

## REVIEWS

**Marijan Dović and Jón Karl Helgason**, eds. *Great Immortality: Studies on European Cultural Sainthood*. National Cultivation of Culture 18. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018. 353 pp., illustrations, \$159 (hardcover) ISBN 9789004364295; \$159 (e-book) ISBN 9789004395138.

This richly varied collection highlights national cultural figures' shared paths to "great immortality," a category the editors borrow from Milan Kundera's novel of the same name. The objects of study are prominent personages championed by national movements, and the collective aim of the book is to show the impact of the former on the latter. Some of the fifteen contributors to this collection refer to the model of canonization presented in the editors' 2017 book, *National Poets, Cultural Saints: Canonization and Commemoration Cults of Writers in Europe*. While canonization processes may span extended periods, readers will find interesting examples of recent and current moves to canonize cultural figures.

The first two chapters work in tandem to usher in the background and means of canonizing cultural saints. Chapter 1, "Sacral States: The Politics of Worship, Religious and Secular," by Joep Leerssen, traces the secular religion of the post-Rousseau state to the Enlightenment. The chapter reviews ways of looking at rites from the anthropological perspectives of Émile Durkheim and Frits Staal; it introduces Edmund Burke's definition of charisma; brings in Max Weber's description of political leadership, and Thomas Carlyle's explanation of hero worship in the post-Napoleonic period. The section on temples notes the beginnings of centenary celebrations, leading into the following chapter.

The second chapter, “Framing the Bones of Dante and Petrarch: Literary Cults and Scientific Discourse,” presents the first particular case. In order better to understand the ideologies of cults of cultural saints, Harald Hendrix explores people’s motivations for exhuming the poets’ remains and the memorial practices surrounding them in general. The chapter is a very physical introduction to the treatment of cultural saints, buttressed and complicated by precise measurements made starting in 1843 (Petrarch) and 1865 (Dante). Centenary celebrations shown a light on scientists as well, and they became “entangled in the peculiar mix of profane and religious attitudes that... framed the handling of these relics” (39). When (1921) measurements lead to Fabio Frassetto reconstructing Dante’s face, Hendrix observes the impact of the poet’s cult on science. The article concludes by looking forward the next exhumation of Dante’s remains, in 2021.

The following five chapters deal with Slavic national poets. This review considers three of them, those related to Slovene culture. Three more chapters trace the canonization of non-Slavic European national poets. The following (chapters 10–12) look at poets canonized in more than one country, and chapters 13 and 14 examine artists in fields other than literature. Chapter 15 concludes the book with a theoretical juxtaposition of religious saints and cultural saints.

In chapter 5, “Hagiographic Discourse in the Early Biographies of France Prešeren,” Alenka Koron presents a clear description of hagiography and legend and sorts out their employment in narrating the lives of religious and secular figures. She then uses Marc Van Uytvanghe’s four features of hagiographic discourse in texts about secular figures to examine a series of biographies and then secular hagiographies of France Prešeren, beginning with Fran Levstik’s (1863) brief account of the poet’s life and ending with Engelbert Gangl’s “Slava Prešernu!” published for the 1905 unveiling of the poet’s monument in Ljubljana. This survey of works about Prešeren is quite informative and very entertaining. The conclusion looks forward to examining twentieth-century trends.

In “Stanko Vraz and the Missing Saints of the Illyrian Movement” (chapter 6), Andraž Jež seeks to explain why the movement did not produce a Romantic national poet akin to France Prešeren in the Slovene lands. Jež considers the Illyrian movement on the background of European Romanticism, which he connects to political liberalism in England, a western center of Romanticism, and describes in the “(semi-)periphery” of Central and Eastern Europe, still dominated by feudal relations and despotic rule in the first half of the nineteenth century. The Central European Romantic poets who posthumously became cultural saints were isolated individuals in hostile social circumstances. To be sure, Jež notes how poets on the periphery modelled themselves on English Romantic poets, but the weight of his argument rests on differing socio-economic conditions. (A two-page

bibliography unfortunately does not point to the rich literature on liberalism and Romanticism that clearly informs the author's approach.)

The chapter furnishes a helpful description of varying conditions within the Austro-Hungarian provinces as a basis for addressing Illyrian exceptionalism, of the Illyrian Movement's ideological underpinnings (including Pan-Slavism), as well as of background on erotic lyric poetry. This leads to a fascinating juxtaposition of Western European lyric aspirations and peripheral epic tendencies, which Jež illustrates in the work of the Slovak poet Ján Kollár, and specifically his *Slávy dcera*. Stanko Vraz's subjective lyricism then becomes a foil to Kollár's poetry, although both shared Austrophile and Pan-Slavic views. Readers will appreciate the article's lucid comparisons of literary figures in Croatian, Czech, Slovene, and other cultures.

The explanation of Illyrian exceptionalism—that is, the absence of a national Romantic poet—is located in subtle contrasts between Vraz and Prešeren, the centripetal nature of the movement itself, and the collective honoring of would-be Croatian national saints. Jež, then, goes a long way to helping the reader understand cultural sainthood by exploring the reasons for a failed case.

Chapter 14 is one of three about non-literary figures. Luka Vidmar's look at "Antoni Gaudí and Jože Plečnik: Two Architects on the Path from Cultural Canonization to Catholic Beatification," describes the Catalan architect's favorable prospects for becoming a Roman Catholic saint and the lesser likelihood that Plečnik will. This inverse, as it were, move—from secular to religious sainthood—seems to underscore the significance of canonization of either variety. Vidmar explains the importance of Pope John Paul II's support for Fra Angelico's beatification to the candidacy of the two architects and non-literary figures in general, thus shedding further light on the hierarchy of the arts in both the religious and secular realms, as the editors indicate in the introduction. Vidmar's concluding comparison of the Catalan and Slovene cases relates to processes, audiences, and, most importantly, the national movements' respective progress.

Chapter 15, "From the Culture of Saints to the Saints of Culture: The Saint and the Writer between Life and Work," draws a clear distinction between Roman Catholic saints' aspiration to lead a holy life and cultural saints' desire to produce enduring works of art: "whereas sainthood follows from a certain kind of life, cultural sainthood follows from a certain kind of work" (333). The author, Jernej Habjan, draws on Max Weber, Mikhail Bakhtin, Louis Althusser, and Benedict Andersen's thought to explain the distinction and its origins in Protestantism. Along the way, Habjan provides an excellent example of the shift to modernity in the Russian priest Avvakum's autobiography or self-hagiography, which sheds additional light on Koron's review of accounts of Prešeren's life. An important contribution

of this chapter is its explanation of the difference between cultural workers and cultural saints on the one hand, and priests and saints on the other, which in the Western tradition yields a synchronic space occupied by cultural saints (the immortal) and mediocrities (e.g., Mozart and Salieri). The essential contradiction is between cultural saint and cultural worker, not cultural saint and religious saint. A second spatial consideration, one that is key to the volume is center and periphery. This returns us to, for example, Vidmar's chapter on Gaudí and Plečnik.

This selective look at the collection's contents shows the depth and breadth of thought and research underlying all the contributions, and how this field of scholarship continues to evolve even as there are new developments in its objects of study.

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**Cvetka Lipuš.** *Kaj smo, ko smo/What We Are, When We Are*. Translated by Tom Priestly. Edmonton: AU Press, 2018. IX + 92 pp. ISBN: 9781771992497.

*Kaj smo, ko smo (What We Are, When We Are)* is the seventh volume of verse by the accomplished Carinthian Slovene poet, Cvetka Lipuš, and the fourth published in Ljubljana (Beletrina, 2015). Now, with the appearance of this elegant little bilingual edition, it has become the first of her books to be translated into English. The translator is Tom Priestly, past editor of *Slovene Studies* and a specialist in Carinthian Slovene linguistics who has been translating Slovene poetry into English since 1992—thus a natural choice to introduce Lipuš to a broader Anglophone audience. While naturally there are things one can quibble with, his renderings of this complex, sophisticated verse are generally most impressive.

Cvetka Lipuš, who is the daughter of the important Carinthian writer Florjan Lipuš, has already earned an impressive array of awards for her poetry, including the Carinthian Provincial Literary Prize, an Austrian State Grant for Literature, and, in 2016, a prestigious Prešeren Fund Award. Born in Železna Kapla/Eisenkappel in southern Austria, she has also lived in Ljubljana and—for fifteen years—in the U.S. before settling in Salzburg in 2009. Not surprisingly, *bivanjska problematika* (“the problem of permanent residence”) has been a major theme of her poetry from the beginning.<sup>1</sup> In the

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Tanja Petrič in her review of Lipuš's 2008 collection *Obleganje sreče* (*Sodobnost* 2008: 1,681–85, especially 1,681).