**The Boundaries of European National Literatures**



Patriots often express pride in national literature, claiming great works of art, or great novelists, as national icons. Literary figures may also imagine themselves promoting or embodying a national tradition. Whether novelists proclaim themselves national or are so proclaimed by others, however, the nation always has some boundary: as Benedict Anderson memorably put it, the nation is “inherently limited.” Even literatures whose boundaries are defined by a national language may have fuzzy boundaries, since the relationship of the national language to “dialectal” literature may be unclear. This conference explores the limits of the national language, either through an individual author, a literary circle or literary tradition, or in the minds of literary patriots.

The event will take place 25 August 2018 at the Kelburn Campus of Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand. The event is free and open to the public.



**Conference** **Schedule**

**9:50 Welcome and housekeeping**

**10:00 Panel 1 Boundaries blurred? The Czech-Slovak case**

Jana Bujnáková “Blurring Czech-Slovak national and literary boundaries in the 19th century: the Czech perspective”

Eliška Gunišová, “Blurring Czech-Slovak national and literary boundaries in the 19th century: the Slovak perspective”

**11:00 Morning Tea**

**11:15 Panel 2 The Ambiguities of Slavic Literatures**

Alexander Maxwell, “Jan Kollár’s Panslavism and the Borders of Slavic Literatures”

Richard Millington: “Riffing On Ambivalence: The Cultivated National Hybridity of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch.”

**12:45 Lunch**

**1:30 Panel 3 National literatures in the age of Anglophone hegemony**

Marco Sonzogni, Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand.

“Boiled Beef for Lunch”: A ‘Filling’ Translation?

Dennitza Gabrakova

“Kapka Kassabova and the Edges of National Identity

**2:30 Afternoon Tea**

**2:24 Panel 4** **The Ambiguity of Drawing boundaries**

Charlotte Simmonds, “Endogenous vs. Exogenous Patriotism and National Icon Creation

in Soviet and Russian Psychiatric Literature”

Antonella Sarti Evans, “Extending boundaries: Italian and NZ national representation of the Second World War in literature.”

**Paper Abstracts**

**Jana Bujnáková, Masaryk University, Brno, Czechia**

**“Blurring Czech-Slovak national and literary boundaries in the 19th century:**

**the Czech perspective”**

This paper will focus on Božena Němcová (1820-1862) and Rudolf Pokorný (1853-1857), the representatives of the Czech national literature. Both authors became famous due to their travels across Slovakia. Němcová started this tradition in 1950s, while Pokorný became one of the most active personalities in the field of Czech-Slovak reciprocity. Based on numerous trips to Slovakia, Němcová published several works, including *The memoirs form the travels across Hungarian part of the Monarchy,* which is considered to be the most important work. While Pokorný published an extensive travelogue in two parts, *From the travels across Slovakia I and II (1884, 1885).* During 19th century, the mutual Czech-Slovak and Slovak-Czech cultural and literary relationships were built mainly on the basis of the individual contacts. However, at the beginning of the 20th century, these relationships intensified and the program of cultural and political convergence lead to the establishment of the first Czechoslovak Republic in 1918.

**Dennitza Gabrakova, Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand.**

**“Kapka Kassabova and the Edges of National Identity “**

I would like to propose a reading of the recent book by Kapka Kassabova, a Bulgarian author who came of age in New Zealand continuously probing the boundaries of her native Bulgaria. Kassabova's "Border: a Journey to the Edge of Europe" (2017) explores a remote mountainous area near Bulgaria's border with Turkey and Greece in an attempt to make sense of the relationship between recent historical, ancient and pre- or post- historical time (Walter Benjamin's idea of the time of the epoch versus the time of the world). Kassabova's writing, combining the literary with the auto-ethnographic fieldwork, is a manifestation of the boundary of Bulgarian literature, which can only survive in the language of globalization, that is English. The thematic inspiration by the political reality and the trope of the border, as this work suggests, illustrates a mode of auto-ethnographic writing as the final stage of so-called "national literature."

**Eliška Gunišová Masaryk University, Brno, Czechia**

**“Blurring Czech-Slovak national and literary boundaries in the 19th century:
the Slovak perspective”**

This paper will capture the perception of Czechs by the Slovak nation. It will focus on the depiction of the Czech nation within the Slovak literature, especially in the travelogues written by Terézia Vansová (1857-1942) and Jozef Miloslav Hurban (1817-1888). These literary  works, *Mrs. Georgiadesová on the road (1897)* and *The journey of a Slovak to his Slavic brothers in Moravia and Bohemia (1839)*, describe the journeys on the Czech territory and depict the perception of the Czech nation as a whole, but they also focus on the individual national specifics.

**Alexander Maxwell, Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand**

**“Jan Kollár’s Panslavism and the Borders of Slavic Literatures”**

This paper considers the borders between Slavic literatures as imagined in the works of Slovak pastor and Panslav activist Jan Kollár. Kollár consistently posited a single Slavic language spoken by a single Slavic nation, but intermittently acknowledged four distinct “literatures” produced by this single nation: Russian, Polish, Czech, and Serbian. The ambiguous relationship between the single national language and multiple national literatures has precedent in previous Panslav thinkers, such as Jan Herkel, who famously coined the term “Panslavism.” The diversity of distinct literatures also foreshadows the collapse of linguistic Panslavism.

**Richard Millington, Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand**

**“Riffing On Ambivalence: The Cultivated National Hybridity**

**of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch”**

The attribution of writers to national literary canons is typically predicated on a straightforward alignment of language of composition and national affiliation. The case of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (1836-1895) illustrates the tensions that can arise when these two factors diverge. Although Sacher-Masoch lived in Germany, wrote his many stories, novellas and novels in German, and was among the most popular writers in Germany in the second half of the nineteenth century, his status as a German writer was cast in doubt by both detractors and supporters. The argument made in this paper is that the uncertainty was fostered by the writer himself for his own literary and political ends. The consequences of his ambivalence are still playing out today, as claims on his legacy have been made in recent decades by literary historians from both Ukraine and Russia.

**Antonella Sarti Evans, Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand**

**“Extending boundaries: Italian and NZ national representation**

**of the Second World War in literature.”**

My speech will focus on comparative literature while exploring Italy as seen through the pages of fiction by contemporary NZ authors like Patricia Grace (‘TU’), Greg McGee (‘The Antipodeans’), Susan Jacob (‘Fighting with the enemy’) besides Paolo Rotondo and Rob Mokaraka (play, ‘Strange Resting Places’) in comparison with iconic Italian national authors dealing with the same historical period and settings such as Italo Calvino, Carlo Cassola, Vasco Pratolini and Beppe Fenoglio. I will start from the places depicted in NZ tales about regaining the Italian territory seized by the occupying German and Fascist army on a journey through the Italians’ revived feeling of a free nation within the encounter and exchange with New Zealander soldiers. My speech will explore the opening up of boundaries between Italian and NZ-English languages and literatures on the grounds of friendship, patriotism and love for Italy.

**Charlotte Simmonds, Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand**

**“Endogenous vs. Exogenous Patriotism and National Icon Creation**

**in Soviet and Russian Psychiatric Literature”**

What role does external recognition play in the creation of national heroes? Expressions and definitions of patriotism and nationalism can be generated from the top or bottom of a society, which can also decide who constitutes a national icon, but nationalism is always competitive and therefore cannot exist without an outside group. Using I. P. Pavlov and G. E. Sukhareva as case studies, I will look at the importance of “Western” recognition to Soviet sciences, expressions of patriotism in scientific texts during Stalinism, how G. E. Sukhareva is portrayed in literature today and who else might claim her as a national hero.

 

**Marco Sonzogni, Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand.**

**“Boiled Beef for Lunch”: A ‘Filling’ Translation?**

This exercise in poetry translation examines a poem by Primo Levi: ‘Pio’(Ad ora incerta, 1984: 589). There are several animal poems in Levi’s poetry but this one has not attracted the critical attention I think it deserves. This poem is particularly powerful because it undoes perceived power. With subtle linguistic stratification and sharp intellectual irony, Levi reverses the traditional image of the ox as a symbol of peaceful and patient power. A canonized image (it is locked in the history of Italian language and literature from the very beginning) by a canonized author (who was praised nationally and internationally for, among other things, the “lyrical force” characterizing his verse). “If there is one thing sure in this world”, argued Levi, “it is certainly this: that it will not happen to us a second time” (Survival in Auschwitz, 1996: 74). Translation, however, makes things happen a second, third, fourth, umpteenth time, repeatedly exposing national boundaries. Moreover, there is never a ‘last translation’. Remembering his last meal before deportation (an unfinished bowl of spaghetti, prelude of the imminent hunger), Levi described it as “solida”: “filling” in Stuart Woolf’s translation. What I propose here is a ‘filling’ translation: one that, by challenging linguistic, cultural and ideological identities and boundaries, strives to unmask travesty, uncover trauma and ‘solidify’ memory.

**List of participants**

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