Saleški Finžgar, and Ivan Cankar – who together created the foundation of Slovenian statehood: namely, the expressiveness of the standardized Slovenian language.

I.

My father once told me that the literary hero and smuggler from the literary tale Martin Krpan, first published in 1858 and now known to all Slovenians, illustrates the centuries-old role the Slovenian territory played in the defense of Christian civilization, and particularly the Habsburgs (Vienna), against the Ottoman Turks. My father was in his final year of law school in Ljubljana when the Second World War broke out. However, when I began research on this subject, I discovered that despite its numerous representations, the literary tale of Martin Krpan has in fact never been interpreted as a work that "defends religion," a common myth in many Southeastern European countries, including the Bosnian enclave, which built its mythical heroes on the "defense of Islam". The French theologian Bernard of Clairvaux among the

3 I would like to emphasize the following works in this extensive bibliography: Slodnjak, 1931; Orel, 1931; Logar & Ocvirk, 1933; Koblar, 1933; Vidmar, 1951; Levstik, 1952; Tomaževič, 1958; Mahnič, 1958; Vilfan, 1962; Vilfan, 1963; Pogačnik, 1977; Paternu, 1978; Kocijan, 1979; Skušek, 1980; Žižek, 1980; Kos, 1982; Mitrović, 1982; Močnik, 1994, 199–201; Velikonja, 1996; Košuta, 1996; Pogačnik, 1999; Hladnik, 2002; Simoniti, 2003, 77–78, 316; Kmecl, 2004, 140–159; Trobič, 2005; Baskar , 2008, 75–92; Jazbec, 2009; Čeh, 2021.

4 For a thorough study on the forms and collective ideas that influenced the formation of national collective consciousness, cf. Smith, 1999. On p. 60, he notes: "By 1800, most of Western Europe was caught in the romantic quest for origins; by 1850, it has spread to Eastern Europe, and during the next century was diffused to Asia and Africa." On influeces of the three nineteenth-century nation building writers, Slovenia's France Prešeren, Denmark's Hans Christian Andersen, and Iceland's Jónas Hallgrímsson, cf. Helgason (2011).

5 Cf. recent work of Darja Mihelič (2021).

first used the term *Antemurale Christianitatis* in 1143 when describing a Frankish garrison defending the town of Edessa (present-day Sanliurfa, Turkey) the Seljuk Muslims, but the metaphor of the bulwark was also known in Croatian and Serbian medieval literature. It was, and remains, part of the process of Croatian state building.[6]

Fran Levstik (1831–1887), the author of the Slovenian literary tale *Martin Krpan* (Levstik, 1858a), would certainly have found examples of the *antemurale* myth in neighboring Slavic countries, especially in folk literature about *hajduks* and *uskoks*, the popular outlaw folk heroes from Western Balkans (cf. Wolff, 2001). In folk songs, *hajduks* and *uskoks* are described as brave men defending justice and punishing injustice.[7]

One special characteristic of the literary tale of Martin Krpan that has yet to be properly interpreted is that the author, Fran Levstik, represents a true example of a mythmaker. The literary tale follows a specific literary and political program: to create a character for the Slovenian nation-building process. Levstik realized that the territory mostly inhabited by Slovenian-speaking people in 19th century did not yet have a common heroic character [8] needed for the formation of "an imaginary community," as Benedict Anderson clearly presents the phenomenon of the creation of national states, especially in his explanation of the role of the press (in particular periodicals) and intellectuals in the nation-building and state-building process (Anderson, 1991, 67–82)[9].

We can assume that Levstik was well aware of the fact that the mythic images that play a decisive role in community identity formation are usually constructed from individual characters portraying folk heroes, precisely because they fall into the category of the origin myths (Eliade, 1963, 8–18). Furthermore, it should be emphasized that Levstik's conscious choice of an outlaw hero character was no doubt made on the basis

6 For this discussion, I would like to point out two collections of scientific papers edited by Pål Kolstø (2005; 2014). The articles offer in-depth comparative interpretations and interdisciplinary analyses of symbolic state-building in Albania and the former republics of Yugoslavia, with the exception of Slovenia. The articles from the 2005 edition are especially interesting for our topic: Ivo Žanić, 2005; Vjekoslav Perica, 2005 and Bojan Aleksov, 2005.

7 The most famous *hajduks* are Starina Novak, Mijat Tomić (both from Bosnia), Stari Vujadin (from Livno), Bajo Pivljanin and Mali Radojica (from Dalmatia), Kostreš Harambaša (from Udbina), and, in the 19th century, Hajduk Veljko (from the Negotin area) and Stanoje Glavaš (from Smederevska Palanka). The base of the *uskoks* was initially Klis Fortress, conquered by the Turks in 1537, then Senj in Austrian territory, and Ravni Kotari in Venetian territory. In Croatian *uskok* songs, the heroic deeds of Ivo Senjanin, Tadija Senjanin, and Đuro Daničić are praised, while songs about *uskoks* from Ravni Kotari are more likely to address Od Zadara Todor, Petar Smiljanić, Stojan Janković, Ilija Smiljanić, Vuk Mandušić, and Ilija Mitrović. Muslim heroic songs from the Bosnian Frontier (Bosanska Krajina) feature similar motifs: Mustajbeg of Lika, Alija Đerzelez, Mujo Hrnjica and his brother Halil, Alija Bojičić, Budalina Tale, and Dizdarević Meho appearing as heroes in these epic poems (Jurančič, 1959, 169). Similar characters portraying folk heroes are also present in the literature and folk literature of other Southeastern European countries (Maretić, 1966; Mijatović, 1974; Stanojevič, 1973).

8 On the concept of character that also has value in aesthetics, cf. Komel, 2011, 95–101.

9 Anderson's findings were developed by Smith (1999), a study that was an important reference work for this paper.

of his ethnographic field research (Slodnjak, 1931; Mahnič, 1958). He discovered that the historical role of the outlaw hero (smuggler, in this case of salt) – who enjoyed a degree of support from his community – was already very much present in Slovenian folk literature, which had only started to be written during that period.[10] In making his choice of outlaw hero as the main character of the literary tale,[11] he also took into consideration the folk literature from other Southeastern countries. Levstik was also inspired by works from Western Europe, particularly from the 18th century when many myths and legends were created, some of them based on real historical episodes when individual smugglers were transformed into folk heroes. A typical representative of this type of hero is the French smuggler Mandrin from the mid-18th century.[12] Smuggling became a popular topic in various literary genres, folk songs, and, last but not least, national mythologisations. Moreover, renowned smugglers sometimes became deeply implicated and involved in the processes of state formation and consolidation (Gallant, 1999, 26–27, 51), and their rebellion became a synonym for civil bourgeois revolution embodying freedom and equality within the economic framework and fraternity of the community. In contrast, the dominant character of the folk hero in Southeastern Europe during the 19th century was associated both with the defense of "religion" and the outlaw hero.

This type of outlaw hero belongs to the so-called social banditry, a phenomenon brilliantly presented by Eric Hobsbawm in *Bandits*.[13] In this study he demonstrates how myths about outlaw heroes are structured. Graham Seal's book *The Outlaw Legend* (Seal, 1996)[14] is also of interest as a methodological and theoretical reference work that traces the development of the outlaw hero myth (personified above all by Robin Hood) in English, American, and Australian cultures. Historians criticized Hobsbawm's treatise: they argued that it is dangerous for historiographers to draw conclusions solely on the basis of folk tales, and claimed that the real bandits, around which such legends were created, were violent and bloodthirsty. The critics often tried to prove their point with individual cases and actual historical documents.[15] However, their criticism did not diminish the importance of Hobsbawm's study because it essentially ignored the basic concept Hobsbawm elaborated, as well as his detailed discussion about why individual bandits were transformed into legends or myths. Hobsbawm also emphasizes the universality of the phenomenon:

10 More extensive collections of folk literature were collected and recorded only by Štrekelj (1895–1923).

11 It is worth noting in this regard that Jacob Grimm, one of the most ardent admirers of Serbian and Croatian folk poetry, wrote a letter to Vuk Stefanović Karadžić in 1822 claiming that "there is not and will not be any nation with songs like these." (Jurančič, 1959, 138)

12 Mandrin united a band of more than two hundred smuggler-rebels who, among other things, demanded social change. For this reason above all, Mandrin was praised as a hero for more than a century afterwards. Cf. Fonvieille, 1995; Lusebrink, 1979.

13 Hobsbawm first published the book *Primitive Rebels* in 1959, with subtitle *Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Also due to criticism from some scholars, he supplemented this study with the work *Bandits* (1969). Here I quote the revised 1981 edition.

14 Cf. also Kooistra, 1989, and the extensive literature listed there.

15 Cf. Slatta, 2004, 22–30, with the list of essential literature by critics of Hobsbawm's concept of social banditry.

Fig. 1: Fresque de Mandrin Yves Morvan Brioude - Images of the Anti-Tax Smuggler Louis Mandrin (1725–1755) - the 18thC French Robin Hood (Wikimedia Commons).

Social banditry of this kind is one of the most universal social phenomena known to history, and one of the most amazingly uniform. Practically all cases belong to two or three clearly related types, and the variations within these are relatively superficial. What is more, this uniformity is not the consequence of cultural diffusion, but the reflection of similar situations within peasant societies, whether in China, Peru, Sicily, the Ukraine, or Indonesia. Geographically it is found throughout the Americas, Europe, the Islamic world, South and East Asia, and even Australia. Socially it seems to occur in all types of human societies that lie between the evolutionary phase of tribal and kinship organization, and modern capitalist and industrial society, but include the phases of disintegrating kinship society and transition to agrarian capitalism. (Hobsbawm, 1981, 18)

Hobsbawm divides social banditry into three main forms: "[1] the noble robber or Robin Hood, [2] the primitive resistance fighter or guerrilla unit of what I shall call the *haiduks*, and [3] possibly the terror-bringing *avenger*." (Hobsbawm, 1981, 20)

Outlaws and system of vengeance were deeply intertwined with each other and thus their outcomes often reflected the legal systems of the various political entities in Southeastern Europe especially during early modern period.[16] The outlaw-hero phenomenon also reflects the importance of common law among the people, especially in comparison with the increasingly forceful scholarly or state law that began to prevail from the 16th century onward. Therefore, this discussion also requires some engagement with aspects of the opposing but interacting notions of "law" and "lore". As Seal has stressed, "the argument is advanced that in those situations where the law of the state is found inadequate or oppressive certain individuals will revolt against the power of the state." These outlaw individuals will be given the support of otherwise law-abiding citizens as long as they are seen to be operating in accordance with the moral code of the outlaw hero tradition, that is outside the "law" but inside the "lore". Outbreaks of social banditry represent ideal circumstances for investigating this general proposition (Seal, 1996, XII).

According to maintain the respect, sympathy, and active support of his own social group, the outlaw hero must adhere to, or at least be seen to adhere to, a relatively rigid set of guidelines. Some actions are appropriate, even laudable, while others are reprehensible and may not be countenanced if the outlaw is to become a hero. In to the outlaw hero tradition, as articulated by Hobsbawm and expanded upon by Seal, the outlaw must act in according to moral tenet or codes embodied in the following ten elements of narrative and character: the outlaw hero must be a friend to the poor, a trickster, forced into outlawry,[17] betrayed, oppressed, brave, generous, courteous, not indulge in unjustified violence, and live on after death. The last motif is Seal's (1996, 11) appendix to Hobsbawm's (1981, 42–43) and is essential to understanding the civilizational-cultural dimension of the outlaw hero character, which is not only embedded in the cultural patterns of the image of Jesus, but also often appeared in earlier primitive societies in religious rituals that created and preserved the social order (comp. Radcliffe-Brown, 1952, 188–211).

16 To the concepts of conflict resolution between customary law and legal process in medieval and early modern Europe was dedicated two issues of Acta Histriae in year 2017. I especially highlight the studies of Muir (2017), Oman (2017), Povolo (2017), Martin (2017), Faggion (2017), Casals (2017), Bellabarba (2017), Vidali (2017), Resta (2017), Carroll (2017). It is worth noting in this regard some other studies published in Acta Histriae: Povolo (2015), Carroll & Cecchinato (2019), Casals (2019), Oman (2019) etc. Cf. also Tepavčić (2018), Oman (2018) and Darovec (2018).

17 Claude Lévi-Strauss believes that the trickster of many mythologies acts as a "mediator", representing the opposition between life and death. The theory of myth is one of the central themes developed by Lévi-Strauss in the following works in particular: Lévi-Strauss, 1963, chap. XI: The Structural Study of Myth; Lévi-Strauss, 1966; Lévi-Strauss, 1976; *Part Three: Mythology and Ritual*; Lévi-Strauss, 1969; Lévi-Strauss, 1988.

Not all of these elements are present in each iteration of a particular outlaw, but enough will be there to indicate that an intricately balanced combination of traditional motifs is being invoked along with the values and attitudes embedded in those motifs. Moreover, in almost every individual case of the outlaw hero tradition, there is clear evidence of serious social, economic, cultural, and political tensions within and between the various communities and groups involved (Seal, 1996, 11; Brown, 1990, 258–281).

This discussion brings us closer to addressing the structural and morphological characteristics of tales. Certainly, Vladimir Propp broke new ground in this area. His aim was to study the genesis of the phenomena (rather than events) from the historical past that correspond to the form and structure of tales and their common origin (Propp, 1984, 48–64).[18] In his analysis of the historical roots of the wonder tale, he devotes special attention to various characters from different tales, including bandits. Nevertheless, Propp admits that at first glance it seems "absurd or perhaps even savage" that "all wonder tales are of one type in regard to their structure." On the basis of this statement and the assumption that "there is no serious reason to isolate tales from myths," Claude Lévi-Strauss placed tales and myths into a unity, an atemporal mythological matrix structure "whose form is indeed constant." (Lévi--Strauss, 1984, 170, 175, 176, 184).

Propp enumerates seven main characters in mythical tales: the villain, the donor, the magic helper (heroes can only manage without a magic helper if they have supernatural powers), the princess (the sought-after person) and her father, the dispatcher, the hero, and the false hero (Liberman, 1984, XXX; Lévi-Strauss, 1984, 173). Lévi-Strauss went on to stress that the fundamental tale, of which all tales offer only an incomplete realization, is formed of two *parties* the functions of which are recurrent – some being simple variants and some belonging specifically to each *partie*. During the first *partie*, the functions are: struggle, branding the hero, victory, liquidation of lack, return, pursuit of the hero, and rescue. During the second *partie*, they are: the hero's unrecognized arrival, the assignment of a difficult task, success, recognition of the hero, the exposure of the false hero, and the transfiguration of the hero (Lévi-Strauss, 1984, 181).

Now let us return to the story of Martin Krpan. It appears that Fran Levstik invented this literary tale, seventy years before Propp's analysis of fairy tales and a hundred years before Lévi-Strauss's analysis of myths on the basis of theoretical and methodological elements. Although the literary greatness of Martin Krpan resides in part in its use of "mythical procedures" and in part in its deconstruction of mythical ideology (which for Levstik presumably presented a romantic lie;

18 This volume is a miscellany by Vladimir Propp (1984), a famous Russian folklorist, the author of the book *Morphology of the Folktale (1928).* It contains seven articles, two chapters from the book *Historical Roots of the Wondertale (1946),* and the introduction to the book *Russian Heroic Epic Poetry (1955).* Claude Lévi-Strauss's critique of *Morphology of the Folktale* was added to the book in the form of a special supplement (167–189). Citations are to this edition (Propp, 1984). The source is Lévi-Strauss's *Structural Anthropology 2,* Chapter 8. Propp's method was later formalized by Greimas, 1976, 5–26.

Fig. 2: Mullah Nasreddin Hodja (1208–1285). Example of representations of the weak horse as helper, the best known rider of such a horse being Nasreddin from the 13th century. A 17th-century miniature of Nasreddin, currently in the Topkapı Palace (Turkey) Museum Library (Wikimedia Commons).

Močnik, 1994, 201), the tale nevertheless follows the rules of mythology. In fact, this was its primary purpose as will become clear in this discussion. The typical mythical process presents the solution to a problem that has emerged in society with dramatic anxiety or even traumatic urgency. The myth achieves this by actualizing the contradiction with a well-known, domestic, uneventful contrast or relationship, and resolving it with modest means, almost aesthetically. Thus the most difficult problems are solved with the minimum number of mental operations (Močnik, 1994, 196–197). Levstik's basic "mythical problem" was the Slovenian language, the Slovenian word.

One of the special charms of the tale or myth of Martin Krpan is that Levstik never published its second part, which remains virtually unknown to the reading public. With the second part, he encompassed the rules mentioned above as well as the concept of mythical tales. Nevertheless, or indeed perhaps precisely because of this lack, the myth was established.

II.

An analysis of Levstik's *Martin Krpan* reveals a unique phenomenon that was tailored to a specific program: namely, the conscious desire to create a national literary character that would constitute both a foundation for further literary creation and for the national political struggle. Levstik was only twenty-seven years old when in the same year (1858) published in a literary form his literary-political programme *Rambling from Litija to Čatež* (Levstik, 1858b),[19] than a critical essay entitled *Mistakes in Slovenian Writing* (Levstik, 1858c), and the literary tale *Martin Krpan,* which served as a model for the realization of his ideas. Only twenty pages long, this lively text presents Martin Krpan, a Slovenian peasant, as the central character whose role is to save the Emperor in Vienna, and indeed the entire empire and religion, from the Turkish threat. This is the central heroic deed in the tale.

What must be emphasized here is Levstik's conscious choice of main character – a peasant, a social rebel, a smuggler, a righteous avenger, and at the same time a savior of the community against the danger of "the other". These choices were crucial in creating a character with whom the Slovenian nation (in formation) could identify. The portrayal of the hero character shows the specific qualities of the Slovenian nation in formation: it lacked not only its own centers of power, but also nobility, bourgeoisie, official authorities, and, until the mid-19th century, suitable schools in the area where its ethnic community lived, there were only a few small-circulation newspapers published in Slovenian. The relatively sparsely populated region was comprised of small villages and towns. A substantial majority of its population was based in rural areas that were divided into administrative units dominated by German culture with a smaller presence of Italian (Venetian) traders. Romanesque towns and their administrative areas were located at the far western part of the region, spread out on a relatively wide hinterland populated by Slavs. Today, the eastern part of the Slovenian territory borders Hungary, which obtained dual power under the Habsburg Monarchy in 1867, and Croatia, with which Slovenia shares common Slavic linguistic roots. The populations of all of the nations that shared borders with Slovenia are of majority Catholic faith. Located on this important European crossroads, Slovenian lands have been significantly influenced by their surroundings in terms of their social (political, economic, cultural), geostrategic, and environmental aspects.

Slovenians are said to belong to those nations or people that were founded on culture and language, rather than on a glorious past of kings and military rulers (Hroch, 2000). Anton Tomaž Linhart (1756–1795) was the first intellectual to describe the territory of

19 Since 1958, a 22-km-long trip has been organized each year along Levstik's trail in memory of this ramble. The number of participants grows every year. In recent years more than 20,000 people have participated in the walk (http://sl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popotovanje_iz_Litije_do_%C4%8Cate%C5%BEa). The travelogue format became popular in European literature at the end of the 18th century and the early decades of the 19th century.

the Slovenian people as a whole. Linhart, like Prešeren, belonged to the Zois circle. *Žiga Zois*, son of an Italian father and Slovenian mother, was the richest man on the Slovenian territory in that era. He gave patronage to many cultural figures personalities and encouraged them to write and explore the Slovenian character. Linhart established himself both as a historian and as a playwright (Linhart, 1789; 1790). In a historical discussion *An Essay on the History of Carniola and Other Lands of the Austrian South Slavs*, written in German in the years 1789 and 1791, Linhart responded to the question – "Who are we, Carniolans?" – in the following way: "The people living in the southern part of the Austrian province between the Drava River and the Adriatic Sea, belonging to the large and characteristic branch of Slavic peoples, which, according to its language and origins, is the same ethnic branch and is divided only by coincidence – although historically not quite correctly – into Carniolans and Winds." He wanted to tell the history of this people "by connecting its fates and adventures into a whole," and not "partially, scattered in the annals of the lands in which this people live." By referring to the importance of this nation's development, he rejected the presentation of Slovenian history in provincial segments. He regarded the division of Slovenians according to provinces as a result of historical development, and instead insisted that the people who lived in this territory be unified. This contention found international support in the famous work by Jernej Kopitar, a linguist and professor at the University of Vienna (1780–1844), entitled *Grammar of the Slovenian language in Carniola, Carinthia and Styria* (1808) (Grafenauer, 1974, 133–135). It should also be noted that it was Kopitar who convinced Karadžić to collect and record Serbian and Croatian folk literature in a systematic way (Jurančič, 1959, 137).

Slovenian intellectuals only began to assert themselves during the mid-19th century. This process was accelerated by the education of young people moving from rural to urban areas, as was the case with Levstik. It is essential to be aware that individual intellectuals played outsized roles in the civilizational process during many historical periods. However, the 19th century also brought an unusual amount of significant social change: widespread literacy, a higher level of education and communication, the wider dissemination of information. Numerous books and newspapers began to be published. Oral literature, laws, and customs were collected and recorded. This new social reality demanded modified forms of organization that ultimately manifested themselves in the form of nation states. As a distinctive factor, language already had a considerable influence on the formation of individual communities in the pre-national era. However, in the period when nation states were in formation, language became one of the most important, if not the most important element of unification (Anderson, 1991).[20] In this period, various national mythologies were created and presented

20 Study of Anderson clearly shows the importance of intellectuals and their role in the creation of nationalisms in the 19th and 20th century and their dissemination in the mass media, newspapers, literature (stories, novels, etc.), and later on radio and television. Anderson's influential research also showed other interesting features of nation formation in modern times, especially a comparison with Latin America and Asia, in which reflected European conditions played an important role. On the role and impact of the weekly magazine Mladina for Slovenia's Independence in 1991 cf. Horvat, 2021, for other mass media cf. Tratnik, 2021.

as advanced ideas. The humanistic sciences also entered the fray, competing for which one of them would be the most effective in establishing national symbols and mythologies (cf. Bajt, 2011; Tamm, 2008).

Recently, researchers have begun to dedicate considerable attention to these issues.[21] For example, Smith in *Myths and Memories* defined the four main categories of originating national myths:[22] *primordial* (original), *perennial* (eternal), *modernist* (as a result of the process of modernization), and *ethno-symbolic* (Smith, 1999, 1–27). Kolstø, in the introduction to his collection of scientific papers about myths and borders in Southeastern Europe, notes that specific forms of national mythologies appeared more in this region than elsewhere in Europe because of the many borders and bordering countries. He divides originating myths into the following four categories: *sui generis*, *antemurale*, *martirium*, and *antiquitas* (Kolstø, 2005, 1–34).

However, if we apply these classifications and the description of the manifestations of national mythologies in contemporary scientific literature to *Martin Krpan,* we encounter a problem: which category or categories does Levstik's tale belong to? The pivotal event of the story – the duel – suggests that this work belongs primarily to the category of *antemurale* myths.[23] And yet the entirety of Levstik's tale is also rich in *ethno-symbolic* traditions. Its mythical narrative, attractive to both preschool children and top-level academics, establishes "a lack of temporal commitment; an autonomy and openness related to meaning," (Paternu, 1978, 234) which is a de facto characteristic and condition of every durable and resistant literary work. It is also successful with the use of metaphors and symbols in establishing a unique combination of individual categories within the

21 I drew on the following works as a theoretical and methodological basis for the study of these phenomena: Smith, 1999; Hosking & Schöpflin, 1997; Kolstø, 2005. These studies have a lot in common with other important comparative studies of the reference literature.

22 Kolstø explains the social use of myths as follows: "When we study the function of myths, we ought not to assume that myths function in any specific way of and by themselves. Myths cannot act, only people can. To ask about how myths function, therefore, is to ask about how myths are used and misused by people. This is to inquire into the application of political myths. It is probably possible to find historical myths that have been narrated throughout the ages without being fuelled by any particular political motive. The opposite phenomenon, however, seems to be much more common: political aspirations are often fuelled by myths and many myth-makers do have a political agenda, myths are regularly produced and propagated in order to bolster specific group claims." Kolstø, "Introduction, Assessing the Role of Historical Myths in Modern Society" (Kolstø, 2005, 30). Kolstø distinguishes between the so-called "enlighteners" and "functionalists" as interpreters of myths. The enlighteners believe that professional historians should reject myths, while the functionalists see the creation of myths as an inevitable, even friendly and harmless element of a well-functioning human society (Kolstø, 2005, 2–3). To find out which phenomena can be defined as myths cf. Overing, 1997, 1–18.

23 This is what Kolstø says about the *antemurale* myth: "This myth comes in many different guises and under many different labels: '*antemurale christianitatis*', 'Europe's last outpost', 'defenders of the gates', 'the bearers of true civilization', and so on. Typologically, this myth is very different from the myth of being *sui generis*. Rather than insisting on the uniqueness of the group, it is now included in some larger and allegedly superior cultural entity that enhances its status *vis-à-vis* other groups who do not belong." (Kolstø, 2005, 19–20). The *antemurale* myth, as defined by Kolstø, is typical of the countries of Southeastern Europe, although the phenomena of the *antemurale christianitatis* metaphor can be encountered in other countries as well, especially Poland, Hungary, and Spain (Kolstø, 2005, 24).

national myths; the lack of temporal commitment creates an impression of *originality* and *eternity* in terms of the hero's (national) economic activity on the selected ethnic territory. The duel at the court and its outcome contains unambiguous associations to ideas about the *victimized* role of the Slovenian nation at the hands of the Turks, something that was still very much present in the collective memory of the community. With the elevation of the peasant class to the carrier of bourgeois transformation,[24] the tale predicts the *unique* or *chosen* role of the people (*sui generis*).[25] But the primary purpose and mission of this literary tale – as imagined and theoretically justified by the author – was *modernistic*. This is the main reason its seed fell on fertile ground.

The success of *Martin Krpan* was undoubtedly due to its having been based on the mentality, "the historical truth", and the collective memory of the nation. Levstik wanted to "hold up a mirror" to the Slovenian people, and, at the same time, to convince them. As the author put it: "He who is original is able to rightly embrace any thought with the particularity of his own spirit and then express it beautifully in his own manner." (Paternu, 1978, 245)

III.

The story is relatively simple. A strong and very large fellow named Martin Krpan lives in a village in Slovenia. He makes his living by smuggling sea salt from the coastal towns of Istria to the hinterland and exchanging it for agricultural products.

This is how Fran Levstik describes Martin Krpan, using the words of the narrator Močilar:

> *There is a village in Innerland, called Vrh. In ancient times, a strong and powerful man Krpan lived in that small village. He was the kind of man the likes of which don't come along very often. He didn't care about work, instead he carried English salt on his little mare from the sea, which in those days was strictly forbidden. The border guards kept an eye on him so as to catch him unawares; they feared an honest fight with him, as they would later with Štempihar.*

24 Although Levstik opposed German culture in his idea about the emergence of the Slovenian nation because "in the first place, their culture has taken everything that was ours... our authentic traditions, our history and our historical message, our national compassion; almost our national language" (Slodnjak, 1931, 30), he did model his thought patterns on Serbian epic poetry by Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (1787–1864) and also on German art. Among others, he was influenced by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781), Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775–1854). Although many national mythologies are established on the basis of important (military) leaders, usually of noble blood, Lessing established a German literature on the basis of the growing German bourgeoisie. In this way, he obviously set an example for Levstik who also used that social class to establish the Slovenian literature. However, in Levstik's case, the bourgeoisie was represented by the rural population (Slodnjak, 1931, 12–13).

25 Even from this point of view, Levstik's Krpan can be interpreted in different ways, or as Kolstø writes (2005, 20): "Skillful myth-makers may succeed in explaining that *sui generis* and *antemurale* belong to different levels of identity, as it were. Expressed in Armstrong's terminology, they may function as myth and counter-myth."

Fig. 3: Martin Krpan meets the Emperor: branding the hero. Illustration by Tone Kralj (Levstik, 1954).

> *But Krpan just kept out of their way and took care that they wouldn't be able to lay their hands on him.*[26]

One day, while on his travels with his mare (mule or donkey),[27] Krpan encounters a carriage carrying the Emperor (*the donor*). Due to his great strength, Krpan is able, in order to let the royal carriage continue on the snowbound road, to pick up

26 Levstik, 1858a, 4. In this introductory description, Krpan is depicted as a hero and a trickster with almost supernatural powers. Levstik's choice related to the name of the place from which Krpan originates is also interesting. The second time it appears in the story, he provides a fuller place name – Vrh pri Sveti Trojici (*vrh* means top or hill, *sveta trojica* means holy trinity). According to the *Atlas of Slovenia* (Ljubljana, 1985) there are several Slovenian villages named Vrh and Sveta Trojica, and they are spread over the entire Slovenian territory. With Innerland, he designates the Inner Austrian provinces where Slovenians lived, and not only the province of Inner Carniola, as most interpretations have. Inner Austria (German: *Innerösterreich*) was a term used from the late 14th to the 18th century for the Habsburg hereditary lands, referring to the Imperial Duchies of Styria, Carinthia and Carniola, the lands of the Austrian Littoral, the County of Görz, the Imperial Free City of Trieste, the possessions in the March of Istria around Pazin, and the free port of Rijeka. The residence of the Inner Austrian Archdukes and *stadtholders* was at the Burg castle complex in Graz. With English salt, the author was probably recalling the so-called Napoleon Continental System that prohibited trade between European countries and Great Britain. Štempihar was a real smuggler, tried and executed in Vienna at the end of the 18th Century (author's note).

27 Sources from the Venetian period refer to peasant traders on packhorses as *Cranzi*, after the Carniola region, or *Mussolati*, after the expression in the Istrian dialect *muša* (slo. *mezeg* or *mula*, it. *mula*, en. *hinny*), an offspring of a horse and a donkey. The traders were thus named after their means of transportation. In the story, this might symbolize the rule of the opposite representation of the most common human helper in the folk tales and poems: the horse. Many heroes from Southeastern European folk tales possess a beautiful or magical horse (often named Šarec, i.e. Prince (Kraljevič) Marko, Mujo Hrnjica). There are also examples of representations of the weak horse as helper, the best known rider of such a horse being Nasreddin from the 13th century, considered a popular philosopher and wise man, and remembered for his funny stories and anecdotes (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nasreddin). Another example is Hitar Petar in the Bulgarian and Macedonian folk tradition (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hitar_Petar).

his mare (along with the salt she carries) and move her aside with ease (*branding the hero*). As a consequence of this action, he attracts the notice of the Emperor. When the Turk, Brdavs,[28] (*the villain*) appears in Vienna and begins to win every duel he fights with members of Viennese nobles (*knights*), and thus threatens to destroy the entire imperial military elite, the Emperor's last hope lies with Krpan.[29] (Between September 27 and October 14, 1529, the Turkish army besieged Vienna with a large army of 140,000 men under the command of Suleiman I, the Magnificent. Vienna was besieged again in 1683.) Martin Krpan, with his rural toughness and cleverness, manages to defeat the mighty Brdavs in a duel (*the struggle*) while mounted on his little mare (*the helper*). Brdavs drives his mighty (Turkish) sword into the club that Krpan has fashioned out of a linden tree (the symbol of the Slavs). Linden wood is soft and the sword cuts deeply into the wood. Brdavs is unable to pull the sword out again (*the trick*). Krpan then disarms Brdavs and cuts off his head with an axe (*the victory*), which he also made himself. Thus, Krpan saves Vienna from the Turk (*the liquidation of lack*). All he wants as a reward is an imperial document that will permit him to carry out his trading activities legally and without hindrance (*the rescue*).

The character of Martin Krpan is important not only because the tale illustrates a commercial activity that had been going on during the centuries from the medieval period to the Modern Ages: the exchange of various goods between the Slovenian population from the coastal Mediterranean region and the hinterland. It is also important that the myth was shaped around an invincible, strong, and cunning merchant-smuggler as well as a shrewd soldier as will become clear in the following discussion: a Slovenian peasant who defeated the notorious Brdavs, a Turk sowing death among the Viennese warriors and lords. This myth elevates the Slovenia nation to the position of the last bastion of Christian countries against the Turks: "So we said: if no other living soul can defeat him, then Krpan can. Listen, you are the last hope of the Emperor and the city of Vienna." (Levstik, 1858a, 14) And it is indeed a historical fact the Slovenian territory represented the last bastion of the Austrian Empire (and also of modern Europe) against the Turkish menace. First, this was a result of Slovenia's geographical position and conditions. Second, it was due to the fact that the *Vojna krajina* (Military Frontier), a defensive network of fortifications against the Turks on what is today the territory of Croatia, received most of its financial and military aid from Slovenian territory.

In this regard, it is also interesting that the tale was written in the second half of the 19th century, during the period when Slovenian national identity was in the

28 Based on a survey conducted around 2000, Baskar (2008, 84) notes that all respondents knew the character of Martin Krpan in one form or another, but "only" a minority of respondents recognized a Turk in the villain Brdavs. Others could not explain the national origin of this character. The tale never mentions the word Turk, but, certainly when it was published, everyone in the target audience recognized that Brdavs was a Turk.

29 The Emperor forgets about this event, and it is the coachman (*the dispatcher*) who reminds him of it (Močnik, 1994, 200). In this work, the author provides an interesting comment, suggesting that the coachman demonstrates in this act the Hegelian point of view according to which knowledge is the privilege of servants.

Fig. 4: Villain and Hero. Martin Krpan shaking hands with Brdavs (the ordeal). Illustration by Tone Kralj.

Fig. 5: The duel between Krpan and Brdavs. Illustration by Tone Kralj.

process of formation, some ten years after the revolutionary year of 1848 during which the political program of *Zedinjena Slovenija* (United Slovenia) was published. The program included some quite typical, but nevertheless visionary, points of view: "People should live in their own country as they please: Germans in German fashion, Italians in Italian fashion, Hungarians in Hungarian fashion. And we, Slavs, demand fiercely and with all our power that others let us live in our country as we please: Slovenians in Slovenian fashion." In 1848, none of the following Slavic peoples – Czechs, Croats, Vojvodina Serbs, and Slovenians – made specific demands of Austria. These ethnic groups emphasized that they wanted to remain part of the Austrian Empire and fight on its side. This was partly in reaction to the attempts of Germans to create their own continental empire. In the program, it was also stressed that "now we can mingle as a free nation among other free nations, because there has never been such a perfect time for Slovenians, even the sun is shining," and "we shall not miss this precious moment." Due to its historical fragmentation and subordination to other countries and the subsequent absence of political and economic elites, the unifying role in the Slovenian nation-building process was played by cultural figures like Levstik and those in his circle: "Slovenians from the Slavic Adriatic coast to the banks of the Drava River, overcome your prejudices and provincial disputes, embrace each other like brothers and create a Slovenia in your hearts that does not yet politically exist. Send your request to the highest throne and demand the political establishment of Slovenia's boundaries."[30]

30 Gestrin & Melik, 1979, 448. For a review of political history on the Slovenian territory during this period, cf. Gestrin & Melik, 1966.

Slovenian lands were under Habsburg or Venetian rule for centuries and consequently did not develop the economic and political elites that in larger nations formed the main constitutive element in the creation of nation states. For this reason, Levstik chose a rebel peasant as his constitutive mythos.[31] And who might this rebel peasant have been? Certainly, one of the men who participated in the peasant revolts.[32] Of course, these revolts were ultimately suppressed and the peasants were the losers. Still, sooner or later, the oppressed and the peasants were defeated, and victory is needed for the creation of a constitutive identity. Rebellion is also important for victory, but it is not necessary only to win. Certain (military) skills, material (financial) resources, knowledge, experience, social acceptance, and especially shrewdness are also necessary. But where and how could peasants of that period find such qualities? The peasants may have acquired some of the skills of warfare in the so-called peasant army or černida (Pezzolo, 2007, 67–112), that was formed in the Austrian and Venetian lands during the transition from the Middle Ages to the modern era as a defense against the Turks. Rulers were forced into this type of defense as a consequence of Turkish military tactics, which were characterized by sudden unexpected attacks and plunders, and the depletion of the population. Regular mercenary armies usually were not successful in these defensive efforts.

Peasant trade on what is today the territory of Slovenia, which was fairly farflung during the period in question, allowed the peasants of that time to expand their horizons and improve the material conditions for their survival. If we take into consideration the fact that smuggling had expanded dramatically due to higher taxes imposed on this type of trade, and that the authorities were almost powerless in their efforts to tamp down smuggling

31 From Levstik's literary program (1858b), it seems clear that Levstik intended to create characters in the tale of Martin Krpan that would serve "as a mirror" for the Slovenian peasantry, allowing them to see themselves as they really were.

32 Five major peasant revolts took place in this region during the period from the 15th to the mid-19th century: the Carinthian peasant revolt in 1478, the Slovenian peasant revolt in 1515, the Croatian-Slovenian peasant revolt in1572–73, the Slovenian peasant revolt in 1635, and the Tolmin peasant revolt in 1713. In addition, over one hundred revolts on a smaller scale took place: 1 in the 14th century, 17 in the 15th century, 25 in the 16th century, 48 in the 17th century, 17 in the 18th century, and 12 in the 19th century. In certain respects, these revolts taken together could also be compared with the broader rebel movement of 1848 (cf. Grafenauer, 1962; Grafenauer, 1974). The peasants' confidence was even greater as a result of the faith they had in their Emperor. In the second half of the 15th century, Frederick III invited the peasants to join him in his fight against rebellious feudal lords. The most famous of these was the feud with the Counts of Celje (cf. Brunner, 1939). At the time of the peasant revolt in 1515, Venetian sources (among them, Marino Sanudo) reported that farmers intended to conquer the Venetian area of Friuli in the name of the Emperor, carrying his picture on their battle banners (cf. Grafenauer, 1974, 70).

Fig. 6: Krpan buying salt in Koper. Illustration by Tone Kralj.

despite an array of measures they adopted,[33] we immediately detect in this historical configuration the natural emergence of the cunning, educated, rebel-peasant soldier, also skilled in fighting with the Turks, that is embodied in the character of Martin Krpan. Thus Krpan represents the ideal figure of the rebel who is socially acceptable, despite being perceived as a criminal in the eyes of the authorities. He continues to live within the community, which protects him, offers him shelter, and considers him a hero. Moreover, the community comes to identify with him and in this way forms its cultural identity.

33 Some official documents from Venetian Istria dating back from the 16th to the 18th century even contain the following expressions: "*pubblico contrabbandiere di sale*" or "*professione di commetter contrabandi di sale*". There were also larger organized groups of people involved in these activities, among whom the Schiavuzzi family of Piran stood out. Cf. Archivio di Stato di Venezia (ASVe), Provveditori al Sal, Atti, b. 378; ASVe, Senato, Dispacci, Provveditori da terra e da mar, b. 232; ASVe, Collegio, Suppliche, Risposte di fuori, b. 349. The situation was similar in the northern part of what is today Slovenia. This can be seen, for example, in the event that took place near the Drava River in Carinthia in 1779. Guards killed Martin Pretner, a serf of the Bled seigniory, and Anton Walloch, a serf on the Javornik property. They were in a group of eleven serfs (nine from the Bled area and the settlement of Koroška Bela, and two from Javornik), who wanted to smuggle salt across the Drava River into Carinthia – near the village of Slamenze – and exchange it for grain and linseeds. Archives of the Republic of Slovenia (AS), 721 Gospostvo Bled, Iustitialia, fasc. 40. The famous chronicler Johann Weichard Valvasor (1689) wrote the following about the town of Velike Lašče in Lower Carniola (Levstik's birthplace in southeastern Slovenia): "All the people from this place are salt traders." (Valvasor, 1689, II, 36, 41)

Michel Foucault explains this phenomenon with the notion of tolerated or unpunished illegalities, according to which "one might say that, under the Ancien Régime each of the different social strata had its margin of tolerated illegality: the non-application of the rule, the non-observance of the innumerable edicts or ordinances were a condition of the political and economic functioning of society ... illegality was so deeply rooted and so necessary to the life of each social stratum, that it had in a sense its own coherence and economy." (Foucault, 1995, 82)

Lestvik's tale was created in the 19th century, right in the midst of Slovenian national-building process. If we closely examine the Slovenian character of the smuggler Martin Krpan, we see that it encompasses the continuity and diversity of smuggling as an important component in the lives of many individuals and communities (Krpan only partially trespassed the boundary of obedience and also managed at least some of the time to get along with the authorities). The smuggler Krpan became a national myth that can be classified into the group of nation-building myths or *antemurales* (Kolstø, 2005, 19–26): i.e. a bastion against another culture (in this case, the defense of Christianity against Islam). Therefore, this is a phenomenon that demonstrates the mythologization of the rebel, who thus came to occupy the position of a national myth during the nation-building processes of several Balkan peoples.[34] Krpan is a Slovenian peasant-smuggler who saves Vienna from the Turks or, more broadly, the Christian world from Islam. This implies that the Slovenian nation-building process was based not only on social rebellion, but the proximity and defense of borders, and the practice of crossing them.[35]

IV.

Slovenian territory was a borderland and peripheral area, so numerous structural elements evolved that enabled and maintained the presence of illegal practices, and indeed precisely these qualities, of being a borderland and peripheral area, were exploited as an additional resource.

When we talk about rural feudal society in Slovenia, we must emphasize that Slovenian lands were not only a peripheral border area, but one where complementary non-agrarian activities were inevitable due to limited resources. We should also stress that this was a very distinctive border area – between sovereign countries, different tax systems, civilizations, Christianity and Islam – that offered the specific structural elements that enabled and maintained the presence of illegal practices over the course

34 There are a number of works in the South Slavic oral tradition about *Prince Marko.* He is venerated as a national hero by the Serbs, Macedonians and Bulgarians, remembered in Balkan folklore as a fearless and powerful protector of the weak, who fought against injustice and confronted the Turks during the Ottoman occupation. This undoubtedly served as inspiration for Levstik; cf. Slodnjak, 1931, 9–12. About legends of Turkish attacks on Slovenian territory cf. Mlakar, 2021.

35 As Schöpflin noted: "through myth, boundaries are established within the community and also in respect to other communities. Those who do not share in the myth are by definition excluded." (Schöpflin, 1997, 20; comp. Pavlaković, 2012)

Fig. 7: Packhorses Transport (Valvasor, 1689, 36, 41).

of the centuries. It was a region with limited natural resources, where the population systematically engaged in various non-agrarian and often illegal activities. Local populations were used to crossing state borders on a regular basis to find additional ways to survive. These borders were legal as well as administrative borders delimiting taxation and economic systems. Here we must emphasize, on the one hand, the resistance of individuals and communities to the authorities and, on the other, the behaviors of adjustment and adaptation that the population engaged in to survive. Finally, it should also be stressed that the peasant trade represented one of the main motivations behind many of the Slovenian peasant revolts (Gestrin, 1973a, 45 –67; Gestrin, 1973b, 207–218).

During the 16th century, the Venetians were plunged into a deep crisis due to a shift in global trade to the coasts of Western Europe. The wars with the Turks and the Habsburgs had also exhausted Venice, and the Habsburgs had been actively supporting their Adriatic port city of Trieste in order to boost trade with the hinterland. Thus trade with Venetian towns in Istria began to decline, this during a time when between three hundred and one thousand Carniolan peasant merchants came to Koper, Piran, and Muggia every day. Taxes on all goods were constantly increasing, and the goods traded were essential for survival. As a consequence, an overland smuggling industry developed and assumed greater proportions. During the final centuries of the Venetian Republic, not only peasants, but the bourgeoisie, actively engaged in this industry (Darovec, 2004, 175–231).

From the 13th century to the end of the 18th century, trade and economic activities expanded between northwest Istria and Koper and the wider hinterland area (the territory of present-day Slovenia). Already in the second half of the 15th and 16th century, Koper had become the most important trading town in Istria. Trade especially flourished with Carniola and other Austrian provinces.

During the 16th century, Slovenian and Croatian lands established strong economic ties with each other, and were included in the trade network that occupied the wider region. This trade network was especially important because it joined the Adriatic and Mediterranean coastal areas with the region around the Danube. At that time, the main

trade direction in these countries ran from east to west, connecting the Hungarian and Croatian territories, via Slovenia and the Adriatic Sea to Italy, and to other parts of the Mediterranean. The centers of this long-distance trade that linked the east with Italian lands included cities located in the territory of present-day Slovenia – Ptuj, Ljubljana, Koper – and other cities such as Villach and Trieste. Goods exchanged on these trade routes were largely similar to goods exchanged on other international trade routes. However, merchandise travelling from east to west was completely different from that travelling in the opposite direction. Large quantities of agricultural products and goods, especially livestock, meat, hides, various raw materials and metals, steel products, and artisanal products were transported to the west, while Mediterranean agricultural products, wine, olive oil, fish, and salt and, artisanal products, and Levantine and Venetian goods were transported to the east (Gestrin, 1973b, 207–208).

In the century of the great peasant revolts in Slovenia and Croatia, financial relationships among the feudal lords strengthened because of the important role of the trade described above. On the one hand, all of this was reflected in changes in the feudal rents and the structure of the seigniory; these changes can be traced to the efforts of feudal lords to get out of the crisis related to seigniory. On the other hand, they were also reflected – despite the medieval concept of the social division of labor – in the increasing growth of so-called rural trade; that is, the engagement of feudal nobles and serfs in trade and bargaining activities. At the same time, the difference between towns and villages was increasing – even in the peasant trade itself. In addition to surpluses of agricultural and artisanal products, the salt trade had always played an important role in this commercial activity, especially the sea salt trade on Slovenian territory carried out by peasant traders.

Rural and peasant trade in particular definitely had a decisive impact on the escalation of social conflicts and also on the climactic events of this period: the peasant revolts. In this respect, the Slovenian peasant revolts, such as the famous Friulian peasant revolt from the 1511, which has been described in several historical accounts (Bianco, 1995; Muir, 1998), were slightly different from other revolts (for contraband cf. Bianco, 1990).

Just like professional middle-class trade, peasant trade also had to adhere to the traffic and toll regimes. In addition, taxes imposed by both the Venetian and Austrian authorities had to be paid on items for consumption. These taxes along with state fiscal policies related to transportation fees and trade, the result of pressure from the feudal lords, especially the *Landstände* nobility, became increasingly onerous for the peasants. Peasants had to pay the old as well as the new and higher charges. They also had to follow the regime of compulsory trade routes and the operating rules of the tollhouses. Although Turkish invasions and conquests on Slovenian and Croatian territory did not significantly affect the direction of trade, they undoubtedly had a powerful impact on the first major peasant revolts on the Slovenian territory. In order to finance the defense of their lands against the Turks, the nobility imposed higher taxes. But when the Turks first entered Carinthia in 1473, for example, the nobility did not provide for the defense of the peasant's holdings. Further invasions led to the first Slovenian major

Fig. 8: Martin Krpan meets the border officers (community support). Illustration by Tone Kralj.

peasant revolt in 1478, involving almost the entire territory of Slovenian Carinthia. The second and largest Slovenian peasant revolt took place in 1515 and covered a territory of twenty-five thousand square kilometers, involving around eighty thousand rebels at its peak, and lasting for nearly a year with preparations alone taking six months. This was chiefly influenced by Austria's war with Venice (the first war between Venice and the Habsburgs in 1508–16) and the obstruction of the peasant trade by feudal lords and townships, including the introduction of tolls and mandatory trade routes, etc. More than sixty castles were attacked. In 1515, prior to the armed revolt, an association of peasants demanded that decisions about regional taxes be made by the peasants rather than the *Landstände* nobility. The peasant association brought together peasants, rural artisans, and miners. It even exercised the right (for a couple of months) to make decisions on some conquered estates regarding taxes and their collection, the higher and lower judiciary, and to choose which priests would be appointed to certain parishes. During this time, the association also organized its own army. From this period, we find historical data about the more or less successful organization of so-called peasant armies or *černida*, first formed to defend against the Turks. They were also present, at least on the Venetian side, in the above-mentioned Venetian-Habsburg war (Vilfan, 1954, 24–29).

Fig. 9: Krpan with his ailing wife who dies before the main story indicating the outlaw hero's moral guidelines to treat women and the poor with the utmost courtesy. Illustration by Tone Kralj.

Peasants had a strong dislike of the new policies and their promoters. Tolls imposed by feudal lords and other rulers of the land represented a major obstacle to the peasant trade. As a consequence of this and the growing importance of the peasant trade as a source of income for the serfs, smuggling increased. The movement of contraband became a socially acceptable activity: a profession, a necessity, a means of survival, and a modus vivendi passed down from generation to generation. Smuggling became a ritual with the dimensions of social determinism. In this sense, smugglers could be described as social rebels – as defined by Hobsbawm – and were perceived as heroes in their community. These outlaws were celebrated because they were seen, rightly or wrongly, to embody a spirit of defiance and protest. They symbolized the opposition of the poor and dispossessed to those perceived to be their oppressors. The criminality of the outlaw hero has a definite political dimension, even when it was crudely formed and poorly articulated – except in folklore. Even if the outlaw heroes did not themselves espouse political views or goals, their activities were viewed in that light by their own and other communities who perceived the outlaw's individual rebellion as symbolic of their own desires, and as a vicarious blow against their oppressors (Seal, 1996, 197). According to Hobsbawm, social rebellion is either a result of the conflict between

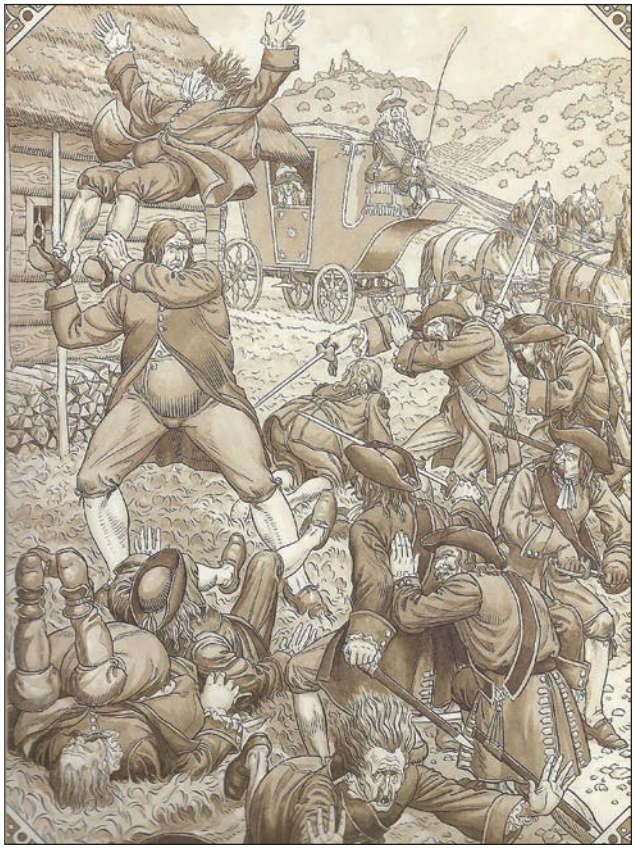

Fig. 10: Krpan chases away the border officers. Illustration by Hinko Smrekar (Levstik, 1917).

traditional and modern culture, or between domestic and foreign culture. It may also emerge from the transformation of the means of production or of the social organization (Hobsbawm, 1981, 23–24).

In Slovenian lands, the authorities were almost powerless in the fight against increased smuggling activities. Nothing seemed to help: not tollhouses, new ways of collecting tolls, a revamped system of certificates about the payment of tolls, stricter supervision, or rewards offered to those who captured smugglers or reported them. The armed servants working at the bigger and more important tollhouses during the 16th century, whose responsibility was to secure commercial traffic and prevent smuggling, did not generally succeed. The numerous decrees issued by the authorities to different offices and the land seigniory in order to prevent the serfs from smuggling contraband, which harmed the Chamber, also did not help. This form of smuggling could be dan-

gerous because peasants who carried contraband goods exposed themselves to the risk of not only losing what they carried, but also paying heavy fines. With the introduction of armed servants at the tollhouses, the peasants were also exposed to the risk of armed encounters. Blood was spilled in the conflicts and fatalities sometimes occurred. In his study, Sergij Vilfan provided an interpretation based on historical sources of the creation of the character of Martin Krpan and its hold on the collective imagination. The event he refers in this interpretation to took place in 1610 in the main square in Postojna. Infuriated locals killed some border guards with whom peasant traders in the area from Trieste to Postojna had been having regular conflicts. After they killed the guards, the locals stripped them naked and saw that they were circumcised, indicating that they were Muslims or Turks, as quoted in the source. The guards worked for the lord of Socerb Castle, which controlled the trade routes to the Habsburg city of Trieste, and particularly the illegal trade in salt. They were constantly venting their anger (often unjustifiably) on peasant traders with whom they had numerous conflicts. The most famous incidents were two conflicts during the same year – one occurring in Hrušica in the area of Brkini and the other in Postojna (Vilfan, 1962, 3–4).

Peasant trade and its growth gradually increased the economic power of a significant part of the rural population, and this part of the population played an important role in the peasant revolts. This was clear from the gathering of peasants in the town of Konjice during the Slovenian peasant revolt of 1515. In 1573, during the Croatian-Slovenian revolt, many rebel leaders originated from this segment of the serf population (Gestrin, 1973a, 3). Indeed, judging from the timing of these events, an argument might be made that the revolts during this period broke out each time the income from trade and other non-agricultural activities was threatened or dropped, causing the serfs to bear the financial burdens and pressure of their feudal condition with greater difficulty.

V.

This combination of these circumstances that marked the Slovenian collective memory – the peasant trade both legal and illegal, the peasant revolts, and the constant Turkish threat (reaching all the way to Vienna which was besieged by the Turks in 1529 and 1683) – can be traced through Slovenian folk literature, and indeed represents the historical and literary foundations for the tale of Martin Krpan. In his literary program, Levstik wrote that there are "... many fairy tales [circulating among the people] about war refugees roaming the hills and woods. Even today, the whole of our country is still telling how young men were once hunted down and forced to join the army. The bandits and the tenth brothers[36] are national property, although nobody likes them, especially not the former." The Reformation when biblical texts were translated into national vernacular languages also provides historical context. In the middle of the 16th century, the

36 Folk wisdom in Slovenia held that the tenth child brought bad luck. Therefore, these children had to leave home and find a job. *Rokovnjači* [The Bandits] and *Deseti Brat* [The Tenth Brother] are two novels by the Slovenian writer Josip Jurčič.

first books were published in the Slovenian language. Levstik emphasizes that it was during this period that "Slovenians behaved with more independence than they ever had before. Indeed, our most beautiful folk songs originate from this period." He adds: "But the entire history of these times still resides in the whole. There is a lot of work to be done, but no one is there to do it." Therefore, it is time "to draw inspiration from our people more than ever before. There is enough substance in the people, especially for humorous writing..." Levstik's insisted that the hero of his story "should be based on an important local person," revealing that the choice of the central protagonist in the story was certainly intentional (Kmecl, 2004, 151–152).

Therefore, as Vilfan concludes, the foundation of the story of Martin Krpan is the centuries-old economic activity that contributed to the stronger economic connection of the lands "from which the Slovenian national consciousness emerged as the basis for the formation of Slovenian statehood. What's more: wherever salt traders went, they connected the places in which the Slovenian language lived. In these politically fractured lands, the salt traders were the ones that helped people to get to know each other and develop a consciousness of a language community." At the same time, he speculates: "That being the case, was Martin Krpan a representative of the older economic foundations that influenced the formation of the Slovenian national entity?" (Vilfan, 1962, 10). In Levstik's times, haulers – so-called *furmani* – embodied one of the most important service activities of the peasant population.

Levstik's tale, replete with symbolism and metaphors, would not have possessed the qualities that elevated it to the level of a national myth if it had not, in its analysis and subsequent artistic creation, insightfully captured the national spirit, collective memory, and imagination of the period. If we read this work from a "historical" perspective, it does more than merely reflect the historical facts. More than anything, it reveals the socio-political "atmosphere" and the collective consciousness of the Slovenian peasant who did not identify with the nobility, even if they were the rare apostates such as Robin Hood and Prince Marko, but did identify with a one of their own,[37] a peasant who possesses a sort of supernatural power in his physical strength complemented by slyness and ingenuity. Levstik draws on rural notions and moral standards in his depiction of Krpan's adventures, as well as on the characteristics of the court in Vienna, and the contrasting world of peasants and lords (Tomaževič, 1958, 60). Identification with the peasant-smuggler who represents the position of a rebel against the authorities/state per se[38] is a well-established tradition among the peasant class who used to elevate such figures to the level of local heroes.

37 Levstik sees the foundation of the Slovenian nation in the peasant and his language, because – as he writes in his program – "the treasure of Slovenian language still lies in the peasants and the people outside the city." Therefore, his main advice to writers was to learn the language "where you find its true source, that is from the peasant's mouth..." (Paternu, 1978, 247).

38 In the Tolmin area, people still equate contrabandists with rebels (see adapted folk songs in the dialect: Bakalina Žbrejnkl, Čadrg Records, Tolmin, 2013, http://www.macefizelj.si/bakalina/bakalina-zbrejnkl.html). The memory of the Tolmin revolt from 1713 is present in the local folk tradition.

Levstik also included in his story – which, although based on folk motifs, was still shaped according to the thematic, formal, and genre guidelines of the time – the distinctive features of a number of Slovenian folk songs and tales: specifically, the most famous Slovenian heroic folk song of that period, Pegam and Lambergar,[39] and several other local folk tales about King Matjaž, Peter Klepec, angry Kljukec, (Stanonik, 2009, 293–298) and the smuggler Štempihar from Upper Carniola, a real person from the late 18th century who was tried in a court in Vienna.[40] Levstik also was well acquainted with Vuk Karadžić's collection of epic poetry. The comparison with Serbian epic poetry is therefore appropriate (for example, Prince Marko and Musa Kesedžija the Outlaw or Prince Marko and the Arab), [41] as well as with similar work from other countries.[42] The central event of Krpan's duel with Brdavs thus establishes the *antemurale* myth.[43]

The central event in *Martin Krpan* – the duel – not only suggests a comparison with Hobsbawm's righteous rebel-avenger (Hobsbawm, 1981, 58–69), but also allows Krpan to ultimately demand the same rights as the nobles; as he

39 This tale was produced by the Habsburgs in the mid-15th century after their victory over the powerful Celje Counts, who had previously ruled roughly half of what is today Slovenian territory and much of Croatia (Gruden, 1910, 370–371). The Slovenian coat of arms is composed of Mount Triglav, the sea, and three gold six-pointed stars that form a triangle and symbolize democracy. The stars are taken from the coat of arms of the Celje Counts.

40 The comparison of Krpan with the historical French salt smuggler Mandrin from the second half of the 18th century who appeared in numerous interpretations in the 18th and 19th centuries, is an obvious one. Cf. Lusebrink, 1979, 345–364; Fonvieille, 1995.

41 The influence of and comparison with the *Kanjoš Macedonović* by the Montenegrin writer Stefan Mitrov Ljubiša (1824–1878), also a work that awoke a nation, is interesting. *Kanjoš Macedonović* was written in 1870 and contains some of Levstik's motifs. But Macedonović, the legendary hero from Budva, who, despite his small stature, fought against the giant Furlan, an enemy of the Doge of Venice, did not evolve into an independent national symbol because he fought for the position and glorification of the local Paštrović nobility which embodied the nation (Pogačnik, 1977, 161–171; Premović, 2021). Slovenian giant Krpan could also be compared with the Istrian Veli Jože who expressed (national) opposition to the Venetian (Italian) authorities, and with the Russian Ilya Muromets, in whose story we also encounter armed conflict for the defense of Christianity; Trobič, 2005, 125–127. On the influence of the story of the biblical giant St. Christopher among Slovenians cf. Divjak, 2015, 591–630.

42 The area of South Eastern Europe is also interesting because of the Muslim enclaves in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A collection of their songs was published by Hörman (1889). One of the central protagonists in the songs is Mujo Hrnjica, also the strongest man in the world, who could only be harmed by a golden bullet. This is what he once confided to "his brother in milk" – they were both born prematurely and kept alive by forest fairies – and his brother then betrayed him and murdered him with a golden bullet. This story is undoubtedly a reflection of the policy of almost all European state authorities of that era, as they encouraged and rewarded betrayal among bandits. Cf. Povolo, 2015, 224–227.

43 The general characteristic of the *antemurale* myth is formed in the structure of the collective memory, especially on the basis of ideas that "this 'wall' throughout history has been assailed time and again by the dark forces of the other side, the group has been chosen by divine providence to sacrifice itself in order to save the larger civilization of which it is a part." (Kolstø, 2005, 20)

Fig. 11: Prince Marko and Musa Kesedžija, painting by Vladislav Titelbah (1900). Musa Kesedžija is on the left (Wikimedia Commons).

fought a (noble) duel and won.[44] He was given the latitude to choose his weapon and his horse, and ultimately competed ably with the court nobles, besting them, because of his shrewd, roguish, and proud character. The derisive quality of the court, in which the Emperor is depicted as good and righteous, while the others are envious intriguers, draws inspiration partly from some of Hans Christen Andersen's fairy tales, humorous and comic stories with satirical elements related to the current perception of society,[45] and partly from the peasant rebels of the 16th century who had faith in the good ruler, an attitude reflected in the

44 As far as the duel is concerned, Levstik also "hit the nail on the head". The tradition of duels in the Austrian empire, including the majority of present-day Slovenian territory, was still present during the 19th century. Albert Wiesinger, an expert on 19th century Austria, estimates that around 2,500 duels were fought in Austria between 1800 and 1893. The culture of duels expanded especially into the student population who formed the foundation of the Slovenian intellectual class and also the basis of the Slovenian bourgeoisie that was in the process of formation. For duels on Slovenian territory (cf. Cvirn, 1994, 33–43; Studen, 2000, 305–314); in an international context Billacois, 1990; Carroll, 2007, 27–35.

45 Janko Kos clearly demonstrated the impact of Andersen's fairy tales on Levstik's story, especially the Anderson tale *The Swineherd* (1841) in which he derided courtiers and also depicted the profanation process of the secular authority of the time (Kos, 1982). In his study Orel (1931) pointed out some interesting symbolic interpretations. He not only highlighted the Štempihar anecdote and situated salt smuggling in the context of Greek mythology, but also pointed out Levstik's preconceived and conscious move away from the stereotypical fairy-tale endings.

Slovenian folk tales about King Matjaž.[46] The events that take place at the court in Vienna represent an original feature of Levstik's work in comparison with Slovenian and Serbian literature. While the folk literature of these traditions offer many examples of the motif of the folk hero (e.g. the fight with the giant, the payment for the victory), no comparisons can be found for the motifs of and scenes in the court, especially those that set the hero in a comical, satirical, or ironic context (Kos, 1982, 259–261). Modern ideas and efforts to demystify authority can be found in these scenes, while at the same time we can observe the establishment of modern Slovenian "court" language. We also detect in these scenes Levstik's broader political vision, most surprisingly perhaps, the notion of gender equality, for example when he places a greeting to all the people from the village of Vrh in the mouth of the Empress – "especially to the mother Mayoress." (Levstik, 1858a, 44)

This section also includes the explicit demand for the demythologisation of the official history of that period: "Krpan answers: 'Listen to me then! I know that my fight with Brdavs is worth the name. Who knows? Perhaps some minstrels will even compose tales and songs that will tell this story when neither you nor I nor our bones reside in the earth, unless Magister[47] Gregor orders them to write something else in the books.'" (Levstik, 1858a, 54–56)

The character of Krpan is meant to portray the ideal image of the Slovenian peasant as "an unusually free man; absolutely confident, even when it comes to the most delicate moments and situations," a peasant who feels equal to the Emperor, just like "a branch is similar to any other branch." Beneath Krpan's rough peasant exterior lays a flexible spirit –free, proud, indomitable. He is "the first hero in Slovenian literature who is completely free; it would be difficult to find anyone similar to him." (Paternu,

46 The emergence of the character of King Matjaž in the area of what is today Slovenia was in part the consequence of the fact that Slovenians never had their own ruler, neither territorial not ethnic. It was therefore necessary for the community to create its own imaginary ruler. The common characteristics of the tradition related to King Matjaž are to show respect for the king, to glorify his kindness and justice, and to create an idealized image of a feudal ruler who is even willing to punish the lords in order to protect the serfs. Until the 16th century, King Matjaž was the most important character in the Slovenian folk tradition. His character is used in many fairy tales, stories, ballads, and songs, some of them with fairly specific structure and motifs when compared to the traditions of other nations (cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_Matja%C5%BE). Hobsbawm describes the phenomena of imaginary rulers as "the norm of human life dream of a world" that is "a world of equality, brotherhood, and freedom, a totally new world without evil. Rarely is this more than a dream. Rarely is it more than an apocalyptic expectation, though in many societies the millennial dream persists, the Just Emperor will one day appear … and all will be changed and perfect." (Hobsbawm, 1981, 27–28) In this respect, it would be very interesting to study the character of King Matjaž in light of the contention of Slovenian historians and ethnographers who believe that he is the Hungarian King Matija Korvin. But would people choose a real king for their immortal hero, especially when that real king had vandalized their properties during his numerous military marches in a number of feuds and imposed 85% taxes on his serfs to finance his luxurious life? It seems unlikely. In any case, the roots of the legend about King Matjaž are much older than those of the real King Matija Korvin.

47 At this point Levstik is playing with words: there is Minister Gregor, who is the anti-hero of the tale, but in this context the author uses the word "Magister" to label him a sorcerer.

Fig. 12: Krpan presents Brdavs's head at court. Illustration by Tone Kralj.

1978, 239). Though Krpan is pious, he is also an individualist as befits a modern liberal man, embodying the motif of the protest of the man in the street against the authority of the seigniors, and also symbolizing the emerging Slovenian nation.

In the section that deals with payment for Krpan's heroism, Levstik bravely demonstrates a genuine mythic "shifting of codes" in order to "deconstruct" the myth or tale. First, Krpan is offered the Princess as his wife as a reward;[48] this represents the mythical solution. When Krpan rejects this offer, his is offered material resources – i.e. a wage; this represents the capitalist solution. Finally, he is offered the role of court jester, which might

48 When he cut down the linden tree, Krpan was in essence refusing in advance a marriage with the Princess, offered to him as a reward for the salvation of the empire. This was the principle source of resentment of the Viennese court towards Krpan. At this point, does it become possible to describe Levstik as a visionary? At the end of World War I in 1918, the famous Slovenian politician Anton Korošec refused the request of the Habsburg Emperor to support trialism in the Habsburg Empire. As a result of this refusal, the Slovenian nation, part of the Yugoslav community until 1991, became a community that was mature enough to have an independent state. However, if we are acquainted with the mentality of the period, we can discern that Levstik made a conscious shift away from the medieval system of dispute settlement that usually ended (following the ideally designed ritual) with marriage. This tradition was very common at the time. Therefore, we may interpret this shift as a demand for the modern rule of law and an independent state judiciary.

Fig. 13: Krpan turns down the Emperor's offer to marry the Princess. Illustration by Tone Kralj.

be interpreted as an expression of Hoffmann's "grotesque". We can only admire Levstik's prescience as these three offers correspond to the three circles of exchange that, according to Lévi-Strauss, establish every possible sociality: the Princess – exchange of women, ham, lambs, etc. – the exchange of goods; court jester – the exchange of words (and, at the same time, *the pursuit of the hero)*. In the end, Krpan chooses payment (*rescue*), in the form of concessions on his trading activities, which corresponds to the proto-capitalist economy that Levstik apparently recommended to Slovenians: the self-fertilization of value in the circle of "money – goods – money multiplied by achievements" (Močnik, 1994, 200). Thus the story ends when Krpan's dream – which on a symbolical level represents the demand for equal political rights as well as the desire for a rule of law and a constitution – comes true. He is given the privilege of free (peasant) trading i.e. the possibility to show his spirit of enterprise and creativity without sanction.[49]

49 The tale was invented during the period of so-called Bach's absolutism. It is only after 1861 that we can speak of constitutional monarchy. Some scholars consider Krpan's return to his native soil, the inability and reluctance to take responsibility (for the fight), a failure. For example, Simoniti, 2003, 316: "Isn't Levstik's Martin Krpan a muscleman who is both obedient to authority but constantly cheating the country, and prefers to retain a passive stance in battle only so he can once again slip back into the world of anonymity and ease?"

Fig. 14: Krpan wins the privilege of free trading. Illustration by Tone Kralj.

Therefore, the value of Levstik's tale lies in its combination of mythical and literary narrative in a functionally connected organism, including the simultaneity of "historical" and "non-historical" elements, the interaction between symbolic and real ambiguities; "it offers the reader the opportunity to identify themselves with the mythical imagination of the archaic folk tale, and to discern the writer's topical idea through symbolic analogies." (Paternu, 1978, 233)

VI.

Levstik wrote the second part of the Martin Krpan tale, but it was not published during his lifetime. Like the first part, the second one emphasizes the analogy of the eternal ingratitude of the Viennese court towards the Slovenian people (*martyrdom*), which had been protecting it for centuries against the Turkish threat. It was the cut-down linden tree that formed the basis for the dispute between the court and Krpan: "And who would have thought that this feud over a linden tree would last forever? Was this tree your God or what?" (Levstik, 1858a, 48)

The refusal of the marriage with the Princess, on the other hand, represented a ritualized foundation for the rejection of peace and an occasion for revenge.[50] Even more important illustrative element in this part of the story is the envious, scheming, and denunciatory role of Krpan's compatriots, living in Vienna, ie. the Empress's chambermaid Ančika (*the traitor*, which is missing in first part), who seeks vengeance because Krpan caught her stealing her neighbor's apples, although she already had enough of her own, and her paramour, Andrej, who obeyed the Empress's (*exposure of the false hero*) orders to follow Krpan, poison him, chain him up, and bring him to the prison in Vienna (*the hero's unrecognized arrival*) where he faces execution (*the assignment of a difficult* task). He is only able to save himself through a spectacular escape (*recognition of the hero*), carried out with the help of the fairytale dwarf king (*a magic helper*). On his way home from the court, Krpan had selflessly helped the dwarf king by giving him the small bag with all the money he had received (*friend of the poor*) as payment for winning the duel with Brdavs. In the end, Krpan also settled his scores with the two traitors and then runs towards freedom "across the city and then onward, following the imperial road out of Vienna" (*transfiguration of the hero*).

Apparently Levstik deliberately decided to never publish the second part of his literary tale about Martin Krpan. It remained in manuscript form until 1931 when it was published in Levstik's collected works edited by Anton Slodnjak (1931).[51] However, in marked contrast to the first part, the second remains largely unknown to the Slovenian public. Why Levstik did not publish both parts of his manuscript about Martin Krpan is a mystery. This enigma offers a range of interpretations and reinterpretations that tend to confirm the author's genius – whether his political satire was an artistic work, an original socio-psychological work, a deliberate literary-political work, or, most likely, a combination of all of these. This is also confirmed by the fact that Levstik perceived the myth in a radically un-mythical way, that is, historically and scientifically, an approach based on Fredrich Wilhelm Schelling's historical perspective on myths. Because of this approach, the content of the story is "independent and indicates its higher meanings more than reveals them, suggests them more than defines them," the reader is relatively free in the process of connecting ideas or "erecting bridges between myth and reality" (Paternu, 1978, 244), which can never be entirely translatable.

Perhaps Levstik considered the second part of the work too fairytale-like, perhaps he decided not to publish because of pressure from censors, or perhaps he was simply pleased with the reception of the first part of the tale. Whatever the reason, we discover that in the second part of the tale Levstik faithfully followed the guidelines of mythic narrative in Lévi-Strauss's myth matrix as well as Hobsbawm and Seal's moral code of the outlaw hero. Furthermore, I also hypothesize, in accordance with the definitions of structuralism, that this action represents a "lack" (comp. Miller, 1968) – the opposite but constitutive part of the structure that guarantees Levstik's outlaw myth "life on after death".

50 Comp. Petkov, 2003, 93–117; Smail & Gibson, 2009; Dean, 1997, 16–17, 29–30; Carroll, 2006, 232–253.
51 A few years ago both parts were published in a special edition (Levstik, 2009).

Fig. 15: Martin Krpan with the cut-down linden tree and the horrified Empress and Princess (conflict continuation). Illustration by Tone Kralj.

Taking this into account, can we may just concur with the opinion of Josip Stritar about Levstik's Krpan,[52] that "isn't this precisely the special gift possessed by devoted men, that they achieve more than they intend to"?

VII.

As discussed, Levstik's entire structure for his Slovenian nation-building literary-political program and his myth about Martin Krpan originates from the historical events of the 15th and 16th centuries: ranging from economic (transportation), social (peasant revolts), to political-historical (defense against the Turks). He combined these elements in the tale of Martin Krpan, with the basics of folklore and the ethno-symbolic cultural heritage of the period. In his literary work, Levstik skillfully conceals the "historical realities". This is typical of myths in which "historical truths" are clad in metaphors and symbolism. In this way, Levstik revealed the path toward the (national) political struggle.

52 Josip Stritar, a contemporary of Levstik's, wrote down this about Krpan in an 1874 letter to Josip Cimperman (Paternu, 1978, 235).

But the "real" mythos that Levstik wanted to create was not only Martin Krpan and his adventures; it was not only the argumentation of historical origin or the vocation of the nation; it was not even the defense of the civilization, the demand for political rights, or mimetic narrative prose (i.e. the ability to create a virtual real world). The "real" mythos was the language. "Language is the only means of expressing literature and literary art in which language is further developed; literature is language's strongest creator, its endless designer." (Kmecl, 2004, 141) Therefore, Levstik wrote the tale of Martin Krpan in order to create a piece of literature derived from his program, in which language would be transformed into the symbolic tool that would shape the Slovenian nation. Thus, language becomes the crucial and central issue of Slovenian sovereignty, because, as Levstik once emphasized: "language is nationality; if you take it away from the people, you take everything from them." (Kmecl, 2004, 14)[53]

In this study, we would be remiss if we did not dedicate some attention to Levstik as a personality, to his character, and especially to the intellectual circle that gathered and worked around him.[54] We also note that Levstik wrote a number of works after the publication of his literary-political program and the tale about Martin Krpan, but they never gained much recognition. Nevertheless, he used them to show the path to literary creation and to master the Slovenian language. He was politically active in liberal circles, and also faced some bitter political defeats. He died lonely, forgotten, and ill. During his life, he held numerous public debates with his peers. He knew how to be tough, stubborn, and contemptuous, with a distinctive and often cynical note; yet he was also a great idealist. He was driven by his belief in the Slovenian language. Prominent representatives of the younger Slovenian intellectuals followed Levstik and actually took steps to put his program into practice. The first among them was Josip Jurčič whose classic Slovenian novel *Deseti brat* (The Tenth Brother) was created with substantial help of Levstik, despite the fact that Jurčič had shifted his focus in his works from the peasant to the middle-class population in response to the development of the Slovenian bourgeoisie. Ivan Cankar (1876–1918), the best-known representative of Slovenian modernism, occupies the peak of this heritage. In his novel *Življenjepis idealista* (*The Idealist's Biography*, 1904), the character, Martin Kačur, described the characteristics of the emerging Slovenian political elite in the second half of the 19th century (one of whose victims was also Levstik) with psychological perspicacity.

In post-revolutionary bourgeois Europe, literary genres, short stories, dramas, tragedies, and novels were considered the *sine qua non* of any national literature; for Levstik they represented the basic conditions of the Slovenian nation. Even subsequent interpretations and presentations of Levstik and his work reveals that both his program and his hero succeeded, perhaps even more than he dreamed they would.

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53 Anderson illustrates the role of language with the following words: "It is always a mistake to treat languages in the way that certain nationalist ideologues treat them – as *emblems* of nationity, such as flags, costumes, folk-dances, and that sort of thing. The most important thing about language is its capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect *particular solidarities*." (Anderson, 1991, 133)

54 Numerous studies have been devoted to this issue, cf. literature in note 3.

Fig. 16: Tone Kralj in the 1930s. In 1954, he created a series of large full--page color illustrations of the story of Martin Krpan (Wikimedia Commons).

Krpan's success among Slovenians was not instant or spontaneous. The story slowly gained popularity, following a clever plan derived from Slovenian literary history and conceived by cultural personalities (Hladnik, 2002, 228–229). Certainly, the story became better known when it was reproduced in a textbook for colleges in 1868. Since then it has been a part of the canon of youth literature (Janežič, 1868, 208–217). It was also reprinted in Levstik's *Zbrani spisi* (Collected Essays) edited by Fran Levec in 1891. In 1917, *Martin Krpan* was published in a children's collection with illustrations by Hinko Smrekar. In the interwar period, the publishing house Mohorjeva družba reprinted it several times. Indeed, *Krpan* was reprinted even during the period of cultural silence between 1941 and 1944. In 1954, the painter, Tone Kralj, illustrated the new jubilee edition of *Martin Krpan* and created a picture book that has been reprinted countless times. Kralj's illustrations of Krpan have lodged themselves into the consciousness of average Slovenian people almost as much as the tale itself – just as befits a myth.

Fig. 17: Fran Levstik around 1865 (Wikimedia Commons).

Myths have always possessed an identificational and constitutive social role, even when it comes to the negative or positive consequences of the actions taken by people who identify themselves with myths. We cannot say that myths are not real or that they are fictional, and thus should be repudiated in some way: myths exist. Their existence makes them real and active. Indeed, they provide an excellent method for historians, anthropologists, and the global interdisciplinary studies about the past and the present to which these academics belong, because they help them to explore cultural memory, imaginaries, mentalities, perceptions, and social relations.

MITOTVORNI GRADNIK SLOVENSKEGA NARODA: FRAN LEVSTIKOV *MARTIN KRPAN*

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POVZETEK

Namen članka je na primeru slovenske umetne pripovedke Frana Levstika Martin Krpan z Vrha *(1858) osvetliti avtorjevo politično agendo, njegov čas in literarno izvedbo stvaritve izvornega slovenskega junaka za potrebe izgradnje naroda, pojav, ki je bil v tedanjem času značilen za skoraj vse oblikujoče se evropske nacije. Analiza tega dela dokumentirano prikaže svojstven fenomen: gre za programsko, zavestno željo po izoblikovanju nacionalnega literarnega lika, ki naj bo podlaga za literarno ustvarjanje in politični (nacionalni) boj. Levstik je bil med prvimi in najvidnejšimi pisci nastajajočih slovenskih intelektualcev v drugi polovici 19. stoletja. Vrednost njegove povesti je v tem, da združuje mitično in literarno pripoved v funkcionalno povezan organizem, saj omogoča sovpadanje »zgodovinskega« in »nezgodovinskega« branja, prepletanje simbolnih in realnih večpomenskosti. Celotno zgradbo za svoj literarno-politični program in za povest o junaku Martinu Krpanu, sicer tihotapcu in s tem v sporu z zakonom, je Levstik črpal iz zgodovinskih dogodkov in kulture spominjanja 15. in 16. stoletja, iz gospodarske (prevozništvo), socialne (kmečki upori) in politične zgodovine (obramba pred Turki), ki jih je prepletal z osnovami tedanje folklorne in etnično-simbolne kulturne dediščine. »Zgodovinske resničnosti«, ki so značilne za mite, in »zgodovinske resnice« je v svojem literarnem delu spretno zakril s pokrivalom metaforike in simbolizma ter tako pokazal pot (nacionalnemu) političnemu boju. A »pravi« mit, ki ga je hotel ustvariti, je bil slovenski jezik. Jezik in z njim povezana kultura sta bila nedvomno bistvena razločevalna in konstitutivna elementa procesa oblikovanja slovenskega naroda in države v primerjavi z »Drugim(i)«.*

Ključne besede: Fran Levstik, Martin Krpan, mitotvorec, junak izobčenec, nacionalni miti, gradniki naroda in države, kultura spominjanja, slovenski jezik, 19. stoletje

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