Relics and Rituals: The Canonization of Cultural "Saints" from a Social Perspective

Jón Karl Helgason
Department of Icelandic and Comparative Cultural Studies, University of Iceland, Reykjavík
jkh@hi.is

This article discusses the social role of European cultural saints with reference to three nineteenth-century writers: Slovenia's France Prešeren, Denmark's Hans Christian Andersen, and Iceland's Jónas Hallgrímsson.

Keywords: national literary canon / Slovene literature / Icelandic literature / Danish literature / national poets / Prešeren, France / Halgrímsson, Jónas / Andersen, Hans Christian / comparative studies

During the past few centuries, certain European intellectuals have played a vital part in the formation of the national identity of their countrymen, through their work either in the political or the cultural arena. In this group, we find writers, artists, and composers, along with scholars in the field of humanities. Consequently, some of these men and women (though women are rare exceptions) have become national symbols in their respective countries. Their public political afterlife is an interesting field of study, in particular in the context of cultural nationalism, defined by scholars such as John Hutchinson and Joep Leerssen. As the latter has pointed out, the revival of ethnic culture in Europe was not only important when fledgling nationalist/separatist movements began to emerge in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries:

> Culture remains on the agenda even when national movements have obtained a full-fledged social and political activist presence […]. Even after the achievement of a nationalist objective in the establishment of sovereign statehood, one can see an undiminished concern for the cultivation of the national culture in the setup of the new state. (Leerssen 563)

These days, the collective memory relating to the sorts of individuals mentioned above is primarily cultivated by public institutions, such as museums, ministries, and even national parliaments. In some sense, these

individuals have assumed the symbolic role earlier played by certain monarchs and religious saints in the European context. Hence, there is a case for referring to these cultural-national representatives simply as "cultural 'saints'" (Verdery 1) and for using concepts traditionally reserved for discussing religious phenomena to analyse their legacy.[1]

In this article, I will discuss the social role of European cultural saints with reference to three nineteenth-century writers: Slovenia's France Prešeren, Denmark's Hans Christian Andersen, and Iceland's Jónas Hallgrímsson. There will be a focus on the way in which later generations have regarded and treated various remains of their lives as relics. Furthermore, the way these relics can be and have been a source of social rituals will be traced. This approach is inspired by Itamar Even-Zohar's discussion of culture as being culture-as-goods and culture-as-tools. In the first case, "culture is considered as a set and stock of evaluable goods, the possession of which signifies wealth, high status, and prestige" (Even-Zohar, "Culture" 9). In the second case, "culture is considered as a set of operating tools for the organization of life, on both the collective and individual levels" (Even-Zohar, "Culture", 12). One can cite the example of skaldic poets within the Norwegian court in medieval times as illustrative of both aspects. The poets were regarded as cultural property or goods, signifying the king's wealth and power, but at the same time they were useful instruments in enhancing the royal ideology and the legacy of the king (see Even-Zohar, "The Role" 45). Similarly, European cultural saints have a double political function in the context of cultural nationalism: they are both a source for the production of various cultural goods, such as monuments and museums, and are frequently used as tools to organize time, space and ideas within the nation state.

National Poets

From the traditional perspective of literary and cultural history, the canonization of an author or an artist is generally regarded as confirmation that his or her works have exemplary aesthetic or ideological qualities, or at least that they were in some sense ground-breaking or exceptional when created (Sheffy 511–12). From the perspective of social history, such canonization generally means that the person in question is idolized, institutionalized and even mobilized in shaping socio-political realities. Generally, the first step is the basis for the second step; before Prešeren, Andersen and Hallgrímsson assumed the roles of cultural saints, they had been defined as the "national poets" (cf. Nemoianu) of Slovenia, Denmark and Iceland respectively.

Born on December 3, 1800, in the small village of Vrba in Carniola, France Prešeren was the third of eight siblings. His father was only a farmer but, with the financial assistance of some relatives, managed to send his son to school, first to Ljubljana and later to the university in Vienna, where Prešeren was awarded a degree in law in 1828. Back in Ljubljana, he had a hard time securing permission to start his own law firm and worked for years as an assistant to other lawyers. In 1846, just three years before his untimely death, he opened his own practice in the town of Kranj. During his school-years in Ljubljana, Prešeren had started to write poetry but he burned most of his earliest works after showing them "to Jernej Kopitar, the most learned and respected Slovene of the time, who was censor for Slavic and New Greek books in Vienna" (Cooper 26). Later, the two of them were at odds in a fierce debate about the alphabet of the Slovenian language. In 1827 Prešeren's first poem was published, both in Slovenian and German, and in the following years he became quite renowned for poems such as those published in the literary almanac *The Carniolan Bee* (*Krajnska čbelica*). One of the poet's most important allies at this time was theoretician Matija Čop who encouraged him to take "up the project of proving the aesthetic potential of Slovene through mastering the most complex and appreciated forms of European poetry" (Dović, "France Prešeren" 100), including the Italian sonnet, and one of Prešeren's best known works is his "A Wreath of Sonnets" ("Sonetni venec"). His first book, published in 1836, contained the lyrical epic poem *The Baptism on the Savica* (*Krst pri Savici*). A decade later his first collection of poetry was published. At that time, however, Prešeren had become "an isolated, inconsolable, and rather pathetic figure. He no longer wrote, and by the end of 1848 he could not even walk. He even failed when, in midsummer, he tried to commit suicide" (Cooper 38). Prešeren died on February 8, 1849, and was buried in Kranj.

Hans Christian Andersen was born in the city of Odense in Denmark on April 2, 1805. When he was eleven, his father, a shoemaker, died; his mother married another shoemaker two years later but he also died in 1822. At the age of fourteen, Andersen went to Copenhagen, determined to become an actor. He had a fine singing voice and attended dance and singing classes but never realized his childhood dream of performing in the theatre. In this early period, several patrons helped Andersen financially; the most important of these was Jonas Collin who made it possible for him to attend schools in Slagelse and Helsingør. In the late 1820s, Andersen started to write in earnest. His debut was in 1829 when he published some travel-sketches and poems. The same year, a play he had written was performed at the Royal Theatre, but without much success (Bredsdorf 84). Andersen's breakthrough came in 1835 with the au-

tobiographical novel *The Improvisatore* (*Improvisatoren*). In this period, he started to publish children's tales, such as "The Princess and the Pea" ("Prindsessen paa Ærten"), "The Little Mermaid" ("Den lille Havfrue") and "The Emperor's New Clothes" ("Keiserens nye Klæder"). These quickly gained popularity abroad and even while some critics and fellow artists in Denmark continued to be critical of Andersen as a writer, he was becoming an international celebrity, receiving decorations of the Danish state and even being appointed an honorary citizen of Odense. When he died on August 4, 1875, Andersen's funeral in The Church of Our Lady (*Vor Frue Kirke*) in Copenhagen was attended by the royal family, members of the cabinet and the parliament, the mayor of Copenhagen and representatives from all the major towns of Denmark (Andersen 395–400).

The son of a parish-priest, Jónas Hallgrímsson was the third of four siblings, born at the farm Hraun in Öxnadalur Valley in northern Iceland on November 16, 1807. After Hallgrímsson's father drowned in 1816, he was fostered by an aunt and uncle at a neighbouring farm in Eyjafjörður. At the age of fourteen, he was sent to study with the parish priest at the farm Goðdalir in the Skagafjörður district, and later he became a student at the grammar school at Bessastaðir, in the south-western part of the country. After graduating from there in 1829, Hallgrímsson worked as a scribe in Reykjavík for three years before leaving for Denmark where he studied law and later natural science at the University of Copenhagen. He graduated in 1835 and spent the following years primarily carrying out research in Iceland. In 1842 he moved back to Denmark, with the intention of writing an extensive book on Icelandic nature and geography. During his university years, Hallgrímsson had begun to publish his own poems and translations in the cultural journal *Fjölnir*, which he edited along with three fellow students: Konráð Gíslason, Tómas Sæmundsson and Brynjólfur Pétursson. Like Prešeren, Hallgrímsson was responsible for introducing some forms of European poetry into his homeland's literature, including the Italian sonnet, and used these forms for his most patriotic poems, such as "Gunnar's Holm" ("Gunnarshólmi", in terza and ottava rima), "Iceland" ("Ísland", in hexameter and pentameter) and the sonnet "I Send Greetings!" ("Ég bið að heilsa!"). He also revitalized the ancient poetic forms of the *Poetic Edda* and harshly criticized the popular but sterile epic poetic tradition of the Icelandic *rímur*. During his travels in Iceland, often far from any home comforts, Hallgrímsson started to experience some health problems. He died on May 26, 1845, after falling down the stairs leading up to his Copenhagen apartment, and was buried in the Assistent churchyard (*Assistent kirkegård*), not far from the place where H.C. Andersen would later be buried (cf. Ringler 1–75; Valsson).

From a political perspective, there are similarities between the situations in Carniola and Iceland in the nineteenth century. While most of the area that later became Slovenia had been an administrative unit of the Habsburg Monarchy since the fourteenth century, Iceland had been a part of the Norwegian and then the Danish crowns since 1262. In both places a peaceful but enthusiastic nationalistic awakening was taking place during Prešeren's and Hallgrímsson's lifetimes, gradually fostering claims of increased political autonomy. For various reasons, the two poets were ideal representatives of the cultural nationalism in their countries. Prešeren emphasized explicitly in his works the key role of poets and poetry in rousing the national spirit, and produced a mythical past of the ancient Slovenian people in works such as *The Baptism on the Savica* (cf. Juvan 245–247; "Early Literary 201–203). Similarly, Hallgrímsson and the other editors of *Fjölnir* took an active part in public debate about the restoration of the Icelandic parliament at the historic site of Þingvellir (literally 'Parliament Fields'). In some of his best known poems, such as "Iceland" and "Gunnar's Holm", Hallgrímsson depicts the first centuries after the settlement of Iceland around the year 900 as a prosperous Golden Age when Icelanders were not subjects of a foreign power (Helgason, "The Mystery" 38–39). The next generation of poets and intellectuals in both of these countries keenly published and praised the works of Prešeren and Hallgrímsson and gradually canonized them in terms of literary history. Accordingly, a public statue of Prešeren was unveiled in Ljubljana in 1905 and two years later a similar monument of Hallgrímsson was unveiled in Reykjavík. In both instances, public collections were organized to finance the projects; the history of these monuments reveals, in Marijan Dović's words, "the marriage of literature and national politics, which indelibly marked the second half of the nineteenth century" (Dović, "France Prešeren" 97).

Contrary to the Slovenian and the Icelandic poets, Andersen has never been a representative of the radical nationalistic ideals of the nineteenth century. While both Prešeren and Hallgrímsson died relatively poor and at the prime of their lives, portraying elements of the tragic, bohemian Byronic hero, the effeminate Danish writer enjoyed success, travelled widely around Europe, socialized with the upper class and lived long enough to witness his own canonization. He was not politically active and although he wrote some patriotic poems, he was more in favour of ideas about the unity of Scandinavia than traditional nationalism (Adriansen 3:145). His career could be interpreted as being symbolic of the increased social mobility made possible by industrialisation and the political developments in Denmark during his lifetime. With a new democratic constitution, Denmark became a constitutional monarchy in 1849, paving the way for

farmers and workers to become progressively influential in the political arena. Furthermore, having sold the Danish colony of Tranquebar in India and its forts on the African Gold Coast to Britain in 1845 and 1850, and having lost control of Norway in 1812 and the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein in 1864, Denmark was no longer a major European power. In this context, Andersen can be seen as a medium between the monarchy and the nation state. Indeed, some of his best known tales deal with the uneasy relationship between different social classes. As Dag Heede has pointed out, the somewhat surprising popularity of their "quaint" author abroad was comforting to the Danes after having lost the Schleswig and Holstein-War to the Prussian forces. "Andersen proved certainly extremely handy for the new national image and its 'small, but beautiful' self-understanding, this new minimised Denmark as being a sweet Lilliput-kingdom, in which the national poet is the most idyllic of all: an author of fairy-tales and a friend of children" (Heede 28). This image of Andersen was being constructed in the early 1870s when a public collection was organized to finance the erection of a statue of him to mark his upcoming seventieth birthday. Andersen himself was an active participant in this undertaking, opposing the initial idea to have a child sitting next to him on the pedestal ("H.C. Andersen Monument", 416). For this and other reasons, the statue was not unveiled until 1880, five years after the writer's death.

Monarchy, Church, Nation State

The democratic movement in Europe triggered a mass-production of new political traditions in individual countries in the period 1870 to 1914, as Eric Hobsbawm has pointed out. New forms of ruling by states and social or political hierarchies "required new methods of ruling or establishing bonds of loyalty" (Hobsbawm 263). The key to success in this area was "in broadcasting on a wavelength to which the public was ready to tune in. Official new public holidays, ceremonies, heroes or symbols, which commanded the growing armies of the state's employees and the growing captive public of schoolchildren, might still fail to mobilize the citizen volunteers if they lacked genuine popular resonance" (Hobsbawm 263–264). To illustrate this, Hobsbawm evokes the ultimately futile attempts of the German Empire to define Emperor William I as the founding father of a united Germany: "Official encouragement did secure the building of 327 monuments to him by 1902, but within *one* year of Bismarck's death in 1898, 470 municipalities had decided to erect 'Bismarck columns'" (Hobsbawm 264).

This example suggests that during this period, individuals such as Bismarck and the three men under discussion were largely replacing the monarch as a unifying symbol of the state. But according to Benedict Anderson, the development of the European nation state as a cultural entity can only be fully understood in relation to the development of both the monarchy and the church. In his view, the territorial reach and impact of the great religious systems of the world was originally achieved "through the medium of a sacred language linked to a superterrestrial order of power" (Anderson 20). In the case of Christianity, Latin was instrumental in this respect, but after the late Middle Ages—with ever more extensive travelling between continents and the development of print-capitalism—the power of that language and hence the Church waned. Anderson is not saying that "the appearance of nationalism towards the end of the eighteenth century was 'produced' by the erosion of religious certainties", but rather that "nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which—as well as against which—it came into being" (Anderson 19). From this perspective, there are certain similarities between the Church's emphasis on the sacred language and the Holy Scripture and the nationalist movement's emphasis on the vernacular and its 'sacred' literature. National poets become particularly important because they cultivated the 'holy language' of the nation state.

Some scholars, however, claim that the significance and the active involvement of the Church was a major premise for nation-construction in many European states. Adrian Hastings, for instance, has classified the various ways in which religion has stimulated nationalism under seven headings:

> [F]irst, sanctifying the starting point; second, the mythologisation and commemoration of great threats to national identity; third, the social role of the clergy; fourth, the production of vernacular literature; fifth, the provision of a biblical model for the nation; sixth, the autocephalous national church; seventh, the discovery of a unique national destiny. (Hastings 187–88)

Using this categorisation, he explains i.e. the importance of Saint Sava for the national consciousness of the Serbs, and describes the role Joan of Arc played in the war between France and England in the fifteenth century. Partially responding to Hobsbawm's scepticism about the existence of national consciousness in medieval and early modern societies, as conveyed in his *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, Hastings claims that already in this period the "requirements of their work and of the church forced the clergy to think in local, vernacular and, increasingly, national terms. This is most evident from the sixteenth century on, not only with the Protestant

clergy publicly committed to vernacular scriptures and services, but also with the Catholic clergy, French, Spanish or Irish" (Hastings 192). In this context, Hastings objects to Anderson's claim about the sacred status of Latin. On the contrary, the success of the Christian faith in his view can best be explained with reference to the church's long and rich translation tradition. Indeed, early translations of the Bible are frequently regarded as major monuments of national culture and were often groundbreaking for the conception of vernacular literature.

Undoubtedly, the views of both Anderson and Hastings are useful to a consideration of the broader cultural context of European cultural saints. Religious and national sentiments go hand in hand in some European nation states. Saint Patrick, who is credited for converting the people of Ireland to Christianity in the fifth century, is still so highly regarded by the Irish that his saint-day is also celebrated as Ireland's national day. In France, however, the nation state is the product of an aggressive revolt against the power of the monarch and the church. David A. Bell, who has written about the roots of French nationalism between 1680 and 1800, claims that during this period there was already a growing interest in various of France's bygone "heroes". The elevation of these persons—through biographies, poems, portraits and statues—was partially inspired by classical examples, but the "writers and artists nonetheless found themselves drawing on religious language and symbolism to foster devotion to the secular deity of the *patrie*" (Bell 108). Addressing the topic from a more general perspective, Bell quotes a speech, delivered by Jean-Paul Rabaut de Saint-Etienne in the hall of the National Convention in Paris in 1792, in which he suggested that public moulding in the new, enlightened and democratic French state should be based on models developed by the Church:

> The secret was well known to the priests, who, with their catechisms, their processions […] their ceremonies, sermons, hymns, missions, pilgrimages, patron saints, paintings, and all that nature placed at their disposal, infallibly led men to the goal they designated. They took hold of a man at birth, grasped him again in childhood, adolescence and adulthood, when he married and had children, in his moments of grief and remorse, in the sanctum of his conscience […] in sickness and at death. In this way they managed to cast many far-flung nations, differing in their customs, languages, laws, color and physical makeup, into the same mold, and to give them the same opinions. O cunning lawgivers, who speak to us in the name of heaven, should we not do in the name of truth and freedom, what you so often did in the name of error and slavery? (Bell 3; citing Rabaut 803).

Even as the revolutionaries sought to reduce the influence of the Church, they were nevertheless influenced by what they had learnt from the clergy. Some of their nationalistic projects, such as the Panthéon in

Paris—where the "former Church of Sainte-Geneviève was transformed during the French Revolution into a monument to (and final resting place for) 'the great men of the *Patrie*'" (Bell 137)—can be described as brilliant examples of palimpsest, where holy catholic relics were literally replaced by the physical remains of French cultural saints such as Voltaire, Rousseau and Zola.

Incidentally, the bones of Réne Descartes never made it to the Panthéon, but as early as 1666 a part of his skeleton was translated from Stockholm under the supervision of leading French Cartesians and reburied the following year in the Sainte-Geneviève-du-Mont Church in Paris; "the model—Catholic treatment of holy bones as relics—was so closely copied in all its particulars that it isn't even right to speak of the reburial as a secular co-opting of a religious event. It *was* a religious event—an attempt to carry the scientific perspective into a world circumscribed by religious awareness" (Shorto 70). However, this tradition also intersects with the preservation of royal remains, as indicated by the example of Westminster Abbey in London. Various kings, queens and bishops have been interred in the Collegiate Church of St. Peter at Westminster in London, built by the king-saint Edward the Confessor, but its Poets' Corner is marked as the final resting place of some important writers and artists, including Spencer, Dryden, Johnson, Tennyson, Dickens, Kipling and Hardy. The first poet to be moved to this section of the church was Geoffrey Chaucer in 1556. "In being translated to a worthier tomb in the main shrine of Catholic and Christian England he is being given the treatment normally accorded to a saint or other venerable person" (Prendergast 143; citing Pearsall 64).

Relics

In a religious context, relics refer either to physical remains of a saint or other personal items of religious significance. A well known example of the latter are relics of the True Cross of Christ, which the Empress Helena, mother of Emperor Constantine, is claimed to have brought back with her from Jerusalem in the fourth century. Alleged pieces of this cross are stored in shrines in churches around the world (cf. Thiede and D'Ancona). In the following analysis, the concept of *relics* is used in a more general sense about various remains of cultural saints that have been systematically preserved by public institutions, ranging from essentials of their physical existence to items or buildings relating to their lives.

Preservation of the body

Although the physical remains of Prešeren and Andersen have not been translated between cemeteries, their graves are well tended. In 1852, three years after Prešeren's death, his coffin was moved to a more central place in the Kranj churchyard and an impressive tombstone, for which a prominent figure of Slovenian cultural and political life, Janez Bleiweis, had collected funds, was unveiled. In 1939, a new resting place was opened in Kranj and thirteen years later the city council decided to convert the old necropolis into a special Prešeren's Grove (*Prešernov gaj*). Visitors to the memorial can view the tombstones of the poet, his daughter and a few other famous individuals that had been buried in the old cemetery, as well as a bust of Prešeren created by Lojze Dolinar. Similarly, the grave of Andersen has been made a special site within the Assistent churchyard in Copenhagen. The Danish writer was originally buried there in 1874 in a burial ground owned by Edvard Collin, the son of Jonas Collin. A decade later, Edvard was buried there and in 1894 his wife Henriette joined him. The Collins got a special headstone, but in 1914 this was moved to a cemetery in Frederiksberg (*Frederiksberg kirkegård*) in Copenhagen where most of the Collin family is buried. Hence, it now seems that Andersen is buried alone in his grave (Johansen 17). As already mentioned, Hallgrímsson was also buried in the Assistent churchyard in 1845. For almost a century, his grave was not only neglected by Icelanders, but reused several times for the interment of other people. In the 1940s, two years after declaring independence from Denmark, Icelanders decided to recover the bones of their national poet from Copenhagen. Hallgrímsson (or what was left of him) was reburied in the new national cemetery at Þingvellir in the southern part of Iceland in 1946. Being the site of the medieval parliament and a setting of important scenes in many of the Icelandic Sagas, this beautiful place has been characterized as Iceland's *lieu de mémoire* (cf. Hálfdanarson).

In her book, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies*, Katherine Verdery analyses numerous cases of burials and reburials taking place in Eastern Europe in the last decade of the twentieth century. In her introduction, she affirms that "[d]ead bodies have enjoyed political life the world over and since far back in time". Accordingly, she refers to Sophocles' description of the contest between Thebes and Athens to be Oedipus' burial city, the struggle between medieval European holy sites for saints' relics, and the shuttling of Dante's body "back and forth between Florence and Ravenna, according to shifting political fortunes" (Verdery 1). She also mentions the translation in the 1980s and 1990s of singer Fyodor Chaliapin to Russia, and composers Béla Bartók to Hungary, Jan Paderewski to Poland and

Bohuslav Martinů to the Czech Republic. There are many other such cases, but Verdery suggests that the putting up and tearing down of statues is another form of manipulation with dead bodies:

> Statues are dead people cast in bronze or carved in stone. They symbolize a specific famous person while in a sense also *being* the body of that person. By arresting the process of that person's bodily decay, a statue alters the temporality associated with the person, bringing him into the realm of the timeless or the sacred, like an icon. (Verdery 5)

The oldest statues of Prešeren, Andersen and Hallgrímsson have already been mentioned, but in order to interpret the importance of these physical monuments, their number and placement is significant. The statue of Prešeren was unveiled in the centre of Ljubljana, at crossroads that used to be in front of the old city-gate. On one side runs the Ljubljanica-river, on the other stands one of the city's major churches, the Franciscan Church of the Annunciation (*Frančiškanska cerkev Marijinega oznanjenja*). Originally, Hallgrímsson's statue had a similarly central place in the down-town area of Reykjavík, between the cabinet-building and Iceland's only gymnasium. The statue of Andersen was unveiled in a park near the city-centre of Copenhagen—the King's Park (*Kongens Have*)—next to the Castle of Rosenborg where the Danish crown jewels are kept. In 1961, another statue of Andersen, by Henry Luckow-Nielsen, was unveiled in Copenhagen, next to the city hall (Zinglersen 105–106, 163). A number of other busts and statues of both Prešeren and Andersen can be found in Slovenia and Denmark, particularly in places relating to their lives and works.

One more example of public space that demonstrates bodies of cultural saints is the state currency. Icons on coins and bank-notes can be regarded as visual relics, but they can also be seen as a modern equivalent of totems and heraldic emblems (Durkheim 101–27). For centuries, images of monarchs have been featured on coins—a tradition that probably has a religious origin, as the oldest preserved Greek coin is decorated with a portrait of Athena (Sacks 87–88). Later, this was extended to banknotes and stamps, and one of the roles of a monarch was to authenticate the paper as a symbol of value. The coat of arms and the crown or head of the Danish king were generally featured on Danish coins and stamps until the twentieth century. A picture of the king was also the watermark on the first highly developed Danish banknotes that were decorated with images of Mercury, Neptune, Minerva and Ceres. With a new set of bills in 1875, the sculptor Thorvaldsen and the chemist Ørsted were added to the group of Roman deities and in the years 1945 to 1947, H.C. Andersen along with engineer and astronomer Rømer and the politician Reventlow joined

in (Adriansen 1:260–66). In 1935, Andersen had been the first identifiable person, outside the royal family, to get his image on a Danish stamp (Adriansen 1:279).

As Slovenia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until the end of World War I, and then became a part of the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs that later formed Yugoslavia, nationalistic themes on banknotes, coins and stamps were developed relatively late. Still, three Yugoslavian stamps with an image of Prešeren were published on the 100th anniversary of his death, in 1949, and 50 years later the fourth stamp was designed (cf. Karasyuk). Following the collapse of Yugoslavia, the currency of an independent Slovenia was adorned with an image of Prešeren, first on the short-lived *lipa* and later on the *tolar*. Presently, his portrait appears on the Slovenian 2-Euro coin (cf. Jelinčič).

Hallgrímsson has never been featured on Icelandic currency. This is one of the fields in which Hallgrímsson's contemporary, the politician and independence hero Jón Sigurðsson, has most explicitly replaced the Danish king as a national totem of modern Icelandic society. Sigurðsson has been on all issues of Icelandic banknotes, and his face is also used for the banknotes' water-mark. Sigurðsson was also the first identifiable Icelander to be placed on a stamp, but Hallgrímsson has twice been bestowed with that honour, in 1957 and 2007, on the 150th and 200th anniversary of his birth.

While the graves and statues of Hallgrímsson, Andersen and Prešeren have a lot in common, it seems that the political afterlife of each of these cultural saints has its own distinctive characteristics. While Andersen has been used to develop further the memory and traditions of the monarchy—certain scholars even insist that he was indeed an illegitimate son of the royal family (cf. Jørgensen; Dorset; Friisberg)—, Prešeren's ongoing presence in Slovenia seems to be a part of the secularization of society. According to a local website, Prešeren's Grove in Kranj is, for instance, "[*sic*] designed as grove because of historical part and piety. It is a place for rest, meditation and cultural inspiration" ("Preseren's Grove"). Similarly, the poet's statue in front of Ljubljana's main church is palimpsestic; originally, the statue—in particular the half-naked muse—provoked the conservative Catholic population, but the rewriting of the place was completed by communist authorities in 1949 when Mary Square (*Marijin trg*), where the statue stands, was renamed Prešeren Square (*Prešernov trg*). It is also possible to contextualize the "translation" of Hallgrímsson's bones from Denmark to Iceland within the religious saintly tradition. For the government, his reburial was certainly designed to symbolise a moment of glory, prolonging the joy inspired by the reclaiming of political independ-

ence from Denmark two years earlier. But the reality was different. The homecoming of the national poet was partially financed by an Icelandic industrialist, Sigurjón Pétursson, who claimed to be in a telepathic relationship with Hallgrímsson. When the bones reached Icelandic soil, Pétursson purloined them and drove them to the north of Iceland, claiming that Hallgrímsson wanted to be buried in the valley where he was born. The government, on the other hand, wanted to bury him at Þingvellir and sent the police to recover the coffin. At the same time, the whole affair became strangely mixed up with a contemporary political debate about the presence of American troops in Iceland in the post-war period, and soon there were vicious rumours circulating that the wrong bones had been excavated in Copenhagen. Instead of uniting the nation, the whole episode not only turned sour—the national cemetery hasn't been used since—but also uncovered great divides within the people of Iceland (cf. Helgason, *Ferðalok*).

Preservation of material objects

Another category of relics concerns material objects relating to the life of a cultural saint. A collection of manuscripts and works of individual authors or artists stored in special branches of libraries, museums and art galleries can certainly be viewed in this context, but the main focus here will be the preservation of clothing, domestic objects and residences of the individual in question. In Slovenia, both the birthplace of Prešeren in Vrba and the house in Kranj where he lived and worked during the last years of his life have been turned into museums. The idea to reconstruct the house in Vrba was expressed in 1937 by writer Franc S. Finžgar in an article entitled "Prešeren's home". Finžgar said it was, "the duty of the nation to preserve this house as a national item of great value and change it into some sort of a Prešeren museum" (Šifrer 37). A nation-wide fundraising effort was organized, with the participation of Slovenian school children. The museum was opened two years later and is still considered to be of national importance; just a few months ago, in January 2011, the Slovenian government declared that the poet's birthplace would get heritage status as "an extraordinary part of Slovenia's historical and symbolic identity" ("Birthplace of Slovenia's Preeminent Poet"). While the Vrba-project can be seen as originating in a nationwide effort towards canonizing the national poet, the museum in Kranj rather designates the interest of the local population to acquire a share in his memory.[2] When this place was turned into a Prešeren Memorial Museum in 1964, it was already a branch of the local Gorenjska Museum. Around the turn of the century,

the museum was reconstructed and now also occupies the ground floor of the building. Apart from a cradle that the poet presumably slept in as a child, the museum in Vrba does not have any authentic Prešeren items. The museum in Kranj, on the other hand, displays various relics from the poet's life, including furniture, some of which is the property of the National Museum of Slovenia (cf. *Prešernova Hiša*).

Similar to the case of Kranj, the town council of Odense has actively invested in the memory of Andersen, ever since it made him a honorary citizen in 1867 (Bredsdorf 320–321). The next step was taken in 1888 when a statue of the writer was unveiled in the Odense King's Park (*Kongens Have*). With reference to Andersen's centenary, the statue was moved closer to the city centre in 1905 and unveiled again (cf. "Mindesmærket i Odense"). Around that time, Ernst Bojesen, director of the Gyldendal Publishing House, suggested that a building at Hans Jensens Stræde 43–45, where the writer reportedly had been born, should be turned into a museum. With financial aid from Bojesen, the town bought the house and in 1908 it was opened as an Andersen Museum. Unfortunately, Andersen himself had categorically denied that he had ever lived in this house and in 1925 H.G. Olrik published two articles that seemed to verify his words (Olrik 20-39). In this respect, the Andersen Museum is reminiscent of Shakespeare's birthplace in Stratford-upon-Avon, which "is an imaginative reconstruction of a historical building in which William Shakespeare may not have been born" (Rosenthal 36). Indeed, the Andersen Museum was expanded in 1929 with a new addition. Around 1975, the museum was enlarged again and in 2002 the building and the exhibition were modernized; not only can visitors now look at manuscripts, letters, drawings and paper-cuttings by Andersen, but also a reconstruction of the study in his last Copenhagen apartment, "with all conserved objects. It is possible to see details of almost every object in the room, and read about when and how it came into Andersen's possession" ("The Nyhavn Room"). This collection of relics may be a late response to the writings of Olrik in 1925, who regretted that the town had not bought a house in Munkemøllestræde 3–5 in Odense which was, unquestionably, Andersen's childhood home. But soon after Olrik published his article, the town council also bought this house and opened in it another Andersen museum in 1931. The building was reconstructed and does not display any relics of the cultural saint other than its own walls and floors. The furniture dates from the nineteenth century but was never owned by the Andersen family.

A few years ago, a cultural society called The Hraun in Öxnardalur Valley Cultural Society (*Menningarfélagið Hraun í Öxnadal*), bought the farm of Hraun, with the network of Icelandic Saving Banks the greatest share-

holder in this investment. The house at the farm was built in the twentieth century; a part of it is now rented out as a writers' residence, but two rooms are used to house an exhibition focusing on the life and legacy of Hallgrímsson, curated by the local Akureyri museum. This exhibition was opened by the Icelandic president on Hallgrímsson's bicentenary on November 16, 2007 (cf. "Hraun í Öxnadal"). It is useful to consider this and the other four houses dedicated to the memory of the three cultural saints with reference to the religious concepts of relics and shrines. While the childhood homes of Andersen in Munkemøllestræde and of Prešeren in Vrba are relics in their own right, the Andersen Museum in Hans Jensens Stræde is first and foremost a shrine, containing various smaller relics, including the bogus birthplace. The Prešeren Museum in Kranj is both a relic and a shrine, but the twentieth-century house at the farm of Hraun is neither of the two. Alternatively, the Ministry for the Environment put the impressive 2286 ha landscape around the farm at Hraun on a list of protected areas in order to make it easier for people to "visit and get to know cultural remains and the national literary heritage, as this is where the poet and naturalist Jónas Hallgrímsson was born" ("Friðlýst svæði").

Rituals

The difference between culture-as-goods and culture-as-tools is not an either-or distinction; the question is rather between the ways in which we look at the same cultural reality. In some respects, the relics of cultural saints become important because they enable people to organize time and space in society and define the ideology of the nation state. It was suggested above that the Prešeren statue was placed in the centre of Ljubljana, but at the same time one could say the statue itself defines this place and the poet as the geographical and cultural hub of the Slovenian people. With regards to this interdependent relationship, most of the rituals discussed in this chapter can also be seen as relics from the life of the cultural saint. The emphasis, however, will be placed on the way in which these relics are mobilized to establish in individuals belonging to different social groups bonds of loyalty towards state and culture.

Saints' days and baptisms

When Ljubljana's Mary Square was renamed Prešeren Square on February 8, 1949, exactly one hundred years had passed since the death of the Slovenian poet. A similar occasion inspired the renaming of Vester

Boulevard in Copenhagen as H. C. Andersens Boulevard in 1955, on the 150th anniversary of the Danish writer's birth. Indeed, various anniversaries of cultural saints are celebrated by state and local governments, often with festivals relating to some relics of their lives. In the above examples, the names of the saints are being immortalized. In the vocabulary of the church, one can describe this as a baptism, affecting public space in the state capital. Originally, the word baptism referred to a ritual washing, which is especially fitting in the Slovenian case as certain Catholic relics are being washed away from the streetscape. Comparable ritual washing took place in Paris in the wake of the French revolution. As they wanted to diminish the symbolic influence of the royal court and the church in society, the revolutionaries erased Catholic saints' days from the calendar, removed royal and religious statues from public places and altered the names of various streets:

> In 1791, the marquis de Villette, in whose house Voltaire had died in 1778, solicited formal approval for his own alteration to the street name on his house from Théatins (after the religious order located nearby) to Voltaire. […] Villette's enthusiasm fired others. Royalty and saints were swept away by authentic republican saints (Montmarte to Montmarat, Hôtel Dieu to Mirabau-le-Patriote, Saint-Anne to Helvétius) and republican virtues. (Ferguson 26)

In the Catholic tradition, children are often given a saint's name in the belief that the saint will become their guardian angel. Names of streets, squares, institutions, buildings and parks can be interpreted in this context. The recycling of the names of Prešeren and Andersen is a form of dedication. This tradition in Slovenia can be traced to the second half of the nineteenth century and seems to be quite strong. Today, almost all major cities and towns in the country pride themselves of a street (*Prešernova cesta, Prešernova ulica*) or a square (*Prešernov trg*) named after the Slovenian national poet. Similarly, many streets (*H.C. Andersens Gade, H.C. Andersens Vej, H.C. Andersens Alle*) honouring Andersen can be found in Denmark, and the frequent use of his name in such a context even spills beyond the national borders of his native soil. A Danish website dedicated to Andersen's memory lists over 100 schools in 18 different countries that refer to him in their names; only two of these are in Denmark, with 33 found in Italy (cf. "Hans Christian Andersen Schools").

Another widespread public way to preserve the names of cultural saints is to create awards in their honour, with the award-ceremony resembling a rite of passage. In 1947, the Slovenian Ministry of Education started to bestow the Prešeren Award (*Prešernova nagrada*). Originally, they were handed out for excellence in the fields of both science and art, but since 1961 the

science award has been separate and under a different name. Recipients of the Prešeren Award are chosen by a special committee, which is nominated by the government and elected by the parliament. There are two categories of awards: the Grand Prešeren Award, given to one or two eminent Slovene artists; and the Prešeren Foundation Award, which up to six artists receive each year (cf. "Prešeren Award"). The award ceremony has always been around February 8, the anniversary of Prešeren's death, but since World War II this day has been publicly celebrated by the Slovenian people. When the country became independent, February 8 was declared a work-free day. It is called Prešeren Day, the Slovenian Cultural Holiday (*Prešernov dan, slovenski kulturni praznik*). Various cultural rituals have developed in relation to this holiday. On this day in 2010, for instance, the Slovenian Minister of Culture, Majda Širca, "laid a wreath on Prešeren's grave in Kranj and opened an exhibition in Kranj devoted to the local cultural heritage". In the afternoon, she and the Minister of Education and Sport, Igor Lukšič, addressed an audience at a ceremony in Vrba, with Lukšič "stressing the nation-building character of culture" ("Culture Minister"). Finally, at the end of the day, Širca held a reception for the new recipients of the Prešeren Awards. Hallgrímsson's name has not been immortalized on the Reykjavík street-map or in other towns in Iceland; the only example of this sort worth mentioning is a small swimming-pool in the district where he was born, which is called Jónasarlaug (Valgeirsson 7). On the other hand, since 1996 the Icelandic Ministry of Culture and Education has handed out the Jónas Hallgrímsson Award (*Verðlaun Jónasar Hallgrímssonar*) to an individual who has been exemplary in cultivating the Icelandic language. The award ceremony is a part of an extensive program that takes place on the Icelandic Language Day (*Dagur íslenskrar tungu*), which is held on Hallgrímsson's birthday, November 16. It is not a public holiday, but it has been celebrated each year since 1996; many cultural and educational institutions mark the day with special programs relating to the Icelandic language and the legacy of Hallgrímsson.

In Denmark, neither Andersen's birthday nor the anniversary of his death have the official status that February 8 and November 16 have in Slovenia and Iceland respectively, but each year since 1955 the Danish Ministry of Culture and the Danish Writers' Union have awarded a grant (*Dansk Forfatterforenings H.C. Andersen Legat*) to a Danish writer or scholar for cultivating the Andersen legacy (cf. Jensen, "Dansk literaturpriser"). Of other awards relating to Andersen, the best known is the international Hans Christian Andersen Award presented by the International Board on Books for Young People to "a living author and illustrator whose complete works have made a lasting contribution to children's literature" ("Hans

Christian Andersen Award"). These awards confirm that Andersen, as a celebrated children's author with a wide international appeal, is not a typical cultural saint. The Danes themselves have actively developed him as a trademark that can be used to promote Denmark's image abroad. When they celebrated the bicentenary of his birth with the catchphrase, "H.C. Andersen 2005 – Join the worldwide celebration", the idea was to appeal to the whole world, rather than confine the festivity to the Danish nation. The organizing committee wanted "the modern and timeless H.C. Andersen to show the world that Denmark is a cutting-edge country when it comes to art, culture, design, technology and ethics" (Davidsen 141). The most recent award, the Hans Christian Andersen Literature Award, has a similar intention, and was bestowed for the first time in 2010. The Gyldendal publishing house and the city of Odense are two of the award's key sponsors, with the prize of half a million DKR designed to "celebrate the influence of H.C. Andersen on authors all around the world" ("J.K. Rowling får H.C. Andersen Litteraturpris").

Pilgrimage

In his book about the rise and function of the cult of saints in Latin Christianity, Peter Brown maintains that the words "*Hic locus est*: 'Here is the place,' or simply *hic*", inscribed on early martyrs' shrines in North Africa, signified that the "holy was accessible to one group in a manner in which it could not be accessible to anyone situated elsewhere" (Brown 86). Consequently, religious life was connected to geographical distance and the physical and mental effort to overcome that distance, such as by moving relics to a church. This also contributed to the development of the pilgrimage tradition. "As Alphonse Dupront has put it, so succinctly, pilgrimage was 'une thérapie par l'espace.' The pilgrim committed himself or herself to the 'therapy of distance' by recognizing that what he or she wished for was not to be had in the immediate environment" (Brown 87).

Some of the relics of Prešeren, Hallgrímsson and Andersen discussed above convey the meaning *hic*. In 1872, the newly founded Slovenian Writers Union had already highlighted the historical importance of Prešeren's childhood home in Vrba by unveiling "a marble memorial plaque on the house during a special ceremony" (Šifrer 37). About a decade later, a Prešeren monument was unveiled by the lake of Bled, with inscriptions from "A Wreath of Sonnets" and *The Baptism on the Savica*; part of the latter poem takes place in this area. A more recent example is a memorial plaque by Albin Ambrožič that was unveiled in 1988 on the

wall of the Trnovo Church of St. John the Baptist (*Cerkev Janeza Krstnika*), stating that it was there that Prešeren met for the time his principal poetic muse, the seventeen-year-old Julija Primic. Likewise, there are plaques on some of the houses in Copenhagen in which Andersen lived; and on the house in Pederstræde 140 where Hallgrímsson broke his leg in 1845 there is plaque with an inscription in Danish informing that here was the last abode of the Icelandic poet. In some instances, in particular the writers' houses discussed earlier, the idea is to get people to come to these places. Carefully planned school excursions to the Andersen museums in Odense and Prešeren's childhood home in Vrba are, just like the Icelandic Language Day and the Slovenian Cultural Holiday, intended to advocate the ideology of cultural nationalism, while simple commemorative inscriptions serve the purpose of informing passers-by that they are in a historically significant setting.

In the case of Andersen, the target group is not simply, or even primarily, local people. The departed fairy-tale author has been a valuable asset for the Danish tourist industry for a long time. Concluding one of his two articles about the "birthplace" of Andersen, H.G. Olrik suggested in 1925 that the *foreign tourists* that visited Odense, looking for the house in which their idol was born, actually ended up "standing at – Hamlet's grave" (Olrik 39). These words suggest that the canonization of cultural saints can be motivated by the demand of various travellers who are not only pilgrims looking for *Hic locus est*, but are also tourists looking for distraction. The new H.C. Andersen Literary Award is interesting in this context. The first writer to receive it was J.K. Rowling, of *Harry Potter* fame. The award ceremony, in which Rowling received her prize from the Danish princess, was the peak of great Harry Potter festivities in Odense. On the website of the Andersen Museum, the event was described as a magic moment, where "two of the most famous fairy-tale writers of the world meet" ("J.K. Rowling får H.C. Andersen Litteraturpris"). In a way, Rowling had been transformed into an Andersen-pilgrim, with the intention of attracting more pilgrims to the Andersen shrine in Odense.

Conclusion

This article deals with the legacies of H.C. Andersen, France Prešeren and Jónas Hallgrímsson, and the cultivation of their memories. Even though these three authors were contemporaries, and were all influenced by the ideas of Romanticism, each had his own distinct characteristics. As poets, Prešeren and Hallgrímsson have quite a lot in common, and

both men became important, as did their works, in their nations' struggle for political independence. Andersen, on the other hand, belonging to a monarch state on the road to democracy, was less of a 'political' figure and hardly fits the traditional description of a national poet. More than anything else, his international fame has motivated his canonization as a cultural saint. While Andersen has to some extent appropriated the symbolic role earlier reserved for the royal family, Prešeren has become somewhat of a substitute for some of the religious saints of the Catholic Church. The home towns of both Andersen and Prešeren have systematically invested in their memory but it seems that the Odense city council is more active in this respect than its Slovenian counterparts. Due to the importance of the 'republican saint' Jón Sigurðsson, Hallgrímsson has not been quite as important for the national development of Iceland as Prešeren has been for Slovenia. On the other hand, there are elements in Hallgrímsson's canonization that suggest the degree to which cultural saints can have various religious dimensions. The significance of the telepathic relationship between industrialist Sigurjón Pétursson and Hallgrímsson for the translation of the latter's relics to Iceland in 1946 has already been mentioned, but a more striking example is the collection of four fairy-tales by H.C. Andersen which were published in Hallgrímsson's Icelandic translation in 1906, under the title *From Mystic Worlds* (*Úr dularheimum*). The Danish original of one of these translations was also included in the book, along with an original tale by Hallgrímsson. But all of these texts turned out to be the involuntary writing of Guðmundur Jónsson, a seventeen-year-old Icelandic high-school student. The project, sponsored by a society of upper-class citizens of Reykjavík interested in psychic research, can be compared with the Catholic tradition of saintly visions, more specifically what has been called inner *locution*. The term refers to a religious person receiving a set of ideas or some substantial volume of information in a relatively short time, from an outside spiritual source (cf. Freze 310). According to Björn Jónsson's afterword to *From Mystic Worlds*, the young student had produced the texts in question in an amazingly short time, ranging from 7 minutes up to two and a half hours (Jónsson 63). Jónsson added that involuntary writing of this sort was by no means exceptional, referring to texts by Heinrich Heine and H.C. Andersen that had been produced by the same means on the continent.

Numerous elements important with respect to the canonization of Andersen, Prešeren and Hallgrímsson have not been addressed in this article; most importantly, very little has been said about their oeuvre. The focus has been placed, beyond the traditional borders of literature and culture, on the social role of these individuals as national symbols and

their function in a socio-political context. Of course, there is not a clear distinction between these two spheres. The function of Prešeren's "A Toast" ("Zdravljica") as the national anthem in Slovenia and of Edvard Erikssen's statue of The Little Mermaid as a symbol of Copenhagen (and even Denmark) are cases in point. These, and various other relics and rituals relating to the three nineteenth century writers, certainly deserve further attention. From a more general perspective, the processes of canonization of cultural saints are complex and may vary from one country to another and one time to another. Consideration needs to be given to the numerous forms of beatification the individual is subjected to, the degree to which institutions of the state are formally canonizing him or her, and the degree to which local political and business concerns are involved.

The role of European cultural saints, as described above, can be compared to the fate of a culture's canonized literary works. Itamar Even-Zohar has pointed out that such works hardly ever circulate on the market as integral texts; once they have been "stored in the historical canon," they are often distributed as textual fragments, i.e. quotations, short parables, and episodes. He adds that a semiotic approach to such fragments would not regard them "simply as a neutral stock, but as one which helps society maintain its *models of reality*, which in their turn govern the models of interpersonal interaction. They thus constitute a source for the kinds of *habitus* prevailing in the various levels of society, helping to preserve and stabilize it" (Even-Zohar, *Polysystem Studies,* 44). The Andersen, Prešeren and Hallgrímsson 'fragments'—statues, coins, literary awards, words of a national anthem, reclaimed bones and so forth—thus become so entwined in the shaping and reinforcement of their nations' identity, that each is dependent on the other, and discrediting either would be akin to treason, and cultural excommunication.

NOTES

[1] The concept of "cultural saints", along with some other concepts used in this article, have been the focal point of the research project "Cultural Saints of the European Nation State" (cf. http://vefir.hi.is/culturalsaints/), developed by Sveinn Yngvi Egilsson, Marko Juvan, Marijan Dović and myself over the past two years in co-operation with Joep Leerssen and SPIN – Study Platform on Interlocking Nationalisms (cf. http://www.spinnet.eu/). I am indebted to Juvan and Dović who have provided me with invaluable information about the legacy of Prešeren in Slovenia and to them and Egilsson for fruitful discussion on this topic and helpful comments on this article. I also want to thank Alenka Koron and Luka Vidmar for assisting me in my research in Slovenia in the spring of 21010.

[2] Certainly, many other views may be important when a writer's house is turned into a museum (cf. Hendrix).

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