

Temporal Intertwining in a Slovenian Narrative

DARJA MAZI-LESKOVAR

Affiliation: Management and Law College
Ljubljana, Slovenia

Email: darja.leskovar@guest.um.si

Abstract

This article, based on the assumption that narrativity and temporality are closely related, explores the chronotope of the Slovenian historical tale *Martin Krpan z Vrha* (1858) by Fran Levstik. It focuses on the narrative time, as presented by the epic story, and the time frame in which this narrative was published. Based on the assertion that literary time and place are intrinsically connected, the timeline of this epic text is viewed as a constituent part of the setting, which entails that the geographical location is also highlighted. The analysis of the storyline reveals that the tale presenting three different time frames separated by centuries, when viewed from a historical perspective, displays cohesion and credibility despite the intermingling of two temporal settings. Significantly, the story was published in the aftermath of the Spring of Nations (1848), in which Slovenians demonstrated an increasing awareness of their ethnic identity. Since scrutiny of the author's biography reveals that this text was heavily influenced by time-related issues, my premise is that the narrative time, viewed in the network of connections, can best be elucidated by the concepts of *chronos* and *kairos*. They can foreground the relationship between the narrative period of this patriotic tale and the date of its publication and even highlight the specificity of the time when the protagonist of this became the best known Slovenian national hero.

Keywords: narrative, time, history, chronotope, Kairos, chronos

Introduction

Time has been traditionally considered a primary component of any narrative since any narration and activity in life requires time. Accordingly, the subject of time has been one of the most researched and analyzed concepts in narrative theory. In the 20th century in particular, time has become an increasingly prominent issue in the field of literary critics.

Paul Ricoeur thus stressed in his research that narrative time elucidates “a deeper experience of time” (1980, p. 169). Nowadays narrative time has been seen as being “in many ways truer to human experience than what is conventionally thought of as real time” (Nelson & Spence, 2020, Summary, para. 2). Therefore, the intertwining of timelines in historical fiction appears particularly interesting. The narrative concept of time additionally deserves special attention because it has been, as a rule, viewed in its interplay with the place of the action. The two concepts have even been traditionally defined as the setting. The link between the time and the location of the narrative has remained one of the foci of philosophy and literary criticism until the present day. Among the literary theorists, Mikhail Bakhtin, a scholar who also worked on the philosophy of language, discovered that “an intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships” (Nikolajeva, 1996, p. 32) exists between the parameters of the setting to which he gave the term *chronotope*.

This paper will explore the experience of narrative time that can be uncovered in the *chronotope* of the historical narrative *Martin Krpan z Vrha* (1858), written by a Slovenian writer Fran Levstik. My aim is thus to highlight the network of temporal connections established within the narrative itself and foreground the links between this epic and its specific historical context. I will, therefore, resort to the concepts of *chronos* and *kairos* to elucidate the significance of the timelines, presented in the story about the eponymous main protagonist Martin Krpan. *Chronos* is the invincible ubiquitous present, as it is claimed by François Hartog, a historian whose research deals also with the notion of temporality, in the book *Chronos: l'Occident aux prises avec le temps* (2020). Very similar to its role in the physical world, *chronos* is the time in which life goes on, the time that can neither be grasped nor mastered, the time in which seemingly nothing can really change. *Kairos* is the time when opportunities for changes appear and when people can or even have to choose between options, between the ways to take and the values to defend and fight for. *Kairos* is the precious gift for those who are able to read the signs of times; in other words, it is the time for those who dare change the world. Since *kairos* is the time of heroes, strong individuals, and inspired communities, folk literature and patriotic narrative tend to highlight it.

From the perspective of the first targeted readers, the imaginary time of *Martin Krpan* was created through the fictional interconnectedness of two historical periods: the centuries marked by the invasions of the Ottoman Empire in Central Europe and the long-lasting period of salt trafficking. However, the present analysis of the temporal dynamics of this prose reveals that the text, besides insight into two fused historical times, also offers insight into the epoch in which it was published. Since it is supposed that these three timelines are interconnected because of their significance in the Slovenian cultural history,

the Kairos of the original¹ narrative temporal context of the book, as well as the time of the publication of this book, will be put into the limelight. Given that Martin Krpan became the best-known national hero in the last decades of the 20th century, the notions of chronos and kairos will be furthermore applied to the spirit of the time that heralded the birth of the independent Republic of Slovenia.

The 1990s witnessed the revival of nationalism, the cultural phenomenon that is constantly shaped by the “material and political development on the one hand and the intellectual and political reflection and articulation on the other hand,” as Joep Leerssen claims in his *National Thought in Europe* (2006, p. 14). Since the word nationalism can refer to a whole set of meanings, it needs to be underlined that in the context of the period discussed, the term denotes exclusively “the devotion to one’s nation” (Joep, p. 14), the national aspiration and a policy of national independence that “is built on the belief that a nation has its specific character and that it must be as independent as possible” (Joep, p. 15). In accordance with such a view of nationalism, also called patriotism, recollecting the heroic past was fostered in order to consolidate the national community of the modern Slovenian state. The need to help Slovenians see themselves “as sharing a similar sense of time” (Peters, 2014, p. 111) was encouraged by stressing the importance of cultural repository—including the patriotic literature of previous literary periods. This way, ‘presentism,’ the term used by Hartog to denote the state of despair that arises from the hopeless walk in the darkness, was avoided. History was regarded as *magistra vitae*, illuminating the path to the future. In such a framework, patriotic historical fiction was considered a source for stimulating curiosity about the ancestral past, for rethinking where the nation stood vis-a-vis its cultural memory and the historical facts and events that paved the way for sovereignty and independence. Patriotic narratives were seen not only as works of literature glorifying the moments of chronos that carried the seeds of Kairos coming to blossom in the unforeseeable future but also as repositories inviting mindfulness and vigilance, as well as gratitude for the present moment.

Martin Krpan: A Narrative Transcending Boundaries

The Slovenian historical narrative *Martin Krpan z Vrha* was published in 1858 as a book for adults, but has crossed the boundaries between a competent adult reading audience and texts addressing children² and less demanding readers. Today it has the status of a dual readership text because it functions as a text that can answer the expectations of readers of all ages.

¹ The first targeted readers, Levstik was primarily aiming at his 19th-century compatriots whose mother tongue was Slovenian.

² In accordance with UNICEF guidelines, in literary criticism the term ‘child’ is generally used to denote a minor who is younger than 18.

As a picturebook, the narrative has been read by children and studied at school. The literary text crossed genres in 1917 when it was first published with illustrations, created by Hinko Smrekar.³ The artist's distinctive contribution added essential information to the understanding of the verbal text because it provided answers to a few seemingly missing textual clues.⁴ With this illustration, the invincible foreign knight became a Turk. Smrekar's enrichment of the verbal text was highly appreciated by the professional and lay public, and accordingly, the following editions aiming at the general public, as a rule, were illustrated. Regardless of their variety in style, they all keep to the interpretations offered by the first illustrator. Thus, they consolidate the traditional understanding of the text that has become canonical due to its literary qualities and cultural and social significance. Today this book about Martin Krpan, who came from Vrha in Inner Carniola, ranks among the most frequently illustrated Slovenian books.⁵

It also needs underlining that *Martin Krpan z Vrha* is one of those 19th-century books that have repeatedly been translated. Even though the text can be read only in nineteen languages, the number of translations has become much larger as it has been retranslated several times into various languages.⁶ Among these languages, rank English and the languages of neighboring countries. *Martin Krpan*, however, crosses not only language and cultural frontiers but, with its theme, plot and chronotope traverses across periods and regions.

Crossing linguistic and cultural frontiers was also a recurrent feature of Fran Levstik (1831–1887). Born to Slovenian parents not far from Ljubljana, he studied in Olomouc (Moravia) and Vienna/Dunaj.⁷ He was a poet and playwright and also a literary critic and a linguist. In all the locations where he spent his working life, from Dunaj/Vienna, Celovec/Klagenfurt to Trst/Triest, he was heavily engaged in the cultural life of Slovenians within the Habsburg Monarchy. At the same time, he was actively involved in the political movement, fostering what we call today 'national political and cultural rights,' aspiring to raise national awareness among his compatriots. A fighter for the new ways and ideas, Levstik was, however, also able to envisage the marriage between the period that was forthcoming and the cultural tradition based on the collective memory of Slovenians. One of his aims was to encourage the expression of national identity through literature,

³ Hinko Smrekar (1883–1942), a renowned Slovenian caricaturist who worked also as a graphic artist and illustrator.

⁴ This picturebook ranks among those where the word and the image complement each other (Nikolajeva & Scott 2006).

⁵ In this context it is worth mentioning the illustrations of Tone Kralj (1900–1975) because they have been chosen for several translations of *Martin Krpan*.

⁶ The most recent retranslation into Spanish was published in 2017 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

⁷ Names of places related to Slovenian cultural history are given in the Slovenian traditional form as well.

which was also the goal of many 19th-century authors in Central European countries. At the same time, he intended to offer contemporary Slovenian writers a model of an original tale based on national folklore and tradition to help them stop using foreign literary models, displaying foreign customs and unfamiliar ways of life. Not only do these two aims echo the ambitions of Slovenian intellectuals—who, filled with new and positive views regarding national issues within the Austrian Monarchy, understood the spirit of the age—but also mirror the expectations of the growing numbers of Slovenians from all walks of life who were increasingly conscious of the potential of their culture and national lore. This narrative was thus a response to the socio-political changes of the time. Today it is generally referred to as *Martin Krpan*, and the short form of the title will be used also in the current context.

The narrative was first published in a Slovenian journal in Celovec/Klagenfurt in 1858. The narrative exploits the traditional theme of a fight between a brave and intelligent stalwart from among the ordinary people and a violent intruder or at least a hostile figure of foreign origin. Martin Krpan defeats a Turk, threatening the Habsburg Court. Complying with the spirit of the era, the winner is loyal to the crown and demonstrates fairness and diplomacy but also self-confidence and pride in his tradition and Slovenian values (Jazbec, 2014, pp. 110–118). Cultural history proves that in the transition period of the mid 19th century, such attitudes were considered appropriate among the political leaders and the intellectual elite of the 'awakened' nations within the Monarchy (Štih et al., 2016) as well as among the general public. The story thus reflects the patriotic feelings of targeted Slovenian readers.

However, early translations confirm that this narrative also fulfilled the expectations of readers of other European cultures and traditions that were facing great social changes. The translations in other languages are a clear recognition of the way in which the author captured the spirit of the time, since Slovenian literature has often been seen as non-central,⁸ and has traditionally been considered for translation less frequently than some other literatures.

Chronotope from the Perspective of the Plot

The configuration in place and time of the narrative plays a significant role in *Martin Krpan*. Not only does it frame the story but also provides its *raison d'être*. Therefore, in order to highlight the relationship between the plot of this historical tale and its setting,

⁸ Division of languages according to the taxonomy of Johan Heilbron and Pascale Casanova is explained in Mona Baker's (Ed.) *Critical Readings in Translation Studies* (2010).

it seems reasonable to resort to the notion of the Chronotope, introduced in the literary theory by Mikhail Bakhtin. He not only confirmed that the temporal dynamics and the realities of the locations are connected, but he claimed that the connectedness between the temporal and spatial relationships is intrinsic in all literary texts (Bemong et al., 2010, p. 3). Therefore, he coined a new literary term which reflects this connectedness. This new literary concept thus refers to the invisible unity of time (chronos) and space (topos).

In *Martin Krpan* the interdependence between temporal and spatial relations is created by the interplay between the broad geographical location extending from the Adriatic Sea to Vienna and between three temporal frames—a contemporary one for the then targeted readers—and two time-lines related to the past also for the 19th century reading audience. The story highlights the locality of Inner Carniola—then part of Inner Austria—with its Karstic region, and it is not easy to tell if any of the three timelines is given greater emphasis or not.

The intertwining of the temporal and spatial determinants of the action is indicated from the beginning of the narrative. The fictional narrator promises the author to tell a story about the life of his countryman Krpan who lived in his region, in Notranjska/Inner Carniola.

Martin Krpan, being of extraordinary strength and exceptional wit, made his living by smuggling English salt. As this was strictly prohibited, he became an object of suspicion to the authorities. On one occasion, he accidentally met the imperial carriage and, with his strength, impressed the Emperor so much that when a brutal warrior threatened the Court, the Monarch summoned him to come to Vienna. Krpan was expected to behead the killer. He accepted the challenge, applied an unexpected fighting strategy, and was successful. Vienna was liberated and the whole Court with it. The Slovenian hero who saved the entire country was hailed by the citizens of the Imperial capital and honored by the Monarch. However, he had to face the opposition of the Empress and the minister who kept the keys to the Emperor's treasury. They have both tried to diminish the importance of his heroic act, so Martin Krpan, aware of his status, addresses the Emperor, saying:

I've heard in church that every labourer is worthy of his hire. If you so will it, then give me a letter that will be valid before every church and land authority, and set your seal upon it, saying that I'm free to peddle English salt. (Levstik, 2004)

The Monarch was willing to fulfill the hero's wish. Krpan, a Slovenian hero from Vrhnica in Notranjska, won another battle: he obtained the official permit to peddle salt without restrictions from Trieste/Triest, to Vrhnica, Ljubljana, or Reka/Rijeka and further to the north and the south.

The temporal context of the author has thus made a simple man of the people a victor. Krpan is the winner at the Court, at the very heart of the Empire. From now on he will no more be obliged to be on guard to outwit the gendarmes pursuing him on his trading routes between Trst, Koper, Reka, and Ljubljana. He will be able to trade freely in a region stretching from the coast to the rest of the Slovenian Lands and even elsewhere in Inner Austria because he has become 'an absolute winner' in two battles. In the first, force and intelligence won over brutality and cruelty; he protected his Emperor, his homeland, and his culture from the Osman invader. In the second, wit and the skill of communication are celebrated instead of arrogance and overwhelming superiority. In the spirit of the post-1848 times, he has become much more self-confident, and does not hesitate to tell and show that he is aware of who needs whom. When it comes to proving his right, he does not spare the sharing of ethical truths or proverbs, well-known among Slovenians. He even dares to indulge in criticism and negative remarks while remaining loyal to his Emperor. Martin Krpan has thus become a herald of new times.

Accordingly, the impact of the times when this narrative was written and published becomes particularly evident at the end of this historical tale. The author introduced a narrator applying a well-known narrative pattern with which he announced the complexity of the chronotope and, supposedly, its focus on the past. Thus, he managed not to marginalize his period, the 19th-century, not even when Martin Krpan—who is said to have lived long, long ago—steps into the limelight. Still more, while the story is evolving, the targeted reader's own time is increasingly noticeable. It becomes salient on two levels. The first is related to the picture of the urbanization of Vienna/Dunaj, a city with high buildings and innumerable streets, where the protagonist feels entirely lost. The second is to the atmosphere of the narrative distinctly marked by the 19th-century *Zeitgeist* manifested through the attitudes of the central character toward his national identity, his cultural background, and his compatriots, as well as towards the Monarch and the gentlemen of the Court. The text, written in the post-revolutionary period, thus vividly conveys the spirit of the author's own society that found itself at the threshold of an era announcing the spirit of a newly evolving social paradigm.

The other two time-lines are also powerfully rendered through a successful fictionalization of the theme. They represent the temporal framework due to which *Martin Krpan* has been ranked historical fiction from the date of publication onwards. Since both of them had to be set in a past that had been anchored into the national collective memory, Levstik resorted to the epoch of the invasions of the Ottoman Empire on European soil and to the time of the Napoleonic Wars.

For the 19th-century-Slovenian target readers, the raids of the Turks on the Habsburg Empire were part of history stored in the cultural memory, and trafficking in salt was a tradition that was still alive in some parts of Slovenian lands. (Kurlansky, 2003, p. 232)

Something completely different, though, must have been the attitude to the Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815) and the establishment of the Illyrian Provinces. They would certainly be well remembered by the older section of the population. Despite the two historical periods being divided by centuries, Levstik blended the two timelines through an intense fictionalization of all literary elements. The imaginary time thus created does not compromise the cohesion of the story. Based on historical facts and cultural memory and, obviously, on the author's ingenuity, the narrative displays its own logic and thus gains credibility.

The Chronotope in the Light of Chronos and Kairos

The presentation of the relationship between chronotope and plot has uncovered that the dynamics between these two constituent literary elements of the narrative derive from the interplay between the storyline and the setting, represented by three temporal layers and several places of action. Since this correlation is pivotal for the understanding of *Martin Krpan*, it needs to be underlined that the chronotope displays a balanced structure even though the temporal framework is in focus. To prove this both constituents of the chronotope are analyzed prior to highlighting the aspects of kairos that can be uncovered in the time frames discussed in this narrative.

A distinctive feature of the narrative place of action is that it is based on the geographical reality easily detected on the map. The territory in question is delimited by Vienna, situated at the north-east, and Trieste at its south-western part. The two cities⁹ once had a special status in the Habsburg Monarchy: Trieste, as what was then the only Austrian Mediterranean port, and Vienna as the centre of the Empire. However, even though Trieste was a Habsburg port, debate is ongoing whether this was really the port from which smugglers carried English salt. According to sociologist and social anthropologist Bojan Baskar (2008), it is difficult to decide whether Krpan's salt came from the Venetian coast—today's port of Koper in the Republic of Slovenia—or from the Habsburg port of Trieste—today in the Republic of Italy. Since Venice is not mentioned in the text, the supposition that the port was Trieste will prevail in this present context. The narrative brings more information about Vienna, where the story has its climax and denouement.

⁹ According to literary geography, Vienna and Trieste are strongly associated with several other writers, not only with Fran Levstik.

The capital, with its architecture and nobility is presented in its splendour and luxury on the one hand; and in its vulnerability and despair on the other. The first images of the center of the Empire are gloomy: “the whole city is draped in black and the people are scuttling around like ants whose nest is on fire” (Levstik, 2004). However, when Krpan comes to the court, which is said to be “terribly grand and beautiful” and where guards stand “outside the doors night and day, summer and winter, however fierce the cold,” he is taken to the upper quarters “which are finer even than a church.” He can only “stare, struck by how grand” everything is. However, when he has a look at the armoury, he must realize that the arms there are useless. He has to make his own weapons, and he cannot use the horses from the Court stables as they are not strong enough. Consequently, he has to send for his own mare. Thus, the huge and splendid court is revealed to be unable to provide what is needed for the fight with the invader. Later in the story a deeper and more dangerous weakness is revealed: the Emperor’s authority is not as firm as it might have been expected. His decisions are not accepted without questions; not only do his Treasurer and even his wife criticize them, but they also try to reverse them. Thus, Vienna, the symbol of the Empire, is shown as powerful and powerless at the same time, and the Court as a stage of clashes between the interests of different factions.

However, the Chronotope does not highlight only the capital of the Austrian Empire and the port where Martin Krpan used to buy English salt but also the region of Carniola, in particular, Inner Carniola that connects the litoral with the interior of Central Europe. Physical geography and geology reveal that due to the karstic features of the terrain, the southern part of Inner Carniola offers the lowest passage between the Southern and Central Europe,¹⁰ which makes it a convenient place for transportation. Accordingly, this area has been known for commercial routes connecting Central Europe with the Adriatic. The specific configuration of the terrain is also one of the main reasons why the territory concerned used to be the place of encounters between nations and, even more, between the three great language groups: the Slavonic, Romance and Germanic. Therefore Martin Krpan must have been used to encountering people speaking Italian, Friulian, German and Croatian. Nevertheless, the story clearly relates that he considers this land of international encounters as *his* region, the people living there as *his* compatriots, and the Habsburg ruler *his* Monarch.

Given that the tale of *Martin Krpan* evolves in an area characterized by a variety of geographical and geological features, all of which support the story line, it turns out that the numerous localities within the place of action give the necessary anchors for the story to evolve in different time-lines. Thus, the place of action, as a literary category,

¹⁰ Postojnska vrata/Postojna Gate, also called Adriatic Gate, is a major mountain pass that allows for the lowest crossing between Central Europe and the Mediterranean (609–612 m).

contributes considerably to the sense of unity of the narrative, as it also does to its credibility. In this respect, the toponyms mentioned in the text are of great importance as the names of places such as Vrhnika and Razdrto are not mere fictional inventions but denote real localities that can be found on the map. Thus, it could be speculated that the particular quality of the fictional place of action of this historical narrative is that it can speak not only to experts in geography, but also to a wide circle of readers.

Conversely, it is likely that a few instances related to the temporal aspects of the Chronotope that the book foregrounds may be relatively unknown to a considerable number of prospective 21st-century readers, even though these aspects have had a memorable impact on the larger Central European region. They are deeply embedded in the cultural history of the nations which had to experience similar historical contexts. Among these, in addition to the period around the year 1848, are the historical periods of the invasions of the Ottoman Empire, salt trafficking, and the Napoleonic Wars. These are echoed in *Martin Krpan* because from the point of view of Slovenian cultural history, each of these periods is marked with particular, opportune moments in which Slovenians' actions contributed to the positive changes that brought the whole nation new options.

This is true for the period between the 15th and 16th centuries when Turks were a real scourge for the territory inhabited by Slovenians. It was the time when the forces of the Ottoman Empire systematically raided and plundered the bordering regions of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. These regions presented a kind of shield against the invasions from the Ottoman Empire, protecting the regions closer to the center of the Empire and thus a considerable part of Central Europe. Another fact derived from history was that the regions of Karst and Inner Carniola were among the Slovenian areas that were particularly afflicted by the invasions of the Turks (Voje, 1996). The first raid on the Slovenian territory took place in 1408, and Turks had been present in that area for almost 200 years (Simoniti, 1990). They are remembered for plundering, arson, killing, and hostage-taking. If not massacred, Slovenians were either sold as slaves in the Ottoman Empire or re-educated as janizaries, according to historical accounts. Thus, due to the Turkish invasions, a significant section of the Slovenian rural population was lost.¹¹ Also, the Slovenian chivalry suffered a severe blow and was considerably reduced during the wars waged against the Ottoman Empire. Not surprisingly, Slovenian lands were constantly deteriorating as a result of the effect on both the common people and the nobility. The raids on the Slovenian territory ceased only in 1593, after the Battle of Sisak,

¹¹ From Vasko Simoniti's *Turki so v deželi že* [The Turks are already in the country] and Ignacij Voje's, *Slovenci pod pritiskom turškega nasilja* [Slovenians under the pressure of Turkish terror].

fought between Ottoman Bosnian forces and a combined Christian army from the Holy Roman Empire. The majority of the Christian soldiers came from the Habsburg lands, mainly from the Kingdom of Croatia and Inner Austria, that also included the Duchy of Carniola. The battle resulted in a crushing defeat for the Bosnian Ottoman army. It was the great time of *kairos*, even though sporadic raids from the Ottoman Empire were still taking place on the territory inhabited by Slovenians until 1683, when the Turks suffered their final defeat in the battle of Vienna.

Also, along the centuries, long period of trafficking with salt is well documented by history, revealing that it was a period in which the people who wanted to engage in a risky activity had to recognize "the right time" to realize their plans. Therefore, when trying to establish facts related to the temporal framework of this tale, it needs to be highlighted that from the Middle Ages onwards, there was a struggle for primacy in this part of Europe (Granda, 2008, p. 142). After the disintegration of the Holy Roman Empire in 1808 and the founding of the Habsburg Monarchy, Austria banned its citizens from trading in salt. This commerce was a monopoly of the Crown, and smuggling was one of the responses to this strict legal ban. Despite this, trafficking played a considerable role in the economy of the region that connected the Northern part of the Adriatic sea with Central Europe. Transporting and peddling various types of commodities became an integral part of trading activities, not without the knowledge of the authorities (Baskar, 2008). Therefore, the question may arise as to why, in *Martin Krpan*, the moment when the hero obtains the permit is considered so important. It may suggest that the author intended to call attention to the political context in which this text was published.

In 1858, ten years after the revolutionary events, there was still a pronounced dissatisfaction with the reactions of the Crown towards the attempts of individual nations to solve some of their ethnic ambitions. Therefore, the figure of the treasurer may represent the part of the governance of the Monarchy that was not ready to grant any, new, rights to Slovenians, despite their well-articulated demands. Such a political reality, fictionalized in this narrative, shows that in the middle of the 19th century Slovenians were not mere observers of social changes. Like Martin Krpan, they accepted the challenges of the time, faced the risks, and were often rejected regardless of their loyalty to the Empire. However, when they realized how to achieve their aims, *chronos* acquired the features of *kairos*.

Chronos and *kairos* alternated also in the third period, signified by the narrative timeline of salt trafficking. Its specificity is above all that it overlaps with the period of Turkish invasions and the period around 1848. Accordingly, the analysis of the interplay between *chronos* and *kairos* focuses on the threshold of the 19th century marked by the Napoleonic Wars.

It is also then when the French army occupied a significant part of Slovenian territory. In this area, the economic situation had been rapidly deteriorating due to the raised taxes and the growing needs of the occupying army, while trafficking in salt gained in importance (Baskar, 2008). However, it is a fact that Napoleonic rule embraced years of war and negative repercussions; however, this period was also a short time when a new political order existed. With the creation of the Illyrian provinces (1809–1814), where Ljubljana was the capital, the French administration introduced considerable changes in the area of law and administration. Some of them applied to commerce and trade, but the prohibition against the salt trade was not lifted. Smuggling remained a reality for the inhabitants of Carniola and the new authorities. It is to be noted that the French were overtly welcome by a few intellectuals, adherents of the enlightening movement, who promoted a new spirit of national pride that later fused with the atmosphere of the Spring of Nations.

The spirit that characterized the period around 1848 proclaimed new times and new ways of life in the multinational Habsburg Empire. From the point of view of chronos, it was simply another period, a transitional time that would relatively soon pass into another era.¹² However, considering the quality of life among Slovenians, this period was extremely important. Slovenians were part of a larger European movement in which each of the individual nations had specific expectations and ambitions. The most radical demand that Slovenians presented to the Crown was that of uniting all Slovenian regions into one administrative unit. This expectation was not fulfilled, but in 1849 Slovenian was recognized as one of the official languages of the Austrian Empire. The Slovenian language, thus, finally obtained the status intellectuals had been fighting for. However, history records that one of the most remarkable achievements of the Spring of Nations among Slovenians was that national pride came to the forefront. This pride pervades the literary figure of Martin Krpan. Such pride was instilled into people at great conventions organized all over the country by true patriots. People from all walks of life expressed their readiness to stand together and used every opportunity—very much like Krpan—to demonstrate that they were aware of their culture, and proud of their language. These conventions tended to be more than simply political meetings: they were a demonstration of the cultural life that characterized Slovenian professional and amateur circles. The conventions attracted people of all ages and gave an incentive for even more expansion of creativity in towns and the countryside. It was the time when Slovenian identity was strengthened on all levels of public life because the achievements of Slovenian spirit and culture were popularized. Therefore, the period in which *Martin Krpan* was published still had the features of kairos time and, as such, occupies an exceptional position in the cultural history of the Slovenian nation.

¹² In 1867, the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy was founded.

The other two periods that constitute the narrative time frame of *Martin Krpan* have also made a specific and undeniable impact on Slovenian history. The period of Turkish invasions was exceptional in many respects. As chronos, it was a centuries-long period and, due to its duration, it embraced several generations. The awareness of the same arch-enemy marked not only the Slovenians who suffered during the times of direct clashes, but also the ones who did not have to endure the tribulations caused by the Ottoman army. Psychology proves that the memory of suffering inflicted on predecessors also leaves wounds on the newborn generations, and fear leaves scars in the psychological structure of the national psyche and thus on national character. Thus, it is not surprising that there was unanimous agreement on the origin of the intruder who carried out massacres in Vienna. The very word evoked similar associations in readers and even more in later viewers. However, despite the harsh times that seemed to have lasted an eternity, there were moments in which the vision of life was not only bleak. Such moments belonged to the knightly class, when they won in battles, and to the common people when they were told that their Christian army had defeated a much more numerous enemy. Churches—like the ones depicted by illustrators of *Martin Krpan*—were built on thanksgiving. Therefore, it corresponds to the spirit of the times that the winner, before beheading the bloodthirsty Brdavs, wants to give his rival time for prayer.

The experience of generations of Slovenians who had to endure the centuries-long invasions culminating in the siege of Vienna thus strengthened their national resilience, ingenuity, and empathy, the characteristics vital for the survival of a nation in adverse conditions. Thus, the kairos of this long-enduring struggle was made up of those crucial moments in which Slovenians were able to adopt various strategies of fight and self-defense so that they managed to protect their homes. Similarly, the crucial moment for Krpan is the one when he decides to make his own weapons and adopt original tactics to save the country.

The chronos and kairos times of the Illyrian provinces were so short-lived that they could be considered only an episode in the long story of salt trafficking were it not for the emergence of the enlightenment in literature. This philosophical movement was embraced by Slovenian authors who, at the end of the 18th century, strongly contributed to the changing atmosphere among intellectuals. The goal of writers, poets, and playwrights was to instill a positive spirit into all literary genres and foster national awareness by extolling the beauties of the Slovenian landscape and the qualities of the Slovenian character. Accordingly, the kairos reveals new optimism that encouraged everybody to be diligent and exploit the possibilities offered by the time and place they were born into. Thus, the titular protagonist of *Martin Krpan* can be seen as an embodiment of the kind of man the new spirit was calling for.

The Kairos of *Martin Krpan* and the Kairos of the Republic of Slovenia

As stated in the introduction, *Martin Krpan* is one of the Slovenian books that have entered into the Slovenian national repository while its titular protagonist has become a national hero. In the last decades of the 20th century, when it was increasingly clear that the national rights of the Slovenians as well as their aspirations for democracy and human rights could not be fulfilled, in the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, Martin Krpan became a sort of national icon. This narrative has thus acquired a special status. My premise is that the main reasons of this phenomenon can be found in the way in which the verbal text and the visual representation depict the titular protagonist and in the complexity of the temporal intertwining that characterizes this narrative.

The intertwining of the epochs united in the storyline has foregrounded a few aspects of the chronos and kairos of the times that have, each in its own way, contributed to the cultural features of present Slovenia. *Martin Krpan*, the impact of which had been continuously growing during the last decades of post-1945 Yugoslavia, was therefore considered an inspiring source in the years between 1988 and 1991. In this period, Slovenians tried once more, as in 1848, to create a new political frame that would enable them to live their national identity fully. These were crucial times for Slovenians, who, after the movement for self-determination—called the Slovenian Spring¹³—and a referendum for an independent national state, had not only to face the opposition of the central government against proceeding towards a peaceful dissolution but also the military aggression of the Yugoslav army. It was a period in which the lessons that Slovenians had learned from their national culture and history had to be applied to resist the military invasion and the media war in order to defend their national state. Krpan's diplomacy, adaptability, and ability to fight gained a new significance for Slovenians fighting for their land, cultural patrimony, and future. Like the literary hero who, in spite of the complexity of the timelines, moves within a uniform time frame, the Slovenian nation managed to rediscover the unifying platform—their culture and their cultural memory that became one of the sources of inspiration, encouragement, and strength. The barriers between various epochs seemed to have disappeared. The deeper experience of time, "one that escapes the dichotomy between the chronology of sequence and the chronology of models" (Ricoeur, 1980, p. 169), helped them grasp that it was not only *the right time* but *the best time* to act, to found the Republic of Slovenia. It was the Kairos time *par excellence* for Slovenians.

¹³ A clear parallel with the year 1848.

In such temporal circumstances, Slovenians, who had a tradition of resorting to literature to express their aspirations, turned to patriotic books to find inspiration and encouragement. They adapted the lessons offered by fiction to their current situation and context. According to Paul Ricoeur, this was possible because the intrinsic power of the narrative and its representations of time lies in the fact that these narratives place “the narrated time within the hands” of readers (Holy et al., n.d., Paul Ricoeur). Therefore, in the case of *Martin Krpan*, readers who were experiencing the war for the independence of Slovenia were able to draw parallels between the temporal line of the story and their own time and realize that the Slovenian nation had already overcome all possible tribulations. In this way, they were encouraged to believe that their present trials could also be overcome. Thus, Martin Krpan became a sort of national icon because this titular character corresponded to the ideal of the reading community. His combativeness, diplomacy, ingenuity, and pride in his roots successfully addressed Slovenian readers at the threshold of the 21st century.

Martin Krpan was thus one of the books that fostered the revival of awareness of the importance of national identity as an essential and constituent part of personal identity. After decades of systematic communist brainwashing aiming at the rejection of patriotism and presenting it, together with the Christian religion, as the most dangerous ideology, the Slovenians fighting for an independent, sovereign state had to rediscover a proper sense of patriotism. After the periods of suppression of nationhood, national identity had to be rediscovered in Slovenian history and collective memory. Patriotism has to be considered a positive feature of collective identity because historical identity and patriotism are, as claimed by Roger Scruton, simply the expression of the “continuing allegiance that unites people” (2014, p. 32).

It seems that *Martin Krpan* is a literary example of this kind of patriotism, which is revealed to be a genuine sentiment that is neither an ideology nor a creed, one which, rather than being dangerous, is a source of strength for both the individual and the community. It is a patriotism that grows from the cultural history of a nation and is supported by independent and creative individuals who are able to act according to principles of solidarity and common sense. Thus, the intertwining of periods that cover a span of more than 500 years—half a millennium in which *chronos* and *kairos* alternated—reveals an important aspect of the reality that humans have to face, namely, that there are good and bad times and that there is never a time when vigilance and readiness to act or simply to resist are not needed. Such qualities have always, throughout human history, been essential for any kind of achievement. Thus, it has become apparent that each *chronos* contains the seeds of the coming *kairos*.

References:

- Baker, M. (Ed). (2010). *Critical readings in translation studies*. Routledge.
- Baskar, B. (2008). Martin Krpan ali habsburški mit kot sodobni slovenski mit [Martin Krpan or Habsburg myth as a contemporary national myth.]. *Etnolog. Nova vrsta (Ljubljana)* 18. 75–93. Slovenski etnografski muzej.
- Bemong, N., Borghart, P., De Dobbeleer, M., Demoen, K., De Temmerman, K., & Bart, K. (Eds). (2010). *Bakhtin's theory of the literary chronotope: Reflections, applications, perspectives*. Ginkgo Academia press. https://doi.org/10.26530/OAPEN_377572
- Brzechczyn, K. (2021). National identity in Roger Scruton's work. *Hungarian Conservative* 1(1). <https://www.hungarianconservative.com/articles/philosophy/national-identity-in-roger-scrutons-work/>
- Granda, S. (2008). *Mala zgodovina Slovenije* [Little history of Slovenia]. Mohorjeva družba.
- Hartog, F. (2020). *Chronos: l'Occident aux prises avec le temps* [Chronos. The West struggling with time]. Editions Gallimard.
- Holyt, L., Wotherspoon, Th., & Bernstein, J. (n.d.). Paul Ricoeur: 'Narrative time.' *Google Sites*. <https://sites.google.com/site/narrativetime/paul-ricoeur-narrative-time>
- Jazbec, M. (2015). *Diplomat Martin Krpan*. Založba Forma.
- Kurlansky, M. (2003). *Salt: A world history*. Penguin Books.
- Leerssen, J. (2006). *National thought in Europe: A cultural history*. Amsterdam University Press.
- Levstik, F. (1917). *Martin Krpan z Vrha* [Martin Krpan from Vhr]. (H. Smrekar, Illust.). Nova Založba.
- Levstik, F. (1954). *Martin Krpan z Vrha* [Martin Krpan from Vhr]. (T. Kralj, Illust.). Mladinska knjiga.
- Levstik, F. (2004). *Martin Krpan*. (T. Kralj, Illust., M. Visenjak-Limon & D. Limon, Trans.). Mladinska knjiga.
- Nelson, S., & Spence, B. (2020). Narrative time. *Oxford Research Eyclopedia of Literature*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.013.1076>
- Nikolajeva, M., & Scott, C. (2006). *How picturebooks work*. Routledge.
- Nikolajeva, M. (1996). *Children's literature comes of age: Toward a new aesthetic*. Garland Publishing.
- Peters, C. (2014). Girls, animals, fear, and the iterative force of the National Pack: Reading the Dear Canada series. In M. Reimer, N. Ali, D. England & M. Unrau (Eds.), *Seriality and texts for young people. The compulsion to repeat* (pp. 111–128). McMillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137356000_6
- Ricoeur, P. (1980). Narrative time. *Critical Inquiry* 7(1), 169–199. https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/294512/mod_resource/content/1/1980%20Ricoeur-1.pdf
- Scruton, R. (2014). *How to be a conservative*. A&C Black.
- Simoniti, V. (1990). *Turki so v deželi že* [Turks are already in the country]. Mohorjeva družba.
- Štih, P., Simoniti, V., & Vodopivec, P. (2016). *Slovenska zgodovina od prazgodovinskih kultur do začetka 21. Stoletja* [From prehistoric cultures to the beginning of the 21st century]. Založba Modrijan.
- Voje, I. (1996). *Slovenci pod pritiskom turškega nasilja* [Slovenians under the oppression of Turkish violence]. Znanstveni inštitut Filozofske fakultete.