BULGARIAN STUDIES IN THE MIRROR OF EMERGING BLACK SEA STUDIES: A PLEA FOR RELOCATION

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The paper argues that Bulgarian studies should be divorced from the paradigms of Slavic, Balkan and European studies and be relocated, in order to let the discipline articulate suppressed historical perspectives and achieve better standing within a global distribution of academic labour. The author analyses a recent collective volume in Black Sea studies (*The Black Sea as a Literary and Cultural Space*, 2019) and discerns some research perspectives that are worth adopting for the mentioned relocation. The article's overall intention is to juxtapose and partly merge the research agendas of Bulgarian studies and Black Sea studies, or at least to provoke a relevant interest in the academia. Such an intention can be primarily grounded in a macrohistorical generalisation: three, out of altogether only four, centres of *worldling* for Bulgarians from the 9th century onwards were located in, or at least gravitated to, the Black Sea basin (Constantinople, Istanbul, and Imperial Petersburg / Soviet Moscow), and were for the most time Black Sea (co)hegemons.

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1. THE BLACK SEA AS LITERARY AND CULTURAL SPACE

In October 2018, Ilia Chavchavadze State University in Tbilisi hosted the conference *Black Sea as a Literary and Cultural Space*, an inaugural initiative within an intended series. Less than two years later a proceedings volume (Dokhtourichvili, Tsipuria, Nuselovici & Andronikashvili, eds., 2019)[1] was issued, with some of the papers substantially appended, as deducible from some articles' length and bibliographies.

[1] Dokhtourichvili, Mzago & Bela Tsipuria & Alexis Nuselovici (Nouss) & Zaal Andronikashvili, eds. *შავი ზღვა როგორც ლიტერატურული და კულტურული სივრცე / La mer Noire comme espace littéraire et culturel / The Black Sea as a Literary and Cultural Space. (შედარებითი ლიტერატურის კრებული 2 / Yearbook of Comparative Literature 2)*. Tbilisi: Ilia State UP (Institute of Comparative Literature: Research Center *Romance Intercomprehension. Intertextual Dialogue*), 2019. ISBN 978-9941-18-343-0,

On the one hand, thematically and conceptually, the volume is a first in its kind, for it – implicitly – claims to have drafted a new research field across a number of disciplines in the humanities; I suggest assessing its ambitions and achievements with an eye on the analysis of the state of the arts in Black Sea studies offered in my review article from 2020[2]. On the other hand, the publication is unavailable online and is hardly available in libraries outside Georgia. Therefore (I believe) it deserves an extensive presentation.

The volume contains thirty-one contributions: in English (eight), French (eleven) and Georgian (thirteen); all of them have same-language summaries, and the papers in Georgian and French have second summaries in English. Roughly one-third of them (incl. the sole one published in two languages, Georgian and English) are of marginal or no relevance to the emerging field of *Black Sea humanities*. The majority of the rest concentrate on the first task from two field-grounding tasks that are implied in the volume's introduction and contents. It is the task of an anticipative definition and elaboration of the concept of *literary space*, through anticipative application of one or another of its facets to Black Sea-related historical, literary etc. data. A tiny minority of articles, maybe a single one, fulfils the other task: to justify the delimitation of Black Sea (space) as a unit of analysis, in the humanities and beyond.

Anticipative definition / application of what seems to be the central concept of the volume means that there had not been a coordinated elaboration of the respective notion; instead, it was carefully and manifoldly defined in the introduction and unevenly and fragmentarily conceptualised in some articles, with or without the introductionary definition in mind.

The unsigned short introduction in three languages claims that the vocation of comparative literature today is to achieve a *post-transnational* outlook or stance. One can surmise that the mentioned stance is achievable through application of the concept of *literary space* to *geographical and historical crossroads* (Dokhtourichvili et al. 2019: 11)[3], involving a subject-dependent renewal of the concept. Is a *post-transnational* outlook, stance or perspective a *communitarist* (i.e. a non-universalist and non-solipsist) one? Possibly. Both imply a time-space of (mutually?) penetrable and entangled entities, but a communitarist perspective would discern site-bounded finite constellations of such entities. Next, the question of the community's shape would arise. Is a literary space a symmetrically shared space or a hierarchical structure, a textualised network of locuses of communication or a configuration of non-communicating enclaves (a collocation)?

623 pp. (Dokhtourichvili et al. 2019). The book was supported by the National Science Foundation of Georgia, as implied by its logo on the front cover.

[2] "Black Sea as Literary and Cultural Space: State of the Art and Prospects." *Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, vol. 6, no 2 (April 2020): 119–140. https://doi.org/10.30958/ajms.6-2-2.

[3] Hereafter in-text references to this volume would contain only the relevant page-number(s).

The articles are distributed in four non-numbered sections: *Black Sea Space and Formation of Identities* (eleven articles, ca. 220 pp.), *Representation of Black Sea Space in Religious-mythological and Historical Texts* (ten articles, ca. 75 pp.), *Cultural Semantics of the Black Sea Space – the Imperial Heritage* (five articles, ca. 110 pp.), and *Varia* (six articles, ca. 100 pp.). The particular distribution of articles among these sections repeatedly raises either quandary or objections, some of which will be voiced below.

The first article in Section One (Alexis Nuselovici, *L'espace littéraire: un paradigme post-transnational*[4]) claims for a post-transnational paradigm of comparative literature, based on a specific conceptualisation of *literary space* inspired by the concept of *deterritorialisation*. I would reformulate (what I see as) the most important asset of Nuselovici's definition and plea thus: *literary space* can ground a perspective different from globalist hegemonising transnationalism and resurgent local(ist) autonomisms (p. 17). It is noteworthy that Marcel Cornis-Pope (2013: 205), defending, *aposteriori*, his project of history of literary cultures of East-Central Europe *in the transnational mode*, indicated the same methodological *Scyla* and *Charybdis*. However, I think that the concept of literary space, as defined by Nuselovici, helps discern a paradigmal shift between transnational and post-transnational modes of writing comparative literature. For him, literary space is *reflective* (accessible not directly but through refraction), *spectral* (possesses an atopical topology), *virtual* (is of floating places), *nomadised* (*not fixable by a map but able to be revealed by the seeming inattentiveness of a roaming view*, p. 24), *encrypting* (encrypting the traces of historical presence that is being absorbed), *ethical* (retrieving what has been made victim and forgotten), and *elusive*. Summarising, I would say that post-transnational history à la Nuselovici would view any national and territorial (per excellence nominal) entity as basically protean, and expand the principles of indeterminacy and negotiated heterogeneity from the referential plane to the axis of confrontation between a source and an interpreter, from the *referent* to the *sign*. It implies a selective but hardly controllable expansion of a subject (Black Sea S/space, in our case), based on association and erudition, divorced from maps (however complex) and from direct experience of a territory and its materiality. A *post-transnational* consideration of a textual or extratextual (dis)continuum may drop from consideration any segments that may be non-protean and may ignore a phenomenon that is possibly *out there* simply because it is apparently, mappably and tangibly (touchably) *out there*.

[4] For reasons of space I will be skipping the English translations of French titles; however, I will be citing the ones of Georgian (as they appear in the volume).

Nuselovici finds a fundamental commonality between literary space and a sea (marine materiality and form: 23, 33). I think he oversees an important property of the marine element: its monotony (compared to most kinds of *terri*tories) and its almost full dependence on an external imagining agency for the production of forms beyond the basic elemental wave-pattern; or maybe he indeed gives the interpreter a degree of ontological prevalence over the interpreted which I find inacceptable.

Eyüp Özveren (*In Search of Literary Evidence for the Black Sea World*) articulates the evidence for the distinctiveness of the Black Sea from the Mediterranean, as a unit of analysis; significantly, he detects evidence in literature, thus paralleling earlier reliance on history and archaeology. I would postpone a review of this article for a subsequent occasion for two reasons: unlike the contribution of Vrinat-Nikolov (see below), it deserves a detailed attention *within a review focussed on the Black Sea space proper* (*and not* on its western hinterland, the traditional geographic domain of *Bulgarian studies*); and, unlike the extensive thematisation based on the concept of literary space, this justification of Black Sea studies, a holistic one and one requiring *in*tensive thematisation, was barely followed in the present volume.

To my mind, these should be and – despite deficient structural pre-eminence – are the two core works of this volume. Solely they are designed to define and duly calibrated to discuss the grounds and ways to delineate a Black Sea literary / cultural space as a consistent subject of inquiry and research, even if from largely different epistemic and methodological perspectives.

Marie Vrinat-Nikolov (*De la 'littérature bulgare' (monolingue et nationale) à 'l'espace littéraire bulgare' (plurilingue et transnational)*) sets against each other the notions of a national literature and a national literary space. The mentioned space appears as inherently plural or polycentric. In this anticipatory application of Nuselovici's perspective to the western hinterland of the Black Sea, the Black Sea space slips into a post-Ottoman one. The contribution invites analogical ones on the rest of the Black Sea hinterlands (no matter how delineated – along national borders, geographical cardinals, or the basic directions of a rose of winds…). It is considered in some detail in the second part of the present article.

Ioana Malita (*Une géographie littéraire. Le temps-espace de la mer Noire chez Jean Bart*) offers a microscopic analogue of the Black Sea-fringing literary space of Vrinat's article; reconstructing not dispersed (post)Ottoman *datum*, but a Romanian quasi-imperial *desideratum* as conveyed by a single fictional work, the novel *Europolis* (1933), said to refer to the town of Sulina. *This is a Europe reduced to the size of a town, concentrated, diversified, cosmopolitan (…) here (…) try to live together Romanians, Greeks, Jews, Tatars, Turks, Russians, Mongols and Kurds, all alongside Western employees (…) of the International Danube Commission* (90).

Malita produces a list of ethnicities which she ascribes to the non-fictional Sulina and, by association, to Europolis. Mongols (note the pleonasm: *Tatars (…) Mongols*) and Kurds in Europolis / Sulina were quite not likely, while the unmentioned Bulgarians and Armenians were[5]. A perusal of the novel[6] reveals a Greek-Romanian cast (and amorous / romantic collisions) against multiple backgrounds: of an idyllic post-WWI geopolitical constellation (marred by occasional but narratively non-peripheral remembrance of the recent Greek-Turkish War); an impersonalised Greek-Jewish trading rivalry; and episodic Maltese, Persian (Persian subjects of non-indicated ethnicity), Russian (in a character's memories of Istanbul), Armenian, Turkish, Gypsy, Lipovan (Russian sectant), "Turks, Lazs and Kurds" as a sub-category of clients of a café[7], and of course Western characters. The novel possibly alludes to at least three important modernist works (Andrey Belyi's *Petersburg*, 1916, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, 1899/1902, Manet's *Olympia*, 1865), for sure to Homer and Ovid, and overtly refers to the Argonauts: to create an overwhelming notion of void. In line with the post-WWI decisive re-vernacularisation of the Black Sea basin in favour of titular nation-states, most Greek characters are presented as (new)comers in Sulina (despite a note, late in the narrative, about the recent introduction of Romanian as the tongue of the community council in lieu of Greek and Turkish). The novel thematises moral and societal corruption, perhaps indicating two sources of such: *Levantine* and a Romanian, hence combines the perspectives of *Orientalism* (in the sense of Said) and of modernist non-disgustful *self-vivisection*. To return to Malita's interpretative slip: it needs to be commented not only with view of continuing (and unconscious) Romanian resistance to Bulgarian interwar irredentism, but to the imaginative power of the novel, which evidently pushed a researcher to bring the cast in situ to a more topical / prestigious shape and at the same time to reinvent a local cosmopolitanism as an imperial one. The *irony* invested in the novel's title is another issue to be addressed in a review on the state of the arts in Black Sea studies. *Euro-polis* is attributed to the town of Sulina[8] (where the action takes place, with occasional, and framed as retrospections, shifts to Istanbul, French Guiana, and Galați or Braila), but one of the novel's characters says: *The rest of our ports are only towns, while Sulina is only a port* (Bart 1974: 80).

[5] An idea about the minorities' cast in Sulina and its environs during the half century prior to 1933 *that modifies both the novel's cast and (especially) Malita's list* may be obtained from Lamouche 1932: 9, 16, 34, 38–39; Sallanz 2005: 15.

[6] In its Bulgarian translation (Bart 1974), whereby it is retitled as *The Black Siren*.

[7] One of the miscroscopic copies (Bart 1974: 206) of both the Black Sea world and of the novel's chrono-tope.

[8] But also to the enclosed space of the International Danubian Commission's quarter, a town in the town that evokes association with a *flat* acropolis.

Atinati Mamatsashvili (*La mer Noire: espace de vie et de mort dans la fiction géorgienne de l'époque soviétique*) explores the transformation and functioning of sea as a narrative agency in some Georgian fictional works; she approaches the notion of literary space through asking the question (either inspired or post-hoc supported by Bertrand Westphal) what comes first: fictional or extratextual (referential) sea / space?

Mzagho Dokhturishvili (*La symbolique de l'eau dans la poésie géorgienne et française*) offers a comparative reading of water (and sea, in particular) symbolism in French and Georgian poetry of the 19th and 20th centuries. A demanding reader would expect some engagement with the issue of Black Sea space and identity, e.g.: what in the identity of Georgian symbolist school came from their French predecessors and aesthetic mentors and what from their first-person encounters with the Black Sea physicality and mythology (both vernacular and imported)?

Ioanna Marcu (*Poétique de l'espace stambouliote dans 'La bâtarde d'Istanbul' d'Elif Shafak*) makes use of the notion of literary space analysing material only marginally pertinent to a Black Sea space: Istanbul is so much powerful a cultural topos that its sole presence works for its own cultural-cum-scholarly mythology, *unless one focusses on Pontic* aspects or outlets of an Istanbulite setting, which however is barely the case with Marcu's article. Besides, one wonders why she chose Elif Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* as a topic of her article and not Dimitrie Cantemir's *History of hieroglyphs* (to mention the first of the contributors to an Istanbulite literary space from her list, 147–148)[9]. I believe that an agglutination of the symbolical aura of Istanbul / Constantinople to the symbolic account of Black Sea S/space would only compromise the nascent field of study.

Ileana Neli Eiben (*Dobroudja, 'terre salée'. Irina Egli et l'art de réécrire la tragédie antique au bord de la mer Noire*) explores a partly autobiographical novel (published in 2006 in Quebec) that has Dobrudja as its setting and as a spatial unlocker of long-term cultural memory. The article contributes to a (desirable) catalogue of Black-Sea related artistic works.

The quite similar article of Salome Lapachishvili (*The Sea as the Destiny in the Georgian Postmodern Novel 'The Black Sea Ocean'*) adds a substantial asset, through historicising its subject: in late twentieth-century Georgian fiction, which not only sought spaces of resistance to Soviet / Russian power (see the article of Mamatsashvili), but also contemplated the loss of Abkhazia, the sea is attributed *a new literary function* (188), being symbolically (re)appropriated *as a lost paradise* (202).

[9] Cantemir's is the only work by a Romanian in the list. The list itself informs on translations of works into French but not into Romanian.

Cyril Aslanov's *La littérature néo-hébraïque, transplantation de l'espace littéraire pontique?* is devoted to the literary importance – and even transplantation – of a Black Sea city beyond the region: to Tel Aviv as a/the *new Odessa*.

Having acknowledged the scholarly timeliness and usability of the notion of literary space, the power of Black Sea milieu to generate a distinctive supranational cultural phenomenon, and the capacity of (a) Black Sea identity to produce spill-over effects, the reader is bewildered by the irrelevance of the closing article of this section: Selami Fedakar, Makvala Kharebava, *Turkish Singing Minstrel-Poets in Georgia and the Tradition of Minstrel-Poetry of* (sic) *Turkish World*. A comparison between minstrel poetry in the Turkic world and in Georgia, and especially an overview of the possible or actual convergence of traditions in an ethnically-mixed region in south-eastern Georgia, deep in the basin of *Caspian* Sea, stays as a diplomatic compliment to a self-assertive political agenda, possibly in an attempt of self-distancing from an analogical (and competing) agenda from the north. Being written in a vernacular, it seeks (Georgian-Turkish) mnemonic rapprochement and recognition, not an assessment by impartial peers. The article is worth praising as a piece of international co-authorship along the Black Sea littoral.

All but three of the articles in this section address the issue of formation of identities outlined by the section's title. But the section mainly demonstrates the flexibility and usability of the notion of literary space. Only two articles address the cultural-historical individuality of the Black Sea region.

Literary space is presented as an identity-transforming agent. Sea and literature are now implicitly synonymised, through the centrality of literary space understood in a post-modern way (as one evading a territorialising, or stable, mapping). The tacit overarching goal of the editors / compilers might have been to show sea / literature as ontologically equal (peer) to terrestrial-territorial / referential reality.

The mild focus on twentieth-century Romanian and Georgian literary works across the volume – and especially across this section – allows the following middle-range generalisation: in the Romanian imaginary, the Black Sea participates in a Danubian-Pontic mental-geographic *voltaic / electric arc* which repels the physicality or at least the gloom of Romanians' barbarous / oriental neighbourhood; in the Georgian imaginary, it embodies the possibility of a space that mirrors the actual national one and is open to the West, instead of being penetrable from the North. That is, in both national mythologies, as revealed in artistic literature, the Black Sea is an *occidentaliser* of collective and individual artistic identity.

The second section of the volume is dedicated to representation of Black Sea space in literature, arts, folklore, religious-mythological and historiographical texts; the section title indicates the latter two modes of representation only.

Béatrice Gonzalés-Vangell (Nuselovici) (*La Tauride dans l'imaginaire allemand*) introduces to early nineteenth-century settlement of Germans invited by Russia along northern Black Sea coast and explores Goethe's *Iphigenia in Taurida*.

Metin Ekici (*Köroğlu Epic in Turkic World and Georgia*) claims an unprecedented spread of the of the epic narratives of Köroğlu, the blind man, across Turkic and non-Turkic peoples of Asia, introduces the reader to Georgian reception of the epic, leaving his reader to wonder whether and how the sharing of this cultural product between Turkic peoples and Georgians is relevant to a Black Sea space, and finally acquaints the reader with the major regional variation of the epic and with a classification of its narrative episodes.

Muvaffak Duranlı and Gökçe Emeç (*The Humor and the Common Anecdote Types and Characters in the Countries of Black Sea Littoral*) introduce the reader to some thematic groups of anecdotes in Turkey, Ukraine and Georgia. One can only regret the missed opportunity to acknowledge whether and how a Black Sea space is not only represented, but indeed created on every-day and non-elite levels. One encounters an arbitrary selection of material, which is cited but not analysed. Not a single thematic group from the chosen ones (about *minorities*, and doctor–patient and husband–wife dialogues) is being followed consistently across the three nations[10]. A historicisation is attempted through indicating that a new character emerged in Georgian post-Soviet anecdotes.

Nino Abakelia (*On the Interrelation between the Literary Text and Visual Artifacts in the Argonaut Myth*) juxtaposes perspectives on Jason's sea journey to Colchis, namely of Apollonius' *Argonautica* and of Greek and Etruscan ceramics, complementing existing interpretations of that journey as an initiation and journey to the Underworld, as a trip from profane to sacred space and from the periphery to the centre.

Eka Tchkoidze (*The Black Sea in Georgian Pilgrims' Writings (18th–19th Centuries)*, in Georgian) discerns individual preferences to kinds of seascapes in Georgian pilgrims' writings from the 18th–19th centuries.

Manana Javakhishvili (*L'école de Phasis – Dialogue interculturel*) argues that the rhetorical school of (the town of) Phasis, 3rd–4th centuries AD, embodies a site of intercultural

[10] The type of anecdotes about minorities could have been an exception. But it is presented through Ukrainian anecdotes about Jews, a general classification of Turkish anecdotes including ones about foreigners, minorities, territorial and ethnographic groups of Turks / in Turkey, and through Georgian anecdotes about ethnographic groups of Georgians as Mingrels, Svans and Acharans.

dialogue (maintained, e.g., through the languages of teaching – both Greek and Georgian). Thus early medieval Phasis could be added to a catalogue of multicultural urban centres along the Black Sea coast, alongside Sulina and Odessa. The article would better fit the first section of the volume.

Gerard Dedeyan's article (*Le thème byzantin des Arméniaques: Une «marche» vers la mer Noire*) is dedicated to the Byzantine theme of Armeniacs (667–1041 AD), an administrative unit on the Asia Minor littoral but, more importantly, in the hinterland. The article does not address marine issues and parts of Armeniacs with any special attention. Its background topic seems to be the one of 'indigenous / local elites in service of elsewhere-based imperial power', namely, Armenians, Khald(ian)s and Laz(i)s in Byzantine service. Hence it is not more (and not less) informative on a/the Black Sea cultural space than, say, Vrinat-Nikolov is on a/the literary one. While Vrinat sought to deconstruct the old-fashioned common wisdom of vernacular continuity in the western hinterland, Dedeyan seeks to construct such for the southern one (indicating the possible demographic link to the kingdom of Armenia Minor from the Antiquity and the most frequent ethnicity of the theme *strategoi*). The reader could hypothesise that proximity to the coast meant both a greater diversity of textual traditions and a lesser autonomy of the indigenous imperial servants from the empire (and of the vernacular textual production from the imperial *vehicular(s)*[11] – Ottoman Turkish and Greek in the Ottoman case). But the two articles neither support nor disprove such hypothesising.

Marina Kavtaradze (*Towards the Interpretation of the Image of Medea in Music*, in Georgian) makes an overview of interpretations of Medea's image in music (in fact Georgian music), reminding readers that a catalogue of Black Sea related mythological characters and their representation across the media (arts) is one more desideratum.

A more scholastic inquiry would be one towards a typology of metonymic / synecdochic replacements of an *aquatic territory* (settlements, hinterlands; personae; works of art…) and towards an assessment of their relative weight (type by type) in mediating the presence of that *aquatory*.

Grigol Jokhadze devoted his Georgian-language article (*The Black Sea and the Issue of Mental Estrangement in Georgian Medieval Historical Tradition*) to the non-articulation by the eastern-Georgian historiographical tradition of western-Georgian maritime experience (which however was reflected in Byzantine sources).

[11] Here I make use of the macrosociolinguistic distinction between a vernacular, vehicular, referential and mythic discourse by Henri Gobard (1976: 34–38).

Nestan Ratiani (*When Homer Nods*, in Georgian) inspects two *lapses* in *Odyssey*, the one related to Odysseus' route back after the isle of Circe, and the other to an episode on that island itself. Hence Ratiani is able to ask the questions: Did Odysseus come to the Black Sea region at all? How was he able to come to the Black Sea from the north, the country of Lestrogones?

Section three, *Cultural Semantics of the Black Sea Space – the Literary Space and Imperial Heritage*, addresses the sediments of Russian and Soviet imperial heritage in perceptions of the Black Sea as revealed in and modelled by artistic literature. Ottoman and Byzantine heritage remain blind spots. None of the articles is a history of the (plain or compound) words (or notions) *sea*, *Black Sea*, or *Black Sea space*, as a cultural semantics in the trait of Martin Jay (1998: 2–5) would have implied. But, unlike the previous sections, it puts stress on *(Black S/)sea* as mental and lingual reality, while they tended to view it as an extra-lingual, referential reality, which is either an agent of lingual-mental formation, a *natura formans*, or a patient of language-and-mind, a *natura formata*. Several contributions from the previous sections (by Mamatsashvili, Abakelia, Dokhturishvili, Lapachashvili) could fit this loose framework of cultural semiotics. None of the five contributions to this section conceptualises *literary space*.

Zaal Andronikashvili (*Cutural Semantics of the Black Sea from Georgian Perspective*, in Georgian) assesses the role of the sea in modern Georgian identity-building. According to him, the sea appeared in Georgian sight in the 19th century, as a hostile space (in premodernity it had been simply a distant one), while mountains were assigned the role of anchor of Georgianness and already-claimed (or visible) Georgian autochtony. He states that this national cosmology was *criticised and challenged* in Aka Morchiladze's novel, or piece of alternative history in fictional form, *Santa Esperansa*. Andronikashvili apparently speaks of the same transformation of which Lapachishvili has spoken (see here above), but he applies a long-, not a short-, term historical perspective.

Yordan Lyutskanov (*Black Sea in the Works of Titsian Tabidze: Site of Overlapping Imperial Agendas*) discerns the co-presence of diverse, partly competing and partly compatible, imperial orders, or centres of *worldling*[12], in sea-thematising literary works of Titsian Tabidze, on the structural level of their chronotopes but also of implicit author. Thus, implicitly and intra-textually (poetologically), he approaches the notion of 'literary space' displayed in the article of Vrinat-Nikolov explicitly and extra-textually (sociologically).

[12] The *patiency* / *agency* of being let within a world centred elsewhere; on this term of Gayatri Spivak see Childs & Weber & Williams 2006: 101.

Bela Tsipuria (*Representation of the Black Sea in Georgian Literature: Postcolonial Perspective*, in Georgian) reveals that in Georgian *postcolonial* literature the Black Sea has become from a space of danger a space of alternative worlds (in works spanning from 1933 to 2004 – by Leo Kiacheli and Otar Chiladze; then Levan Gotua; and lastly, Morchiladze) within a perceived strategy of resistance to colonial power. An identity transformation observation much in line with Andronikashvili's and Lapachishvili's is enacted here.

Khatuna Beridze (*Galaktion Tabidze's 'Mary' in Russian Translation*) questions the myth of successful Soviet Russian-Georgian intercultural/-literary communication, discerning in Bela Akhmadulina's translation of the poem *Mary* features of (post)coloniality, including specific stereotyping of Georgianness.

Nana Kutsia and Marina Turava (*Sea Concept in Georgian Postmodernism ('Sea Soup' by Beso Khvedelidze)*, in Georgian) focus on the paradoxical semantics of the sea in one Georgian post-modernist short story: a space of purification and cannibalism.

All articles in Section Three address Georgian colonial resistance to Russian / Soviet colonising presence. One of them focusses on (pos)colonial stereotypes produced by the colonising power, thus fitting the more traditional vein in applying the postcolonial studies paradigm to the study of Southern Caucasus.

This section could be especially beneficial to Bulgarian Studies, inasmuch as the study of Russian-Bulgarian intercultural and interliterary communication has been only marginally re-conceptualised against the framework of post-colonial studies. (A *theoretically innocent*, and for that reason more indicative, book by Kamen Mikhaylov (2015) is a rare exception. While the publications under the aegis of the recent EU-funded international project *SESDiva* (2018–2022) more or less uncritically reproduce the nineteenth-century paradigm of an intercultural communication-communion and macrohistorical mutuality within the imagined supercommunity of *Southern Slavs* and *Eastern Slavs*[13].) Extrapolation of the post-colonial paradigm should however be enriched through the use of the concept of *self-colonisation*, or (self-imposed) *hegemony without domination* (Kiossev 2011: par.1 of 19), which, I believe, is applicable not only to Bulgarian-European, but also to Bulgarian-Russian *interculturality*.

Bulgarian literature, no less than Georgian, has been conceived as one of mountaineers, not of mariners. Change in semantics of the sea as an indicator (or non-indicator) of shifts in national identity can be seen as another line of inquiry to be borrowed by Bulgarian Studies from this volume.

[13] The lack of personal entries devoted to Mikhail Obolensky and Boyan Penev (Penev is the author of the earliest Bulgarian academic courses and curricula in Russian literature, starting with 1913 – Petkova 2017: 105–113), but also, paradoxically, to Stefan Bobchev, are among the apparent symptoms.

Section Four of the volume, *Varia*, contains articles in the Georgian language which are variably attributable to prior sections or not relevant to the volume's topic at all.

Shukia Apridonidze (*On Tow-element Composition of Spatial and Temporal Concepts*) explores names of geographic cardinals and of seasons in the Georgian language, offering random comparisons to English and Russian languages and discerning an underlining binary semantic structure.

Kevser Ruhi and Fahhrettin Çıloğlu (Parna-Beka Chilashvili) (*Turkish-Georgian Literary Relations and Traditions of Relations*) focus on Turkish interest in Georgian literature and translations from Georgian in 1937–2017.

Ekvtimé Kochlamazishvili (*Greek Translations of Latin Ecclesiastic Literature as a Source of Their Georgian Translations in the Middle Ages*) focusses on the translation of St. John Cassian's works by Euthymios the Atonite (d. 1028). I believe that (in)avoidability of Greek mediation between the Latin- and Georgian-speaking worlds could be conceptualised in terms relevant to Black Sea studies, but here it is not.

Lela Tsipuria (*Variations of Classics in Contemporary European Theatres: The Black Sea Countries at the Tbilisi International Theatre Festival*) devoted her contribution to five performances at the mentioned festival in 2017: to an interpretation of Luigi Pirandello's short story *The Turtle* by the Emilia Romagna Theatre Foundation (Modena, Italy), directed by the Georgian Levan Tsuladze; to a performance based on four short stories by Ivan Bunin (*Henrich*, *An Inn at the River Bank*, *Nataly* and *Madrid*), directed by Yuri Titov (the theatre is not inidcated); to *C[h]ekhov's First Play*, by the Irish Dead Centre, directed by Bush Moukarzel and Ben Kidd; Anton Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard* by the National Theatre of Bucharest; and, most extensively, to *Francs*, by New Theatre from Poland, directed by Krzysztof Warlikowski, based on Proust. The article pertains to the genre of an expanded magazine review, while the summary is hardly relevant to the article and, together with the title, creates unsubstantiated expectations.

Davit Malazonia and Nino Chiabrishvili (*Encouraging the Acceptance of Georgian Cultural Diversity by Elementary School Students in Social Science Teaching*) have their article printed twice, in Georgian and then in the English language.

To summarise, the collection under review is the first of its kind. It promotes a key / grounding theoretic concept (*literary space*), and a well-substantiated demarcation of its subject as an autonomous *unit of analysis*. Certain overstress on the former effort (the key concept) is predictable, since following the holistic focus of the latter effort would hardly be expectable within a nascent research field. Thematic dissipation across the volume and

thematic irrelevance of some of the articles were also to be expected. The volume would have benefitted from more demanding editorship and from an editorial Conclusion.

I would reformulate the chief lessons for Bulgarian studies thus: 1) any national literary space is plurilingual and hence pluri-literary; 2) a literature of *mountaineers* can turn its face to the sea; 3) geographical proximity is a possibility for cultural proximity and a sufficient reason for the study of the latter's (non)occurrence.

I would juxtapose now the perspectives for Bulgarian Studies implied by the volume on the Black Sea with some other perspectives for the mentioned studies, in no lesser a degree challenging their framing as a subdomain of Slavic, Balkan and European Studies.

2. POSSIBLE LINES OF RELOCATION (RETERRITORIALISATION, REFRAMING) OF BULGARIAN STUDIES

Framing Bulgarian Studies as a subdomain of Slavic, Balkan and European Studies implies a cast of cultures (literatures etc.) together with which the Bulgarian one has to be contextualised, be it typologically, genealogically or contactologically. One of the grounding texts of Bulgarian Studies as interdisciplinary cluster gravitating towards philology – *grounding* in the sense of being a specimen of a literary work in Slavic / Bulgarian and an explicit justification of Slavic / Bulgarian literacy and textual production – conveys quite different a cast: *We know of numerous peoples who possess writing and render glory unto God, each in its own language. Surely these are obvious: Armenians, Persians, Abkhazians, Iberians, Sogdians, Goths, Avars, Turks, Khazars, Arabs, Egyptians, and many others* (*The extensive vita of Constantine Cyril*, cited in Kantor 1983: 71).

Razumnik-ukaz (lit. *Reasoner-indicator*), a Bulgarian historical-apocalyptical work from the 12th or 13th century, with some currency at least till the 18th, charts a concentric cosmography with Bulgarians, Greeks, *Syrians, Iverians* and Russians in the core (see the source in English in: Miltenova 2011: 533–536, compare 516).

The protagonist of the *novelised* autobiography by Svetoslav Milarov *Memories from the Jails of Istanbul* (Milarov 1881) encounters, in *the Central Jail of Istanbul*, a hardly imaginable in its scope and richness ethnic cast of prisoners: *And so now they filled our jail with nearly 500 persons from all the eastern ethnicities. Here were: Bulgarians from all corners of Bulgaria; Turks, Greeks – Turkish subjects and Hellene; Serbs, Croats, Montenegrins, Arnauts – from the three creeds; Vlakhs, Zeybeks, Lazs, Kurds, Gurdzhians, Circassians, Persians, Karamanlis, Ermenians, Jews, Gypsies, Araps – white and black; Africans – as far as from Darfur, – and besides there were some Germans, Americans, Russians, Poles – and an Indian* (Milarov 1881: 119; some phonetic peculiarities of the original are deliberately preserved).

None of these three casts would support a Slavic, Balkan or European contextualisation, or *communitarianisation*, of *Bulgarianness*.

2.1-2. RELOCATION FEATURING SIMILAR SPIRITUAL GENEALOGY WITHIN WORLDS CENTRED IN JERUSALEM AND IN PARIS

2.1. More or less at the core of Bulgarian Studies, as a set of philological but also culturological, historical and other inquiries, lies the complex issue of the two Slavic alphabets (Glagolitic and Cyrillic) and the generic repertoire supporting their use. The basic facets of the issue seem to me to be the following: the contexts of the alphabets' genesis / invention; their comparative (dis)advantages; their historically-proven capacity *to domesticate* / *be domesticated by* semiotic, material and generic milieus; and, finally, their pertinence to a series of similar cultural-historical and philological cases.

To start with the last mentioned facet: the genesis / invention of the Glagolitic and Cyrillic scripts and their adoption by the medieval Bulgarian polity has its closest analogues in the genesis / invention / adoption (in one word: acquiring) of the Geʿez, Armenian, Georgian and (now and since long time obsolete) Aghvanian (Caucasian Albanian) scripts, by the respective late antique / early medieval polities.[14] It is important to stress that *scripts* stays here as a synecdoche for liturgical languages and languages of learning. Acquiring these scripts, with or without a crucial involvement by the Christian imperial metropole, meant an opportunity for adoption of a long-term cultural, but also political-theological, impetus and identity: of a *New Israel*[15]. The context of origin of (medieval) Bulgarian identity points out the most

[14] These five Christian communities form a distinct group for the following reasons. Greek and Latin alphabets preceded Christianity; Aramaic was the tongue of Jesus and Syriac Christians under diverse jurisdictions could claim equality and even priority to the two former scribal and lingual communities (see Minov 2020: 254–309, esp. 278); while Copts used Greek script and Persian Christians (under the Arsacids and then the Sasanians; as an introduction see Rilliet 2014a) Syriac scripts (Estrangelo and Chaldean – cf. Rilliet 2014b: 691 col. 1). *Kartvelian* inhabitants of Lazica / Egrisi and early medieval *Abkhaz* in its north-west (two population stocks intermingled in a polity with Greek and then Kartvelian written culture, Lazica / Egrisi, till the 6th century, and then in Egrisi / Abkhazia, which united with the eastern Georgian kingdom of Iberia in 978) were proselytised in Greek (official conversion of the Abkhaz was in 542) but in the 9th and 10th centuries turned to Georgian as ecclesiastical language (Rayfield 2012: 40, 42–43, 46, 48, 53, 61–64; Shurgaia 2021: 627). Yet the Bulgarian switch from Glagolitic to Cyrillic script, inasmuch as we identify the latter as *Graecoslavic* (Safarik 1858: 8), urges to include in the group, or typological series, Laz / Abkhaz and possibly Coptic, too. Discerning this group modifies the typology offered in Prokhorov 1991.

[15] On the Bulgarian case: Biliarski 2013; on the Georgian: Shurgaia 2021: 616–619, compare Rapp 2001 (in Rapp & Crego 2018: 321–336): 101, 106–107, 112; Esbroeck 2018; Chkhartishvili 2009; Toumanoff 1963: 201–202, 328–329, 333–334, 336, 359–360, etc.; on the Armenian: Thomson 1997: 199–206; Garsoian 1997: 150; Garsoian 2012: X–XI, 122–125; Toumanoff 1963: 201–202, 306, 327–329, 333–334, etc.; Boyajian 2018: 140–146; on the Ethiopian: Raineri 2014: esp. 851 col. 2, 853; Esler 2019: esp. 27–41, 101, 110–113, 53–56 (cf. Leeman 2011); on the Aghvanian / Alvanian / Caucasian Albanian: Shurgaia 2021: 619–620. These

relevant scope and *cast* for comparative cultural studies addressing medieval (but also early modern) Bulgaria. That most relevant scope and cast was already charted in the work traditionally considered as one of the earliest specimens of Bulgarian / Slavic literature, *The extensive vita of Constantine Cyril* (a relevant passage cited above), whatever the original context and purpose of its composition had been (on them see Ivanova 2020: 436–440).

It is important to disentangle, for now, the typological motives for a relocation from genetic ones, even though the list from the *Vita* would support both. Actually, a genetic (re)location of the Glagolitic alphabet and early Slavic textual production from an Eastern European to an Eastern Mediterranean context has been (unsystematically) attempted at least since the mid-19th century.[16]

The latest and remotest in the series of scripts-sacred-languages-and-Christian-polities forged from non-Christian cultures in the Eastern Mediterranean hinterland seems to be the most successful historically (i.e. in *domesticating* / *being domesticated by* semiotic, material and generic milieus), if we accept the plausible idea that medieval and modern Russian culture has been its close heir.

2.2. All five but the Aghvanian culture survived the falls of Constantinople (in 1204, 1453, and 1922[17]), the expansion and the retreat of the Ottomans, and the rise of the West and the birth of Eurocentrism. In the Bulgarian case, during the 19th and early 20th century a symbolical geography centred in Paris displaced the cosmography based on the axis between Jerusalem and Constantinople[18]. A comparative exploration of the four surviving cultures' (Armenian,

secondary works would provide the necessary starting points for a comparative history along the concepts of *(holy) script* and *New Israel* (including claims for Davidic origin of ruling dynasties).

[16] To mention particular issues seeming most important for the present article: *The originator of Glagolitic script was a* well-versed Orientalist (Safarik 1858: 7, emphasis in the original), the script possibly being invented by a missionary with Syrian background in the seventh century who baptised Slavs/Bulgars near Thesaloniki (Prokhorov 1991: 192–194); its structure and forms of letters followed not only Greek but also Armenian and Samaritan (used for Hebrew texts) (previous research summarised, assessed and complemented in: Jung 2013: 114–127), and Coptic, Georgian, Mandean and esp. Ethiopian (Ge'ez) (Prokhorov 1991: 183–191; a sceptic listing of maybe all suggested scripts-sources see in: Prokhorov 1991: 180–181); in Crimea Constantine Cyril saw specimens of a Syriac script (references to this tradition in interpretation, dating back to at least the 1930s (André Vaillant) see in: Ivanova 2020: 44; Jung 2013: 111–112); the apocryphal narrative on the baptism of Bulgarians *Thesalonican legend* (styled as an autobiography of Constantine Cyril / of a certain Cyril (cf. Prokhorov 1991: 192, 195)) was not an original Slavic work but a translation from Syriac (Vasilii Lurie in several publications since 1996, see esp.: Lourie n.d.; 2015). Scholarly narratives known to me that synthesise several such issues are available in (Prokhorov 1991: 183–199), (Budanov 2008) and several works of Lurie.

[17] Withdrawal of Entente troops in the wake of the Greek-Turkish war, divesting the city of its status of a capital, and official and insistent shift to the name *Istanbul*.

[18] Cf. Lyutskanov, Yordan. "Introduction: Heteroeuropeanisatios." In Lyutskanov, Y. & B. Kalnacs & G. Shurgaia, eds. *Heteroeuropeanisations: (In)capacity to Stay Marginal*: 1–62. Naples: UniorPress, 2021.

Bulgarian, Ethiopian, Georgian) uneven (mis)fortunes and their centripetal / centrifugal moves in a world gravitating towards the Northern Atlantic would constitute a framework for Bulgarian Studies focussed on (especially late) modernity. Such a quadruple comparison could be correlated with comparisons to cultures with a different pre-modern genealogy / pre-history, provided that the following lines of comparison are kept in mind: do these cultures resist Eurocentrism and how?; are they pro-active in their communication with the European centre of symbolical power?; are they oscillating between Eurocentric and alternative gravitations? The distinction that was made between peripheral(ly) and marginal(ly) European cultures[19] could thus be attenuated and enriched. Yet the hypothesis that modern Bulgarian culture is a peripheral (monofocal) European culture which contemplates its marginality (bifocality) in politically platonic discourses like art history[20] could hardly be disproved.

The geographical ambient of the Black Sea basin hosts a wide typological variety (range) of national responses to *Eurocentrisation*. I base my claim that such a variety is at hand on an acknowledgement of the crucial importance of two choices: for / against scriptural shift and for / against geopolitical alignment with Europe; – assigning them the theoretical property of distinctive features (in the sense of structural linguistics). Bulgarian, Romanian, Russian and Turkish cultures exemplify the main types here. A comparative study focussing on the anticipation, taking, remembrance, reasons for and consequences of the aforementioned choices would take decades, undergo unexpected turns and substantiate unexpected self- and hetero-images.

The criteria helping to define a Europeanising / Europeanised culture as peripheral (monofocal) or marginal (bifocal) could be used, of course, in studies addressing the earlier, Jerusalem- or Constantinople-centred cultural universe.

2.3. RELOCATION WITHIN THE (POST)OTTOMAN WORLDS

A third line of relocation would stem from a (dual) focus on the (post)Ottoman condition of Bulgarian culture: (1) on the latter's immersion within a plurilingual (plurireligiuos, etc.) milieu with a certain cast of neighbours on communal and regional levels; and (2) on its pertinence to the cultural geography of the Ottoman realm (which, like the Byzantine earlier, spanned across the banalised metageographical divides between Europe, Asia and Africa). Indispensable

[19] Cf. Lyutskanov, Yordan. "Hellas, Byzantium and Sasanian Iran on Lower Danube: *Kulturkreise* or Multicivilisational Perspectives in the Works of Bogdan Filov." (pp. 455–498) and "Conclusion: Modes of De-essentialising 'Europe': Towards a General Temporal Pattern of Heteroeuropeanisations." (pp. 683–690). In Lyutskanov, Y. & B. Kalnacs & G. Shurgaia, eds. *Heteroeuropeanisations: (In)capacity to Stay Marginal*. Naples: UniorPress, 2021.

[20] Lyutskanov, Y. "Hellas, Byzantium and Sasanian Iran…", op. cit., 455–498.

preliminary work to substantiate the second focal option was done *outside* the domain of Bulgarian Studies (Balta & Otmez 2011; Kilpatrick 2000; Privratsky 2014; Strauss 2003 & 2011), due, possibly, to the traditionally and still strong Eurocentric bent or bias within that domain and its strong dependence on the aforementioned metageography[21]. The first focal option has been articulated *within* Bulgarian Studies, e.g. in recent works by Marie Vrinat-Nikolov (2018: 6 of 9; 2020: 26–27), including her contribution to the above-reviewed volume. Perspectives and a possible pitfall of historical interpretation implied by this contribution will be treated now in some detail.

The contribution of Vrinat-Nikolov overtly challenges the mono-lingual and mono-ethnic focus of Bulgarian Studies. I would qualify her stance as basically one of areal studies. Her approach implies that the textual production of any community in any language on physical sites in the current Bulgarian state territory, and possibly on sites claimed as *Bulgarian* by more or less influential agents of Bulgarian cultural memory, would be a potential subject matter of Bulgarian Studies: all such sites would be sites of the physical dimension of *Bulgarian literary space*. Perhaps inevitably, Vrinat-Nikolov is sensitive to – and points out – those non-Bulgarian-language textual productions which characterise Bulgarian literary space as post-Ottoman. The post-Ottoman *cast* of collective identities and respective textual productions dominates, with insignificant variations, roughly the half of the Black Sea littoral (the south and the west). Discerning it in all the current national successor-literatures of the south-western rim, and complementing it with an analogical *pluralisation* of the national literary spaces from the north and the east, to reflect their post-Tsarist and post-Soviet tissue, would be a fair tribute to the pluri-centred plurilinguality of the Black Sea literary space. A subsequent step should be to map the common Byzantine substratum and its reverberations and selective adoption. In parting ways with monist ethnocentrism and its orientalist downgrading or neglect of heritage associable with the period of Ottoman rule, Vrinat-Nikolov confesses an important epistemological choice: to rule out the *normativity and the teleology produced by progressive comparison* from the *hidden apriori* of the questions asked (74; Vrinat cites Schulz-Forberg, *The Spatial and Temporal Layers of Global History*). In other words, she refuses to merge the temporalities of the emerging modern Bulgarian nation and of the Ottoman pluri-lingual and pluri-religious society and thus makes any statements that might consider the former collective agent as *progressive*, and the latter as *backward* pointless (unjustified and impossible).

[21] See examples and an exploration of this condition in the discipline in Lyutskanov, Y. "Introduction: Heteroeuropeanisations.", op. cit.: 31–33, 35–43. A standard piece of criticism against that meta-geography has become Lewis & Wigen 1997.

Despite the declared epistemic credo, projects like Vrinat's are themselves vulnerable to criticism for the same fallacy of progressive comparison as a, as their own, *hidden apriori*. Yet the fallacy is reproduced not by the scholar as a historian, but as a historiographer. Nationalist modernity is tacitly declared outdated, principally because a centre tacitly considered a prime one (Paris, or London, or a rhizome overseas) has come to a 1) new model of writing literary history, 2) symbolical rehabilitation of early modern non-Western empires[22]. The mentioned rehabilitation is compatible with a stance of veiled intellectualised repentance in the wake of Edward Said's *Orientalism*[23]. It is compatible with the dismantlement of nation-state and of methodological nationalism in the wake of *leftist* criticism of what Anthony Smith called the *classical modernist* paradigm of nationalism studies (Smith 1998: 3–4). And it is compatible with what Smith tended to signify as a postmodern paradigm of these studies (ibid: 224–225) and Umut Ozkirimli (2017: chapter 6) as a constructivist one. The imperial *patchwork pattern of relations with structural holes between the peripheries* (Barkey 2008: [1]) should look like, from *a leftist-modernist* (especially B. Anderson and E. Hobsbawm, but also E. Gellner) and postmodern theoretical perspectives, a preferable alternative to the homogenising aspirations of classical nation-states and theories of nationalism[24], with its structural pluralism and unevenness. To rephrase Smith (1998: 226), the conditions of *post*-modernity *may* favour the replication of nations, national states and nationalisms, both on societal and on analytical levels, *but these replications are modelled, perhaps unconsciously, after imperial structures*[25]. The above-mentioned rehabilitation is compatible with the full-scale, scholarly and extra-scholarly, rehabilitation of one such empire by the institutions of its principal successor-state[26], and in particular with the state-managed *Ottomanalgia*[27]. Whether compatibility is a mere coincidence, a self-affirmative *intra*polation of high-brow scholarly fashion on behalf of AKP Turkey's cultural agents, or an unconscious *extra*polation of a changing self-image of

[22] A recent volume recognises religious toleration and tolerance as a more or less shared asset in a number of early modern imperial polities across Eurasia, dispelling the wide-spread western assumption of western precedence (Spencer, ed., 2018). A comprehensive account on the stigmatisation and then uneven rehabilitation of the Ottoman legacy across Ottoman successor-states see in: Quataert 2005: 195–201 (yet it must be noted that this academic textbook is at times overhasty and haughty towards verbal enemies of Ottomans and close to saying that *nations like* Bulgarians and Greeks owe the preservation of their ethnicity and tongue to the (tolerating and tolerable) Ottoman rule and hence should be grateful for that). An optimistic account, bordering on naivety, of the developments in representation of Ottomans in Croat historiography see in: Mujadžević 2014.

[23] Compatible with, and maybe stimulated by, cf.: "Admittedly, Said's book but marginally addressed itself to the work of Ottomanists; yet it did not fail to make an impact on many thoughtful representatives of our field" (Faroqhi & Adanir 2002: 1 [a reference to two works follows in a footnote]).

[24] On these aspirations: Ozkirimli 2017: 88, 109, 117–118, 122, 141, 171, etc.

[25] See potential examples in Ozkirimli 2017: 101, 176–177, 222.

[26] On this particular case: Egeresi 2018; Kaya 2013: 19, 68 ff.

[27] See Oncu 2010 and other works cited in Kaim 2021: 527, 559.

Turkey by western, and *then* by neighbouring states' academics, is difficult to judge. I believe that accumulation of new data and generalisations within the research field of Ottoman Studies is a possible, but insufficient explanation, primarily because in humanities and social sciences there is no such thing as a research field per se. Whatever the case, interference might produce an academic analogue of what Yalvaç (2012) saw as *strategic hegemony*.

We do need to reconstitute and reconstruct the (Ottoman) Turkish, Ladino, Greek and Armenian textual production in current or *historical* Bulgarian territories from the 16th to mid-20th centuries: in order to ensure that something which was *dropped outside the process of tradition* in these territories could be accessible as *heritage* (cf. Kockel 2007: 20–21) and to achieve a deeper reconciliation with and knowledge of neighbours (in historical time and in topographical and political-geographical spaces). But not for the sake of subscribing to the scholarly prestigious and politically, but also ethically, adventurous rehabilitation of experience under or within the Ottoman Empire. Of the four non-Bulgarian literary tongues on *Bulgarian* territory addressed by Vrinat-Nikolov, Armenian is likely to have the least value in the current, post-nationalist, constellation of prestigious subjects of research in high-brow scholarship. I base my suggestion on the following generalisations. First, it had high symbolical value in the previous, nationalist macrohistorical period, because of the topos of *Armenian-Bulgarian fraternity*[28], which should probably be specified as … *anti-imperial fraternity*. Second, it had relatively high value in the previous *mes*ohistorical period, the Soviet one, when it should have been experienced as a filiation of the *Soviet-Bulgarian friendship*. Third, it has low competitive value in the current post-nationalist setting, when compared to the other three tongues. Ottoman Turkish and Greek benefit from the post-nationalist cognitive imperative to reassess the nationalist topos of *double yoke* (*Turkish*, *physical*, and *Greek*, *spiritual*)[29]; Ladino – from the imperatives to reassess the self-centred nationalist narrative on the Ottoman period which underplayed cultural pluralism and toleration under the Ottomans, and the self-complacent narrative on Bulgarian tolerance towards Jews in the post-Ottoman period and especially about non-sending them to the camps of death in 1943. Believing that scholarship should avoid commitment to any hegemonies or agendas pursuing hegemony, I think that a reconstitution and reconstruction of the plurilinguality (and pluritemporality, or plurality of historiosophic perspectives immanent to the different scriptural and literary traditions) should carefully disentangle its agenda both from scholarly fashion and the agenda of neo-

[28] An attempt of its exploration see in Selvelli 2011.

[29] As any topos, it reiterates (summarises and overdraws) some lived experience. It characterised not only modern Bulgarian (Detrez 2013: 31–32; Daskalov 2013: 151, 208, 212), but also modern Romanian (Iordachi 2013: 127) and modern Greek (Detrez 2013: 32, see quotation from Clogg / Gell) identity.

Ottomanism. Such a disentanglement would mean an initial focus on the Armenian textual production (the only one against the post-nationalist grain), as well as an inclusion of the short-lived but abundant Russian-language textual production of émigrés from 1919–1943.[30] Such an inclusion, besides adding accuracy to the description, would reflect the important fact that from the mid-nineteenth century onwards Bulgarian literary (and cultural) space became a contact zone between the (post)Ottoman and the Russian (post)imperial one. All lingually-defined literary cultures and textual corpora in Bulgarian territory oscillated, in varying degrees, between three centres of *worldling*: the European (gravitating to Paris, but also Vienna), the Ottoman, and the Russian (then Soviet).

2. 4. BESIDE AND BEYOND THE NORTH ATLANTIC – GLOBAL SOUTH AXIS

A fourth line of relocation of Bulgarian literature (and hence of Bulgarian Studies) was suggested by myself in a paper published in 2014[31]: to the global *belt* of cultures that falls out of the currently almost hegemonic global symbolic antagonism between former European colonial empires and their former colonies. If we (I believe, rightly) assume that Ottoman and Russian imperial rule differed from the European rule of overseas territories[32], then we would allot all national cultures from the Black Sea basin to that *belt*; and we would apply achievements of postcolonial studies with certain modifications, hypothesising a typological gamma of stances between or maybe across *subalternity*[33] and *dhimmitude*, and also the doubly subjugated condition of populations / population strata experiencing both (some simile of) *subalternity* and *self-colonisation* (in the sense of Kiossev).

2. 5. WARS OF SUCCESSION

A fifth line of relocation would reconceptualise Bulgarian culture as a Byzantine successor culture and focus on issues of intercultural rivalry for a legacy (works by Asen Chilingirov

[30] As well as an inclusion of Aromanian, Albanian and Karamanli Turkish textual production, which would pay tribute and switch attention to the *neo-Romaic* stratum in Balkan(-Anatolian) identity (the most clear-cut exploration of this stratum known to me, albeit limited to the Balkans, is Detrez 2013) and to two more referential frames for Bulgarian Studies: of Balkan Studies but also of (post)Byzantine Studies.

[31] Ljuckanov, Jordan. "Towards Paired Histories of Small Literatures, To Make Them Communicate." *Studi Slavistici*, vol. 11 (2014): 285–300. https://doi.org/10.13128/Studi_Slavis-15363.

[32] A wide ad hoc typology of (early modern) imperial handling of cultural otherness is proposed in Colak 2018: 378–379).

[33] Including the specific condition of being *under the Soviets* (in the USSR or in Sovietised Eastern Europe) (the issue of typological identity between a post-colonial and post-soviet condition is addressed at length in: Stefanescu 2012) – reflected already in the 1920s in the then-Russian émigré neologism *podsovetskii*. And including the specific condition of a *perennial subaltern group*, applied by Sergey Minov (2020: 16) to the Syriac Christians (I believe, with no extra pathetism).

(2002, 2011), in general neglected by Bulgarian paleoslavists and historians,[34] could be a valuable starting point, yet the paradigm was anticipated in works of Bogdan Filov, see e.g. Filov 1922); and on comparative studies of different *families of successor cultures*.

A net of comparisons is framed by different types of contexts, or *implicit sets of reasons for comparison*, against which to be elaborated: a genealogical (as the one tacitly present in comparisons between Slavic languages), a contactological (as the one between different literatures in the USSR), of assumed typological proximity (as the one between European *peripheral* cultures or between those of the *infra-/a-/allo-colonial belt*), a geographical (as the one between Balkan cultures), an abstract universalist. The Black Sea basin could constitute the territorial (geographical) context for any of the five lines of relocation, along hypothesised typological, genealogical and topographical proximities, of Bulgarian culture proposed above.

2. 6. CONCLUSION

None of the five lines of relocation, or reframing, of Bulgarian Studies could be relevant to all historical periods in the life of their subject. In their entirety, they reflect the shifts in Bulgarian *worldling*, or *international socialisation*; in terms of comparative literature: the successive switching to different *special interliterary communities* (in the sense of Durisin 1984) *and collocations*.

Any of the proposed lines of relocation would rescue Bulgarian Studies in Bulgaria from the utterly peripheral, or self-colonising, position within the global division of intellectual labour – of producing knowledge solely about Bulgaria and about the major cultures of the West (mostly as they are refracted in Bulgarian culture). I have no idea of the proposition's possible impact on Bulgarian Studies outside Bulgaria.

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[34] The article (Petrova 2019) is a notable indicator of this neglect (see esp. par. 8 of 13).

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