

Preface

The project which culminated in this collection of articles was instigated by the Comparative Literature Department of Istanbul Bilgi University and backed by Monica Spiridon of New Europe College, Bucharest, Albena Hranova and of Plovdiv University, Alexander Kiossev of Sofia University. Following an initial workshop at Istanbul Bilgi University, the group decided to proceed on three topics: *Grand Narratives and Dramatis Personae of National Literatures*; *The Image of the Ottoman Empire in East-European Literatures*; *Canon Formation and Canon Teaching*. Two other workshops were held in Bucharest, and Sofia, followed by a symposium in Istanbul to reconsider the three topics under the general rubric of *Nationality Building and the Break up of the Empire: Balkan Literatures in the Era of Nationalism*. When we finally reached the stage of publishing this book, it turned out that the papers would be regrouped under slightly different headings although substantially they were still related to the original design.

Essentialism proved to be a topic that became relevant to all discussions of national literatures. In its reliance on myths and myth-

making, essentialist thinking is a functional fantasy in the creation of nationalist fictions to establish national solidarity. That is the reason essentialist thinking becomes the major impetus behind the conception of foundational narratives that employ symbols, stereotypes, and formulaic plots that aim at producing a sense of collectivity around the revival of a glorious past and the promise of an equally glorious future.

Tatjana Aleksić, in “Disintegrating Narratives and Nostalgia in Post-Yugoslav Postmodern Fiction,” modifies the prevalent theory of historiographic metafiction by bringing Yugoslavian examples to our attention. She argues that aside from its uneasy relationship to history, postmodern historiographic metafiction might also take a nostalgic stand, a “symbiotic” attitude toward the “lost absolute” and might end up by overwriting the grand multinational narrative. Aleksić demonstrates this paradox by analyzing two novels, Dubravka Ugrešić’s *Museum of Unconditional Surrender* and David Albahari’s *Bait*, both published in 1996. Conceding that “essentialism is one of the safest and most comforting intellectual harbors of the human mind,” Murat Belge constructs his article on a series of nationalist foundational novels that rest on essentialist notions of origin and national/racial identities. Historical hostilities are the *sine qua non* of foundational fictions; Peter Hajdu’s vivid account of the image of the Turk as the traditional enemy in Hungarian literature confirms this nationalist posture. In “Hoax Literature and Phony History,” Evelina Kelbecheva speaks about the forged epic cycles of forged literary artefacts made up to establish a primordial sense of nationhood. She argues that hoax historical sources are invented to strengthen and support such myths—literary and historical—that serve to build up nationalist ideologies and/or discourses. In “The Enemy Within: Aka Gündüz’s *The Star of Dikmen* as an Example of Turkish National Romances,” Erol Köroğlu tries to locate the ambivalences that mark national romances despite the intention of their authors to the contrary. In “Epic Masculinity among the ‘the Serbs’: Mourning the

Nation in the Post-Oriental Condition,” Tomislav Longinović shows how the Serbs keep alive the memory of their subjection under the Ottoman rule as a way of preserving their masculine identity. Like the other Balkan nations, Serbs, too, imagined their own “scarecrow” to serve “as a negative against which the masculinity of the nation erects its version of the nation’s heroic greatness.” Ana Martinoska, in “The Image of the Ottoman Empire in Macedonian Literature,” depicts the dark and diabolical Ottoman image as representing a typical case of nationalist othering. Andrew Wachtel in his “The New Balkan ‘Other’” considers the emergence of a new vogue of othering in the Balkans’ novel based on an undefined conviction that the “Balkan peoples possess a valuable national culture that West Europeans fail to appreciate or even to notice.” Wachtel argues that because these works are not outspoken about the merits of that culture, their nationalism remains covert or only implicit. Nevertheless, “authors hoping to remain relevant to their societies have chosen to create works which satirically portray the actions and motives of European ‘helpers,’ counting on a readership which feels colonized by these outsiders to appreciate the satire and, presumably, to assert the value of their own cultures.”

However one defines a literary canon, whether as the list of works that we choose to put on our syllabi, or those selected for survival because they are deemed superior by the arbiters of literary taste, or as a cultural institution that legitimizes the social, ideological, and aesthetic prerogatives of a leading elite, or as the group of works appointed by hegemonic social structures to perpetuate and validate cultural cohesion and established power, literary canons are often created as part of a general scheme of building national ideologies that serve to preserve traditional cultural values. Venetia Apostolidou’s “The Formation of the Modern Greek Literary Canon and Its Relation to Institutions” is an inquiry into national canons and canon formation. She discusses the idiosyncrasies of the process of canon formation in Greece as that process got entangled with the controversy

over the division between the language of instruction, the *katharevousa*, and the vernacular, *demotic*, adopted by the literati. Writing on the Bulgarian canon, Bilyana Kourtasheva, in “Anthologies as an Export Canon” describes the historical-cultural contexts of the belated appearance of anthologies of Bulgarian literature in the twentieth century. She mentions the interesting example of one of the first of these anthologies, made by Pencho Slaveikoff (1910), in which the anthologist fabricated poetic persons for his own poetry. Another article on the canon, by Dessislava Lilova, entitled “A Canon without Messianic Myth: Narrating How Bulgaria Fell under Ottoman Rule,” describes the vagueness with which the fall under Ottoman rule has been discussed in Bulgarian historiography although it was marked in Balkan historiography as an event with disastrous consequences. Lilova explains this vagueness by the circulation of various accounts rather than the adoption of one dominant version. Hercules Millas, in “Literary Canons and Promising Challenges: Greek and Turkish Novels” investigates the canon question from the perspective of canon formation and demonstrates how literary canons are formed by nationalist prerogatives. In “From an ‘Empty Pumpkin’ to a ‘Leaf in the Wreath of Immortality’: The Canonization of Grigor Pärličev” Raymond Detrez investigates Pärličev’s canonization in Bulgaria and exposes the national factors that operate in literary canonicity. Matthew Gumpert reflects upon the etymology of the word canon and sees Atatürk’s overwhelming statutory presence in Turkey as signifying “a form of ordinance... for projecting force across vast distances, spatial or temporal.” Alben Hranova discusses an interesting case among the widespread nationalist purification projects that are undertaken in almost every nation; the particularity of the Bulgarian case, as Hranova points out, is that the purification project that aimed at the elimination of the Greek and the Turkish words in order to preserve “the Slavonic essence and national character” ended up preserving the Ottoman and eliminating the Greek. In her second article, “Linguistic Canon and Literary Canon: Mimicries and Alibis,”

Hranova underlines the national(ist) conspiracy between the linguists and the literati. Although language is a changing, dynamic thing, its diachrony is downplayed and even overlooked by a silent consensus among the linguists and writers in an effort to establish the Bulgarian tongue as an unchanging, timeless essence mirroring an essential Bulgarianness. Monica Spiridon, in “‘We ought to Know Who We Are’: Post-Ottoman Identities: The Feud of (Hi)Story Telling” discusses the question of nationalism and identity formation and contests Harold Bloom’s criteria for the canonization of the literary work on purely aesthetic standards. In her second article in this collection, namely “Facing the Canonical Challenge: The Making of Romanian Literary History,” Spiridon focuses “on the particular ways in which communities represent identities in post-Ottoman Asia Minor, an area of cultural overlapping, hybridity, and sometimes confusion.” In this context, Spiridon analyzes two novels: *Birds without Wings* by Louis de Bernières, and *Middlesex* by Jeffrey Eugenides. Using three randomly chosen textbooks taught in high schools, Roumiana Stantcheva, in her article “Bulgarian Literary Textbooks and the Image of Self, Others, and Modernity,” demonstrates how the ideologies that support nation building penetrate literary texts in Bulgaria. Feminist literary criticism has pointed to how the literary canon has been shaped by patriarchal assumptions and how women might read differently. Ivana Živančević-Sekeruš criticizes the Serbian literary canon for its exclusion of women’s writing, an instance quite universally observed in literary canonicity.

To say anything in the way of an introduction on the topic of traditions and discourses of nationalism is next to impossible for the various ways in which that malady has infiltrated into our cognitive and emotional make-up. If, then, nationalism is such an all-pervasive ideology, it is to be expected that any discussion of its traditions and discourses will only scratch the surface. And yet, as we believe that that surface needs to be scratched, as often and as deeply as possible, we have gathered a series of articles around that inexhaustible topic.

One thing is clear: Especially following the First World War, everything served the cause of nationalism and contributed to its flourishing all over the globe; capitalism and socialism, colonialism and anti-colonialism, imperialism and anti-imperialism contributed to the preservation of nationalist sentiments. Those sentiments, in turn, fed on a diet of an alleged superiority of the national culture over other cultures, reverence for a national spirit, oaths taken to rejuvenate, regenerate, and revitalize that spirit, expansionism in the name of spreading the superior national culture, policies and procedures of cultural and linguistic homogenization, glorification of a heroic past; in short, the creation of a sacrosanct national consciousness. Vangelis Calotychos, in “‘It Was the Best of Times, It Was the Worst of Times’: The Limits of Greek and Turkish Co-Existence in Dido Soteriou’s *Farewell Anatolia* and Stratis Doukas’s *A Prisoner of War’s Story*” shows that “it is precisely when harmonious co-existence is imminent that limits and taboos intervene to reinstate an unyielding difference. “Calotychos shows how, even in the nostalgic accounts of peaceful, neighborly co-existences, such as in *Farewell Anatolia*, the limits of co-habitation are subtly drawn. And paradoxically, in a novel of identity exchange, as in Doukas’s, the disguise succeeds only because the difference is maintained. Ozan Erözden writes on the fortunes of “Alka tournament” as “the last chivalric tournament still surviving on European soil.” And discusses how it became a national symbol in Croatia for which both the modernists and the traditionalists competed. Madina Tlostanova’s article “Constantinople-Istanbul-Tzargrad in Russian Cultural Imaginary and Fiction and the Imperial-Colonial Differential in Modernity” designates the Russian and the Ottoman Empires as the “subalterns” of the Western European powers because both empires were “seduced by Western modernity.” And she observes that the logic of the clash between the two empires was western although that clash was expressed in Orthodox, Christian, and Pan Slavic or Socialist terms in Russia and nationalist, pan-Turkish, or Islamic terms in the Ottoman Empire.

In the section on historiography and geography we have Alexander Kiossev's article which states that there have been two competing assessments of the Tanzimat Reforms of the late Ottoman era; the first argues that those reforms would have westernized or Europeanized the Ottoman Empire had it not been for the separatist national movements of the nineteenth century. The second maintains the opposite view, i.e. that the Empire's disintegration was necessary for the modernization of its people. In "Reforms and Rhetoric: Bulgarian Images of the Tanzimat Reforms" Kiossev shows how both arguments are tainted with ideological historiography. It will perhaps be an exaggeration to say that there might be as many histories as national historical interpretations; however, more often than not, such histories are tainted by national prejudices. Dagmar Roberts analyzes an interesting novel by Jan Johanides, *Hereditary Woodworm*, and demonstrates how contemporary Slovak literature approaches historiographic novel. Geographies, likewise, are nationalized in a variety of ways and styles. Ornamental, orientalist prose representing the Balchik inspired what Romanita Constantinescu analyzes as the Balchik picturesque. She concludes that the pictorial Balchik could not have been represented without the "othering" effects of the ornamental *şalvari* and the *fergea*, the orientalizing accessories of the representations of the region. Jale Parla, in "From Allegory to Parable: Inscriptions of Anatolia in the Turkish Novel" discusses the novels written during the years 1923-1985, that is in the Republican period, to show how Anatolia became the landscape on which the national consciousness of the new nation would be inscribed.

We extend our thanks to SEAL (South European Academic League); Research Committee on Eastern and South Eastern Europe; ACCL (Academic Circle for Comparative Literature) Istanbul Bilgi University; New Europe College, Bucharest; University of Sofia, and Istanbul Bilgi University for sponsoring the workshops where these articles were read and discussed. We also thank the *Triquarterly*, a publication of Northwestern University, and *New Perspectives on*

Turkey, for permission to print the articles by Andrew Wachtel, “The New Balkan ‘Other’” and by Jale Parla, “From Allegory to Parable: Inscriptions of Anatolia in the Turkish Novel.”

Our thanks for editorial assistance go to Nina Ergin of Koç University and Göksun Yazıcı of Istanbul Bilgi University Publishing.

MURAT BELGE - JALE PARLA