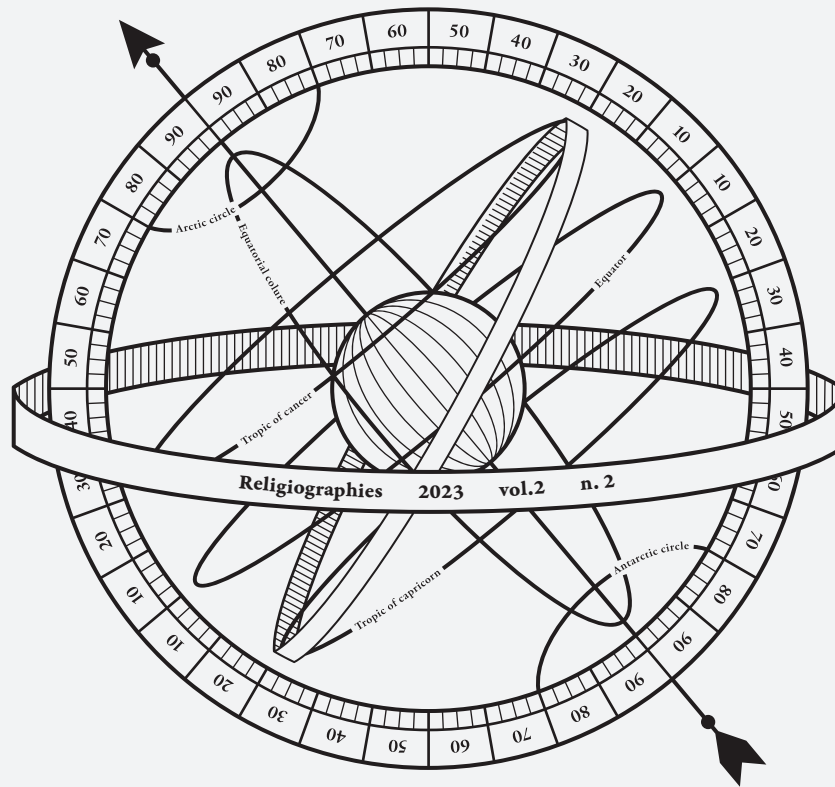


# Religiographies



Special Issue  
“Religious Dimensions of Nationalism”  
edited by  
Marios Hatzopoulos

*Nation and Commemoration:  
Cultural Saints and National  
Panthéons*  
Marijan Dović



CENTRO STUDI  
DI CIVILTÀ E SPIRITUALITÀ  
COMPARATE

*fondazione* ONLUS  
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Keywords:  
Cultural Sainthood, Pantheons, Canonization,  
Pantheonization, Nationalism and religion, European  
Nation-states

To cite this:  
Dović, Marijan. "Nation and Commemoration:  
Cultural Saints and National Pantheons." *Religiogra-  
phies*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2023): 58–75.

### *Abstract*

In the course of the nineteenth century, literary cultures throughout Europe began to enthusiastically venerate their (deceased) artists and intellectuals as their exemplary representatives. Through the process of canonization, these artists became “cultural saints,” acquiring a social status and symbolic significance traditionally reserved for royal authorities and religious saints. As increasing research into the commemorative culture of the nineteenth century reveals, there are numerous analogies between the veneration of religious saints and the inauguration of their cultural counterparts. Especially after the 1830s, cults of cultural saints spread rapidly across the continent. Cultural saints also played an important role in the newly created “national pantheons” that usually took the physical form of (secularized) pantheon churches, pantheon cemeteries, galleries of sculptures or paintings, and so on, in which the emerging national cultures “exhibited” their great personalities. As a brief overview of the various European solutions demonstrates, the “pantheonic imagination” went in very different directions. It also indicates that a broad comparative study of national pantheons, taking into account both larger and smaller nations, would be of great benefit to various disciplines, including history, memory studies, nationalism studies, and religious studies.

This article considers the specific relationship between nation and commemoration manifested in two closely related phenomena: the veneration of cultural saints and the emergence of national pantheons. Both have a considerable prehistory: the tendency to preserve the memory of the deceased cultural greats of a community through rituals and the tendency to honor all the key figures of that community, preferably in a prestigious place, span a vast historical trajectory since the beginning of human civilization. Both phenomena have also always encompassed a religious dimension. From the deceased Greek poets, whose tombs were showered with offerings, to the modern literary figures canonized by the Orthodox Churches, the commemoration of artistic and cultural “greats” has regularly had a sacred character. As with the pantheons, religious connotations are deeply woven into the concept, which has undergone numerous transformations throughout its history, and the same is true for the design of most of the buildings in which pantheons have concretized.

I address the two phenomena—in the broadest sense, they can be understood as practices of commemoration—in a specific context, the context of the nation. I therefore consider the emergence of cultural saints, which appeared alongside religious saints but also rulers and military leaders, especially in the nineteenth century, and the emergence of national pantheons, which appeared in very different materializations across the continent at the same time, in close connection with the history of (European) nationalism. The historically specific trait of national thought that spread in Europe from the end of the eighteenth century changed the (self-)understanding of human society: it increasingly became a community of nations that could be clearly distinguished from each other on the basis of their unique culture. Of course, I do not want to reproduce

here the history of the phenomenon that underpins the everyday identity experience of most people in the world today. However, I can point out that since Carlton Hayes' pioneering essays many important scholars have interpreted nationalism as a form of secular or civil (or civic) religion—and the following consideration of cultural saints and national pantheons is certainly based on this tradition.<sup>1</sup>

Research on “cultural saints” is quite recent and mainly comes from the last decade and a half.<sup>2</sup> It is based on studies of commemorative culture, which have documented an astonishing Europe-wide spread of nationally motivated veneration of the “great men” of culture: poets, writers, composers, and other artists and intellectuals. The massive dimensions of cults rhythmicized by jubilees in the nineteenth century, especially the “centenary cult,” the exalted erection of monuments (*Denkmalwut*), and the manifold rituals bear witness to the important role that the celebration of artists played in the formation of modern European nations.<sup>3</sup> This practice was even more important for smaller, politically subordinate cultures with less pronounced historical or political identities, where the investment in language and literature was even more emphatic and the prominent position often belonged posthumously to poets declared “national.”<sup>4</sup> At first glance, it seems surprising that the rhetoric and practices of national movements contained religious elements: not only in Catholic and Orthodox areas of Europe, but also in Protestant regions, artists' commemorative cults took on the characteristics of traditional saintly cults, such as the *translatio* of relics, various rituals tied to specific “saints' days,” pilgrimages, sacralized memorials, hagiographic representations, and so on. Numerous examples confirm that the “saintly” metaphor is extremely useful for the analysis of such phenomena—especially in the context of understanding nationalism as a civil religion.

Similarly, important research on “national pantheons” has also appeared in recent decades. In particular, the four most notable European examples discussed in the book by Eveline G. Bouwers—the pantheons in Rome, Paris, London, and Regensburg—were the subject of thorough analyses that included comparative aspects.<sup>5</sup> Much as with the cults of cultural saints that were utilizing similar patterns in very distant places, structural similarities, inspiration, and even direct imitation were also at play in the design of the pantheons. However, the fact that all nations, even the smaller ones, wanted to have pantheons in one form or another—even if the idea took very different forms and the implementation was far from optimal—has received less attention so far. Although there are numerous studies on this European network of pantheons (often only in the respective national languages), dealing with their various aspects (architectural, political, and art historical), we are still far from a synthesis in this respect. Therefore, I also reflect on how this research could be added to. I consider this particularly valuable because both phenomena—cultural saints and national pantheons—are important for the study of cultural and political nationalism and, not least of all, for the formation of a “Europe of nations.” Moreover, I suggest that the metaphor of cultural saints can inspire conceptualization of the metaphor of national pantheons.

1

Among these, for example, Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (London: Hutchinson, 1960); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 2006).

2

Cf. Marijan Dović and Jón Karl Helgason, *National Poets, Cultural Saints: Canonization and Commemorative Cults of Writers in Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2017); and Marijan Dović and Jón Karl Helgason, eds., *Great Immortality: Studies on European Cultural Sainthood* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

3

A reference publication in this field is Joep Leerssen and Ann Rigney, eds., *Commemorating Writers in Nineteenth-Century Europe: Nation-Building and Centenary Fever* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). It includes analyses of major commemorations across the continent from the mid-nineteenth century to World War I.

4

Cf. the thematic section “Figures of National Poets” in the fourth volume of Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer, eds., *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2010).

5

Cf. Eveline G. Bouwers, *Public Pantheons in Revolutionary Europe: Comparing Cultures of Remembrance, c. 1790–1840* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); and Richard Wrigley and Matthew Craske, eds., *Pantheons: Transformations of a Monumental Idea* (London: Routledge, 2004).

Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (London: James Fraser, 1841). The Scottish philosopher talks about hero-worship, about poets as saints, and about their canonization in the third chapter, entitled “The Hero as Poet.” He refers to Dante and Shakespeare as “saints of poetry” that have definitely been “canonised, though no Pope or Cardinals took hand in doing it” (138).

On other uses, cf. the Introduction in Dović and Helgason, *National Poets*.

Dović and Helgason, *National Poets*, 3.

Regarding the model, cf. Dović and Helgason, *National Poets*, 94–95; on postulators: 32–34.

## I. Cultural Saints and Their Canonization

The transference of the idea of sainthood to the realm of secular culture is not in itself new; it occurred as early as 1841 in Thomas Carlyle’s famous lectures on hero worship.<sup>6</sup> In other respects, the transference of religious practices or concepts such as worship, ritual, idolatry, relics, cult, or charisma into the sphere of secular culture has been frequently observed (and occasionally criticized) by contemporaries of artistic cults in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The *liaisons dangereuses* between religion and (secular) artistic cults of fame were also observed (and occasionally criticized) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By contrast, the term itself appeared only recently; with some hesitancy, for example, in connection with the immortals of cultural history, but more explicitly in connection with celebrity worship in mass media culture (e.g., Elvis Presley and Madonna).<sup>7</sup> The metaphor of cultural sainthood undoubtedly fits well with the icons of popular culture, but it fits even better with the heroes promoted and venerated in the context of national movements, especially from the 1830s onward. As explained in the book I co-authored with Jón Karl Helgason, the term *cultural saints* refers to deceased poets, writers, and other artists and intellectuals who, as embodiments of certain social ideals, became figures in the cultural memory of their national (or regional) cultures, and assumed social roles traditionally reserved for rulers and saints.<sup>8</sup>

How this process took place can be explained with the help of the concept of *canonization*. In the humanities, the terms *canon* and *canonization* usually refer to a selected elite corpus of artworks (e.g., the literary, visual, and musical canon), and sometimes to the artists themselves and/or the process of their establishment (canonized or canonical authors). From our point of view, however, it has proven useful to broaden such a traditional understanding to include not only textual practices (such as critical edition, revision, interpretation, or appropriation), but also ritual practices (commemorations, festivals, processions, and handling of relics), and mnemonic practices (setting up a constellation of *lieux de mémoire*, and naming places and institutions). In our book, the possibilities of such an extension were presented in the condensed form of an analytical model of canonization, and so I will not go into detail here. I would only like to emphasize that the aforementioned model focuses not only on the life and work of cultural saints, but also on those that cultivate their memory—by analogy with canonization in Catholicism, one could call them *postulators*.<sup>9</sup>

So, who were the chosen ones elevated to the prestigious status of cultural saints? As the term itself implies, the potential candidates were by no means only poets. Many European artists can be understood as cultural saints—among them, above all, musicians, painters, sculptors, and architects, and here and there a philologist or linguist (e.g., Elias Lönnrot, the author of the Finnish *Kalevala*, or Ferenc Kazinczy, the “purifier” of the Hungarian language). However, in accordance with the prominent position that language practice occupied in the context of cultural nationalism, the most lively cults developed in relation to writers and, in particular, poets. In the new, national context, the veneration of older literary giants (Petrarch, Shakespeare, Camões, and Cervantes) was revived, and the veneration of younger poets (Schiller, Burns, Mickiewicz, Petőfi, Prešeren, Hallgrímsson, Mácha, Shevchenko, etc.) also flourished. It is therefore not at all surprising that the *national poet* can be understood as a paradigmatic embodiment of a cultural saint. This is a structural position legitimized by the pan-European discourse of Romanticism and gratefully

accepted especially by the (semi)peripheral literary cultures.<sup>10</sup>

The veneration of cultural saints took its most fascinating forms between 1840 and 1940.<sup>11</sup> At that time, the cults gripped the whole of Europe like a kind of epidemic and also reached beyond its borders (e.g., to the Caucasian countries, the US, and later Israel). Smaller literary cultures celebrated mostly romantic (poetic) giants, and the dominant cultures dragged established authorities of their respective artistic canons into the maelstrom of increasingly nationalist cults. The euphoria peaked at the beginning of the twentieth century and only slowly ebbed after World War I. By then, commemorative cults had mostly moved away from extreme and large-scale forms, but the inertia of cultural nationalism often kept cultural saints on the surface, albeit in the somewhat ossified form of “canonical giants.” In most cases, these have remained central national icons to this day and a convenient source for ever-new appropriations. What is more, especially in recent decades, some cases return in surprising post-secular transformations in which the dividing line between cultural and ecclesiastical canonization disappears.<sup>12</sup>

### *From the Culture of Saints to the Saints of Culture*

Now, to take up Jernej Habjan’s imaginative chiasm, how did we get from the culture of saints to the saints of culture?<sup>13</sup> The development indicated above certainly encourages us to look for analogies between the veneration of saints (or, more generally, of holy persons) in different religious traditions and the emergence of their cultural counterparts. In the case of Christian saint cults in particular, it is relatively easy to draw several parallels that are evident both in the organization of the cults and in the process of canonization. Whereas the cults of Christian saints covered medieval Europe with a multitude of shrines, the cults of cultural saints covered modern Europe with a multitude of monuments, memorials, museums, and institutions.<sup>14</sup> Both types of cults contributed significantly to the organization of social space and time and influenced the daily life of the community through various rituals. Relics also played an important role in this transformation—which may seem surprising in the case of secular cults. Finally, the paths to full official recognition are also partly analogous, although the canonization of cultural saints does not have such formalized procedures as those developed, for example, for the beatification and canonization of saints in the Catholic Church.

Despite these similarities, cultural saints are not simply a mirror image of religious saints.<sup>15</sup> At least one difference prevents carrying the metaphor through to the end. Belief in an afterlife is constitutive only of religious cults, not secular ones. An ecclesiastical saint may be physically dead in this world, but as a member of the heavenly communion of saints he or she lives on and can act as an intercessor with God. For the believer, a saint represents a shortcut to direct communication with the Creator, who is the only true source of sacred power. The earthly remains of the saint, the relics that are the object of veneration, are thus much more than symbols: they are the actual presence of a saint in this world. On the other hand, no one expects a cultural saint to perform miracles posthumously; cultural saints may have an (indirect) effect on individuals, but they certainly do not possess a transcendent life after death. Thus, the handling of relics, which is very important in both forms of cult, does not carry the same weight with cultural saints as it does with religious saints.

This difference seems fundamental, but it is not the only one. It is

10

Cf. Virgil Nemoianu, “‘National Poets’ in the Romantic Age: Emergence and Importance,” in *Romantic Poetry*, ed. Angela Esterhammer (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2002), 249–55; and Marko Juvan, “Romanticism and National Poets on the Margins of Europe: Prešeren and Hallgrímsson,” in *Literary Dislocations*, ed. Sonja Stojmenska-Elzesser and Vladimir Martinovski (Skopje: Institute of Macedonian literature, 2012), 592–600.

11

This finding is based on empirical data and attempts to partially correct the general view that the long nineteenth century as a whole can be characterized as a “commemorative century” (cf. Dović and Helgason, *National Poets*, 51–53).

12

Cf. chapters on Ilia Chavchavadze, Mihai Eminescu, Petar II Petrović Njegoš, and Antoni Gaudí in *Great Immortality*.

13

Jernej Habjan, “From the Culture of Saints to the Saints of Culture: The Saint and the Writer between Life and Work,” in *Great Immortality*, 331–42.

14

On saintly cults, cf. Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints. Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982). On writers’ houses, cf. Harald Hendrix, ed., *Writers’ Houses and the Making of Memory* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

15

In older times, the relationships may be even more complicated. In Greek heroic cults, poets were worshipped as demigods (e.g., Homer, Hesiod, and Archilochus); the ancient Egyptians deified the great scholar and poet Imhotep; and the cult of the medieval poet Hafiz in Persian culture retains a distinctly religious character to this day. The expansion of research to non-European cultures is certainly a challenge for the future.

16

Among the numerous European “national” poets, one finds only two women: the Galician poet Rosalía de Castro and the Estonian Lydia Koidula. The same is true for other arts: there are practically no intense female cults. An important reason for this is the narrow basis for “sanctity” that results from women’s limited access to the world of arts and science.

17

Dović and Helgason, *National Poets*, 103–4.

18

Poets as (national) prophets—such a label fits perfectly, for example, for Adam Mickiewicz, Hayim Nahman Bialik, and Sándor Petőfi—were written about by the distinguished historian of nationalism Hans Kohn, who elaborates on this connection in *Prophets and Peoples. Studies in Nineteenth Century Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1946).

19

Carlyle, *On Heroes*, 126–27.

20

In this sense, it seems that the history of (cultural) nationalism has not yet adequately evaluated the cultural saints, their cults, and their canonization. The reason for this could also be a certain uneasiness caused by the para-religious features of supposedly secular cults.

worth noting, for example, that the cults of cultural saints are hopelessly misogynistic: Christianity has added numerous female saints to their male counterparts over time, whereas female cultural saints hardly exist.<sup>16</sup> Another important difference is that Christian saints are primarily canonized for their exemplary, virtuous lives, martyrdom, miracles, and so on (*vitae*), and only in exceptional cases for their works (e.g., theological writings), whereas the canonization of cultural saints is primarily based on their works (*opera*). Conversely, the lives of cultural saints do not necessarily resemble the lives of saints; in fact, sometimes the opposite is true: from a moral point of view, cultural saints’ biographies are so shameful that only the process of canonization invents the appropriate rhetoric to justify them.<sup>17</sup>

These differences indicate that the reference to sacred traditions associated with the term *cultural saint* should not be taken literally. In some cases it is very appropriate, but in others different terms apply, such as *idol*, *icon*, *hero*, or *prophet*.<sup>18</sup> In the words of Thomas Carlyle: “Hero, Prophet, Poet—many different names, in different times and places, do we give to Great Men.”<sup>19</sup> Cultural saints, therefore, must be seen in a larger context and in relation to other types of personalities who have also become objects of veneration and deification—for example, legendary heroes, rulers, and statesmen.

The veneration and canonization of cultural saints played a prominent role in the formation of modern national literary cultures. They helped the protagonists of national movements convince their compatriots that they were part of a special identity community distinct from others, and that this specific identity defined their existence in fundamental and profound ways. Studying this phenomenon, then, makes it possible to better understand the historical dynamics of national movements and to better explain the reasons for their (political) success or failure. In this sense, it is possible to complement the established picture in which a prominent role is attributed to the development of national institutions (such an emphasis could be attributed, for example, to Joep Leerssen’s research on cultural nationalism) or to the media (this would be, somewhat simplified, a central emphasis according to Benedict Anderson). The efforts to build the infrastructure of a developed national culture are certainly the rational core of the “national revivals.” In a sense, cultural saints and their cults represent the reverse side of this matrix, its emotionally charged pole, which mediated a living experience of belonging to new forms of community through commemorative rituals. This experience could become quite concrete, even physical, and thus go beyond Benedict Anderson’s abstract notion of a “horizontal” affiliation with a multitude of unknown people, made possible—through codified literary language—by a newspaper or a novel.<sup>20</sup>

The cultural saints were not capable of performing miracles. Nonetheless, their “posthumous powers” have contributed to fundamental social changes in the last two centuries, especially to the formation of the symbolic imaginary and the collective memory of a new type of community: the nation. Especially for small ethnic communities with weak historical traditions, quasi-secular saintly cults meant more than just an eccentric fad—they developed into one of their survival strategies. But how does the appearance of cultural saints fit into the overall picture of venerating great figures in the nation-building period?

## II. National Pantheons

Looking at the phenomenon of cultural saints more broadly, it is clear that they only cover a portion of the personalities that have been the subject of nationalist commemoration. Cultural saints have indeed grown in the new context because they have been elevated to a pedestal by the inner logic of cultural nationalism. However, nations, the new imagined communities, also incorporated into their commemorative frameworks other kinds of personalities that had long before been the objects of veneration. These were mainly kings and other secular rulers, generals, military leaders and other kinds of heroes, saints, and religious dignitaries, but also travelers, explorers, scientists, and inventors. All these personalities joined together to form new entities, which the protagonists of the national movements envisioned as a kind of pantheon of the nation's "great men." Women were rare among them—so rare that in this respect Carlyle's term *great men* or the inscription *grands hommes* on the portico of the secularized Paris Panthéon seem quite appropriate. In the nineteenth century, the celebration of the nation's great men became the celebration of the nation itself—and the material pantheons provided remarkable realms of memory for the emerging national cult.

What actually is a pantheon? The original Greek word is composed of the words *pán* ("all") and *theíon* ("divine, of the gods"). Thus, the word *pantheon* literally means ("of all the gods"). The history of the use of the term is extremely varied and complex, but in contemporary usage the word primarily refers to two things: a) the gods of a community or people (e.g., the Mesopotamian, Roman, Greek, Norse, or Slavic pantheon), or b) a temple dedicated to the gods of a community (e.g., the Roman Pantheon). In a secondary, somewhat figurative (and secularized) sense, the term *pantheon* no longer refers to deities, but to a group of famous people. Again, it can refer to either a) a group of important individuals (e.g., the pantheon of Italian painters, the pantheon of American movie legends, etc.), or b) an object in which the nation's famous dead are buried or represented in the form of monuments (e.g., the National Pantheon in Lisbon). Thus, the semantic range of the word primarily lies in the intersection between a pantheon as a subject (a group of gods or secular deities) or as an object (a site) and a pantheon as a religious or secular category:

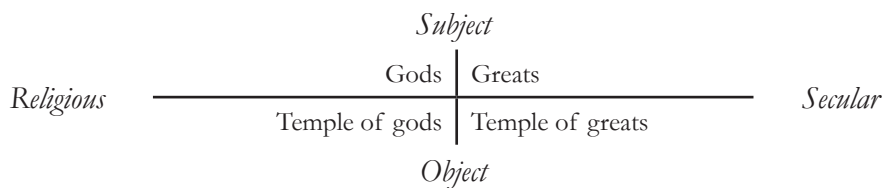


Fig. 1. Semantic range of the word *pantheon*.

Previous research on pantheons has often focused on the "objective" aspect; that is, buildings that served to represent and worship selected major figures. Moreover, the focus has been on the most obvious and influential examples from western Europe. As I show below, it would be useful to expand this framework not only geographically but also conceptually.



The idea to think these four pantheons together comes from the aforementioned book *Public Pantheons* of Evelin G. Bouwers.

On the building, cf. William L. MacDonald, *The Pantheon: Design, Meaning, and Progeny* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

Edmund Thomas, “From the Pantheon of Gods to the Pantheon of Rome,” in *Pantheons*, 11–34.

On Raphael and subsequent artistic burials, cf. Susanna Pasquali, “From the Pantheon of Artists to the Pantheon of Illustrious Men: Raphael’s Tomb and Its Legacy,” in *Pantheons*, 35–56.

Bouwers, *Public Pantheons*, 132–60; the list of herms: 235–37. In the complex political context, Canova’s “greats” soon had to leave the church; today, they are housed in the Capitoline Museums.

“*The Big Four*”: Rome, Paris, London, and Regensburg<sup>21</sup>

In search of the source from which most modern pantheonic ideas, including nationalist ones, drew their inspiration, one must certainly first go to Rome—to the mysterious edifice built by Emperor Hadrian on the site of the earlier temple (Agrippa’s), the first and only Roman sacred building dedicated to “all the gods.”<sup>22</sup> The cult performed in the Pantheon remains shrouded in mystery but, as Edmund Thomas’s excellent study shows, models for the Roman Pantheon (built c. 117–28) can be found in the ancient Greek temples dedicated to the Olympian Twelve (*dōdekátheon*) and especially in the Antiochian Pantheon, which was most likely a direct model for Rome.<sup>23</sup> After the collapse of the Roman Empire, the former temple retained its sacred character: the emperor in Constantinople granted permission to Pope Boniface IV in 609 to consecrate it as the basilica of Saint Mary and the Martyrs (*Sancta Maria ad Martyres*). The building was thus saved from decay, remained in Catholic use, and, unlike the Pantheon in Paris, was never secularized. Its history is perplexing, and so a look at its current interior—dominated by the tombs of the painter Raphael and a handful of other artists, as well as kings Victor Emmanuel II (the “Father of the Nation”) and Umberto I—hides more than it reveals. In the century-long dynamic of funerals, exhumations, and placement and removal of monuments in the basilica, Raphael’s burial in 1520 stands out as one of the most important events because it helped shape the idea of a pantheon as an appropriate resting place for great artists.<sup>24</sup> At the beginning of the nineteenth century, this idea, now freed from the relics (so characteristic of Christianity), culminated in the monumental series of sculptures by Antonio Canova. Indeed, between 1809 and 1820, the neoclassical sculptor densely populated the interior of the Pantheon with dozens of herms of famous Italian artists and scholars—from Dante and Giotto to the niche that would eventually pantheonize the postulator of the gallery of the great Italians, Canova himself. However, the questionable coexistence of religious and secular cults in a church in the center of Rome did not please everyone—and the statues were eventually removed.<sup>25</sup>

Another important event that influenced the further development of pantheons at the end of the eighteenth century was the French Revolution. In France, where the cult of the *grands hommes* had already developed under Bourbon rule, the revolutionaries were, not surprisingly, excessively hostile to the former royal pantheon: in the fall of 1793, they carried out the previously unimaginable desecration of the tombs of the hated “tyrants” in Saint Denis’s Basilica (*Basilique royale de Saint-Denis*), the old mausoleum of the French kings. However, they also tried to design their own pantheon. As early as 1791, the National Constituent Assembly (*Assemblée nationale constituante*) secularized Sainte Geneviève’s Church in Paris, a neoclassical masterpiece by Jacques-Germain Soufflot, dedicated to the city’s patron saint, which had been completed shortly before, and transformed it into the Panthéon, where the mortal remains of outstanding French citizens would be interred. On April 4, the assembly declared that the former religious building should become a “temple of the nation” and an “altar of liberty,” and it had a new inscription placed above the entrance: *Aux grands hommes la patrie reconnaissante* (“To its great men, a grateful fatherland”). Mirabeau’s magnificent funeral followed the same day. However, as the botched history of the Paris Panthéon shows, the fate of the relics of politicians and revolutionaries was uncertain: the mortal remains of the now celebrated hero could have ended up in a ditch the very next day. This is what happened to Mirabeau and many others,

including Jean-Paul Marat, whose martyr cult was elevated to the level of Christian saint cults in the course of the Jacobin de-Christianization campaign.<sup>26</sup> Simplifying the checkered history of the Paris Panthéon, it can be said that the least controversial category in the long run was that of the artists, who generally retained a permanent place in the building. First and foremost was Voltaire, whose famous funeral on July 11, 1791, can be considered the continental prototype of the secular emulation of a saint's *translatio*. He was followed in 1794 by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who had previously been buried on Poplar Island (*Île des Peupliers*) near Ermenonville (a commemorative cult flourished there in the sixteen years following the writer's death), and somewhat later the burial of Victor Hugo (1885) enjoyed great popularity. The whirlwind of political and ideological perturbations of the nineteenth century, the resacralization of the church, the "banalization" under Napoleon, when relatively insignificant bureaucrats were buried there, and the development of Les Invalides as a competing military-political pantheon all contributed to the Paris Panthéon not becoming representative—like the one in Rome, it simply does not cover the totality of national "deities" by a long shot.<sup>27</sup>

Another influential phase in the development of pantheons took place in London. The famous Westminster Abbey, the millennial center of monarchical and religious life on the island (the scene of coronations, royal weddings, and funerals), became a vast cemetery for prominent figures in British history over the centuries. Among the more than three thousand buried there today, there are at least sixteen monarchs and eight prime ministers, as well as eminent military figures, scientists, and artists. Since 1400, when Geoffrey Chaucer, the author of the famous *Canterbury Tales*, was buried there, the so-called Poet's Corner had also been developing in the church.<sup>28</sup> The southern transept gradually filled with monuments to important British cultural and especially literary figures, many of whom (including Shakespeare) were represented only by monuments or plaques—and thus an artistic pantheon of the combined kind was created.<sup>29</sup> In an effort to establish a "national temple of fame," the state took a more active role in the late eighteenth century in developing pantheons, which until then had primarily been the domain of the church. Overcrowding at Westminster Abbey prompted the British Parliament to pantheonize another important London church, St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral (the seat of the bishop of London). In this case, too, no secularization took place: both churches retained their sacred purpose but evolved into (secular) national pantheons with the physical presence of relics. The selection of personalities in St. Paul's Cathedral reflects the spirit of imperial and colonial superpower, and it shows how the politics of the time envisioned the temple of glory, in that it was primarily limited to military dignitaries and placed famous army commanders and admirals, preferably nobles with the highest military ranks, at the center of commemoration—its major *exempla virtutis* being the heroes of the Napoleonic wars.<sup>30</sup>

Walhalla, a magnificent neo-classicist temple on the picturesque Bräuerberg above the Danube at Donaustauf, a village near the renowned Bavarian city of Regensburg, has a very different appearance. The solutions that King Ludwig I of Bavaria, its great patron (and also main financier), and the architect Leo von Klenze realized in it differ considerably from those mentioned so far. In this case, it is not a (former) church, but a completely new building erected for the purpose of a pantheon. The

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On quasi-religious festivals, cf. Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

27

Bouwers, *Public Pantheons*, 91–131, 230–34. On additional aspects of the French cult of *grands hommes*, cf. Dominique Poulot, "Pantheons in Eighteenth-Century France: Temple, Museum, Pyramid," in *Pantheons*, 123–45.

28

Thomas Prendergast, *Poetical Dust: Poets' Corner and the Making of Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

29

On Westminster Abbey, cf. Matthew Craske, "Westminster Abbey 1720–70: A Public Pantheon Built upon Private Interest," in *Pantheons*, 57–79.

30

Bouwers, *Public Pantheons*, 45–90, burials at both locations (1793–1823), 226–29. On St. Paul's Cathedral, cf. also Holger Hoock, "The British Military Pantheon in St Paul's Cathedral: The State, Cultural Patriotism, and the Politics of National Monuments," in *Pantheons*, 81–105.

idea preoccupied the Bavarian ruler, who envisioned Walhalla as a monument to the victory over the French and at the same time as a symbol of the growing Bavarian power in the German context, since 1807, and the spectacular structure (construction lasted from 1830 until the ceremonial opening on October 18, 1842) represents the peak of pantheon fever in post-revolutionary Europe. The abandonment of relics—a move that might have slightly deprived the project of a sacred dimension—allowed the design to achieve a conceptual roundness: it was possible to include all people without having to face the expensive and difficult handling of relics. (Similarly, relics were absent in the Munich *Ruhmeshalle*, the hall of famous Bavarians, commissioned by the same king and opened in 1853, which with its colonnade design induced a new, later increasingly popular “hall-of-fame” type of a pantheon). The main criteria for including an individual in Walhalla were “greatness” and belonging to the realm of the “German language,” and the spectrum of pantheonized individuals included two millennia of figures from the broadly understood German(ic) cultural sphere. Very importantly, women were not excluded. Thus, politicians, rulers, scientists, and artists—from Germanic leaders of antiquity (Arminius and Marbodius) to Ludwig’s contemporaries—are represented by herms in the Walhalla in a fairly balanced manner, and the collection was later added to and today includes 130 busts and sixty-five commemorative plaques.<sup>31</sup> Although Ludwig was a Catholic king, his “Teutonic” temple flirts quite openly with pagan traditions: whereas the architecture of Walhalla is modeled on the ancient Greek Parthenon, the name of the building and the reliefs on the frieze betray a closeness to Germanic (Norse) mythology. Moreover, the motivation for the temple’s construction has unmistakably nationalistic overtones.<sup>32</sup>

The “Stockholm Pantheon,” already envisioned in 1791 by Swedish King Gustav III as a royal funeral church, was designed by the architect Eric Palmstedt as a replica of the Roman Pantheon. However, due to the assassination of the king in 1792, the project was not realized.

Caroline P. Boyd, “Un lugar de memoria olvidado: el Panteón de Hombres Ilustres en Madrid,” *Historia y política* 11 (2004): 15–40. Cf. Iso Joaquín Álvarez Barrientos, “Ramón de Mesonero Romanos y el Panteón de hombres ilustres,” *Anales de Literatura Española Anales de Literatura Española* 18 (2005): 37–51.

“The Others”: From *Mtatsminda* to *Bingvellir*

These four major examples largely framed the pantheon solutions in Europe during the long nineteenth century but, as shall be seen, far from completely.<sup>33</sup> Inspired by Westminster Abbey and the Paris Panthéon, the Pantheon of Illustrious Men (*El Panteón de Hombres Ilustres*), planned since 1837, was inaugurated in Madrid in 1869. Like Walhalla, it was conceived systematically. The list of candidates was drawn up by a commission of experts but, unlike the German project, it also included the presence of relics. Although many much-desired mortal remains could not be found (of Miguel de Cervantes, Lope de Vega, and Diego Velázquez), the relics of some major literary figures (including Garcilaso de la Vega, Francisco Quevedo, and Pedro Calderón de la Barca) and political leaders arrived in an imposing procession at the Royal Basilica of Saint Francis the Great (*Real Basílica de San Francisco el Grande*) on June 20. The project, based mainly on liberal and democratic values, did not get off to a good start due to tumultuous political disputes. Thus, it was only after 1890 that the idea was partially revived at a new location in Madrid, the Royal Basilica of Our Lady of Atocha (*Real Basílica de Nuestra Señora de Atocha*), where the Spanish Pantheon (*Panteón de España*, as it is now called) is still located today. However, its focus remains primarily political.<sup>34</sup>

During the First Portuguese Republic, a pantheon was established in Lisbon that followed the example of Paris: in 1916, Saint Engratia’s Church (*Igreja de Santa Engrácia*) was secularized and proclaimed the new National Pantheon (*Panteão Nacional*). Its design emphasized republican values and the new symbols of national identity. The range of personalities

buried there is wide: in addition to presidents (Manuel de Arriaga, Teófilo Braga, Sidónio Pais, and Óscar Carmona), artists are also represented (e.g., the literary figures João de Deus, Almeida Garrett, Guerra Junqueiro, Aquilino Ribeiro, and Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen); among the newer inclusions are the female fado singer Amália Rodrigues and the soccer player Eusébio. In addition to the personalities represented by genuine relics, there are also those represented only by monuments: for example, Luís de Camões, Afonso de Albuquerque, and Vasco da Gama.<sup>35</sup>

The Italian example is also interesting. As has been seen, the Roman Pantheon, which carried the name and concept throughout the world, never became a true national pantheon. However, the function of a (cultural) pantheon has been taken over to some extent by Holy Cross Basilica (*Basilica di Santa Croce*) in Florence, which over the centuries has established itself as a burial place for great artists and intellectuals: Michelangelo and Galileo Galilei, among many others, were buried there. In the course of the nineteenth century, after the great romanticist Ugo Foscolo imagined it as the pantheon of Italian glory in his poem *Dei Sepolcri* (Sepulchres, 1807), this Florentine church quickly filled with monuments. After the unification of Italy, the collection was enlarged by the “repatriation” of precious relics: in 1881, the mortal remains of Ugo Foscolo were transferred from London, in 1887, those of Gioachino Rossini from Paris, and so on. On the contrary, Venetian “pantheon” Saints John and Paul Basilica (*Basilica dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo*) is clearly focused on rulers: it houses the tombs of twenty-five doges, as well as military leaders, politicians, and a few nobles—but, despite the extraordinary cultural pulse of *La Serenissima*, only a handful of artists keep them company. Finally, the Roman *Vittoriano*, whose construction began in 1885, is conceived as a (secular) temple dedicated to a united Italy, but on the altar of the fatherland, instead of a multitude of greats, only the royal “Father of the Fatherland” (*Padre della Patria*), Victor Emmanuel II (who, significantly, is buried in Hadrian’s Pantheon), and an unknown soldier are celebrated.

Moving toward central Europe, the picture becomes even more dynamic. Wawel Cathedral in Kraków, seat of the Archdiocese of Krakow and arguably the most important sanctuary of Polish Catholicism, resembles the model of Westminster Abbey in many ways. The magnificent crypts of the historic royal residence on Wawel Hill contain the tombs of Polish kings, heroes, generals, and revolutionaries (e.g., Jan III Sobieski, the rebel Tadeusz Kościuszko, Władysław Sikorski, and Marshal Józef Piłsudski, founder of the Second Polish Republic). A counterpoint to this powerful military and political framework is the Crypt of National Poets, located in the same cathedral, where Adam Mickiewicz (translated 1890), a paradigmatic Polish cultural saint, Juliusz Słowacki (translated 1927), and Cyprian Kamil Norwid (translated 2001) are (re)buried. The symbiotic coexistence of religious, political, military, and cultural saints takes place in an overtly sacred context—in a symbolically charged place that symbolizes Polish statehood.

Pantheon cemeteries represent an entirely different trend. These cemeteries were transformed, though often rather accidentally, into pantheons by the aggregation and transfer of monuments and relics and by other architectural interventions. In Pest, Hungary, the public Kerepesi Cemetery (*Kerepesi temető*) was opened as early as 1847 and gradually developed into a pantheon. A series of “national” burials began in 1855 with the poet Mihály Vörösmarty; since then, dignitaries have been

Today, most of the cemetery has been turned into a park, and the most important monuments are protected. Cf. Imola Gecse-Tarmasc and Ágnes Bechtold, “The Hungarian National Graveyard (Budapest) as a Public Park,” *Teka Komisji Urbanistyki i Architektury Oddziału Polskiej Akademii Nauk w Krakowie* 54 (2016): 187–93.

Marek Nekula, “Constructing Slavic Prague: The ‘Green Mountain Manuscript’ and Public Space in Discourse,” *Bohemia* 52, no. 1 (2012): 22–36; Marek Nekula, *Tod und Auferstehung einer Nation: Der Traum vom Pantheon in der tschechischen Literatur und Kultur* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2017); and Tomáš Bubík, “A Graveyard as a Home to Ghosts or a Subject of Scholarly Research? The Czech National Cemetery at Vyšehrad,” *Changing Societies & Personalities* 4, no. 2 (2020): 136–57.

Cf. also the official website, accessed November 2023, <https://www.gradskagrobilja.hr/pocetak-gradnje-arkada-758/758>.

interred in a designated area and, since the beginning of the twentieth century, mainly in the imposing arcades (built in 1908–1911) and the special artists’ area. Although there are many cultural figures among the several hundred Hungarian greats, other profiles are also strongly represented. However, the true dominants of the cemetery, which was declared a “national pantheon” in 1956, are the three mausoleums of the leading politicians and statesmen from the second half of the nineteenth century: Lajos Batthyány, Ferenc Deák, and Lajos Kossuth.<sup>36</sup>

The Czech example is also illustrative, where—as elsewhere in the Habsburg Monarchy—national movements often operated in multiethnic areas and sought to express their power and dominance with national(ized) pantheons. Vyšehrad, an ancient fortress overlooking the Vltava River south of central Prague and a mythical site of the Czech national movement, was gradually transformed into a national cemetery. Since 1861, when the (controversial) philologist Václav Hanka was buried there, Vyšehrad has become the final resting place of many “great Czechs”: composers such as Antonín Dvořák and Bedřich Smetana, the painters Alphonse Mucha and Josef Václav Myslbek, and the writers Jaroslav Vrchlický, Karel Hynek Mácha, and Božena Němcová, among others. Especially prominent is Slavín, a monumental collective tomb (built from 1889 to 1893) with the allegorical sculpture *Génia vlasti* (Genius of the Nation)—the idea for which came in the early 1860s from the Svatobor Society, an influential member of which was the historian and politician František Palacký, later considered the “father of the nation.” As the “Czech Pantheon,” Slavín continued to accept new members throughout the twentieth century: as recently as 1996, the composer and conductor Rafael Kubelík was buried there. Among the fifty-five people interred there, poets and writers make up the largest group (twelve). Significantly, as a smaller, subordinate nation in an imperial context, the Czechs seem to have particularly developed the cultural aspect of the pantheon: artists make up the vast majority in the tomb.<sup>37</sup>

The development in Croatia was similar. In Zagreb, Mirogoj Cemetery was opened in 1879, where the architect Herman Bollé laid out magnificent arcades (they were not completed until 1917). The cemetery had already gained national importance in its first year due to the typical saintly *translatio*, the second burial of the Romantic poet Petar Preradović. In the autumn of 1885, the Arcade of National Awakeners (*Arkada preporoditelja*) was completed, where the mortal remains of Ljudevit Gaj, Stanko Vraz, Živko Vukasović, Vjekoslav Babukić, Fran Kurelac, Vatroslav Lisinski, Dragutin Seljan, and Dimitrije Demeter were ceremonially reburied. The cemetery continued to fill with patriotic relics, and the selection of persons was made by the municipal authorities.<sup>38</sup>

Analogous (although somewhat later) transformations can be observed in Ljubljana. The old city cemetery next to Saint Christopher’s Church (*Sveti Krištof*) was one of the first in the Habsburg Monarchy to receive monumental arcades in the fashionable Italian *campo santo* style in the mid-1860s. However, the arcades initially served as the final resting place for members of the predominantly German Carniolan upper class. When the new Holy Cross Cemetery (now called *Žale*) was built at the beginning of the twentieth century, this also led to the piecemeal degradation of the former burial site. After the collapse of the monarchy, the Navje memorial park was planned on the old cemetery, which the architect Jože Plečnik envisioned as a “grove of illustrious men” (*gaj zaslužnih moš*).

Due to various circumstances, Plečnik's pantheonic "cemetery of honor" was not realized in its full monumentality. Nevertheless, in the late 1930s, the tombstones of many great Slovenians (most of whom had previously been scattered in the cemetery) and the mortal remains of others were moved to the restored arcades of the Navje Memorial Park, where artists and cultural figures, especially literary greats (some of whom were commemorated in a collective "writers' tomb"), clearly predominate. In this respect, Ljubljana's Navje resembles the Vyšehrad case.<sup>39</sup>

The idea of a pantheon cemetery reached the borders of Europe and beyond, and it had an impact well into the twentieth century. In Georgia, a pantheon was created on Mtatsminda Hill above the city center of Tbilisi as a "symbol of Georgia's collective identity," with monumental tombs of writers and public figures. It had been planned since the late nineteenth century and was built in the 1920s.<sup>40</sup> As part of the cult of national greats, the newly founded state of Israel also created a cemetery—the "Zionist Pantheon," which, unlike the cemeteries mentioned so far, is almost exclusively political in character. Its main figure is Theodor Herzl, the visionary and "father" of the Jewish state, whose bones were ceremoniously transferred from Vienna in 1949. Among the eight sites across the country that competed for the prestigious relics, the topographically dominant hill, the highest point in Jerusalem (now named after Herzl), on which the park was built, occupies to this day the position of a sacralized epicenter of the state's territory.<sup>41</sup> In Iceland, where a nineteenth-century initiative to reinstate the parliament (*Alþingi*) in rural Þingvellir (rather than the town of Reykjavík) failed, the government attempted to transform the old center of Icelandic parliamentarianism into a pantheon cemetery. In 1940, the poet Einar Benediktsson was buried there, and in 1946, after grotesque complications, the remains of the "national poet" Jonas Hallgrímson, which had lain in Copenhagen for a long century, were added. However, that was it, more or less: Þingvellir, now a major tourist attraction, did not become a real pantheon.<sup>42</sup>

#### *Pantheons: Between Idea and Materialization*

Material pantheons continue the ancient practice of burying and/or commemorating "great men" in symbolically invested spaces. Nationalism in the nineteenth century arguably accelerated this process by aligning it ever more clearly with the new concept of the nation. National pantheons as physical sites—whether temples or pantheon cemeteries—were conceived as places of pilgrimage where people could experience a deep attachment to their nation and its glorious past and identify with its exemplary heroes. As can be seen, different strategies were employed, and pantheonic aspirations encountered various obstacles in reality. Sacred objects, for example, were controlled by the church, which was not necessarily enthusiastic about the development of (secular) cults of private fame; the transformation of cemeteries was expensive and time-consuming; the grandiose ambitions of national movements collided in practice with their financial impotence; various political principles (be they liberal or conservative) and broader concepts of social structure (republican or monarchist) confronted each other; and, finally, there were the conflicting interests of the pantheon's commissioners or "postulators," who, as a rule, also tended to glorify themselves along with the pantheons. It is therefore not surprising that ideas materialized with very different levels of success.

However, it should be noted again that a pantheon in general does not

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Milena Piškur and Sonja Žitko, *Ljubljansko Navje* (Ljubljana: DZS, 1997); Tina Potočnik and Tanja Simonič Korošak, "Arkade na Navju. Monumentalna pokopališka arhitektura 19. stoletja in Plečnikova predelava," *Kronika* 68, no. 2 (2020): 241–56.

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Nino Chikovani, "The Mtatsminda Pantheon: A Memory Site and Symbol of Identity," *Caucasus Survey* 9, no. 3 (2020): 235–49.

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Maoz Azaryahu, "Mount Herzl: The Creation of Israel's National Cemetery," *Israel Studies* 1, no. 2 (1996): 46–74; Doron Bar, "Zionist Pantheons? The Design and Development of the Tombs of Herzl, Weizmann and Rothschild During the Early Years of the State of Israel," *Israel Studies* 25, no. 2 (2020): 72–94.

42

Dović and Helgason, *National Poets*, 177–85.

Cf. Uta Kornmeier, "Madame Tussaud's as a Popular Pantheon," in *Pantheons*, 147–65. Madame Tussaud's wax pantheon was, of course, not "national" but rather "popular" in its predominantly commercial design.

Jo Tollebeek and Tom Verschaffel, "Group Portraits with National Heroes: The Pantheon as an Historical Genre in Nineteenth-Century Belgium," *National Identities* 6, no. 2 (2004): 91–106. In an excellent study, the authors define the pantheon as "a common denomination for these diverse types of ensembles of (historical) greats"; they bring together people from different historical periods that "contributed to the rise of the fatherland and embodied the identity of the nation in an admirable and glorious way" (92). The authors also analyze the hierarchy of pantheonized individuals in terms of the different types of heroes (warriors, statesmen, artists, and scholars). The history of the Belgian pantheon inevitably became more complicated with the rise of Flemish nationalism in the twentieth century.

Éva Bicskei, "The Formation of the National Pantheon: Portrait Galleries of County Halls, City Halls, and Clubs in Nineteenth Century Hungary," *Acta Historiae Artium Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 49, no. 1 (2008): 305–36.

Michael Fellman, "The Earthbound Eagle: Andrew Jackson and the American Pantheon," *American Studies* 12, no. 2 (1971): 67–76. According to Fellman, the major heroes of the American (political) pantheon are three presidents—Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln: "As members of the American Pantheon, these three demi-gods exemplify transcendent national qualities" (68).

Anna Minta, "Planning a National Pantheon: Monuments in Washington, D.C. and the Creation of Symbolic Space," *Architecture—Technology—Culture* 3 (2009): 21–50.

Albert Murray, "The Vernacular Imperative: Duke Ellington's Place in the National Pantheon," *Callaloo* 14, no. 4 (1991): 771–75.

In the course of the twentieth century, hundreds of halls of fame (sometimes also walls or walks of fame) for various areas (sports, music, and art) were established in both the US and Canada.

necessarily have to be a material place (Walhalla or Vyšehrad Cemetery) but can also be a group of "deities" (e.g., the pantheon of Greek gods). Although the actual structure of this group is often difficult to grasp, one of the characteristics of these new communities is that they cultivate the notion of a "national pantheon" as a group of representative individuals (prominent Serbs, famous Norwegians, etc.)—regardless of whether this community of secular deities can be honored by visiting a particular site. Such a pantheon, increasingly subordinated to the national principle in the late nineteenth century, can thus be thought of as a kind of (Platonic) idea that can be realized in a concrete pantheon (temple), a pantheon cemetery, a hall of fame with colonnades and busts, or in other ways; for example, in the form of a portrait gallery, an avenue with statues, a wax doll museum,<sup>43</sup> painted ceiling frescoes, or decoration of national institutions (e.g., the curtains of the Croatian National Theater in Zagreb, painted by Vlaho Bukovac in 1895).

From this perspective, the Belgian example is illustrative, where the idea of the pantheon found wide resonance in sculpture, but also in other media. The examples of Paris and London fueled the desire for a physical pantheon and, under the vivid impression of Walhalla, the monarchical elite actually planned such a pantheon—but the idea was never realized. Instead, sculptural pantheons experienced a veritable boom: toward the end of the 1830s, a series of statues of great Belgians, commissioned by a royal decree, were designed and distributed throughout the country, and by mid-century in Brussels, a series of statues glorifying a number of nationally important figures were placed in both the capital's new National Museum and in its parliament buildings. A series of busts for the Royal Academy in Brussels was also designed as a pantheon, and in other cities (Louvain, Bruges, Ypres, and Ghent) busts of the "greats" filled the empty niches of restored Gothic townhouses. The striking fashion for sculpted pantheons was supplemented by painted pantheons, frescoes, miniature statues, and, from 1840 on, the *Panthéon national* book series, in which *Les Belges illustres* (The Famous Belgians) was published in three volumes.<sup>44</sup> The tendency to create portrait galleries in the style of pantheons also existed elsewhere—for example, in Hungary;<sup>45</sup> a comparative study would probably show that it was a broader, pan-European phenomenon.

A particular example of a monumental sculptural pantheon that is entirely political is the American Mount Rushmore National Memorial in remote South Dakota, which contains the giant heads of four presidents (Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt, and Lincoln) carved into the mountain massif between 1927 and 1941.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, the monumental architectural design of the center of Washington D.C. has also been considered a "national pantheon" with sacral dimensions,<sup>47</sup> as has the Smithsonian National Museum of American History in the United States capital—for the pantheon is not necessarily a temple; it can also be realized through a museum setting that "enshrines and deifies and even idolatizes human beings."<sup>48</sup> However, the most successful pantheonic concept in North America was evidently the "hall of fame," of which the earliest example is the Hall of Fame for Great Americans in the Bronx, started in 1901. Inspired by the Bavarian Hall of Fame (*Ruhmeshalle*), it was designed as a growing gallery of busts of the "national greats," whose selection was entrusted to the board of electors.<sup>49</sup>

A pantheon can also be designed as a single sculpture, as shown by the Kremlin in Novgorod, with its imposing fifteen-meter-high monument

*Tysyacheletiyе Rossii* (Millennium of Russia) in the form of a *globus cruciger*, erected in 1862 as part of the (self-)glorification of Russian statehood. The hundred-ton bronze giant, glorifying Russia's monarchical past, features 129 historical figures, with rulers and religious and military leaders dominating; many artists are also represented, but they take a hierarchically subordinate role to the world of high politics. Half a century later, political dominance became even more apparent in the new Bolshevik pantheon, which focused primarily on two revolutionary deities—Lenin and Stalin.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, a pantheon can be realized in a series of books—like *Les Belges illustres* or *Znameniti Slovenci* (Famous Slovenians)—or, as in the case of *Ukrayins'kyj panteon* (Ukrainian Pantheon), in the form of a single book.<sup>51</sup> The idea of collected works of nationally important artists, found in practically all European literary cultures, also bears pantheonic traits: until the end of the nineteenth century, nationalism encouraged the writing of national literary histories centering on the “literary greats.”<sup>52</sup> In this context, of course, it should be borne in mind that the creation and promotion of national pantheons (or, in this case, canons) was in great part motivated by the global “competition” between nations (already initiated with Herderian thought)—hence the countless disputes over the appropriation of celebrities.<sup>53</sup>

The above overview is fairly partial and far from exhaustive. However, it certainly demonstrates at least two things: the great variety of manifestations of the “pantheonic imagination”—to use Eveline G. Bouwers' apt expression—and the fact that research into national pantheons would necessarily have to be broad and comparative. Such research would undoubtedly be very useful from the point of view of many disciplines, especially history (political, cultural, and artistic), memory studies, nationalism studies, and, last but not least, religious studies.

#### *A Comparative Study of National Pantheons*

If one wishes to empirically grasp national pantheons in their various manifestations in order to better compare them, several methodological dilemmas arise. The first is the following: what exactly should be considered a *national* pantheon? Here it is certainly useful to focus on their commissioners; in general, one can consider national only those pantheons that were inspired by national thought in a broader sense, and especially those that were planned and propagated by the protagonists of national movements. This guideline can also help in the chronological classification of the phenomenon, which—similar to the cults of cultural saints—experienced its peak in the second half of the nineteenth century, but whose offshoots may extend here and there to a few decades before or after.<sup>54</sup>

Even greater difficulties arise when trying to determine the structure of a particular national pantheon. There are no definite answers and no universal methods. Of course, it is useful to start from the material pantheons, but these are unreliable because of the complexity of their formation; they tend to remain a chronically incomplete source. It is therefore necessary to consider other forms of pantheons, from sculptural and pictorial to “discursive”—after all, the contours of the pantheon that Antonio Canova attempted to create in marble were partly sketched much earlier by Giorgio Vasari in his famous book of artists' biographies. As with the canonization of cultural saints, in assessing the degree of “pantheonization,” one must consider a complex interplay of factors ranging from major public

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Brandon Taylor, “Rise and Fall of the Soviet Pantheon,” in *Pantheons*, 221–42.

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In *Ukrayins'kyj panteon* (Kyiv: Baltia, numerous editions), Sergey Szegeda discusses forty-three key figures of Ukrainian history and art from the time of Kievan Rus to the present. Significantly, the cover depicts the Virgin Mary uniting Ukrainian dignitaries under her mantle.

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On national pantheons as book collections, cf. Dragos Jipa, “The Transnational Construction of National Pantheons,” in *Literary Transnationalism(s)*, ed. Dagmar Vandebosch and Theo D'haen (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 121–31.

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Was Mickiewicz a Polish or Lithuanian “national poet”? Is the inventor Tesla Serbian or Croatian? And so on.

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The controversial “Skopje 2014” monument series, installed by the government (i.e., the ruling nationalist party VMRO-DPMNE) in the capital of North Macedonia, is a somewhat belated reenactment of a sculpted open-air national pantheon.



Cf. the canonization model in Dović and Helgason, *National Poets*, 94–95. A major source for research on European monuments is the (online) *Encyclopedia of Romantic Nationalism*, accessed November 2023, <https://ernie.uva.nl>. National pantheons seem to be one of the natural possibilities to expand the *Encyclopedia*.

Dović and Helgason, *National Poets*, 194.

Historically, “father of the nation” is linked to the ancient Roman tradition of honoring outstanding individuals (mostly emperors) with the title *pater patriae*.

monuments and street names to rituals, reprints, banknotes, stamps, and, quite importantly, school curricula (history, literature, and art).<sup>55</sup>

In any case, if one considers the structure of the national pantheons, it can be seen that they include various personality types. As presented in the “Chart of Immortality,” the figures commemorated traditionally belonged to one of four groups: religion, politics, warfare, and arts/culture.<sup>56</sup> Whereas the first group, religious figures (gods, religious leaders, saints), has been sacralized by definition, and (secular) rulers and military leaders in particular have been subject to sacral forms of commemoration since antiquity (e.g., Egyptian or Roman emperors), modern nations have incorporated two relatively new types of “deities” into their pantheons. The first type is represented by cultural saints (poets, writers, artists, composers, scholars, inventors, and explorers); although not entirely new, it is the increased intensity of worship that distinguishes the new cults in the national context from past forms of veneration. The second change was the expansion of the scope of political celebrities: not only kings and victorious generals, but also other types of political figures became important: presidents, political leaders, national leaders, and revolutionaries; in the new, national context, this second type could be called patriot (or republican) saints. The first type is most vividly embodied by the figure of the “national poet,” and the second type is perhaps best represented by the figure of the “father of the nation”—a unique position important to many national movements, especially smaller ones.<sup>57</sup>

Conversely, the formal typology of national pantheons, as revealed in their various materializations, can be outlined by considering two contrasting traits: the first concerns the presence (or absence) of the mortal remains of pantheonized individuals, whereas the second concerns the form of materialization, which ranges from the (architectural) temple on the one hand to many other solutions that do not imitate the temple form. This yields four quadrants that the existing pantheon configurations can be classified into:

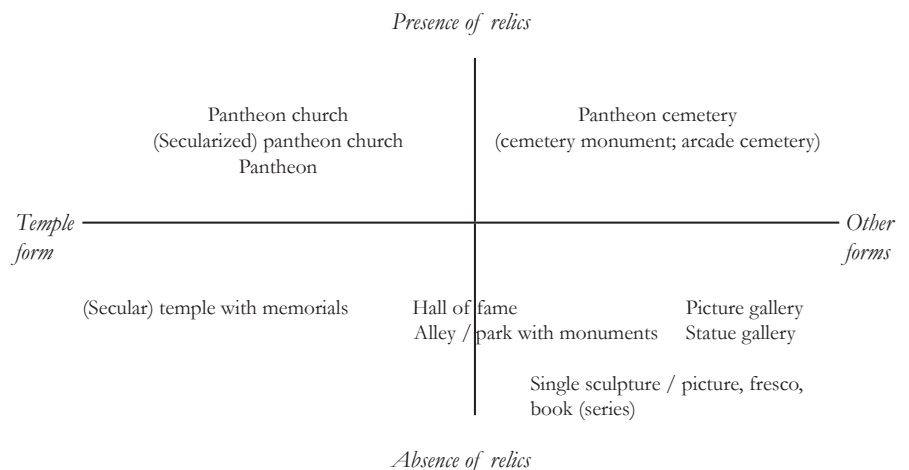


Fig. 2. Classification of pantheon configurations.

The starting points outlined above naturally open up a number of questions that could be adequately answered by comparative research. How variable is the structure of national pantheons, and how does it change across space and time? Are there specific differences, for example, between northern and southern Europe, or between Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox cultures?

What are the differences between “large” nations, where national movements could draw on rich monarchical and imperialist traditions, and “small,” dominated nations, where political emancipation overdetermined the nationalist process? How and when (if at all) do women enter the national pantheons? Another interesting question is whether the pantheons are hierarchically structured: are the deities in them at least roughly equal, such as the Greek Olympian Twelve (*Dōdekátheon*) or the gods of the central Norse pantheon (*Æsir*), or is worship concentrated on individual, highly elevated deities—for example, the “father of the nation” or the “national poet”? In other words, are the national pantheons monotheistic or polytheistic in nature? Which type of saints predominates: patriot or cultural? Finally, what is the degree of sacralization—are there significant differences in the way each national movement incorporates ritual and other religious elements into the commemoration of its “pantheonized”? What is the role of relics of various saint types, and do they receive excessive attention (solemn *translatio*, repatriation, and ritual veneration)? What kinds of relationships (conflictual or symbiotic?) have been developing between (increasingly) secular states and local religious institutions?



Fig. 3. Giusto de' Menabuoi, *Paradise*, ca. 1378. Ceiling fresco in the Baptistery dome of Saint Anthony of Padua Basilica, Padua. Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Pantheons change over time. Even the twelve Greek Olympians were not completely fixed—more than forty deities have occasionally been counted among them.<sup>58</sup> In Christianity, which is a monotheistic religion in principle, emphases also change with time and place: what role will be played by Mary, or by this or that saint? The ceiling fresco in the dome of the baptistery dome of Saint Anthony of Padua Basilica, painted by Giusto de' Menabuoi in the late fourteenth century, is dominated by Christ Pantocrator—one of the three persons of the Holy Trinity. However, Christ is by no means alone in Paradise:

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Thomas, “From the Pantheon,” 12.

The “Pantheon” website, developed since 2013 at MIT, provides analysis and attractive visualizations of world-renowned personalities. Individuals whose biographies appear on Wikipedia in at least fifteen languages are taken into account; online popularity is measured using the complex Historical Popularity Index (HPI), accessed November 2023, <https://pantheon.world/>.

he is surrounded by Mary, angels, and numerous saints. Of course, the early Renaissance master knew very well for whom he was painting. If he had been commissioned by a national leader of the late nineteenth century to paint a dome with the heroes of the “national pantheon,” he would have placed a variety of cultural and patriot saints within it—according to the wishes of his client. And, if he had had to paint the dome according to the dictates of the Soviet revolutionaries at the beginning of the twentieth century, of course, it would look quite different. And what would it look like today? As the online “Pantheon” project suggests, the painting would include many more athletes and entertainers than the earlier religious or nationalist pantheons. In the pantheons of the new millennium, even rulers and politicians have to make way for actors, singers, and soccer players.<sup>59</sup>

#### *Acknowledgements and Funding Details*

I would like to thank Jón Karl Helgason and Jernej Habjan for their careful review of the first draft of this article, and Eveline G. Bouwers for helpful comments on the pantheon section.

This work was supported by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS) as part of the research program “Studies in Literary History, Literary Theory, and Methodology, P6-0024 (B).”