Canonization of “Cultural Saints”:
Commemorative Cults of Artists and Nation-Building in Europe

International Workshop

University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands, October 28–30, 2015

Wednesday, October 28
18.00 Keynote lectures (Doelenzaal, University Library, Singel 425)
   Joep Leerssen: Canonicity and Veneration: Secular Religion and National-Cultural Hero-Worship
   Marijan Dović: Canonizing Cultural Saints: A Model

Thursday, October 29
9.00 First session (Doelenzaal, University Library, Singel 425)
   Christian Noack: The ‘Plagues of Egypt’, or: the Riddles of the Shevchenko Cult
   Bela Tsuria: Iliia Chavchavadze: Georgia’s Cultural Saint and the Saint of Georgian Orthodox Church
   Bojan Baskar: Re-Canonization of Njegoš as the Montenegrin Poet
10.45 Coffee break
11.15 Second session
   Andrei Terian: Prophet, Martyr, Saint: Mihai Eminescu’s Lateral Canonization
   Roman Koropeckyj: Taming a Romantic: The Canonization of Adam Mickiewicz
   Levente Szabo: From Cultural Saints to Literary Celebrities. The Cult of Ferenc Kazinczy and the Rising Market of Hungarian Cultural Sainthood in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century
13.00 Lunch
14.30 Third session (Oude Manhuispoort 4-6, room D0.09)
   David Fishelov: H. N. Bialik the Prophet and the Modern Hebrew Canon
   Andraž Jež: Cultural Saints, Alternatives, and Negatives. Prešeren vs. Vodnik, Koseski, and Vraz
   Alenka Koron: Patterns of Hagiography in Biographies of France Prešeren
16.15 Discussion (moderated by Marijan Dović and Jón Karl Helgason)
19.00 Conference dinner

Friday, October 30
9.00 First session (Bungehuis, room 1.01, Spuistraat 210)
   Jón Karl Helgason: Modern Postulators of Jónas Hallgrímsson’s Cultural Memory
   Simon Halink: A Story of Many Snorris: The Canonization of Snorri Sturluson in Iceland, Norway and Denmark
   Andreas Styen: “Altars of the Flemish movement”: Tombstones and Rituals of Nation-Building
10.45 Coffee break
11.15 Second session
   Irena Samide: The Role of Educational Apparatus in Constituting Friedrich Schiller as the Cultural Saint in Central Europe
   Franca Sinopoli: Political and Literary Italian Icons: The Mazzini Case
   Luka Vidmar: Architects Antoni Gaudí and Jože Plečnik: Cultural and Catholic Saints?
13.00 Lunch
14.30 Magí Sunyer: Jacint Verdaguer as a Catalan Cultural Saint (with a response from Jaume Subirana)
14.50 Discussion and Conclusion (moderated by Ann Rigney and Joep Leerssen)
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This workshop aims to identify and describe patterns in the nationally-motivated veneration of poets, writers, composers, and intellectuals in post-1789 Europe. The rise and rapid spread of such practices especially as of the 1840s should be understood within the framework of cultural nationalism. The incredible variety of this cultural commemoration, veneration, and “hero-worship” (Thomas Carlyle’s term) can be grasped on the basis of an expanded concept of canonization (referring both to the acknowledgement of cultural prestige and durability, and to para-religious rituals of pious commemoration) in the context of newly emerging “imagined” communities and their (collective) cultural memory.

Following on from earlier research on commemoration of writers (cf. Commemorating Writers in Nineteenth-Century Europe, ed. by J. Leerssen and A. Rigney, 2014), “national poets” (cf. History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe, vol. 4, ed. by J. Neubauer and M. Cornis-Pope, 2010), and “cultural saints” (articles by J. K. Helgason, M. Dović, and M. Juvan), this workshop aims to reappraise the continuous veneration of canonical figures as part of the European nation-building process, especially in those smaller cultural communities who drew their sense of identity primarily from language and literature. Our working hypothesis is that para-religious elements (which characterize national movements as forms of “secular religion”) were instrumental in this process especially from the mid-nineteenth century to the beginning of the World War II. We aim to circumscribe the heuristic value of the metaphor of sanctitude through discussions of the relevant concepts (canonization, worship, rituals, relics) and the analysis of paradigmatic cases from a number of European literary cultures – from Iceland to Georgia and from Spanish Galicia to Estonia.

Organizers
Joep Leerssen, University of Amsterdam
Marijan Dović, ZRC SAZU, Ljubljana

Partner projects and institutions
SPIN Study Platform of Interlocking Nationalism
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