MISPLACEDNESS AS NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE: A JONAH BETWEEN THE OTTOMANS AND THE SOVIETS (YAVOROV, ZARKIN AND THEIR ARMENIAN COLLOCUTORS)

YORDAN LYUTSKANOV

Institute for Literature of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

In this article I rationalise my historical intuition that perceptible commonalities, evolution and intentionality between two groups of texts (four poems by Peyo Yavorov and three by Georgi Zarkin) could be indicative of a Soviet-Ottoman contact zone. Moreover, I discuss my theoretical intuition that the basically spatialising concept of "contact zone" can refer to temporality and, in particular, to continuity that may be overseen or seen from an 'outside' as dis-continuity. To summarise the prevalently historical argument of the article: The topos of 'Jonah in the big fish' implies the condition of engulfment by the abyss, but also the (temporary) punishment for a (temporarily) unfulfilled moral obligation. The topos links Yavorov and Zarkin, and them both to the national hero Vasil Levski: it is a facet and maybe a symbol of their shared cultural-historical condition of agents in the Soviet-Ottoman (or Ottoman-Soviet) contact zone. Yavorov 'semi'-fulfills the 'present' task of Levski; Zarkin is forced into a creative synthesis of both Levski's 'present' and 'future' tasks. Yavorov fights for the freedom of Macedonia (as a would-be part of Bulgaria) and actively sympathises with the Armenians. Zarkin combines into a symbol a remembrance (a furious weep?) of the Armenian Genocide with an urge for liberation from a Soviet prison (from one or another of the prisons of communist Bulgaria in which he spent much of his life, and from the 'prison of peoples'). Put within the extratextual frames which conditioned their coming into being, the two groups of texts show, and we are invited to conclude, that while Yavorov was defeated by his personal demons (which is accepted in the article as trivial for an artist in the decadent/modernist condition), Zarkin defeats his and thus brings the contact zone into being (irrespective to our (non)intention to (re)construct it). Some Armenian 'glosses' to the two groups of texts add depth to their genealogical link and pose some challenges to Bulgarian literary scholarship.

Keywords: Soviet-Ottoman/Ottoman-Soviet contact zone, Jonah in the big fish, Peyo Yavorov, Vasil Levski, Georgi Zarkin, Garegin Nzhdeh, Daniel Varuzhan, Siamantho

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.17951/zcm.2026.15.7-30

But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. (Jonah 1:2)

> Interestingly, Armenia is not the only country in the world where a celebration is held in honor of the translator and inventor of the national alphabet: there is another, and curiously enough, it is Bulgaria! (…) '[S]o there is a natural kinship between Armenians and Bulgarians, as there was between Paulicians and Bogomils. But the most important thing is that the alphabet is original, both for Armenians and Bulgarians.' (Personal interview with Hovannes Mikaelian, November 2010 – Selvelli 2024: 65)

INTRODUCTION: SOMEWHERE-ELSE-NESS

In accordance with my paper "Towards Demarcating Emigrantology,"[1] I understand 'somewhere-else-ness,' or 'misplaced-ness,' as a family of experiences with the following common denominator: non-voluntary being not at home. Within this framework, both a (self)lamenting and a 'kairotic'[2] self-determination are possible.

Somewhere-else-ness[3] can be viewed as a coincidence of isolation and excessive socialisation (or socialised-ness). An émigré, a prisoner and so on is left alone but their personal space is being penetrated in such a way and in such a rhythm, that they chronically feel themselves as not belonging to themselves and not at their place. Maintaining of a personal space (be it individual or collective) is disrupted. One is forced to retreat into one's self (or, one forces *him/herself* to retreat) while being put in a condition that makes such a retreat impossible. The second option, framing the one who 'is somewhere else' as an agent rather than a patient, apparently undermining the definition offered above, relies on the notion of *gharib* rather than on the one of *exile* (on the contrast: Pifer 2018: 17–21) as an underlying perspective on 'somewhere-else-ness.' *Gharib* in Islam, as a (zealotic) comer among (reluctant) co-religionists (Pifer 2018: 23–24, 26–28), is similar to some kinds of Christian sanctity (the most vivid being probably the stylites and the holy fools) based on the premise that physical

[1] „К определению эмигрантологии." *Studi Slavistici*, vol. 18, no 2 (2021): 261–289. https://doi.org/10.36253/Studi_Slavis-8870.

[2] 'Kairotic' would refer here to the intuition of the misplaced that his or her condition is an allotment to a(n extraordinary) task. Such an understanding is a Biblical re-interpretation of the ancient Greek notion of 'lucky occasion' but does not go as far as to identify it with Giorgio Agamben's 'messianic' time that spans between the Resurrection and the Second Coming, or with Nikolay Neychev's 'time open to God's action' (on both: Neychev 2024: 307–309).

[3] Choosing one synonym for the title and another for the text of the Introduction deliberately reflects my indecision about the most adequate term.

(topographical) seclusion from the temptations of a densely inhabited place do not serve enough to human relinking to God.

Near-death experiences and ventures into the otherworld can be considered the extreme cases of 'somewhere-else-ness.' Core kinds have been frequently described for rhetorical purposes and out of emotional shock, in terms of the extreme. Moreover, some ancient practices suggest that the just suggested differentiation between core and extreme kinds might depend on a modernising bias. In ancient Greece, a murderer used to be punished with eternal banishment from the territory of the respective city-state, while in Rome the convicts to death were offered a choice between exile and death penalty (Knapp 1991: 1).

Be it as it may, experiencing 'somewhere-else-ness' within the 'Abrahamic' intercultural realm is likely to actualise, within the sense-and-purpose giving horizon of the experiencer, particular Biblical archetypes. Such is the one of Jonah in the big fish.

An archetype set in motion may transcend the life span of the agent who roused it, involving lives of posteriors. A poet may resurrect an ancient plot and as if to challenge the fate, which afterwards would influence their contemporaries or literary heirs, letting that fate shape *their* lives.

1. YAVOROV IN TARSHISH

In the early 1900s, Bulgarian poet Peyu Yavorov published three remarkable poems: 'Armenians'[4] (1900), 'Exiles' (1902) and 'A Night' (1901). In the 1970s, Bulgarian poet Georgi Zarkin, while imprisoned for anti-state activity, wrote three no less remarkable poems: 'Judgement/ Trial' (1973), 'Armenia, Live!' (1974) and 'Expelled' (1974).

1.1. In the (co)lamentation 'Armenians' (six octets[5] made of 12-syllabled lines, or of four amphibrachs each), he almost co-experiences the grief, desperation and rage felt by Armenian refugees to Bulgaria after the Ottoman massacres under Abdul Hamid in 1894–1896.[6] A group

[4] Here and below 'semantic' quotes around titles and fragments translated by me reflect the preliminary and non-published status of these (as a rule, literal) translations.

[5] Rhymed *ababcdcd*, hence, formally, united pairs of quatrains, but syntactically and narratively undividable. Compared to the rhyming pattern of the octave (*abababcc*), this one infuses, subtextually or 'intra-semantically,' the notion of alternation and oscillation: not of succession or synthesis.

[6] *By early 1894 mass murder was in the air, and by mid-1896 at least 100,000 Armenians lay dead – shot, stabbed, and axed to death by Turks and Kurds in a succession of horrific massacres. More died through starvation and exposure in the weeks and months that followed, an indirect result of the destruction of their homes, the confiscation of their property, and the wholesale murder of breadwinners. (…) There were no massacres, the Turks claimed. Only Armenian attacks or 'battles' between Armenians and Muslims* (Morris & Ze'evi 2019: 44; compare different estimates of victims on pp. 130–132). *It is unclear how many Armenians emigrated during and immediately after 1894–1896; perhaps tens of thousands left* (p. 130).

of refugees (refugees in the town of Straldzha in the autumn of 1895, mid-1890s refugees to Bulgaria) fuses into a transhistorical image of a terrorised and uprooted people. The boundaries between the lyrical 'I', the *Armenians* and the night storm are penetrable, even though the presence of each of the three agencies is recognisable. Intoxication, sorrow and rage (and a will to revenge) occur as the common physical-psychological denominator. A synopsis of quotations is due here:

> Away from motherland (…) in dilapidated brothel (…) // They drink – in drunkenness [they] will all forget[7] (…) // And sing they… Wild is their song (…) revenge – bloodthirsty revenge – crave for [their] souls. (…) // While the winter storm as if seconds them (…) // They drink and sing… a shard negligible / Of brave and glorious people-martyr (…) And sing, in the way one through tears sings… (literal translation, based on the poem's first publication in the journal *Misal* in 1900 (Yavorov 1900), is mine)[8]

It seems to me that the chronotope of the poem reproduces, yet by minimalising material (of an indoors *mise-en-scène*) and historical context, the chronotope of a poem by Hristo Botev, 'In the tavern' (1873). The first quatrain of Botev's poem reads: *Heavy, heavy! Wine give [to me]*! / *Drunken, let me forget* / *that, about which you, (o) fools, are in ignorance,* / *whether it is a disgrace or glory* (literal translation, based on (Botev 1884), is mine). Then the lyrical 'I' of Botev sarcastically lists the infortunes of his homeland and mocks his fellow émigrés in Wallachia (Romania) who are ready to take up arms and go to Bulgaria only while drunk. In the last stanza, drunkenness becomes for Botev's lyrical 'I' a means for one's alienation – maybe powerless – from both enemies and inconsiderate / stupid patriots.[9]

During 1894–1897, Armenian immigrants to Bulgaria may have been about 33,000 (Popek 2021: 261, referring to Ivan Zanev), but not all of them refugees from the massacres (ibid.) and only about 10% of them permanently settling in the country (ibid: 262, referring to Suren Ovnanyan). Yavorov's poem was based on the impressions from encounters that occurred in or by October–December 1895 (Agukyan 2000: 548). It was written during the mentioned period in Straldzha and in all likelihood edited in Anhialo in the winter of 1899–1900 (ibid: 548, 541).

[7] Or: 'in drunkenness all to forget'. The narrating agency oscillates between attachment to and aloofness from the main suffering agency.

[8] All redactions of the poem and dozens of published translations (incl. three into English) are republished in: Yavorov 2018.

[9] The intertextual similarity can be contextualised biographically. In 1899–1900 in Anhialo (and earlier, in Straldzha) Yavorov had hallucinatory encounters with Hristo Botev (Iliev 1976: 22).

In the elegy 'Exiles'[10] (1902; five octets)[11] the lyrical 'I' observes or contemplates a departure of a ship with exiles, taking (according to grammatical indication) the standpoint of the exiles and likening the trip to the place of exile to a trip into the otherworld: (…) *But the ship – alas, does not stop: / Even farer and farer / Flies, takes us away… Spreads / The night its wing…* (literal translation mine, after the first publication, in the journal *Misal*, 1902, under the title 'Towards Podrumkale (A song)' – Yavorov 1902).[12] A reading open to biographical and historical contexts would identify the exiles with Yavorov's senior fellows in the anti-Ottoman guerrilla war in Macedonia, and that the ship sets forth from Thessaloniki to the former castle of St Peter at nowadays Bodrum on the Anatolian coast of the Aegean. An introspective reading would identify the elegy with an emotionally sublimated and almost allegoric account about (and partial self-identification with) the experience of Jesus after the Last Supper, as demonstrated by Kamen Rikev (1996), and to His descent into hell, as almost suggested, but not stated explicitly, in the same reading (Rikev 1996: 7–8).[13] As one can infer from the same reading, it remains unclear whether He will rescue the 'righteous pagans' and the Patriarchs from death. 'Exiles' compared to 'Armenians' offers an alternative approach to alluding to Passions through marine symbolism.

In the poem 'A Night' (seventeen completely different in size and metrics stanzas; 1901), a lyrical 'I' tormented by insomnia and apparitions is torn between what must be and what is. In other words, between service to the national liberation movement (the liberation of Macedonia from the Ottomans was considered a continuation of the activity that had led to the restoration of Bulgarian state in 1878) and constraint by one's own person complexity, disharmony, monstrosity and terror about the power of evil.[14] The poem unpremeditatedly embodies the view of Gregory of Nyssa, Isaak the Syrian and others that the hell is to be found in a human's soul, that it is a human cognitive/ethical condition.[15] Literary scholars have viewed it as a piece of early modernist national apocalyptic (Nedelchev 2000: 371–372). Tormenting

[10] Not *Изгнаници*, but *Заточеници*, or, literally, 'sent/taken/driven beyond' rather than 'taken/driven from/out'. Etymological considerations about (Greek-)Latin *ex(s)ul* and Semitic *gh-r-b* (whence Arabic *gharib*) brought together by Michael Pifer (2018: 17–18) are worth considering in any attempt of interpreting the mythopoetical layers of Yavorov's poem.

[11] The same rhyming scheme as in 'Armenians', and the same property of stanzas as autonomous narrative / pictorial scenes or semantic units.

[12] All redactions of the poem and dozens of published translations (incl. two into English) are republished in: Yavorov 2018.

[13] It is my unprovable intuition that the plot of the poem alludes as well to a crossing of Styx.

[14] The poem, or *поема* ('long / narrative poem'), is considered central, even *watershed*, in Yavorov's oeuvre by different quarters in Bulgarian literary studies (see, e.g., Iliev 1976: 42–45; Kolarov 2021: 97).

[15] On that view of hell: Losskiy 2012: 332, 356, 358–359, 376, 545–546.

visions dissolve and the poem returns to its framing (the image and a fireplace with maw wide open to utter a curse but not uttering it), adding the setting of a snowy morning.

1.2. The ideology of Bulgarian national liberation movement produced, by the early 1870s, the following noteworthy formula (coined by or put in the mouth of Vasil Levski):

> – And you, *bay* Vasil, what position would you take when we get liberated? – asked him once (…) in the presence of three more apostles:[16] (…). / – After the liberation of Bulgaria, I will have no more work among you. (…). Then I will go to Russia to organise committees, because there, even if not wearing turbans, the people is suppressed more than our one. (Stoyanov 1883: 75–76; available in later editions, too: 1943, 1977, 2008)

After 1944, the users of the formula used to skip Russia but indicated just *other people* and to apply it in the sense of liberating peoples from either Nazism or colonialist capitalism. What had become the *topos* of contributing to the liberation of other peoples had been supported in public consciousness at various societal levels already in the early twentieth century.[17] Levski's most authoritative statement of intention reported by a most authoritative biographer (Zahari Stoyanov) conveys and imparts to posteriors a particular ideological perspective. That perspective committed to the task of liberating Bulgarians of Macedonia and southern Thrace, but it also obliged to collaborate with, most notably, Armenian[18] revolutionaries.

The memoirs of Yavorov's sister Ekaterina and considerations of a coeval literary scholar support the intuition that co-experiencing Armenian disaster and rage unlocked or at least stimulated his decision to join the Bulgarian paramilitary in Macedonia:[19]

[16] In line with Bulgarian nationalist (and later officialised) parlance, organisers of anti-Ottoman clandestine networks are meant.

[17] A fictional poet in Pencho Slaveikov's anthology-mystification *On the Isle of the Blessed* (1910) fought for Garibaldi in Italy, and there were lore and testimonies about Bulgarians who fought in the forces of Giuseppe Garibaldi (gathered and examined in Neshev 1988) and, prior to that, in the Greek War of Independence (Todorov & Traykov 1971).

[18] Bulgarian irredentist ambitions regarding Ottoman territories clashed with Greek and Serbian interests, but not with the Albanian and the Armenian. A general picture of *nationalities* relations with the government and with the policies towards them in the late Ottoman Empire is offered in (Safrastyan 2024: 35–90; Ahmad 2014; Morris, Ze'evi 2019). Diverse perspectives, not to be discussed here, to assess the special relations between two late Ottoman *nationalities*, the Bulgarians and the Armenians, are offered in Yavorov List 1935; Selvelli 2011: 9–11; Safrastyan 2024: 118–147. Military aspects of the Bulgarian-Armenian collaboration have been scrutinised and its importance for the Armenian side has been explained, e.g., in Ketsemanian 2017.

[19] The reconstruction of Milka Markovska shows an interest in the Bulgarian cause in Macedonia already in or by 1895 (Markovska 2000: 523).

> … In Anhialo (…) he recounts to me about what he experienced in Straldzha. Recounts about the black nights, during which, as mad, he ran sometimes (…) 'If I had stayed some more time there, I would have gone mad' … / Here – in Anhialo – he made himself close to a Macedonian-émigré. (…) More and more often speaks about and admires [Hristo] Botev. / … He is relocated to Sofia. On his way he stays for a while in Chirpan. (…) In the evening he briefly asked [our] father to give him money to buy cattle to transfer it to Asia Minor – as did others among our fellow town dwellers. (E. N. 1935)

> Too many in Varna and its vicinity, Armenians[20] should have been even more numerous in Anhialo, where Yavorov worked as a telegrapher, and in Anhialo's vicinity. (…) Years later Yavorov confronted the same ill fate of Bulgarians, too. New, bigger wave of Macedonian refugees poured into the realms of the liberated Bulgaria. (…) But how big is the difference between the two competing poems! A cursory comparison – a look at the initial lines would suffice – is enough to convince us that in 'Armenians' Yavorov lives, while in 'Refugees' observes and describes. (…) And it wouldn't have been otherwise – one and the same feeling, even if on one and the same occasion, cannot be experienced equally intensively and even less to be conveyed with the same magical power of word. This, evidently, was felt by Yavorov himself, as far as he decided to spill his blood for the liberation of Bulgarians in Macedonia. (Chilingirov 1935)

Inasmuch as Macedonia and southern Thrace were still under the Ottomans, a (direct) participation in the Armenian liberation movement had to be postponed or dropped. Yavorov had to limit himself to expressing compassion in verse and to *de facto* collaboration[21] on the territory of the Balkan Peninsula. What can be called decadent sensibility should have been an additional blocker that finally led to tragedies in personal life and early death (at thirty-five).

Was Yavorov able to admit that the deepest torments of decadent soul[22] do not overweight after all the sufferings of one or another terrorised people? It seems that he was, but he was not able to act correspondingly.[23] Yavorov was aware that he had come to a Tarshish, neglecting God's commandment (cf. Iliev 1976: 227).

---

[20] Here understood as the refugees from the 1895–1896 Ottoman massacres.

[21] Briefly on collaboration of Yavorov, as a member of VMORO, with Armenian revolutionaries: Agukyan 2000: 542–547.

[22] One caught between belief in God, belief in Satan and disbelief, between adherence to traditional values and utmost self-conceit; vacillating between the guess that only material or sensual exists and the need to believe or the intuition that only immaterial is real.

[23] Lyubomir Rusev (1939) applied a psychoanalytic perspective, defined the structure of his self-consciousness as one of *suffering aloneness*, and spoke of Yavorov's *psychic regression*, starting with a contrastive juxtaposition of two of his poems, 'Armenians' and 'Hebrews' (Rusev 1939: 12–13). The book (Iliev 1976), analysing Yavorov's biographical person and lyric persona profound duality or split, summarises prior research and offers vantage points for subsequent. The same author gives reasons to think that Yavorov did not consider the torments of a decadent individual graver than the martyrdom of a people but was unable to make a choice between two paths.

Yavorov was not able to stop the transformation of his internal hell into a biographical hell. National-liberation imperative, or duty, did not prevent him to the necessary extent. Georgi Zarkin overcame the biographical hell by the virtue of compassion to someone other's disaster. Compared to Zarkin, fate was relatively merciful towards Yavorov:[24] despite making him suffer the suicide of his wife, remorse and accusations in murder, even despite making him commit suicide himself.[25]

2. ZARKIN IN THE *BIG FISH*

Zarkin was born in 1940; in 1944 he had his father killed. In 1966, he was sentenced to six years of prison for composing anti-governmental leaflets and organising an underground group. In 1968, he carried on a 28-days hunger strike protesting the USSR-lead invasion of Czechoslovakia and wrote an open letter to the secretary of government council of Bulgaria, for which he was litigated again, and while under sentence in the Stara Zagora prison, some more trials followed. In 1977, he died in the Pazardzhik prison after a severe beating.[26] If we are to (re)construct Zarkin's personal archetypal condition in the terms of the Book of Jonah, we would say that he was thrown into the sea and devoured by the big fish even though he listened to God and went to 'Nineveh.' Going beyond the apparent similarity requires a knowledge of Zarkin's biography and texts I lack.

Judging from Zarkin's texts, he rated his imprisonment less disastrous than the sufferings of Armenians. Yet he had in mind not only the past,[27] but also the present (this is hardly surprising, given his response to at least one current event). Less than a decade before the creation of the three 'Armenian' poems of Zarkin, the memory of the 'Great Crime' or the Genocide,[28] and hence the pledge for historical justice, is in its 'nadir' worldwide. In 1965, a mass demonstration in Yerevan compelled the Soviet government in Moscow to recognise the Genocide; in 1973, a survival of the Genocide assassinated two Turkish diplomats in Los Angeles; in 1975, the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia was founded in Beirut. Since

[24] Iliev (1976: 25–27) concedes to such view, in order to refute it afterwards.

[25] For the latter deed, he has been refused commemoration service by the Bulgarian church – but not by the Armenian (Agukyan 2000: 550).

[26] Information in this paragraph is drawn by the anonymous bio-note in the newspaper 'Armenians', *biweekly of the Armenians in Bulgaria* issued in Burgas (no 24, 1–15 January 1995 – Anonym 1995).

[27] *In the Stara Zagora prison Georgi Zarkin was for a certain time in one cell with our compatriot* [i.e. an Armenian]*, a political prisoner too. From him he learns about the tragedy that reached the Armenians in Turkey in 1894/96 and 1915/1922* (Anonym 1995).

[28] A term coined in 1943 by the layer Raphael Lemkin, partly based on the analysis of 1915–1916 Ottoman policies towards the Armenians and used in the litigation against the Nazis in 1945 (see Safrastyan 2024: 18–24, esp. 22; cf. Dadrian & Akcam 2011: 22).

1966, Zarkin was permanently in prison; I cannot judge whether and what he might have known about the Armenian political resurrection. As for the Armenian community of Bulgaria, after the Soviet occupation in 1944 it was pressed to reduce its cultural activity and conform, incl. to gradually give up printing in the Armenian language (Kasabyan & Giligyan 2008: 8, 10). Some members of Dashnaktsutyun were now incarcerated in the USSR (Garegin Nzhdeh, arrested by Soviet military counter-recognisance in Bulgaria). They just shared the lot of some simply non-adult Armenians who avoided death in 1915–1916 (like Tigran Makaryan, 1902–1976) but were arrested in Soviet Armenia.[29] These are emblematic examples.

Let me turn from the context to the texts of Zarkin's three 'Armenian' poems.

2.1. 'Judgement/Trial' was dedicated to the *Armenians who survived through the Genocide*; it was written in the prison of the city of Stara Zagora on 28 May 1973:

> Judgement/Trial/Litigation // (To the Armenians [who] survived the Genocide) // Forward, forward still the ship unstopping glides, / yet the passengers, with eyes turned, / backwards, backwards still they see, where get small and small / in the distance their native mountains. // How painful is to you to look, how they take oneself / off that which, oh, completely to them belongs, / whereas the ship still keeps on going, keeps on going / and the last point there [is ready] to erase. // And to where it leads them, nobody inquired, / having them gathered[,] the liner[,] in its menacing paunch. / And it is only heard how the Armenians sob. // O, is there a more fearful, / tell me, than this judgement! // Stara Zagora prison / Monday, 28 May 1973. / Published for the first time. / Georgi Zarkin (Zarkin 1995a)

Formally, it is a 'lame' Petrarchan sonnet: instead of the second (and final) tercet is has an extremely short distich, in literal translation: *O, is there a more fearful, / tell me, than this judgement!* Such incompleteness unobtrusively recalls the tradition of censorship-sensitive and censorship-mocking writing, most famously expressed, if one looks at Bulgarian literature's neighbourhood, in Alexander Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* (its lines of dots completing a stanza or even a chapter – and staging a trace of censorial interference). With to-and-fro movements on several textual levels, it seems to shape itself vis-à-vis a poem by Yavorov in much more particular sense. The central images of the poem (a ship sailing away, passengers moving off their homeland, mountains disappearing in the distance) and the narrative situation that brings

[29] In 1916, Makaryan fled from Der Zor (a *principal destination point* in a series of Ottoman death camps for Armenians, near the eastern Syrian city of De(i)r el Zor /cf. Kevorkian 2011: [263] etc.; Suny 2015: 314–316) to Haleb (Aleppo), in 1919–1922 lived in Constantinople, in 1922–1926 in Germany, and since 1926 in the USSR. Engineer by job, he was an inhabitant of GULag twice: 4 November 1935–1938, December 1941–May 1955. In 2024, the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Foundation published his book of memoirs or remembrances, written in 1917, 1964 and 1973 (Makaryan 2024).

them together recall motives and plot of Yavorov's 'Exiles'. The poems apparently differ by the profile of the humans on ship: Zarkin calls them *passengers* (not *exiles*) – these are, possibly, the *survivals of the Genocide* mentioned in the dedication; unlike Yavorov's (unnamed but *ex silentio* present) passengers,[30] they have been patients rather than (defeated) agents of history. The second apparent difference is in the strophic structure. Another formal level partly supports the hypothesis of conscious or unconscious orientation of 'Judgement' towards 'Exiles'. Iamb, with female endings in odd verses and male in even ones, echoes Yavorov's 'Exiles'. Yet Zarkin has his lines twelve-thirteen-syllabled (twice as long as Yavorov's), and stanzas twice as short (quatrains, instead of octets). A third difference concerns the image of the ship(s): the third Zarkin stanza makes the *ship* a *liner*, while humans are not on its board but inhabit its *paunch*. Thus, the late poem hints at an emigration to America, at Titanic, at Ivan Bunin's long short story *The Sir from San Francisco*, and to Jonah in the big fish.[31] A fourth important difference relates to the narrative standpoint: with Yavorov, exiles narrate, while with Zarkin, an omnipresent and unspecified lyrical speaker narrates about exiles (or homeland-leavers). The defeated agency of Yavorov's exiles is split, in Zarkin's poem, into the *patience* of the *passengers* and the (still? already?) *verbal* agency of the narrator. We can return now to the strophic form of Zarkin's poem and link the final distich, the abridged end-stanza of a Petrarchan sonnet, to Yavorov's 'Exiles,' too: each stanza's final line in 'Exiles' is shorter, and by one-third (six vs. nine syllables). The poems share a general indication of incompleteness or lapse.

The 'judgement / trial / litigation' of history in Zarkin's poem is being likened, through the allusion to Yavorov's one, to a trial against revolutionaries and to a sentence to exile. At the same time, it is being likened to an unjust Final Judgement; to God's (in)justice in the complaints of Job (chapters 6–7, 9–10, 12–14); and to Jonah who found himself in the big fish instead of going to Nineveh to scorn its inhabitants for their sins.

To switch from the intratextual to an extratextual perspective, the poet implicitly compares the unjust trial of history over survived Armenians to litigations he himself has suffered. The poet admits that a judgement (trail, litigation) that is more fearful than the one over the survived Armenians does not exist. A semantic room for identification of the agent of judgement with the (evil) Demiurg of dualist heresies and of Gnosticism appears here. (Such a perspective would sometimes merge God with the Job-tempting Satan.) Appealing to God's

[30] Members of paramilitary organisation, if extratextual information is brought to contextualise the meaning of the poem.

[31] Did Zarkin's *passengers* find themselves in the ship's paunch / big fish due to deserting from fulfilling a task ordered by God?

justice, Zarkin recalled one more poem by Yavorov, 'Refugees' (1905). Yavorov had been bolder: *(…) And to know*[32] */ that some God almighty there / stays over all [as] a cool spectator, / [and keep silent; no, /] I would call from the whole of my breast / Towards that dark forethinker: / O God, be damned!* (translation mine, after the first publication, in the *Democratic review* journal – Yavorov 1905). By 1905, Yavorov had already descended into the psychological dimension of his own 'pit'. Yavorov of 'Refugees' and Zarkin of 'Judgement' share an implicit position: recognition of one's existential *bottom* or *de profundis* as not the deepest one and one's own bitter lot as not the worst one. Such a position opens an emotional perspective to keep thinking about someone other's one, to keep a pledge to struggle for someone other's salvation (freedom…).

The date on which the poem 'Judgement' was written apparently stood in the poem's manuscript;[33] it is not a result of a scholarly reconstruction. Thus, it attains interpretative value, its biographical (un)trustworthiness notwithstanding. It is the 28 of May 1973. It marks the fifty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the First Republic of Armenia, a polity annihilated with the coordinated efforts of the genocidal Young Turks renamed Kemalists[34] and the Bolsheviks on the third year of its existence.[35] Therefore, the colophon appends the poem with a distinct historical-semantic layer.

2.2. The second poem, an apparent incantation, is titled 'Armenia, Be Alive!' It has a second title and a subtitle: 'A Bell(s) Call: An Hour Has Come! / (Armenian Song)' – which indicate a folkloric source of inspiration. The poem is quite interesting in terms of form: three nonnets with three-line refrain.[36] According to the postscript, the poem was written in the aforementioned Stara Zagora prison in April 1974:

> The bell of Freedom / for you, o Armenia, trumpets, / hour has come for retribution, / into a fist, o people, merge! / Don't wait, brother, grab in the hand / a weapon and fly forth / of the brave men with the wings / and the enslaver smash! / And with thunder, the enemy strike! // Of what the Armenian [man] is capable, / now you shall understand…! / Armenia, live! Armenia, live! // Euphrates and Tigre, listen, are crying / and pyres bloody are smoking, / unnumbered bodies the rivers are dragging, / may this world see them, / [may it see] how accommodates himself the executioner, / but we shall not bend neck / and shall disperse the slavery gloom, / we swear in you,

[32] Or: *And knowing*. Such a translation makes the [inserted line] below unnecessary.

[33] Yet it cannot be ruled out that dates were indicated by Zarkin's mate in prison, who *was able to smuggle* from the prison the three poems related to Armenians and some more than twenty poems (Anonym 1995).

[34] On the continuity, ideological, sociological and personal, between the Young Turks and the Kemalists: Zurcher 2010: 104–148, 195–206, 213–235; Dadrian & Akcam 2011.

[35] An abbreviated chronology of the events see in Hovannisian 1997: 333–344.

[36] This shape can be a transposition of three trifolia (or clovers of a playing cards suite).

> Ararat, in hild [=battle]! / Undefeatable is the sewer / of Freedom and Justice, brother! // Of what the Armenian (…) // Ahead in fight in ferocious battles, / there the road is illuminated / by the feats heroic / of our people tempered [=toughened]! / A supreme right of every / people is free to live. / O people our Armenian poor, / even in storms of blood start singing! / And for us a dawn shall shine upon us! / [O] Free[you,] flags unfold! // Of what the Armenian (…) (Zarkin 1995b)

We, just as Zarkin, know that April brought the highly symbolic beginning of the Genocide, the *Bloody* Istanbul *Saturday* of 24 April 1915.[37] But April used to be as well the time when guerrilla fighters (hayduks, komitas, Fedayeen) left their winter hiding places and gathered in the forests and mountains. The poem calls for armed resistance; although the host that is summoned is armed simply with *hands* and with thunder, too; and is a sewer of *Freedom and Truth* / *Justice*. Besides, April is quite often the month of Easter, of Resurrection. Whereas in the first two lines of Zarkin's poem *the bell of Freedom* does not *ring* but *trumpets*. Images of Last Judgement and of Christ harrowing the hell conflate here. The inhabitants of hell who are being liberated from the shackles of death are being called not just to wait for the Redemptor but also to take weapons in their hands and *fly with wings of brave men*. Biblical and post-genocidal contexts are given definite prevalence over regionalist and anti-Soviet: Tigre and Euphrates are mentioned, not Araxes. Subtly, almost invisibly, as in 'Judgement/Trial', the image is present of a *disaster bigger-than-mine that calls for compassion and collaboration*: the crying Tigre and Euphrates and the still smoking bloody pyres appeal to, as one can guess, to the relatively fortunate diaspora and Soviet Armenians. Implicitly, Zarkin places his own suffering below the Armenian one.

2.3. The third 'Armenian' poem of Zarkin is titled 'Outcasts' and bears a dedication: *To the Armenians-refugees, [who] survived the Genocide* (Zarkin 1995c). It is more epic than the rest: fourteen quatrains without a single exclamation mark or a dotted ellipsis. The choice of strophic form – of quatrains, the most trivial possible – contributes to the evenness of intonation (or the simulation of such). It is longer than Yavorov's 'Exiles' and 'Armenians' and is likely to be perceived as longer than 'Night' because of its strophic monotony. Its title recalls the titles of two poems by Yavorov – 'Exiles' and 'Refugees'; the dedication links it definitely to the second one. 'Refugees' is about Bulgarian refugees from Macedonia, in its canonical version it consists of seven septets, being longer in the first journal publication (five 12-line stanzas). At this turn of Zarkin's intertextual dialogue with Yavorov, Zarkin's choice in favour of *service of some other people* is most visible. 'Outcasts' emancipate from 'Refugees' on the levels of imagery, strophic structure and title at the same time. It has the same dedication as 'Judgement/Trial,' being

[37] A brief account of the events: Kevorkian 2011: 251–254.

written in Stara Zagora prison on Wednesday and Thursday, 23–24 May 1973. In the poem, refugees or their heirs meet the sunrise at a western shore of a sea, as if transforming first into stone statues and then into immaterial shadows. With the motif of grievous refugees, the poem refers to 'Armenians;' with the motif of *will* to cross a sea from the west to the east it is antithetic to 'Exiles;' with the non-pathetic empathic final stanza it is sharply antithetic to 'Refugees' (which ends with a curse to God in the subjunctive mood). Metrically, with its 7-feet iamb often deficient in stressed syllables, 'Outcasts' is most close to 'Armenians' with its 4-feet amphibrach. Instead of ending with an empathic semi-fusing of the agencies of the refugees and the lyrical 'I', 'Outcasts' makes a clear final statement on the discrepancy between these two agencies. With the time of action/vision indicated as *before dawn*, combined with the motives of psychic suffering, of apparitions and of crucifixion, 'Outcasts' recalls one more poem by Yavorov – his 'Night.' By strophic structure, the two poems are complete antipodes. They are antipodes too by the way they present a tormenting experience. In 'Outcasts,' an experience that might have well been pertinent to the lyrical 'I' as well, is presented as the property of apparitions, or of grievous refugees. On this background, the lyrical 'I' of 'Night' seems too immodest, self-propelling as a bearer of a suffering that is likely to be someone else's. Where Yavorov engulfed the reader with suffering that might have been not his own but only an empathic affect, Zarkin completely annihilates his empathic agency to let the sufferers speak by themselves. If in 'Night' people / homeland and lyrical 'I' are *co-crucified*, in 'Outcasts' the lyrical 'I' modestly refrains from self-assigning such an exalted position. In 'Outcasts,' Zarkin polemically rewrites four poems of Yavorov at once. In the last stanza, he admits the insignificance of his own suffering compared to others'. The imperative to fight for the liberation of someone else (of one's fellow human) is present in an embryonic, or contemplative, version.

This time I shall complement my attempt at translation with comments, hence I place the translation here, after articulating considerations that might have done without it:

> Who are these, who each time before sunrise, / meet it there, crying on their knees, / on the elevated rock over the dead sea / [waiting] from ones' home environ a breeze intoxicating to waft on them? // Carved as stones, by storms smoothened, / with Biblical outlook they protrude on grey horizon, / and the first rays cast them in bronze / and the tears that slip with the earth solder them. // And like a ship golden the sun before them glides out, / there, where forever is tied their destiny, / where the first cradle has swung them, on the native land, / repelled homeless men, to foreign environs to suffer. // Swollen weep instead of song is grievously pulled up / from the overfilled with distress [their] chests, / [about] these unmourned, o, living deadmen, / even the rocks and the sea sob and are being touched. // With what did they deserve these pains unending,

> / is it so that you, God, can be so cruel / to those who first of your son Christ / accepted the faith, in order to rise agape eternal? // As an altar mirageous there before them protrudes / with the Crucifixion the treasured by them Ararat, / with the Ark of Noah from deluge to save / the world, while for their unhappiness now everywhere [people] do not care. // Having stretched hands prayingly towards the expanse / and only seagulls wave to them with wings / as angels, come from native coasts, / fly low over them and not to weep with concern they beg them. / And tries hard with its smile the sun to warm up / your souls, Armenians, miserable, without gleaming, / for with nothing can one replace of a native environ / that thing which makes even blood in a man to sing. // Insane madness in moments of weakness overtakes you, / and you wine that, oh, you have no wings / to fly forth towards cherished/caressed land, / where groans she[,] poor[,] under three slave's yokes.[38] // And a conversation they raise: with the Wind, the Sea and the Sky: / *Drop [o] Sky, there tears grievous instead of us* / *and, [o] you Wind, weep with maternal voice,* / *kiss our coasts, [o] Sea, with big tears on the [=your] face!* // And imperceptibly all has sunk into gilt, / melts before them the horizon and the coast, / and gets lost the bay, where an anchor cast has the day, / and lets down a shivering curtain of milk the haze. // And the stone statues stand up, come to life, / unneeded by anyone on the foreign land, / with stone shards[39] in their soul / they full looks of sorrow to widths direct.[40] // Lifeless and miserable from the rocks [they] sneak down, / to the unknownness having taken grievously path[41], / far more depressed than sentenced to death, / and it occurs to them as if in the hell unparented descend. // And how difficult is [for] who[m] has home, motherland, / the unhappiness boundless to see through / of those, who in foreign corner homeless perish, / caress that sometimes are even the evil winds.[42] (Zarkin 1995c)

I have tried to retain the sometimes-*unnatural* word-order and, more importantly, the strange syntax in the poem. Sometimes (stanzas 4, 8) the syntactic link between the beginning of a stanza and its continuation is very loose – in a non-apparent way, the lyrical agent/grammatical subject is changed, and the first part of a stanza remains as if unfinished, inasmuch as the reader has expected non-change. Together with the occasional *disclosure* of *inner form* of phrasal verbs, loose syntactic links and unnatural word order may create an illusion of a series of images occurring during sleep.

[38] One can only speculate which the three yokes are; of republican *Turkey*; of *Soviet* Armenia; and of *Soviet Azerbaijan*.

[39] Sic! a word from Yavorov's 'Armenians.'

[40] The original is both clumsy and ambivalent: *they look at*, but also *they send looks – like ships – loaded with sorrow*; Zarkin oscillates between naivety and naïvism.

[41] Discourse balances on the verge of clichéd, unliterary phrasal verbs, and phrasal verbs regaining the literal sense of their components – in this particular instance, the second option would make the verse signify the taking of cross (either by Jesus or by Simeon).

[42] The 2nd line links with the 3rd, but also with the 4th as if skipping the 3rd. Normalising the word-order: '[to see through] that sometimes even the evil winds are a caress'.

To return to the last stanza, it seems that only God can understand the full extent of this unhappiness, of this emptiness; thus, *God's Weep* by Daniel Varuzhan (1884–1915) is recalled, in all likelihood without being known to Zarkin. A peculiar triangle between Zarkin's, Varuzhan' and Yavorov's poems emerges. A matter of post-hoc linking, adduced by Garegin Nzhdeh in 1935 (and now by me), *God's Weep* may serve as a *work-amplifier* (term by Radosvet Kolarov 2021: 228), not within an oeuvre but between oeuvres: one that makes some half-pronounced meanings of 'Armenians' sound far clearer in 'Outcasts'.

Nzhdeh's casual[43] interpretation may pose a more serious challenge to Bulgarian literary scholarship than visible at first sight:

> (…) A poet of earthly vigilance – he did not become satisfied merely with a philosophical solution of the metaphysical problems of being; he sang an ode, while in order to sing an ode he deeply experienced; he allied in his soul with his brother-human, with his brother – risen against his fate, with the suffering brother. His life was a co-crucifixion; he was crucified together with all crucified by life. Suffering was for him a divine licentiousness. / *And, like the poet, God too, before being able to create – had to weep*.[44] He sung the road to crucifixion of our tribe too; he drank from the glass of Armenian suffering too. And, with a divine intoxication, to the suffering, he announced: *Drink – this is my blood!* The author of *Armenians* sung our pains too, and did it not as a poetic caprice, not as an accomplishment of a human duty (…) He was able to start despising, in the name of the suffering human, (…) the laurels and the wine of inspiration too; he sung our refugeeness. Because – as a sorrower of our century – he could not but sing the most sublime and heroic suffering, unknown to that day to the world. (Nzhdeh 1935).

Submitting Yavorov's oeuvre to his own, inevitably interested and supposedly based on fragmentary knowledge perspective, Nzhdeh apparently considers 'Armenians' to be Yavorov's initiation work. I believe Nzhdeh's intuition about this concept is compatible with the one of neo-structuralist literary scholarship (Kolarov), the second intuition being more text-centric than poet-centric:

> [Initiation works] are works which mark a turning point in an author's œuvre – they synthesize his/her path so far, which is perceived as outlived, and they contain codes, the milestones of future development. (…) The initiation rite contains elements which Lipking does not consider worthy of mention when they are transposed to a literary context, but which can be related to Yavorov's œuvre and are quite instructive. The consecration of the individual in the initiation, his introduction to a cultic mystery whose aim is to pass from one status to another, higher status, demands his spatial separation from the settled life of the community, while the period of trial, which continues from several days to several years, is perceived as ritual death. (Kolarov 2021: 96, 97)

[43] He was not a literary scholar; and, as far as I know, he did not leave a substantial work about Yavorov.
[44] Nzhdeh's note: *'God's Weep' by the Armenian poet Varuzhan*.

Believing that Nzhdeh casual finding is defendable against, or *pace*, the established tradition in Bulgarian scholarship, defendable even in the tongue of neo-structuralism represented by Kolarov, I would offer here two brief starting considerations.

Firstly, we can intuit (and postulate) a principal gap between one's personal and one's communal life. Alternatively, we can postulate it laying between one's person-and/or-community and an alien person-and/or-community. (The first intuition would imply a hypothesis of historical change towards solipsism,[45] the second towards nationalisation of poetry.) Considering 'A night' a watershed work implies we have followed the first intuition…

Secondly, the alternative line of interpretation would need an additional epistemic (and ensuing methodological) tool. I believe it should abandon the priority of chronological alignment of Yavorov's works and operate not with individual works but with works contextualised within one or another polytextual ensemble (be it a cycle or an assemblage within a periodical, or one or another redaction of a book of poems).[46]

Returning to the comparison that served Nzhdeh to point out 'Armenians' as Yavorov's initiation work, I would complement Nzhdeh's focus on the initiatory significance of weeping. Before its final point cited by Nzhdeh, Daniel Varuzhan's 'God's Weep'[47] narrates about God's loneliness and His desperation about His (initial) inability to create a responsive, speaking being:

> God's Weep // Beautiful things/words grow amidst tears. // Renan // When in the space place was not given / Yet to the Nothingness in this Universe, / I would think God a thing/word was seeking, / Which remedy would become to the wound of weariness. // A tour He made of the space at once, / And there from himself a separate thing/word did not find; / An existence [He] required from his existence; – / His existence his resonance was. // Afterwards returning, sad and regretful, / To dumb Silence and the blind Nothing – / He from them something required, and they / Their own selves gave, or thing/word did not give. // When the Infinity so much empty found He, / In Himself [He] felt abysmal, bitter-pungent pain; / And onto Silence and Nothingness / From hopelessness[48] heart-sprouting-ly wept. // Below his tears the required gave – / Creating unrestrainedly stars on

[45] Apparently, a lingual correlate of such mental development would be a development from *the referential to the symbolic code* (Kolarov 2021: 99).

[46] Within the range of research on Yavorov known to me, some preparatory work regarding this issue has been done by Violeta Ruseva (2000) and Cvetan Rakyovski (2018).

[47] First poem of the cycle or book of poems *Golgotha's Flowers*, incorporated in the first edition of his *Pagan Songs* as its second part (Varujan 1912: 163–342, resp. 163–164).

[48] Out of being-cut-from-hope.

> the sky; – / And a Rhymester (словослагател) alike[,] God too / So that to versify – was charged first to weep[49] (literal translation, after Varujan 1912: 163–164 and 1953: 103–104, is mine).

To return to 'A night,' I believe the poem is central (and maybe an initiation one) in a sense, and with an aspect of its poetics, underplayed by Bulgarian scholarship. I would recall early Roman Jakobson and the attention he paid to the *(non)motivation*, (non)-*motivatedness* of an innovation or of the application of a poetic device. Yavorov's *national Apocalypse* is put firmly in the firm framework of a fireplace with maw wide open to utter a curse and a snowy morning. Decadent-surrealist imagining still needs a realistic motivation, which is infused even inside the framing: *The dream-like plot, the nocturnal-hallucinatory, and the diseased provide a psychological and artistic rationale for the accumulation and stockpiling of images by way of the magical and leaping associations* (Kolarov 2021: 99). The *fraternal* (Selveli 2011) poetic tradition created a quite similar nightmare that lacked a framing – this was *Apparition of death* (1898) by Siamantho (Atom Yarcharyan, 1878–1915):

> Carnage!, carnage!, carnage!... / Within the cities and outside the cities!, / And the barbarians in blood pass to-and-fro, / Over the died and the agonising, / Of ravens multitudes come from above, / With bloody mouths (sic) and drunkards' giggle... / Dry-land-wind the semi-died with rage chokes, / And of old ladies voiceless caravans / Quickly run away from the wide roads... / From the midst of the night a wave of bloods (sic) rises, / With the trees phantom fountains outlining, / And from each side with dread hasten the chased – / Flocks from the midst of burning [field of] wheats... / Amidst the streets slaughtered progenies I see / And crowds from unspeakable massacre coming, / A tropical heat rises / From the conflagrated noble cities (Or: From the noble cities left to fire)... / *And beneath the snow descending with marble heaviness* / *The loneliness of ruins and of dead* (will) say(s): / O, listen of these carts the creak horrible, / *Under the corpses heaped on them*, / And of the mournful people the prayers teary, / Who from a path to common (grave)pits [hands] stretch; / Listen to the last sounds of the expiring (agonising), / In the blasts of the wind, which trees breaks, / O! Do not approach! do not approach! do not approach!, / May it never happen that you approach the graveyards and the sea, / On the red waters ships I notice in the distance, / Piles of dead in them are there, / *And on the waves crinkled with pain*, / Skulls and shins appear to me. // Listen! listen! listen!, / The storm's (hunting) yell the waves amidst. / Carnage! carnage! carnage!... / Listen! listen! listen! (lit.: Make a way...) / With dead-sound howl the terrified dogs, / From valleys and graveyards reaching me, / O! your windows close and your eyes too, / Carnage!, carnage!, carnage! (literal translation, after Siamantho 1989: 89, is mine).[50]

[49] *had foremost to weep, had to pay a weep*.

[50] I am grateful to Artashes Sargsyan (Yerevan State University) for substantially improving my translation. I deliberately preserved un-English word order, except in the lines given in italics.

This was Siamantho's first poem (Hacikyan et al. 2005: 774); was the Armenian proto-surrealist poetic apocalyptic more mature than the Bulgarian, or the Armenian poet was naïve/immature?

To add a vignette: may Zarkin have imagined in the 'Outcasts' the site where Yavorov wrote his 'Armenians,' the peninsula of Anhialo?[51]

CONCLUSION

Zarkin linked his anti-communist or anti-Soviet present to the anti-Ottoman past of Yavorov and his Armenian contemporaries. Zarkin presented or felt himself or just was an heir of Yavorov vis-à-vis fellow's disaster – but one less egocentric and more empathic than Yavorov had been. In his departure from Yavorov, he may have emulated the example of Vasil Levski.[52] In the intertextual memory of Zarkin's poems Soviet oppression inherited Ottoman one, as well as its enemies. Such intertextual memory sensed or replicated extratextual life-trajectories (like those of Garegin Nzhdeh and Tigran Makaryan). Such life-trajectories reflected the hypothetic – and likely – genealogical link between Ottoman practices of 1915–1916 and Soviet ones starting with the first exile of an ethnic group in 1935 (on the practice and system of *special settlements* as parallel to the one of individual camp incarceration: Berdinskih 2005: 23ff).[53] (Arguably, this pair of episodes is includable into a far longer chain of mutual adoption of collective violence

[51] *When he worked in Anhialo (1899), Yavorov lived in a small room above the seashore, by the rocks where the waves were breaking. (…) In that time Yavorov's split into two becomes even more perceptible. As a shadow he quietly lived at the sea coast, engulfed in the contemplation of world's infinity* (Iliev 1976: 19, 20). As mentioned, here he completed 'Armenians,' but also *incepted* 'A Night,' as Stoyan Iliev's (ibid: 20–23) account suggests. A place identifiable (if a referential not a symbolic mode of thinking is adopted) with Anhialo concentrates an intertexual attraction of Zarkin to/through Yavorov to Botev and Levski. In 1969–1970 in the prison of Stara Zagora, Zarkin wrote the *tragedy in five acts* 'The Apostle' (Zarkin 2022: 3), with Vasil Levski as its protagonist. In it, Zarkin introduces Botev as a character and makes him cite his *In the tavern* to Levski upon the request of the latter, *tell me something* (Zarkin 2022: 173–174).

[52] In *The Apostle*, Zarkin makes use of the topos *what will Levski do after the Liberation*, but in its Sovietised version (most likely because Zarkin hoped the play to be published). Being inquired by a *shepherd*, the *Apostle* answers: *I will go where there is another enslaved people, / with no discrimination of faith, continent, ethnicity* (Zarkin 2022: 200).

[53] These should be distinguished against the background of earlier resettlement practices (exchange of populations after the wars of 1828–1829, etc.) that sometimes bordered on genocide (as the Russian imperial against Circassians; on the decimation / expulsion of Circassians: Hamed-Troyansky 2024). Disambiguation is needed for two reasons. First, because earlier practices pursued cleansing of a territory rather than complete physical destruction of the targeted populations (in 1915–1916, Armenians were convoyed towards Syria and Iraq and not towards the borders of the Russian Empire with which they were alleged to have clandestinely cooperated). Second, because earlier practices did not relate to the Soviet Union.

practices with possible Mongol pedigree by the late Rurikids/Romanovs and the Ottomans,[54] as well as Kemalist-Soviet exchange.) The life-trajectory of a war criminal of global scope, considered nowadays a national hero by two states, Enver Pasha, belongs to the same contact zone, just as the one of such polities as the Soviet Socialist Republic of Bukhara (as represented in Khalid 2010). We understand a contact zone as a specific field of intercultural contact, which integrates, most notably, bi-directional mirroring of practices and essential blind spots, in line with the classic definition/enumeration:

> I use this term to refer to social spaces where cultures clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power [...]. Autoethnography, transculturation, critique, collaboration, bilingualism, mediation, parody, denunciation, imaginary dialogue, vernacular expression – these are some of the literate arts of the contact zone. Miscomprehension, incomprehension, dead letters, unread master pieces, absolute heterogeneity of meaning – these are some of the perils of writing in the contact zone. (Pratt 1981: 34, 37)

Entangled (post)colonialities, or collaborating (anti)colonialisms, or *an entanglement of refracted contact zones*, can be partially successful substituting terms. The belated reception of Zarkin's work transferred the intuition about an Ottoman-Soviet inheritance from the 1970s to the 1990s. Today, after the Second Karabakh War of 2020, the de-Armenisation of the microregion in late September 2023, and the top-to-bottom attempts of radical re-defining of current Armenian identity that had one of their culminations in 2024 (cf. Lemkin Institute 2024), that intuition is revivified. It is not so much a spatial, but rather a temporal or tempo-spatial contact zone that catches its victims and agents in a specifically layered, non-unitary time.

REFERENCES

Agukyan 2000: Agukyan, Stepan. "Yavorov and the Armenians." In Zhechev, Toncho & Stoyan Iliev & Hilde Fay & Marieta Ivanova-Girginova, eds. *120 Years Peyo Yavorov*: 541–552. Sofia: European Forum International Foundation; BAS Institute for Literature, [2000]. [In Bulgarian: Агукян, Степан. „Яворов и арменците." В: Жечев, Тончо & Стоян Илиев & Хилде Фай & Мариета Иванова-Гиргинова, ред. *120 години Яворов*: 541–552. София: Международна фондация „Европейски форум"; Българска академия на науките – Институт за литература, [2000].]

Ahmad 2014: Ahmad, Feroz. *The Young Turks and the Ottoman Nationalities: Armenians, Greeks, Albanians, Jews, and Arabs, 1908–1918*. Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2014.

[54] Most notably, the *sürgün*, as a conscious policy of ethnic engineering, arguably unknown to the pre-Mongol Turkic polity of Anatolia (the Seljuks) and to the Arabs (Braude 2014: 17).

Anonym 1995: [Untitled Biographical Note about Georgi Zarkin.] *Armenians: Biweekly of the Armenians in Bulgaria*,[55] no 24 (01–14.01.1995): 4. [In Bulgarian: [Без подпис. Неозаглавена биографична бележка за Георги Заркин.] *Арменци: двуседмично издание на арменците в България*, no 24 (01–14.01.1995): 4.]

Berdinskih 2005: Berdinskih, Viktor. *Special Settlements Inhabitants: The Political Exile of the Peoples of the Soviet Russia*. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2005. [In Russian: Бердинских, Виктор. *Спецпоселенцы: политическая ссылка народов Советской России*. Москва: Новое литературное обозрение, 2005.]

Botev 1884: Botev, Hristo. "In the Tavern." In Vazov, Ivan & Konstantin Velichkov, eds. *Bulgarian Chrestomathy: Or Collection of Selected Specimens across All Creative Genres*. Part 2: *Poetry*: 278–279. Plovdiv, Svishtov, Solun: Knizharnica na D. V. Manchov, 1884. [In Bulgarian: Ботев, Христо. „В механата." В: Вазов, Иван & Константин Величков. *Българска христоматия: или сборник от избрани образци по всички родове съчинения*. Част 2: 278–279. Пловдив, Свищов, Солун: Книжарница на Д. В. Манчов, 1884.]

Braude 2014: Braude, Benjamin. "Introduction." In Braude, ed. *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Abridged Edition, with a New Introduction*: 1–49. Boulder (Colo.): Lynne Rienner, 2014.

Chilingirov 1935: Chilingirov, Stiliyan. "Yavorov's Armenians." *Yavorov's Leaf... 18 August 1935*, p. 2. [In Bulgarian: Чилингиров, Стилиян. "Яворовите арменци." *Яворов лист... 18 август 1935*, с. 2.]

Dadrian & Akcam 2011: Dadrian, Vahakn N. & Taner Akçam. *Judgment at Istanbul: The Armenian Genocide Trials*. New York – London: Berghahn Books, 2011.

E. N. 1935: E.N. [Naydenova, Ekaterina.] "My Brother Peyu (Memories)." *Yavorov's Leaf... 18 August 1935*, p. 6. [In Bulgarian: Е. Н. [Найденова, Екатерина]. "Брат ми Пею (Спомени)." *Яворов лист... 18 август 1935*, с. 6.]

Hacikyan et al. 2005: Hacikyan, Agop Jack & Gabriel Basmajian & Edward S. Franchuk & Nourhan Ouzounian. *The Heritage of Armenian Literature*. Vol. 3: *From the Nighteenth Century to Modern Times*. Detroit: Waine State UP, 2005.

Hamed-Troyansky 2024: Hamed-Troyansky, Vladimir. *Empire of Refugees: North Caucasian Muslims and the Late Ottoman State*. Stanford (Calif.): Stanford UP, 2024.

Hovannisian 1997: Hovannisian, Richard G. "The Republic of Armenia." In Hovannisian, ed. *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*. Vol. 2: *Foreign Domination to Statehood; The Fifteenth Century to the Twentieth Century*: 303–346. Houndmills – New York: Macmillam, 1997.

Iliev 1976: Iliev, Stoyan. *The Contradictive World of Yavorov*. Sofia: Balgarska akademiya na naukite, 1976. [In Bulgarian: Илиев, Стоян. *Противоречивият свят на Яворов*. София: БАН, 1976.]

Kasabyan & Giligyan 2008: Kasabyan, Nerses & Agop Giligyan. *Bibliography of Armenian Books Issued in Bulgaria (1885–1944–1989)*. Plovdiv: Public Library "Ivan Vazov", 2008. [In Bulgarian: Касабян, Нерсес & Агоп Гилигян. *Библиография на арменските книги, издадени в България (1885–1944–1989)*. Пловдив: Народна библиотека „Иван Вазов", 2008.]

Ketsemanian 2017: Ketsemanian, Varak. "Straddling Two Empires: Cross-Revolutionary Fertilization and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation's Military Academy in 1906–07." *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association*, vol. 4, no 2 (2017): 339–363.

[55] The title is bilingual – Bulgarian-Armenian.

Kevorkian 2011: Kevorkian, Raymond. *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History*. London – New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011.

Khalid 2010: Khalid, Adeeb. "The Bukharan People's Soviet Republic in the Light of Muslim Sources." *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. 50 (2010): 335–361. https://doi.org/10.1163/157006010X544287.

Knapp 1991: Knapp, Bettina. *Exile and the Writer: Exoteric and Esoteric Experiences: A Jungian Approach*. University Park (Pa): Pennsylvania UP, 1991.

Kolarov 2021: Kolarov, Radosvet. *Repetition and Creation: Poetics of Autotextuality*. New York – Abingdon: Routledge, 2021.

Lemkin Institute 2024: Lemkin Institute. "Statement Condemning Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's Cryptic Engagement with Genocide Denial." *Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention and Human Security*. May 10, 2024. https://www.lemkininstitute.com/statements-new-page/statement-condemning-prime-minister-nikol-pashinyan%27s-cryptic-engagement-with-genocide-denial (accessed 20.10. 2025).

Losskiy 2012: Losskiy, Vladimir. *Essay on the Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church. Dogmatic Theology*. Transl. from French by nun Magdalina (V. A. Reshchikova). 2nd, corr. and reworked ed. [Sergiev Posad]: Holy Trinity Sergius Lavra, 2012. [In Russian: Лосский, Владимир. *Очерки мистического богословия Восточной Церкви* [1944]. *Догматическое богословие* [1964–1965]. Пер. с франц. мон. Магдалины (В. А. Рещиковой). 2-ое, исправл. и перераб. изд. [Сергиев Посад]: Свято-Троицкая Сергиева Лавра, 2012.]

Makaryan 2024: Makaryan, Tigran. *Memoirs: Der Zor – GULAG*, ed. Robert Tatoyan. Yerevan: Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Foundation, 2024. [In Armenian: Մակարյան, Տիգրան: *Հուշեր. Դեր Զոր – ԳՈՒԼԱԳ*, մմբ. Ռոբերտ Թաթոյան: Երեվան. «Հայոց ցեղասպանության թանգարան-ինստիտուտ» հիմնադրամ, 2024.]

Markovska 2000: Markovska, Milka. "Yavorov – an Activist, Ideologue and Hstorian of VMORO." In Zhechev, Toncho & Stoyan Iliev & Hilde Fay & Marieta Ivanova-Girginova, eds. *120 Years Peyo Yavorov*: 522–540. Sofia: European Forum – BAS Institute for Literature, [2000]. [In Bulgarian: Марковска, Милка. „Яворов – активист, идеолог и историк на ВМОРО." В: Жечев, Т. & С. Илиев & Х. Фай & М. Иванова-Гиргинова, ред. *120 години Яворов*: 522–540. София: Международна фондация „Европейски форум"; Институт за литература БАН, [2000].]

Morris & Ze'evi 2019: Morris, Benny & Dror Ze'evi. *The Thirty-Year Genocide: Turkey's Destruction of Its Christian Minorities, 1894–1924*. Cambridge (Mass.) & London: Harvard UP, 2019.

Nedelchev 2000: Nedelchev, Mihail. "A Turn-of-the-Century Looking into Yavorov's Poetry." In Zhechev, T. & S. Iliev & H. Fay & M. Ivanova-Girginova, eds. *120 Years Peyo Yavorov*: 369–382. Sofia: European Forum – BAS Institute for Literature, [2000]. [In Bulgarian: Неделчев, Михаил. „Краевековно вглеждане в Яворовото творчество." В: Жечев, Т. & С. Илиев & Х. Фай & М. Иванова-Гиргинова, ред. *120 години Яворов*: 369–382. София: Международна фондация „Европейски форум" – Институт за литература БАН, [2000].]

Neshev 1988: Neshev, Georgi. *The Volontarios of Giuseppe: Bulgarians in the Detachments of Garibaldi*. Sofia: Otechestvo, 1988. [In Bulgarian: Нешев, Георги. *Волентирите на Джузепе: българи в отрядите на Гарибалди*. София: Отечество, 1988.]

Neychev 2024: Neychev, Nikolay. *Chronos, Kairos, Eternity in the Pentateuch by F. M. Dostoevski*. Plovdiv University Press, 2024. [In Bulgarian: Нейчев, Николай. *Хронос, кайрос, вечност в Петокнижието на Ф. М. Достоевски*. Пловдив: УИ Паисий Хилендарски, 2024.]

Nzhdeh 1935: Nzhdey (Nzhdeh), Garegin. "Ecce homo… ("One never gets deceived, when they take the side of the defeated")." *Yavorov's Leaf… 18 August 1935*, p. 1. [In Bulgarian: Нждей, Гарегин. "Ecce homo… ("Човек никога се не мами, когато взема страната на победените")." *Яворов лист… 18 август 1935*, с. 1.]

Pifer 2018: Pifer, Michael. "The Age of the *Gharīb*: Strangers in the Medieval Mediterranean." In Babayan, Kathryn & Michael Pifer, eds. *An Armenian Mediterranean: Words and Worlds in Motion*: 13–37. Cham (Switzerland): Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Popek 2021: Popek, Krzysztof. "Conspiracies and Refugees: Armenian Migrants in Bulgaria in the Last Decade of the Nineteenth Century." *Hyperboreea*, vol. 8, no 2: (2021): 249–267. https://doi.org/10.5325/hiperboreea.8.2.0249.

Pratt 1981: Pratt, Mary Louise. "Art of the Contact Zone." *Profession*, [vol. 11] (1981): 33–40.

Rakyovski 2018: Rakyovski, Cvetan. "The Collection of Poems 'Sleeplessnesses' and Its Ideological Begining (Literary-historical and Compositional Vistas)." In Traykova, Elka & Mihail Nedelchev, eds. *Memory for Yavorov in Anhialo / Pomorie: Anniversary Collection of Speeches and Reports, 2012–2017*: 183–192. Pomorie – Sofia: [n.publ.], 2018. [In Bulgarian: Ракьовски, Цветан. „Стихосбирката „Безсъници" и нейното идеологическо начало (литературно-исторически и композиционни ракурси)." В: Трайкова, Е. & М. Неделчев, ред. *Памет за Яворов в Анхиало / Поморие: Юбилеен сборник от речи и доклади, 2012–2017*: 183–192. Поморие–София: [б.изд.], 2018.]

Rikev 1996: Rikev, Kamen. "The Christian Spiritual Heritage in the Poem 'Exiles'." *Darba*, no 1 (1996): 3–9. [In Bulgarian: Рикев, Камен. „Християнската духовна култура в стихотворението 'Заточеници'." *Дарба*, бр. 1 (1996): 3–9.]

Rusev 1939: Rusev, Lyubomir. *The Poetry of Yavorov in a Psychological Light*. Sofia: [n.publ.], 1939. [In Bulgarian: Русев, Любомир. *Поезията на Яворов в психологична светлина*. София: [б.изд.], 1939.]

Ruseva 2000: Ruseva, Violeta. "Yavorov: from 'Poems' (1901) to 'Anthology' – the Reflection of Modern Consciousness vis-à-vis Tradition." In Zhechev, T. & S. Iliev & H. Fay & M. Ivanova-Girginova, eds. *120 Years Peyo Yavorov*: 405–413. Sofia: European Forum – BAS Institute for Literature, [2000]. [In Bulgarian: „Яворов: от „Стихотворения" (1901) до „Антология" – рефлексията на модерното съзнание спрямо традицията." В: Жечев, Т. & С. Илиев & Х. Фай & М. Иванова-Гиргинова, ред. *120 години Яворов*: 405–413. София: Международна фондация „Европейски форум" – Институт за литература БАН, [2000].]

Safrastyan 2024: Safrastyan, Ruben. *The Ottoman Empire: Programmes of Genocide*. Moscow: Knizhnyy mir, 2024. [In Russian: Сафрастян, Рубен. *Османская империя: программы геноцида*. Москва: Книжный мир, 2024.]

Selvelli 2011: Selvelli, Giustina. "La fratellanza armeno-bulgara: una questione di mera retorica?" *Ricerche slavistiche*, no 9 (55 / 2011): 5–12.

Selvelli 2024: Selvelli, Giustina. *Language Attitudes, Collective Memory and (Trans)National Identity Construction Among the Armenian Diaspora in Bulgaria*. Berlin etc.: Peter Lang, 2024.

Siamantho 1989: Siamantho. *Integral [Collection of] Works*. Anthelias: Typography of the Catholicosate of Cilicia, 1989. [In Armenian: Սիամանթօ: *Ամբողջական երկեր*: Անթէլիաս. Տպարան Կիլիկիոց Կաթողիկոսութեան, 1989.]

Stoyanov 1883: Stoyanov, Zahari. *Vasil Levski (The Deacon): Sketches from His Life*. Plovdiv: T. Gatev, 1883. [In Bulgarian: Стоянов, Захари. *Васил Левски (Дяконът): Черти из живота му*. Пловдив: Т. Гатев, 1883.]

Suny 2015: Suny, Ronald G. *"They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else": A History of the Armenian Genocide*. Princeton – London: Princeton UP, 2015.

Todorov & Traykov 1971: Todorov, Nikolay & Veselin Traykov, comps. *Bulgarians Participants in the Struggles for the Liberation of Greece: 1821–1828 [Collection of Documents]*. Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1971. [In Bulgarian: Тодоров, Николай & Веселин Трайков, съст. *Българи участници в борбите за освобождението на Гърция: 1821–1828 [Сборник документи]*. София: БАН, 1971.]

Varujan 1912: Varujan, Daniel. *Pagan Songs*. Ghalathia[, Constantinople]: Shanth, 1912. [In Armenian: Վարուժան, Դանիել: *Հեթանոս երգեր*: Ղալաթիա. Շանթ, 1912.]

Varujan 1953: Varujan, Daniel. *Pagan Songs*. Tehran – Jerusalem: Sasun, 1953. [In Armenian: Վարուժան, Դանիել: *Հեթանոս երգեր*: Թեհրան. Հրապարակչութիին Սասուն; Երուսաղեմ. Տպարան Սմբատ Հակոբեանց, 1953.]

Yavorov 1900: Yavorov, Peyo. "Armenians." *Misal*, vol. 10, no 3–4 (1900): 202–203. [In Bulgarian: Яворов, Пейо. „Арменци." *Мисъл*, кн. 3–4 (1900): 202–203.]

Yavorov 1901: Yavorov, Peyo. "A Night." *Misal*, vol. 11, no 5–6 (1901): 315–321. [In Bulgarian: Яворов, Пейо. „Една нощ." *Мисъл*, кн. 5–6 (1901): 315–321.]

Yavorov 1902: Yavorov, Peyo. "To Podrumkale. (A Song)." *Misal*, vol. 12, no 1 (1902): 3–4. [In Bulgarian: Яворов, Пейо. „Към Подрумкале. (Песен)." *Мисъл*, кн. 1 (1902): 3–4.]

Yavorov 1905: Yavorov, Peyo. "Refugees." *Demokraticheski pregled*, vol. 3, no 2 (1905): 38. [In Bulgarian: Яворов, Пейо. „Бежанци." *Демократически преглед*, год. 3, бр. 2 (1905): 38.]

Yavorov 2018: Yavorov, Peyo. *"Armenians", "Homeland", "Refugees", "Exiles"*: Translations. Comp. by Yordan Lyutskanov. Sofia: Boyan Penev, 2018.

Yavorov List 1935: *Yavorov's Leaf: On the Occasion of the Inauguration of the Monument, Erected to the Poet Peyu Yavorov by the Armenians of Bulgaria*. Sofia: The Bulgarian-Armenian Committee for Cultural Approachment, 18 August 1935. [In Bulgarian: *Яворов лист: по случай освещаването на паметника, въздигнат на поета Пею Яворов от арменците в България*. София: Българско-арменският комитет за културно сближение, 18 август 1935.]

Zarkin 1995a: Zarkin, Georgi. "Judgement/Trial." *Armenians: Biweekly of the Armenians in Bulgaria*, no 24 (01–15.01.1995): 4. [In Bulgarian: Заркин, Георги. „Съд". *Арменци: двуседмично издание на арменците в България*, no 24 (01–15.01.1995): 4.]

Zarkin 1995b: Zarkin, Georgi. "Armenia, Live! (A Bell Call: A Time Has Come)." *Armenians: Biweekly of the Armenians in Bulgaria*, no 24 (01–15.01.1995): 4. [In Bulgarian: Заркин, Георги. „Армения, живей! (Камбанен зов: настана час)." *Арменци: двуседмично издание на арменците в България*, no 24 (01–15.01.1995): 4.]

Zarkin 1995c: Zarkin, Georgi. "Expelled." *Armenians: Biweekly of the Armenians in Bulgaria*[56], no 25 (16–31.01.1995): 4. [In Bulgarian: Заркин, Георги. „Прокудени." *Арменци: двуседмично издание на арменците в България*, no 25 (16–31.01.1995): 4.]

Zarkin 2022: Zarkin, Georgi (Rilski bor[57]). *The Apostle: A Tragedy in Five Acts*. [N.pl.:] Lachezar Georgiev Zarkin, 2022. [In Bulgarian: Заркин, Георги. *Апостолът: трагедия в пет действия*. [N.pl.:] Лъчезар Георгиев Заркин, 2022.]

Zurcher 2010: Zürcher, Erik J. *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Buidling: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey*. London – New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010.

YORDAN LYUTSKANOV (JORDAN LJUCKANOV, IORDAN LIUTSKANOV, ЙОРДАН ЛЮЦКАНОВ), ASSOC. PROF. PHD
Institute for Literature of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6363-1585

"Misplacedness as Near-Death Experience: A Jonah Between the Ottomans and the Soviets (Yavorov, Zarkin and Their Armenian Collocutors)." *Cyrillo-Methodian Papers*, no 15 (2026): 7–30.
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.17951/zcm.2026.15.7-30

[56] The title is bilingual – Bulgarian-Armenian.
[57] 'Rila pine', or 'Pine from Rila mountain'.