

# The Romantic (Be)Longing and National Poets: Imagining a Nation in European 19th-Century Literatures

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Thematic panel

Panel organizer: Marijan Dović

Session I, Galway, NUIG, August 27, 11.00–12.30

**Marijan Dović:** The Romantic (Be)Longing and National Poets: Introduction

**Marko Juvan:** The Aesthetics and Politics of Belonging: Prešeren between Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism

**César Domínguez:** Rosalía de Castro's *Familienroman*. Autobiography in *La hija del mar*

**Manus O'Dwyer:** The Poetics of (Non)Belonging: José Ángel Valente

Session II, Galway, NUIG, August 27, 13.45–15.30

**Jola Škulj:** Longing for the Self, Longing for the Other and Canonization

**Sándor Hites:** "Let Us Bless the Cradle that Rocked Him Hungarian": The Making of Petőfi as a National Poet

**Carmen Popescu:** Belonging to Several Traditions: National Heritage and Foreign Influences in Romanian Poetic Modernism

**Dimitar Kambourov:** Hristo Botev: The Ekstasis of Non-Belonging

Session III, Galway, NUIG, August 28, 9.00–10.45

**Urška Perenič:** Streets Named After National Poets and Writers in Major European Cities

**Katre Talviste:** When the Nation Wasn't Looking: 19th-Century Estonian Poets' Vision of Their People and Their Mission in Private Documents

**Arne Merilai:** Longing for Independence in 19th-Century Estonian Literature

## The Romantic (Be)Longing and National Poets: Introduction

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National poets are a phenomenon known in many European countries since it has significantly contributed to the formation of individual literary cultures throughout the long nineteenth century. The significance ascribed to particular national poets (in some cases, more candidates for this position existed) varied across Europe and usually depended on whether the emerging nations were politically or culturally subordinate. In most of the national literatures, the venerated figures originate in the Romantic age. The comparative research of posthumous careers of poets such as Adam Mickiewicz, Robert Burns, Sándor Petőfi, Hristo Botev, Mihai Eminescu, Karel H. Mácha, France Prešeren, Taras Ševčenko, Maironis, and Jónas Hallgrímsson has revealed that the patterns of their canonization were very similar – turning them into “cultural saints.” Nonetheless, compared to their afterlives, their opuses seem to be much more diverse. Within the canonization process, these poets were always given special credit in terms of contributing immensely to the “national cause.” In practice, however, the close reading of their texts reveals a variety of stances, attitudes, and ideas that do not always comply with the ideals of the mainstream leaders of nationalist movements. In this panel, we would like to research the ways of how, in their texts, the “national poets” and other key Romantic writers imagined their respective nation and its future prospects. How do the belonging to an imagined community and longing for its emancipation mark their texts? How have the subsequent generations of writers, scholars, and politicians interpreted, misinterpreted or appropriated the legacy of Romantic ideas during the process of canonization? Welcome are contributions about “cultural saints” and other key Romantic writers whose work represents the longing for and belonging to a nation.

**Marijan Dovič** is Senior Research Fellow at the ZRC SAZU Institute of the Slovenian Literature and Literary Studies (Ljubljana) and Associate Professor at the School of Humanities of the University of Nova Gorica. His books include *Sistemske in empirične obravnave literature* (Systemic and Empirical Approaches to Literature, 2004); a book on the development of the role of the literary producer, *Slovenski pisatelj* (The Slovenian Writer, 2007); and a book on Slovenian interwar avant-garde, *Mož z bombami* (The Man with the Bombs, 2009). His major publications in English deal with Romanticism, European cultural nationalism, a literary canon, systems theory, the avant-garde, and the theory of authorship.

## **The Aesthetics and Politics of Belonging: Prešeren between Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism**

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Jameson's thesis about modern Third-World literature as a national allegory may be pertinent for the nineteenth-century First-World literature. Why not, since postcolonial national movements have often followed the steps of their romantic predecessors from the West, especially those posthumously canonized as national icons? The discourse of several (post)romantic poets from European peripheries strove to saturate their mother tongue with aesthetic features they perceived as universal. However, national poets' adoption of cosmopolitan aesthetic standards from the emerging practices and canons of world literature (e.g., qualitative individualism, subjectivity, originality, imagination, organic style) was not a self-sufficient goal. Rather it was instrumental in their belonging to politics of national movements. The Slovene national poet France Prešeren (1800–1849) is a case in point. Outlining how and in what lingual and genre registers Prešeren imagined national past and prospects, I will analyze Prešeren's strategies of "worlding" (Kadir) of Slovenes. How did he imagine the position of Slovenes in the world republic of letters, world history, and international politics? How did he try to get over the tension between the aesthetical and the political in his oeuvre? This contradiction, along with that between nationalism and cosmopolitanism, characterized Prešeren's canonization. Conflicting appropriations of his work by the dramatic history of political discourse in the Slovene lands testify to this.

**Marko Juvan**, MAE, is literary theorist and comparatist, head of the Institute of Slovenian Literature and Literary Studies at the Research Center of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (ZRC SAZU), and professor of Slovenian literature at the University of Ljubljana. He has been member of the REELC/ENCLS Executive Committee and the ICLA/AILC Committee on Literary Theory. In addition to numerous articles and edited volumes (e.g., *World Literatures from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-first Century*, special issue of the *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, 2013), his recent book publications include *History and Poetics of Intertextuality* (2008), *Literary Studies in Reconstruction* (2011), and *Prešernovska struktura in svetovni literarni sistem* (The Prešernian Structure and the World Literary System, 2012).

## Rosalía de Castro's *Familienroman*. Autobiography in *La hija del mar*

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Whereas the canonization of Rosalía de Castro—Galicia's national poet—is the result of a biographical reading of her poetry, her prose writings, especially those written in Spanish, have remained marginal. And yet Rosalía de Castro herself required her novel *La hija del mar* to be read as an autobiography of sorts. My reading makes of Rosalía de Castro a “daughter of the sea” whose family relationships are questioned in several directions. First, I will carry out a prosopographical analysis of Rosalía de Castro's literary debut and, next, I will interrogate what I consider a productive marginality of *La hija del mar* in terms of literary genre. Finally, I will reread the main conclusions in the light of what Sigmund Freud called *Familienroman*.

**César Domínguez** is Associate Professor of comparative literature at the University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain, where he holds the Jean Monnet Chair “The Culture of European Integration”. His teaching and research focus upon theory of comparative literature, comparative literary history, comparative European literature, and world literature.

## The Poetics of (Non)Belonging: José Ángel Valente

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The relationship of Spanish language poet, José Ángel Valente, to his native Galicia raises profound questions as to the nature of linguistic belonging. Valente, the majority of whose work is written in Spanish, published in 1981 a collection in the Galician language, *Sete cántigas de alén*, extended versions of which were republished in 1989 and 1996. It is worth noting that in these collections Valente writes in a language that is removed from the normative Galician that was formulated in the 1980s. Valente seems to attempt to return to a language that escapes the constraints of statal norms. We can draw from this idiomatic use of language that Valente is marking the singularity of “his” Galician, the language of the hearth and of the fields which he learnt on visits to the rural surroundings of the Spanish speaking city in which he was raised. Valente’s gesture provokes questions as to what it means to “have” a language, and whether it is possible to oppose a familiar language of place to what Valente would term the “crystallized” language of the state. Reading Valente’s complicated sense of belonging with regard to Galicia and Galician language in light of Jacques Derrida’s reflections on a mother-tongue in his short text, *Monolingualism of the Other or; The Prosthesis of Origin*, I will explore the ways in which his poetry and poetics problematize the notions of origins and belonging, asserting both the singularity of place, but also the impossibility of return.

**Manus O'Dwyer** has recently completed a PhD in Comparative Literature at the University of Santiago de Compostela on the work of Spanish postwar poet, José Ángel Valente.

## Longing for the Self, Longing for the Other and Canonization

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Addressing the issue of longing for the self/longing for the other in Romanticism, the paper will focus on the needs of the romantic poets and their aspirations to the idea of national and to cosmopolitanism in views of creating a genuine literary canon. In the 19th century such aspiring ideas were current in most literatures and even more in the newly emerging ones. Romanticism is considered as a period of radical awareness of the self as *autonomous* and *absolute* being, hence the claims that its poetics emphasized the individual, the subjective, the irrational, the imaginative, the personal, the spontaneous, the emotional, and the visionary. The interest in the *self* and the *national* was an inherent part of Romantic newly imagined subjectivity in human self-understanding. Romanticist consciousness of the self positively gained fresh ground for national ideas, especially in literatures that were not yet fully formed. Poets were animated in their vigor for a unique though all-embracing understanding of their belonging. In German speaking lands the Shakespearean canon was freshly discovered and as the Bard his name became associated as the very epitome of imagination. The grandeur of his writings provoked Romantic creative thoughts to make their cultures to become opulent achievements as well. But nevertheless, the Slovenian territory was part of the German speaking world at that time, and Shakespeare's original works and his sonnets in German translations were found in the private library of Matija Čop, a literary mentor of France Prešeren, a canonic Romantic poet of Slovenian literature. However, there is no influence from Shakespeare in Prešeren's writings and even his name was never mentioned in the poems. Prešeren admired Petrarca and his sonnets and he often evoked him in his poetry as well as many other Classics: Homer, Ovid, Pindar, Dante, Camões, Cervantes, Tasso, etc. The paper will provide insight into Prešeren's exemplary longing for the self and longing for the other as the constitutive elements in the dynamics and complexity of the canonization process of his poetry.

**Jola Škulj** is an Independent Humanities Specialist at the Institute of Slovene Literature and Literary Studies of the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovene Academy of Sciences and Arts (Ljubljana). Her research focuses on the theoretical and methodological aspects of literature, as well as on historical studies in comparatist perspective. Her bibliography includes over 300 units. In addition to her wide-ranging scholarly interests, she organized several international meetings and conferences (on postmodernism, poststructuralism/deconstruction, Bakhtin and Humanities, on literature and spaces/spaces of transgressiveness, on comparative literature in 20<sup>th</sup> century between universal and local, on essay and singularity, on book as economy of cultural spaces, on Reading Live: Literature, Science and the Humanities ). She participated in several bilateral research programs and was invited to a number of international research projects. As an active member of ICLA/AILC and founding member of REELC/ENCLS she was elected in both Executive Councils; since 2010 she is a member of Research Committee AILC/ICLA. She was the President of the Slovenian Association of Comparative Literature (1997-2002) and its secretary (1985-1997).

## **“Let Us Bless the Cradle that Rocked Him Hungarian”: The Making of Petőfi as a National Poet**

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The title quotes the closing sentence of János Horváth’s immense monograph on Petőfi. The nearly 600-page book was published in 1922 as part of the state organized celebrations of the centenary of the poet’s birth (1823). Horváth’s call is itself a quote: it alludes to the poem *Cosmopolitan Poetry* (1878) by János Arany, a close friend of Petőfi’s, a poem that played a formative role in the Hungarian debates on the legitimacy of a solely national culture in the late 1870s.

Departing from the intertextual network this sentence evokes, I will study how Petőfi’s Slovakian origin or background was dealt with in the efforts of turning him into a Hungarian literary icon, how exemplary role his legacy came to play in the forming of a national cultural memory, and how Petőfi himself faced the issues of his own cultural and national identity.

**Sándor Hites** (1974) is a Senior Research Fellow at the Research Center for the Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He held visiting fellowships at the University of Amsterdam, the University of London, and the University of Edinburgh, and has lectured at several Hungarian universities. His works include a monograph on the 19th century historical novel and a monograph on the 20th century Hungarian literary exile. His current research interests range from exile studies and the economy of literature to the relations of cultural nationalism and modernity.

## **Belonging to Several Traditions: National Heritage and Foreign Influences in Romanian Poetic Modernism**

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By taking into account “the variety of modernist engagements with the past” (Fernald 2007: 157), I want to emphasize a peculiarity of Romanian inter-war poetry, namely the synthesis between modernism and traditionalism (despite the tension between the two trends, which tended to be seen in dichotomy, at least in the theoretical debates of the period).

The poetry I am concerned with often thematizes the relationship with the past (especially in the guise of the national heritage), by various metaphorical and allegorical strategies. Tudor Arghezi’s representation of the soul as an archaeological site and Alexandru Philippide’s poem about the soul perceived as a palimpsest are compelling examples in this direction. Tropes concerning spiritual heritage and the organic relationship with the ancestors are also pervasive with Lucian Blaga and Ion Pillat.

In terms of the explicit and implicit poetics, the focus was therefore on the continuity with previous generations rather than on the paradigm shift brought about by the modernist poets’ innovations. This awareness as to the importance of the voices of tradition and the intertextual devices associated with it are more than cultural nostalgia and also more than just defence mechanisms against the Bloomian “anxiety of influence”. They have been instrumental in shaping the poets’ sense of identity. But this consistent dialogue with tradition (both national and international) was accompanied by the vivid dialogue with contemporary avant-garde movements. Militant discussions of modernism (conducted, mainly, by Eugen Lovinescu) typically involved the necessity of *synchronization* with Western cultural development. In this way, there was a marked propensity towards palimpsestic appropriations of French and German models. However, the foreign influences only had a catalytic function, and local specificity was constantly inscribed in the modernist poetic texture. Instances of world literature, particularly from the classical and the Western canon, were seen on a par with national tradition and were equally converted into places of belonging.

**Carmen Popescu** is senior lecturer at the University of Craiova, Romania. Her research interests include comparative literature and world literature, dialogism, intertextuality, polyphony, literary communication, and (post)modernist poetics. Her recent publications include an edited volume *Comparatism, identitate, comunicare/ Comparativism, identity, communication* (Proceedings of the fourth edition of the CIC Conference, Universitaria Publishing House, Craiova, 2012) and a book *Scriturile diferenței. Intertextualitatea parodică în literatura română contemporană* (Craiova, Universitaria Publishing House, Craiova, 2006).

## Hristo Botev: The Ekstasis of Non-Belonging

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Bulgarian nineteenth-century literature, although largely unknown abroad, was and still is decisive for the formation of Bulgarian national identity. In this respect, the authority of Hristo Botev's has been uncontested for a century and a half. The poet invented the Bulgarian mytho-poetic narrative, imposing it as a set of political, social, and ethical principles crystallized to an insurmountable paradigm. Yet Botev's poetic agenda was not immune to contradictions. Based on an unquestioned natural belonging to the people, kin and family, Botev's nationalism was persistently extended towards social criticism and a utopian longing for class equality. Thus, the assumed unity and wholeness of the nation were permanently subverted: the well-to-do, educated, and respected representatives of the elite were stigmatized as not belonging to the nation as such, to "the people," the third-person collective subject which is passive, mute, and "swung in this slave cradle." Hence, the principle of natural national belonging clashed with the principle of social longing for equality and justice.

This unsolvable contradiction between the two kinds of struggles was additionally complicated by a third, most intimate longing – the quest for personal unbinding in the radical form of birth of its own accord: auto-conception, a self-emerging and unprecedented event beyond any kinship and class affiliation. Such a longing for an ecstatic self-liberation was challenged by the lack of alternative places to dwell, be they actual or symbolic. As a result, the mytho-poetic figure of an apocalyptic Motherland had to be re-articulated as the eternal "There" of a Coveted Death. Botev's suicide, orchestrated as a rebel raid, hence appears as logical and predestined. Bulgaria's most powerful national poet thus appears as a Gordian knot of contradicting longings and belongings. The corollaries for the national identity might be dramatic. The endemic Bulgarian inability to establish a functioning state might have to do with Botev's ongoing identity crisis of clashing longings and belongings.

**Dimitar Kambourov** is Associate Professor of Literary Theory at the University of Sofia, and Bulgarian Lector at Trinity College Dublin. His research focuses on literary theory, deconstruction, gender studies, postcolonial studies, and the postmodern canon in the Balkans. His books include *Явори и кло̀ни* (Sycamores and Branches, Sofia, 2003) and *Българска поетическа класика* (Bulgarian Poetic Classics, Sofia, 2004). He co-edited, with Irina Novikova, *Men in the Global World. Integrating Post-Socialist Perspectives* (Helsinki, 2003) and, with Maria Vassileva, *ProArt: АртПро* (Sofia, 2007).

## Streets Named After National Poets and Writers in Major European Cities

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The paper examines the streets, roads and squares named after major (national) literary authors in the strict(est) town centres of the chosen European cities. Here, at least two questions arise, namely, is it – from the today's point of view – possible to recognise a specific pattern in the arrangement of the streets, named after such writers (for example, if two streets lying close or parallel to each other bare the names of writers which were in immediate contact or formed a literary circle)? The other question is related to the symbolic messages that can be discerned by today's visitor from the individual street names and from the cluster of street names bearing the names of prominent national writers. Apart from Ljubljana, the Slovenian capital, other selected European cities will also be analysed from such viewpoint. The analysis will test the analytical tools, such as Google maps and GPS Visualizer, which are not designed only to show the results, but also help to generate new and fresh knowledge – concretely about “cultural saints” which borrowed the names to the city districts.

**Urška Perenič** is Assistant Professor of Slovene Literature at the University of Ljubljana. She is one of the leading Slovene scholars in the field of empirical literary studies. She wrote a monograph *Empirical-systemic literary research* (2010), a university textbook *Empiricism in literary studies* (2014) and has consistently published in Slovene and foreign scholarly journals. In 2012/13 (winter semester) she was a guest professor at the University of Vienna.

## When the Nation Wasn't Looking: 19th-Century Estonian Poets' Vision of Their People and Their Mission in Private Documents

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In the context of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Estonian literature and national awakening, four poets are of equal significance, although two of them – Kristian Jaak Peterson (1801-1822) and Juhan Liiv (1864-1913) – found readers for their poetry mostly in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The other two – Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald (1803-1882) and Koidula (1843-1886) – acquired the status of national poets without delay. However, all of them have, from today's point of view, equally contributed to the construction of national identity and its poetic expression. The ways and meaning of being Estonian are an important theme in their poetry. Kreutzwald and Koidula addressed the subject in the heyday of the national awakening, in a manner that was acceptable and inspiring for contemporary readers as a community. Peterson and Liiv were more personal or individualistic in their reflections and poetic endeavors, but all the more appreciated and eagerly canonized when the newly formed nation began to reinvent and modernize itself at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the process of canonization, various private documents were also included in the public canon, for example Kreutzwald's correspondence with Koidula (edited in 1910-1911; 1962), Peterson's diary (1922; 1976), Liiv's letters to his fiancée (1996). While the nation that they helped build has claimed their private thoughts as its own, these have not considerably influenced the general perception of their vision of their nation and their role in it. Their private thoughts might offer us nuances and new perspectives for continued meaningful canonization of their work, showing them less as fearless supporters of the national cause, and more as thoughtful examiners of the possibilities and limits of the national cause in a wider, multinational and multicultural context. I propose to discuss some of these perspectives in this paper, with a focus on their potential pedagogical use.

**Katre Talviste** (b. 1978) took her PhD in comparative literature at the Paris 12 (now Paris-Est) University in 2007 with a thesis about Baudelaire's translations into Estonian, and held a postdoctoral research grant at the University of Tartu from 2010 to 2013, studying translations of French poetry in the context of Estonian literature. She now holds a part-time position of Senior researcher at the University of Tartu, is an editor of textbooks and educational software for literature at the Avita publishing house and the managing editor of *Interlitteraria*, journal of the Estonian Association of Comparative Literature. Her main research interests are Estonian poetry and history of translation. She has published a monograph (*La poésie estonienne et Baudelaire*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2011), a collection of essays (*Laulmine iseendast ja teistest. Mõtteid tõlkivatest luuletajatest*, University of Tartu Press, 2013) and various articles (listed at the database [www.etis.ee](http://www.etis.ee)).

## Longing for Independence in 19th-Century Estonian Literature

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Estonia reached its first sovereignty as a country in 1918, lost it in 1940 to the Soviets and Nazis, and regained it again in 1991. The paper will address the early emergence and prospering development of the idea of national and cultural self-sufficiency – the very heart of the Estonian identity, free belonging – as it is evoked in 19th-century Estonian texts. It was the era of shaping a newly formed literature and promoting free speech by a suppressed people kept under the yoke of Baltic-German serfdom, and subjected to its aftermaths in the Russian Empire. The paper will focus on modern identity construction: economic, political, mental, linguistic, and artistic emancipation, anticipated in literature. To what extent can one characterise this form of progress in terms of implicit self-colonisation? Possible answers to this question and salient issues related to it will emerge from an examination of the line of works by authors such as Kristian Jaak Peterson (1801–1822), Friedrich Robert Faehlmann (1798–1850), Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald (1803–1882) and his epic *Kalevipoeg*, Johann Voldemar Jannsen (1819–1890), Carl Robert Jakobson (1841–1882), Lydia Koidula (1843–1886), Jakob Pärn (1843–1916), Eduard Bornhöhe (1862–1923), Eduard Vilde (1865–1933) and Juhan Liiv (1864–1913), as well as the revolutionary Young Estonia movement (1905–1916). The paper will illuminate and occasionally defamiliarise some petrified cultural legends central to our understanding of Estonia and its history of thought.

**Arne Merilai** is Professor and Chair of Estonian Literature at the University of Tartu. His main research interests include national literature in comparative contexts, literary philosophy and poetics. He has developed a unique pragmapoetics and unified field literary theory, published five monographs, an anthology of ballads, a textbook of poetics, and edited several scholarly volumes. In addition, he has authored two collections of poetry, a play, and a novel.