

TRANSLATION

THE BAPTISM ON THE SAVICA

Francè Prešeren

On the Occasion of the 150th Anniversary
of the Death of Matija Čop

Translator's introduction

The Baptism on the Savica is, like Milton's *Paradise Lost*, one of those central works of a national literature that we need not necessarily like in order to appreciate. Now quite distant from the sensibilities of the modern reader, its devices may fail to enthrall us, as they did the first generations of readers to encounter it. But the poem, for better or for worse, remains a touchstone, a *locus communis*, an (arti)fact for every educated member of its culture. In that spirit—to elucidate a central text of Slovene culture by making it accessible to readers of English—I have undertaken to translate Francè Prešeren's major opus.

I confess to a certain pleasure in the process. The meter I chose to render the Slovene is English blank verse, a form so natural to the target language that great blocks of the poem presented no serious problems. Moreover, iambic pentameter, with the occasional eleventh unstressed syllable, is quite close to Prešeren's hendecasyllabic verse in the opening sonnet ("To Matija Čop"), the terza rima (in the "Introduction") and the ottava rima (in the "Baptism" proper). We might venture to hope that as a result the translation does not betray at least the beguiling rhythm of the original.

The diction on the other hand did pose a problem. Prešeren's syntax can be very complex, here and there straining the resources even of a language as highly inflected as Slovene. The requirements of rhythm and rhyme occasion frequent elisions (at least two or three per page—the opening sonnet has four), which may speed the flow of the verse but can obscure the meaning. And the vocabulary mixes a neologism here with an archaism there, though for the most part, perhaps because Prešeren's poem is considered to be a central text of his tradition, modern readers doubtless perceive the poet's language to be normative, if a bit old fashioned. One feature of *The Baptism on the Savica* that modern editors regularly change is the use of dialectal forms: Prešeren's Upper Carniolan desinences, the use of *nar-* instead of *naj-*, and a few other items, can be normalized without an impact on the structure or texture of the verse. In the situations where they cannot (e.g., the final couplet of the work), they are left to stand as they were and the Slovene reader is expected to make the appropriate allowances. Needless to say, in most of these matters of poetic diction it has proved impossible to provide adequate equivalents in English. My chief priority therefore has been to translate the literal meaning of the text within the bounds of a similar metrical pattern. Any "translational" achievements beyond those have not been consistently sought after.

One final word on sources and meanings. That Prešeren played fast and loose with the one source of the poem he deigned to mention, note 7 should make clear. That he drew on many other sources more carefully is confirmed in the scholarship adduced in the other annotations to this translation. Yet for all its seeming indebtedness, *The Baptism on the Savica* is in many ways a profoundly original work. Technically, structurally, poetically it was something new for the infant Slovene literature of its day but that is not

its greatest accomplishment. Its originality lies most especially in the meanings encoded in the careers of its hero and heroine. First there is the personal meaning. Thanks to the work of several critics, we can no longer read this poem without regard to the events of Prešeren's life at the time, his loves and losses. We should not fail to understand the poem's *fabula* as an attempt at psychological transference, where the poet sets up and then resolves (in a way) the very problems that bedeviled him. Second is the social meaning of this work: acceptance of a higher order, even where it is imposed by force, is necessary for the continued existence of the nation. At the same time, however, the nation must learn to maneuver within this new order to procure for itself the greatest advantage (or at least minimize the initial cost of change). The implications of this second meaning reach, I believe, well beyond the Slovene context.

I would like to express my very sincere gratitude to four people who read this translation and offered many useful corrections and improvements: Professor Franc Jakopin (Ljubljana), Professor Rado L. Lencek (New York), Dr. Irma Ožbalt (Montreal), and Professor Boris Paternu (Ljubljana). Without their kind cooperation, my attempt to give the English-language reader some notion of Prešeren's masterwork would have been *più tradire che tradurre*. Where I do fail to convey either his true meaning or am incapable of rendering his poetry in anything but banal prose, I and I alone accept full responsibility.

And one final word on inspiration. For the example he set as translator, teacher and scholar, I would like to dedicate this translation to the memory of Profesor Anton Slodnjak.

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Bloomington, Indiana
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THE BAPTISM ON THE SAVICA: A TALE IN VERSE¹
To Matija Čop²

To you, dear ashes of a friend who sleeps
 In a too early grave, I give this song.
 In parting from him it has been a balm,
 A tonic for a bygone, wounded love.³

Proclaim the passing of the world's sweet ties,
 How small the number of our happy days,
 That only he, like Bogomila,⁴ thrives,
 Whose heart awaits its joy beyond the grave.

I've buried all my highest-flying thoughts
 And all the pains of unfulfilled desires,
 Like Črtomir⁵ all hope of earthly joy;

Bright day, dull day, they both become our nights,
 And riven hearts which suffer joy and pain
 Will calm find in the deepness of the grave.

Introduction⁶

- 1 Valjhun,⁷ the son of Kajtimar, a war
 So long has waged and bloody for Christ's faith
 That Droh, Avreli⁸ both have ceased to fight,
- 2 And ended now their lives and many others'.
 Blood shed in Carniola, Carantania,
 Would surely fill a lake and overflow it.
- 3 Cut down and rotting on the fields of battle
 Are brave commanders and the men they led,
 Alone fight Črtomir and his small band.
- 4 The youngest of the heroes wages war
 For fathers' faith, for Živa, goddess fair,⁹
 For devils and for gods beyond the clouds.
- 5 With those who cling still to this false belief,
 He's fled to Bohinj in Bistrica's Vale,¹⁰
 To seek the fort built on a greying crag.
- 6 The ruins you may observe until this day,
 The Heathens' Fort its name,¹¹ you see in it
 The last redoubt of fleeing Črtomir.

- 7 The ninefold larger foe surround the fort,
And everywhere stand guards most vigilant
Who rob the pagans of all hope of rescue.
- 8 High towers the foe erect against the walls,
And undermine them and tear at the gates,
But still they fail to reach the men inside.
- 9 Six months a bloody river floods the ground,
Slovene kills Slovene, fellow fratricides,
How dreadful is the blindness of mankind!
- 10 What sword and ax and shovel failed to do,
That hunger, the unconquerable foe
Now threatens, as it weakens men's resolve.
- 11 No more can Črtomir their plight conceal,
These words he speaks to all his gathered troops:
"No sword, but bitter fate will bring us down.
- 12 So little food remains for you, my brothers.
We've fought so long with no hope of support.
Who wants to yield, I will no longer stop him.
- 13 Who of you wishes to await dark dawn,
To live enslaved days similar to nights,
I'll stop him not, just let him wait for morn.
- 14 The heroes of you I now call with me,
All you whose backs unwilling are to bend;
The night is dark and thunder shakes the clouds.
- 15 The enemy will scurry to their huts,
The forest is no distance from our walls,
And night gives us a chance to flee the fort.
- 16 *More of the world is Slava's sons', by right,*
And we will find the pathway to that place
Where they may cherish faith in liberty.
- 17 But should the gods decree us then our death,
Less fearful is the night in black earth's womb
Than days of slavery here beneath the sun."
- 18 Not one man quits him in his time of trouble,
In silence each his weapon brings to bear,
And not a coward has he in their number.

- 19 No sooner, though, than are the gates swung wide
But there begins a battle, no, a slaughter:
Valjhun with his whole army falls upon them.
- 20 He too was counting on their need for sleep,
And so he thought to scale the fortress walls,
And unbeknownst to them rise up and o'er them.
- 21 Just as a storm unleashes its full fury,
He calls the guards to gather round the gate,
A roar arises and men start to die.
- 22 As a torrent in a downpour gushes,
And rushing toward the plains from some steep crag,
Encircles with its rapid, speeding waves
- 23 All that stands in its way, nor does it yet
Relent until some obstacle impedes it,
Valjhun likewise storms in upon the pagans.
- 24 He does not stop until the final drop
Of blood is spilled or breath is stopped of those
For whom their faith was of the utmost import.
- 25 As dawn its rays shines on the troops of corpses,
There lie, as when the rye or wheat are cut,
There lie upon the fields both sheaths and bundles.
- 26 There lie of Christians more than half their force,
Among them those who perished for their idols.
Valjhun in vain seeks out one younger face
Of him who bears the guilt for this great slaughter.

The Baptism

- 1 The matching violence of both men and clouds
 Dark night has ended, now bright dawn
 With ruddy sparks does gild the threefold peaks
 Of the grey master of Carniola's mountains.¹²
 Bohinj Lake rests in calm and quiet now,
 No trace remaining of the recent tempest.
 But 'neath the waves the sheatfish battle on
 With other robbers of the watery depths.

- 2 Does not this lake on whose shore, at the edge,
 You stand, O Črtomir, resemble you?
 Last night the noise ceased of your valiant troop,
 The tempest in your breast, though, has not calmed;
 That ancient worm, much worse now, has awakened,
 If my own tastes of sorrow teach me right,
 It bites more and it cries for still more blood.
 The harpies of despair are more voracious.

- 3 The pillars of our nation are cast down,
 As well as Slovene law affirmed by habit;
 While the Bavarian Tesel¹³ rules the land,
 The sons of Slava groan beneath his yoke.
 Bright fortune shines on aliens in our homes,
 So haughtily do they their proud heads rear.
 To stop the pain of this benumbing blow,
 Do you not think to follow Cato's¹⁴ way?

- 4 The grey head of late years would not be able
 To bear the present hours of great pain;
 But in our youth the nets hold far more firmly
 Wherein false power of hope can bind us tight.
 What binds you to this life, O Črtomir,
 Appears to me from scanning your past days,
 For not that old religion only led you
 Here to the very middle of Lake Bled.¹⁵

- 5 Here is an island circled round by waves,
 In our days it's a pilgrim shrine to Mary;
 Against the background stand the snowcapped giants
 And fields that spread before them; Castle Bled
 Reveals still greater beauties to the left.
 The hillocks on the right conceal each other.
 Carniola does not have a prettier scene
 Than this one: it is truly heaven's twin.

- 6 In Črtomir's time on that little island
The image of the goddess Živa stood,
To whom young men's groans often were directed,
To whom you maidens, kind and loving, sent
Your laughter and your weeping, all devices
That for us men are insurmountable—
There Staroslav and his enchanting daughter
Care for the temple of love's goddess, Živa.
- 7 The daughter Bogomila is as fair
As famous Hero¹⁶ of the ancient tale.
Her eyes and face are bright with innocence,
Her beauty she herself does not perceive.
The fawning speeches of her many suitors
All fail to stir or penetrate her heart.
Just sixteen years she's recently accomplished;
Her heart, still young, burns not for anyone.
- 8 A light and little boat brings Črtomir
To offer gifts to Živa, as his wont was,
Of all that grew about his land and castle,
Of flocks and grain and first fruits of the garden.
As he presents them to the fair young maid,
Love's arrow flies from her eyes to his heart
And strikes him when he least expected it.
The flame of love is kindled in his breast.
- 9 O happy, happy Črtomir, you've won
The maiden with your glance, and that alone.
And she is overcome with ecstasy,
Her gaze is earthward, trembling are her words,
Just like a dawn that promises fair day.
And her pale face appears to color slightly,
The while her hand remains enclosed in yours,
Kept there by powers she cannot command.
- 10 Let other poets tell you of the love
That all that summer blossomed in their hearts:
Of Črtomir's oft visits to the temple,
Of father's growing younger as he watched them
To me unknown but not to others joy
Is that which brands the heart with happiness.
Let others tell of love's intoxication,
Soon driven away by fear of separation.

- 11 Already, Črtomir, it's time to go now.
Do you not hear the trumpets loudly sound?
Wild hordes Valjhun has, seething in a rage,
Brought hither to destroy the gods' own home;
And all about the shields rise of that faith
That you imbibed upon your mother's breast,
The faith to which your maid has pledged her troth,
With whom pure love has now made you as one.
- 12 How hard, how bitter is the hour of parting!
Great tears are running down their burning cheeks.
Entwined they stand as if they were one body
Nor will allow their clinging lips to part.
A drop now from the right, now from the left eye
Her father is unable to disguise,
As he regards them plunged into such sorrow,
And knows there is no consolation for them.
- 13 He would remind them of eternal glory
If he thought the victory they could win.
But to Carniola from beyond the Drava
Valjhun has brought a huge and fearsome army.
The old man knows the youth goes to his death
While still unable friends and faith to free.
A messenger arrives: both towns and temples
Are burning—Črtomir, take up your arms.
- 14 And off he went to fight, nor hoped to win,
But showed himself to be of ancient stock.
Where e'er his sword swung, there a mortal wound,
The enemy in bloody heaps were lying,
Expiring, souls let go, already dead.
However, neither sword nor fortress strong
Could save the gods of all his glorious forebears,
Nor starve off death from cutting down his men.
- 15 Defeated, isolated at Bohinj,
Alone he stands reposing on his sword.
His eyes are measuring the water's depth,
And dreadful thoughts are swarming through his mind.
Still blind in faith, he thinks to take his life,
But something stops his overeager hand.
It was the image of your beauty which,
O Bogomila, drove him from the fray.

- 16 He wishes once again to see that beauty,
To greet again the site of former joys,
To learn if she's survived these troubled times,
If in her heart she keeps her loving promise,
Of if perhaps she sleeps beneath the ground,
Or foes have carried off his bride-to-be—
Alive or dead, he must find out her fate
Before he can decide to leave this world.
- 17 A fisherman he knew once paddles to him,
Recalls him from his thoughts, and warns him too
That Christians hunt him down on every side.
That angry Valjhun is his captives' bane.
He urges Črtomir with friendly words
To flee this shore, and offers him his boat,
So that to safer havens they might row.
And Črtomir accedes to this advice.
- 18 They quickly row to Bohinj's other end,
Where swift and clear Savica's waters enter.
A happy breeze makes light their four hands' work.
The skiff moves on like birds in morning flight.
The fisherman keeps watch out for the foe,
Then stops his boat where shadows are the deepest.
It seems to him our hero's suffering hunger—
He offers him what little he has brought.
- 19 And Črtomir would like to recompense,
But lost his fortune fighting in the war.
Then he recalls that Staroslav is keeping
A hoard of gold for him in secret regions.
He tells the fisherman to seek him out,
And gives a ring to him to serve as token
Known only to the father and his daughter—
He says to bring a quarter of his trove.
- 20 He orders him to ask of Bogomila:
Does she still see the sunlight, does she live?
Has she been safe, protected by the waters?
Or does she hide elsewhere before the foe?
If so, what is the safest route to follow
To where his dearest maid resides in peace?
At the Savica falls he'll wait tomorrow
To hear the news, though it be good or bad.

- 21 The falls next morning thunder in his ears.
Our hero ponders as the lazy waters
Below him roar and shake the river banks.
Above him towering cliffs and mountain heights,
These with their trees the river undermines,
As in its wrath its foam flies to the skies!
So hastens youth and then it spends itself,
Thus Črtomir reflects upon this scene.
- 22 Men's words awake him from this rumination,
As they approach with treasures that they bear.
At once he sees the fisherman's kind face.
An unknown man as well with him is walking.
His robe and stole are tokens of his faith:
They tell that he's the Nazarean's priest.
The young man's hand would reach out to his sword,
But at that moment Bogomila enters.
- 23 "O, hither to my heart, my Bogomila!
The end of worry, woe and grief is here.
Each fibre of my being moves with joy
As I behold the radiance of your face.
So let the whirlwinds loose now all their fury,
The heavens be covered over by their clouds.
It matters not to me what happens now,
As long as you are in my happy arms."
- 24 Reluctantly she leaves his fond embrace,
And comes to rest upon a rock nearby,
And in a firm but loving voice addresses
The ardent youth with words she has to say:
"Now is the time of parting, not of union,
And each must make his own way through life's snares.
So that eventually our paths should cross,
You see me now in this forsaken place.
- 25 I must admit to you, I am a Christian.
The faith of idols I have now abjured.
It It vanished like the hoarfrost in the sun.
My father too has taken Christian vows,
And our community, in pledge to Mary,
Has drowned the goddess Živa in the lake.
See now, O Črtomir, my path to truth,
And understand me from these words of mine:

- 26 So often in our island's farthest reach,
After the boat had taken you away,
I wondered whether all our mutual love
Would pass, a wave that wind has stirred but briefly,
Or if our hearts' sweet passionate desires
Would be snuffed out by clods of heavy earth,
And if there was not somewhere just one place
Or star wherein our hearts might come together.
- 27 These thoughts as you went off to fight the war
Gave me, poor orphan, neither peace nor rest.
To know your life stood constantly in danger,
To see all routes to you closed off to me—
I did not know how to assuage my grief,
Nor find relief in my misguided ways.
Despairing and in misery I prayed
For light for you while I in darkness stayed.
- 28 One day I went to learn our army's fate,
If it perhaps succeeded or had failed;
A man was teaching all who there would listen,
Godfearing he, whom you now see with us.
He spoke of how God made us in His image,
How sin befell the world because of Adam,
How His own Son our likeness took upon Him,
To save the nations and to give them joy.
- 29 That God is truly called the God of Love,
That He loves all His creatures, His own children,
That earth, where violent tempests rant and rage,
Is but a time of testing, for our home
Is really heaven on high, that pain and patience
Are worthy gifts of His, along with joy,
That all His children He will lead to Him,
He does not wish the death of e'en one sinner.
- 30 He has created all of us for heaven,
Wherein His glory shines without a cloud.
The eye has not beheld, nor heard the ear
The joy that waits there for His many chosen.
For we shall lose the bonds that are our bodies,
And all of our desires will be filled,
For God's own dear commands will there unite
Those who in this life walked the way of love.

- 31 As I went home my thoughts turned to our love;
The man who taught this wisdom followed after.
He called to me a greeting in his way,
And said that formerly he'd served the Druids,
But then had turned to preach the one true faith
And make it known in our lands roundabout.
But since the towns were still unknown to him,
He wished to follow me as night approached.
- 32 To father and to me at home he told
What once the prophets had proclaimed of old,
How all the sins of Adam and of Eve
Were cleansed with floods of blood from just one cross;
The terrors of the Judgment he described,
And all the miracles which faith inspires.
All things that we should know he did explain,
Then he baptized us who believed them all.
- 33 But one care still my peace of mind disturbed,
That you were yet among those fighting God;
And many a time I dreamed I saw your head,
Pale, noble, lying on its bed of death.
I trembled every moment at the thought
That you in death would heaven never see.
That man of God my troubled heart consoled
By telling me that prayer can do all things.
- 34 From that time on how often I invoked,
Implored the help of Mary, Ever Virgin:
'My God, deign not condemn this man I love,
For he in error walks and not in malice.
Do not surrender him unto the foe,
But let Thy mercy graciously protect him!'
And strangely that same night your life was spared,
Though not one of your comrades escaped death.
- 35 Awake, O Črtomir, from your deep sleep,
And bid farewell the errors of your youth.
Do not walk still the paths of darkling night,
Cease to resist the kindness of our God.
Delay no longer dawning of that day
So that our paths will join again forever,
So love may live without the fear of parting,
After we die and pass to our reward."

- 36 "O Bogomila, how can I repay
The love and care and all you felt for me?
My heart is almost overcome by joy,
Your love makes ardor's flame grow brighter still.
Until my blood's last drop no longer flows,
And grave's dark night embraces all my bones.
Till then my life is yours to have and hold,
Command its faith, its thoughts and all its deeds.
- 37 How could I anything to you refuse,
Not do whate'er your heart should think or wish?
Consider, though, the wounds that Valjhun's swords
Inflict upon our land, his bows and arrows,
And think of Slovene blood that flows in rivers.
Consider one more time these Christian deeds,
And tell me if their God a god of wrath
Is he whom you a God of love would call."
- 38—The Priest
"On earth be peace to all men of good will!
Thus did the angels' voices sing on high,
Announcing the arrival of Messiah.
Of but one Father we are all the sons,
All people brothers, brothers are all nations.
His teaching tells us we must love each other.
Valjhun, however, follows his own way,
And not the way of God of true belief."
- 39—Črtomir
"The faith of love, of peace, of human concord,
The faith of *Bogomila* I accept,
I know that idols born are of the minds
Of those who act as their obedient servants.
And I upheld them for tradition's sake.
But now the force of arms has overthrown them.
But, Bogomila, if baptism unites us,
When too will marriage also make us one?"
- 40—Bogomila
"The flower's days are numbered and made short
If springtime frost should suddenly occur,
Or if its blooms are overlaid by snow!
So too a young girl, wounded in the heart,
That early on has lost all hope of peace,
Is given to wander briefly on life's path;
What worth a moment's union here below
If she must always fear a separation?

- 41 So that the Good Lord rescue you from death
And later join us in eternal bliss,
In heavenly realms, my darling, far from earth,
I did renounce the sweetest of my wishes,
I did renounce all further earthly joy,
And I abandoned all hope of our union.
My prayer was heard and for that very reason,
I cannot now become your earthly bride.
- 42 To God alone I have bequeathed my virtue,
To Jesus and His Mother, Mary mild;
However many years I've left to live,
Enduring vain desires, in hope of heaven,
No earthly power will overcome my will,
Make me unfaithful to the world's Messiah,
My heavenly, my one and only groom.
I cannot therefore ever be your bride!"
- 43 The priest then added to those words of hers:
"The joys of marriage he may not enjoy
Who deeds the likes of yours and mine did sow
In the discordant furrows of our times.
With Druid faith I led astray my race,
And had your sword not given me support,
That false belief would long ago have perished,
And many a widow still would be a wife!
- 44 To Aquileia¹⁷ and the Patriarch
You must needs go and be ordained by him.
You slew your brothers, so you now must save them.
For that he'll priest you as he once did me.
Rich harvests will await you in the east,
Nor can delay detain you anymore.
Go quickly then to Aquileia's bishop
And make yourself a guardian of souls."
- 45—Črtomir
"You reason right, I cannot hope for joy,
Which always is and will to me be foreign:
My father never won great victories,
But finished out his days in hopeless wars;
My mother barely 'scaped a prisoner's bonds,
And now at long last rests beneath the ground.
Sweet love alone proposed to make me happy,
But how that sweetness quickly, quickly passed!

46 The trumpet's voice resounds throughout the land:
Me of my Bogomila it deprives.
We fought heroic battles with Valjhun,
But happy days of victory did elude us.
The sword has slain my comrades to a man,
So flight's my hope, the woods a present refuge.
And union would with me be most unwise
Whom great misfortune constantly pursues."

47—Bogomila

"He does not recognize true love who thinks
That great misfortune can abate its flame,
For it will burn in pure and endless blazing
Both now and when I've shaken loose this shell.
A firmer bond with God prevents me now
From tasting love's sweet fruit in marriage to you.
But you will see when we're beyond the grave
The pure and faithful love I feel for you.

48 So that God's ways be known by every person,
Go preach His word to all the Slovene lands;
For all the days assigned to me on earth,
I shall to God and you stay ever faithful.
Then with the Father I, your virgin bride,
Shall wait for you in heaven until the time
Your rescued flocks bemoan their pastor's death,
And you come up to me in realms of light."

49 From out between the clouds the sun now shines
And forth a rainbow sheds upon the pallor
Of Bogomila, pure light on pure beauty,
And heavenly radiance brightens her dear face.
The tears his eyes can't hold he does not hide,
For has not heaven opened here above him?
No longer does he think he stands on earth,
So does this vision overwhelm our hero.

50 When it was finished, thought he of his gold,
And took some from the men who'd brought it to him.
The rest he left the fisherman and them.
"As for the trove, tell Staroslav to give
The orphans help," says he to Bogomila,
Then went to her and held her fervidly.
He silently a hand gave in farewell,
And tears stood in his eyes as he departed.

- 51 "O wait, I have but one request of you
Before we part," says lovely Bogomila,
"Do not allow my heart to suffer more,
But help me fend off further bitter thoughts.
Before you cross the hills to Aquileia,
Abjure in front of me your former faith,
And linger here until you are baptized.
The water's near, and so's a holy priest."
- 52 In silence Črtomir bends to her will,
And to Savica's falls they make their way.
He with the priest repeats the sacred prayers,
And, Father, Son, and Spirit, is baptized there.
All who are there fall down upon their knees,
The maiden's face lights up with heavenly joy,
The face of her who'd served a pagan faith,
And once had worshiped as a priest of Živa.
- 53 In Aquileia Črtomir is taught
The Holy Scriptures, free of every taint.
He is ordained and from his breast do fly
His former hopes; he now goes forth to preach
To the Slovenes and those who live beyond them,
Dispelling error's clouds till his last day.
And Bogomila set out for her home;
They never met again upon this earth.

REFERENCES

1. First published privately by Francè Prešeren (1800-1849) in a run of 600 copies on 14 April 1836, under the title *Kerst pri Savici: Povest v verzih*. Reprinted in *Kmetijske in rokodelske novice*, 17 July-28 August 1844, where a note explains that the Savica "is a source of the Bohinj Sava in Gorenjsko" (in fact, the Savica flows from the southern foot of Mt. Triglav [see note 12], into Lake Bohinj from the west, in the highland region of the province of Carniola; before entering the lake it passes over falls 60 meters high). And published for the third time in the poet's lifetime in his collection *Poezije Dóktorja Francéta Prešérna* (V Ljubljani: Natisnil Jóžef Bláznik, 1847), 168, 169-92. The present translation is based on this last version, as reprinted in Francè Prešeren, *Zbrano delo*, Vol.1: *Poezije* (Ljubljana: Državna Založba Slovenije, 1965) edited and annotated by Janko Kos. The text of the poem is on pp. 172-98 and the annotations on pp. 346-57. For additional information about this poem, see: Anton Slodnjak, *Geschichte der slowenischen Literatur* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1958), 139-41; Boris Paternu, *Francè Prešeren in njegovo pesniško delo*, Vol.2 (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1977), 83-152; and Henry R. Cooper, Jr., *Francè Prešeren* (Boston:

Twayne, 1981), 119-29. Though translated into most European languages (see Štefka Bulovec, *Prešernova bibliografija* [Maribor: Založba Obzorja, 1979], 177-80), only a manuscript translation exists in English, by Anton Justin (ibid., p.177, item 1382). I have not been able to consult this translation in preparing my own.

2. This sonnet to Prešeren's closest friend, Matija Čop (1797-1835) precedes both the first and third printings of the poem. Though structurally separate, it forms an integral part of the epic itself in that it names the hero and heroine of the "Baptism" and suggests parallels between their fate and that of the poet and his friend. For more information on Čop, see Cooper, op.cit., pp.41-5.
3. Čop drowned tragically while swimming in the Sava River on 6 July 1835; presumably he had a stroke. Prešeren may also here be referring to his unreciprocated love for Julija Primic, the "Laura" to his "Petrarch".
4. The heroine of Prešeren's epic, a fictitious character (pronounced "boh-goh-MEE-lah").
5. Prešeren's hero, also fictitious (pronounced "CHUR-toh-meer").
6. I have numbered the stanzas to facilitate reference; in the original they were not numbered.
7. "Valjhun, called Valhunus and Valdungus by Latin writers, was the chief of Carinthia and particular persecutor of the pagans. His father Kajtimar (Chetimar) had before him striven mightily to spread the Christian faith through Carantania and Carniola; but the Slovenes stubbornly clung to their old faith, and drove out the Christians and particularly their missionaries. See Valvasor, *Ehre des Herzogthums Krain*, Book 7, Chap. 2" (Prešeren's note). Carantania, Carinthia and Carniola are regions in the Eastern Alps north and south of the Karawanken Range. The first refers to a medieval territory bordering on the Frankish Ostmark (see Bogo Grafenauer, *Zgodovina slovenskega naroda*, Vol. 1, *Od naselitve do uveljavljanja fevdalnega reda* (Ljubljana: Državna Založba Slovenije, 1964), 2nd revised and enlarged edition, 393-402; and Imre Boba, "'Caranthani Marahenses' and 'Moravi sive Karinthe,'" *Slovene Studies* 4/2 [1982], 83-90). The second two, Carinthia (Slovene *Koroško*, German *Kärnten*) and Carniola (Slovene *Kranjsko*, German *Krain*), comprise areas of modern Slovene settlement, the former a province of Austria with a mixed Austrogerman-Slovene population, the latter the central district of the Yugoslav Socialist Republic of Slovenia. Johann Weichard Valvasor (1641-1693) published the fifteen books of his historical examination of Carniola, *Die Ehre des Herzogthums Krain* in 1689 (reprinted in 1877 by the firm of J. Krajec; this is the version cited here). In the chapter cited by Prešeren, Valvasor treats the forced conversion of the Slovenes by the Bavarians in the eighth century. It is of interest to note that not only does Valvasor make no mention of Črtomir or Bogomila, but he also treats Valjhun in a much more sympathetic way than does Prešeren: "mit aller Sanfftmuth das Land regierte" (p.387). Valvasor places the blame for the bloodshed in Carniola and Carantania squarely on the shoulders of the lesser nobility ("die Landherren und Edlen," p.387), among whom Črtomir might be numbered. Specifically of the time in which Prešeren sets his epic (i.e., after the defeat of Hermannus Aurelius and Drochus), Valvasor merely notes that Valjhun continued to cleanse the lands of their weeds ("Unkraut") with his sword to let the good wheat of Christ ("der gute Weitzen Christi") grow, but that soon he turned to the "two-edged sword" of God's Word to do this work by asking six priests to come

- from Salzburg to teach the faith to the Slovenes (p.389).—Prešeren also drew information about early Slovene history from Anton (Tomaž) Linhart, *Versuch einer Geschichte von Krain und den übrigen Ländern der südlichen Slaven Oesterreichs*, Vol.1 (Ljubljana: 1788) and Vol.2 (Ljubljana: 1791), particularly the latter, pp.159-66 (a well annotated modern Slovene translation is also available: Anton Linhart, *Poskus zgodovine Kranjske in ostalih dežel južnih Slovanov Avstrije* [Ljubljana: Slovenska Matica, 1981], pp.227-9).
8. "Avreli, Droh (Aurelius, Drochus), two leaders of the pagans. See Valvasor, loc. cit." (Prešeren's note).
 9. "Živa, the goddess of love, the Slavic Venus" (Prešeren's note). Here Prešeren follows Linhart, *Versuch* 2:259 (*Poskus* 261): "Shiva, the goddess of life; she was venerated among the Polabians;" to which Linhart adds a folk tradition that: "Carniolans use this name for the planet Venus." It is known that Linhart's source regarding the ancient Slavs was Karl G. Anton, *Erste Linien eines Versuches über der alten Slawen Ursprung, Sitten, Gebräuche, Meinungen und Kenntnisse*, (Leipzig: 1783-1789), and that Anton based his information about the goddess Živa on both the *Chronica Slavorum* by Helmold (1120-1170), where we read: "Siwa dea Polaborum" (lib. I, cap. 52), and on Jan Długosz, *Annales seu Cronicae...Poloniae* (1455), where we find that the ancient Poles knew "dea vitae, quam vocabant Zywyte."
 10. Bohinj and the Vale of the Bistrica (Slovene: Bohinjsko jezero and Bistriška dolina): the first is an Alpine lake northwest of Ljubljana, 523 meters above sea level, 32.3 km² with a maximum depth of 45 meters; the second is a microclimatic region adjacent to the lake.
 11. Heathens' Fort (Slovene: Ajdovski gradec): a hill northeast of Lake Bohinj, with archaeological sites dating to Roman times.
 12. That is, Mt. Triglav, tallest peak in the Julian Alps of Slovenia (2,863 meters).
 13. "The Bavarian Tesel. Tesel (Tassilo), the Bavarian ruler, returned Valjhun to power in Slovenia with three bands of troops and imposed him on the people. The Slovenes had driven him from their land in the first years of his rule. See Valvasor, op. cit." (Prešeren's note).
 14. Marcus Porcius Cato, the Younger (95-46 BC): the last of the noble Romans, he took his life after Caesar defeated the nobility and doomed the Republic.
 15. Lake Bled (Slovene: Blejsko jezero): an Alpine lake northwest of Ljubljana, 475 meters above sea level, 1.45 km² with a maximum depth of 30.6 meters. In the center of the lake is an island with a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary and archaeological sites dating to pre-Christian settlement. On a bluff nearby stands the Castle of Bled.
 16. Hero: a legendary Greek figure, she was courted by Leander who swam the Hellespont every night to see her; when he drowned, she committed suicide.
 17. Aquileia (Slovene: Oglej): a city of northeastern Italy which in 558 AD was elevated to the rank of patriarchate. In 811 Charlemagne drew the jurisdictional boundary between the patriarchs of Aquileia and the bishops of Salzburg in part along the Drava River thus splitting the Slovenes of the time between the two sees. In 1751 the patriarchal privileges of Aquileia were abolished by the pope. It is noteworthy that Črtomir is sent to Aquileia rather than Salzburg for instruction and ordination. The implication is that the Aquileian (i.e., Roman) brand of Christianity was more acceptable, thanks to its milder methods, than was the Bavarian (i.e., Frankish or German) kind, epitomized by Valjhun's rapacity and cruelty.