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Bulgarian Literature in a "Romaic" Context

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According to the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Literary Terms*, a national literature consists of the "written creations in a specific national language," especially with a view to those characteristics that are considered to determine the appearance of the literature in question.[1] An answer to the question of what exactly "appearance" (*облик*) might signify is provided by the entry "National singularity of literature" ("Национално своеобразие на литературата") in the same dictionary: "the national singularity of a literature is displayed in its subjects matters, in the description of everyday life and nature, in the language and style of the authors, but first of all in the character of the protagonists."[2] In practice, since language is supposed to constitute the base of the nation and to reflect the "people's soul" or *Volksgeist*, which allegedly is omnipresent in all material and immaterial cultural achievements of the nation, the entire literary production in a specific national language—from the first written accounts to contemporary literature—is believed to reflect the collective singularity of the national community using that language.[3]

However, many, if not most literary works have no particular national features except for the language in which they are written. This is the case with literary works produced during the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and so on. They are strongly marked by a common perception and experience of the surrounding world, a religious or philosophical outlook on life, a moral and aesthetic value system characteristic of a civilization in a specific phase of its historical development, but do not display a particular ethnic, let alone national specificity. Admittedly, these works may contain references to certain *realia*. Medieval mystery plays, neo-stoic Renaissance poems, Enlightenment *contes philosophiques* conveying abstract ideas are inevitably situated in a concrete location and deal with concrete people, but the "national" particularities of that location and these people are of no relevance to their chief message.

It might be useful to attribute to the term "national literature" a narrower meaning, comparable in its specificity to terms such as "Renaissance literature," "Enlightenment literature," and others. "National literature," then, relates to such literary works, in which the author had purposefully meant to display national distinctive features: they deal with

national themes including liberation struggles, foreign oppression, and personalities and events with national historical relevance, situated in recognizably "national" urban or rural environments. The protagonists are attributed typically "national" features (traditional costumes, a collective mental makeup or "national character"); they use an "authentic" language, labeled as "national" as well. Mountains and rivers are seen as personifications of national identity (e.g., Стара планина, Балкана, i.e., the Balkan Range; Дунава, Danube, in Bulgaria). Such literature, produced mainly by authors of the romantic and realist schools in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, is a "nationalizing literature," both in the transitive and the intransitive sense: a literature that acquires an explicit national character and at the same time contributes to the creation of the national community, making it "visible" by construing its cultural distinctiveness and strengthening the bonds between its members by providing them with a mythologized self-image.

My contribution to this volume deals with Bulgarian literature from the seventeenth through the early nineteenth centuries, the era preceding that literature's development into a national literature in the narrow sense of this term. It is a literature possessing a number of characteristics that render it different not only from the literature of the National Revival (*възрожденска литература*)—a "national literature" in the narrow sense of the word—but also from medieval literature. Considering this literature as "late medieval" or "early National Revival literature" is denying it its own specific nature, which I will deal with in this chapter.[4] At variance with Old Bulgarian, genuinely "medieval" literature, Bulgarian literature in the pre-national period appears to have been part of a particular polylinguistic literary system that developed within the multi-ethnic Orthodox Christian community that formed within the bounds of the Ottoman Empire and resulted from the Ottoman state institutions, more specifically the way the Ottomans dealt with religious diversity. This system developed from the sixteenth century onward, reaching its full maturity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As opposed to Old Bulgarian literature, this literature is democratized, in the sense of being more accessible to ordinary people and dealing with their everyday life; in addition, it had acquired some frail Enlightenment features. However, conversely to what is customary in National Revival literature, the "people" addressed is not ethnically marked; it is the merely Bulgarian-speaking segment of the huge Orthodox Christian community in the Ottoman Empire. To emphasize its being a literature "in its own right" (and for the sake of brevity), I attemptively launched the term "Romaic literature," in the sense of "the literary production of the Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman empire," of which Bulgarian literature was a part. "Romaic" is derived from *Romaios* (Greek Ῥωμαῖος, plural Ῥωμαῖοι), and "Romaean," which was a shared self-denomination of all Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire.

My use of the term "Romaic" needs clarification, since it touches the very essence of my argument. The Byzantines called themselves *Romaioi* and in Bulgarian *romej* (*ромей*) means *vizantiec (византиец)*, "inhabitant of the Byzantine Empire." However, since Orthodox Christianity was the essence of Byzantine "national" identity, the term in the Balkans acquired the meaning of Orthodox Christian in general. After the fall of the Byzantine Empire, *Romaios* meant Orthodox Christian in or from the Ottoman

Empire, of whatever ethnic origin. Bulgarians, too, were frequently called *Romaioi* and called themselves *Romaioi*. In his *Manual pertaining to the bishopric of Plovdiv* (*Εγχειρίδιον περί επαρχίας Φιλιππουπόλεως*), the priest Konstantin mentions that "there are five kinds of inhabitants in this city: Turks; Orthodox Christians, who call themselves Romaeans (*romaioi*); Armenians; Manicheans, usually called Paulicians; and Jews."[5] At least half of the population of Plovdiv at that time consisted of Bulgarians.[6] In the chronicle of Ohrid, which pertains to events that took place between 1801 and 1843, the population of Bulgarians, Greeks, and Vlachs is systematically represented in religious terms as "Romaeans."[7] In the book-keepers' registers of the mixed Bulgarian-Greek Orthodox Christian community in Adrianople, kept from 1838 to 1858, each year began with the formula *Tis politias Romaion* (From the community of the Romaeans).[8] The self-identification of all Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire as *Romaioi* was obviously quite widespread.[9]Yet, the most frequently used collective self-denomination among Bulgarians was *християнин*, "(Orthodox) Christian" or, with the same meaning, "Greek" and "*Romaios*," while the ethnonym "Bulgarian" appears mainly in folk songs, although the heroes of these songs were most often labeled "Christians" as well.[10] These collective self-denominations referring to religious appurtenance indicate the preponderance of religious over ethnic self-identification.[11]

The Ottoman Context

The Ottoman Empire was an Islamic state. However, in the Balkans, the majority of the population was Orthodox Christian, and in Anatolia Orthodox Christians were a considerable minority. Following the Islamic tradition and moved by sheer pragmatism, the Sublime Porte offered to the "people of the Book" (Jews and Christians), confessing a revealed religion, a substantial amount of internal autonomy in return for their acknowledgement of the supremacy of Islam and the acceptance of a number of restrictions and obligations, among which was the payment of a poll tax called *cizye* or *haraç*, marking their subordinate position. Relations between Muslims, on the one hand, and Jews and Christians, on the other, are traditionally defined as a contract, "*zimma*," "providing protection in return for subjection," although, undoubtedly, "discrimination without persecution" seems to be a more appropriate assessment.[12] Orthodox Christian Bulgarians belonged to the *Rum millet-i*—the first of the three main non-Muslim religious communities (*millets*)—together with Orthodox Christian Albanians, Arabs, Gagauzes, Greeks, Karamanlis, Romanians, Serbs, Vlachs, and others.[13] Just as the Ottoman authorities dealt with religious and not with ethnic groups, the leaders of the Orthodox Church(es), in an ecumenical spirit, did not take into account the ethnic distinctions within their flock.

Until the eighteenth century, the situation of non-Muslims differed considerably from place to place and from period to period, as the implementation of *zimma* was left to the local Ottoman administrators. However, the responsibilities and competences of the clergy were increasingly extended and institutionalized, involving also a number of

secular tasks. This process coincided with the steady territorial expansion of the chief ecclesiastical institution within the *Rum millet-i*, the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Conquering the capital of the Bulgarian Empire in 1393, the Ottomans abolished the Patriarchate of Bulgaria in 1393, whereupon the Bulgarian dioceses were submitted to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The dioceses in the Bulgarian principalities of Dobrudja and Vidin, which had broken away from the Bulgarian Empire in the 1330s and the 1360s respectively, had already joined the Patriarchate of Constantinople earlier. The Autocephalous Archbishopric of Ohrid in Macedonia, founded by the Byzantine Emperor Basileos II in 1019, maintained good relations with the Ottoman invaders and was left undisturbed. After the capture of Constantinople in 1453, the Ottomans considered the Patriarch of Constantinople as the leader of all Orthodox Christians, who were ruled in the same way and were exposed to the same cultural influences across the empire; they shared the same fate and were dealt with as one single supra-ethnic religious community. All Orthodox Christian churches accepted the moral and judicial authority of the Patriarch of Constantinople. Moreover, the Patriarchate of Serbia and the Autocephalous Archbishopric of Ohrid were formally included into the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1766 and 1767 respectively, an event that multiplied and promoted the contacts between Orthodox Christians in the Balkans.

The Patriarchate's Cultural Policy

The Patriarchate of Constantinople pursued a policy aiming to strengthen the Orthodox Christian flock spiritually and to make it more resilient to the threat of schismatic Christian teachings (such as Catholicism and Armenian miaphysitism) and Islam. Although the danger of the "Latins" had steadily faded away, Catholicism remained the main enemy. A large part of the exegetical literature spread by the Patriarchate—and translated from Greek into Bulgarian—contended with the "schismatic Catholics."[14] Apparently the hostility towards the Catholics was inherited from the late Byzantine period, when the Hesychast monks fiercely opposed the policy of reconciliation the Byzantine emperors (reluctantly) pursued in order to find in the West allies who could help to halt the Ottoman advance. Most likely, the Ottoman sultans supported the Patriarchate's anti-Catholic stand, given the fact that the Catholic West was among the empire's chief enemies—to be joined in the late seventeenth century by the Orthodox Russians.

Islam was considered a heresy on par with Catholicism. In addition, the "Turkish" or "Muslim" oppression was explained by the Patriarchate as "a punishment from God" for the sins Orthodox Christians had committed, more specifically their conformity to recognize the authority of the pope. In practice, since Islamic proselytism was not very strong, the main threat of Islam consisted in its seductive lure: membership in the Islamic community offered unique "career opportunities." Bulgarians seem to have understood well the benefits of having a choice between various religions.[15] In order to strengthen the solidarity and the feeling of togetherness among the Orthodox Christians, the Patriarchate resorted to the creation of the cult of the so-called "new

martyrs" (*новомъченици*)—Christians who were martyred by Muslims for the sake of the True Faith. Most "new martyrs" had embraced Islam in a moment of weakness, most often drunkenness; when they regretted their decision and wanted to re-convert to Christianity, the Muslims accused them of apostasy and threatened them with capital punishment. The *cadis* (Muslim judges) often preferred to declare the apostate non-accountable in order to avoid the emergence of a local place of pilgrimage that would threaten public order.[16] Execution occurred mostly on insistence of the Muslim crowds. (It is worth mentioning that most converts from Christianity to Islam, however, did not change their minds.)

In the first half of the sixteenth century, two famous Bulgarian hagiographies, venerating such new martyrs, were written: *The Life of the New Georgi of Sofia* by Priest Pejo and *New Nikola of Sofia* by Matej Gramatik.[17] Neither of them mentions the Bulgarian nationality of the saint. According to the Russian historian Irina Makarova, the Patriarchate insisted on concealing the ethnic origin of the new martyrs in order to make them apt for veneration by *all* Orthodox Christians.[18] While Donka Petkanova admits this, she also observes that the new martyrs were local saints of limited popularity.[19] Whatever the case may be, the hagiographers point out only their protagonists' Orthodox Christian identity. Similarly, when hundreds of new martyrs are collectively venerated by the Orthodox Church on the third Sunday after Pentecost their ethnic origin is not mentioned.

Probably the most efficient means to unite the Orthodox Christian flock was the use of the Greek language. In the eighteenth century in Bulgarian and Macedonian cities, especially those in which a bishop resided, divine services in Church Slavonic were gradually replaced by services in Greek. In the Slav villages, though, Church Slavonic remained in use. In the Serbian Patriarchate of Peć, to which belonged a large number of dioceses now located in Bulgaria (including Sofia, Samokov, and the famous monastery of Rila), Church Slavonic never disappeared. When the liturgy was celebrated in Greek, but the flock was overwhelmingly Bulgarian, the reading of the Gospel and the sermon was often performed in Bulgarian or, more exactly, in the local Slav dialect.[20] The Greek or Graecized non-Greek bishops also resorted to Bulgarian when corresponding with non-Greek village priests. In sum, the Patriarchate of Constantinople pursued a policy of imposing Greek as a liturgical and administrative language, but mainly for the sake of homogeneity, efficiency, and convenience. When the interests of the church were threatened, it was prepared to tolerate the use of other languages. Nevertheless, since schools principally trained future priests, Greek liturgies implied being educated in Greek.

"Greek Culture" vs. "Romaic Culture in Greek"

In the eighteenth century, Greek rapidly spread also among the Balkan urban elites. This was due to the establishment of Greek merchants in Bulgarian cities and to the increasing number of Bulgarians engaged in trade and becoming Graecized. A command of Greek was not only a professional requirement but also a precondition for

social upward mobility. Greek functioned as a means of intellectual communication not only among priests and monks but also among all educated Bulgarians. From the Middle Ages onward, Bulgarian intellectuals, as a rule, had a fair command of this language. Many of them studied in Constantinople or on Mount Athos, the main centers of Orthodox learning. From the outset, Bulgarian written culture was a *calque* of Byzantine literature. Greek influence increased in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, due to the spiritual and cultural renewal initiated by the Athonite hesychast monks. Their influence on the written culture was still strongly felt in Bulgaria during the first centuries under Ottoman rule.

It is of utmost importance, however, to keep in mind that the use of Greek should not be understood as Graecization or Hellenization in the ethnic sense. First of all, in all of its functions—as a liturgical language, as the *lingua franca* of trade, as the language marking the "social distinction" of a multi-ethnic urban elite, as the language of inter-ethnic and even intra-ethnic communication among Romaic intellectuals—the Greek language had, to a large extent, lost its ethnic markedness (while remaining, to be sure, also the language of ethnic Greeks). The "Greek culture" was not "Greek culture," but "a culture in the Greek language."[21] Greek was a religiously and civilizationally marked language, adopted by the intellectual elite of the entire multi-ethnic Romaic community as "their" language. In the same way "Greek literature"—more appropriately "Romaic literature in Greek"—was considered by Bulgarians and other Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire as the common literature of the entire Romaic community, that means, as "their" literature.

"Romaic Diglossia"

The language which I have been calling "Greek" for the sake of simplicity so far actually encompassed a large variety of languages, from the many Greek dialects via "demotic" or "vernacular Greek" to the moderately or extremely archaizing "scholarly Greek." The latter was not understandable to common, undereducated people. This created a situation known as "diglossia," which occurs when two varieties of one language, a low code and a high code, exist side by side in a given society, each one with a different role in different social situations.[22]

By the end of the sixteenth century the learned cleric and writer Damaskinos Stouditis, alarmed by the fact that most Greeks had no access to religious books written in the scholarly language and were, consequently, threatened by various religious aberrations, decided to compile the *Thesaurus* (*Θησαυρός*), a collection of thirty-six sermons, written in a language close to that spoken by the common people.[23] Damaskinos, who usually wrote in a very pure, archaic scholarly Greek, explicitly mentions at the beginning of each sermon that he writes in the "common language" (*κοινή γλώσσα*), the "colloquial language" (*λόγος πεζῇ φράσει*), or "simple language" (*λόγος ἰδιωτικῇ φράσει*)—to distinguish it from the scholarly language.[24] The *Thesaurus* was widely translated into Bulgarian. The *damaskinars*—translators and adaptors of *damaskins*, "sermons from the Damaskinos Stouditis"—initially made use of Church

Slavonic, but since that language was as incomprehensible to the average Bulgarian as scholarly Greek to the average Greek, they soon resorted to vernacular Bulgarian.[25] The *damaskinars* took over Damaskinos' terminology and called the language they wrote "common language" or "simple language." The *damaskinar* Josif Bradati is even more explicit: he claims to translate "into the simple Bulgarian language so that the simple and ignorant Bulgarian people should understand and learn."[26]And Sofronius, bishop of Vratsa, translates "from the Church Slavonic and Greek profound language into the Bulgarian and simple language, to be read every Sunday in the churches, so that simple and uneducated people, women and children could understand the Law of God."[27]

Obviously, the *damaskinars* also considered the language variety in which they wrote as "common" and "simple," meaning "low." Sofronius's remark seems to suggest that "simple" Bulgarian corresponds to both Church Slavonic and Greek as "high." However, at variance with scholarly Greek, Church Slavonic had long lost all other functions but that of a liturgical language at that time. Scholarly Greek was still a widely used, "living" literary language; Church Slavonic was a dead language, the use of which outside the liturgical sphere was rather a curiosum.[28] In fact, to low code written Bulgarian vernacular corresponded high code scholarly Greek. The German linguist Karl Gutschmidt pointed out that "[d]uring the first decades of the nineteenth century, the Greek language at least partially executed the function of a literary language: in the Helleno-Bulgarian schools, in scholarship, and in correspondence."[29] That opinion is shared by Bulgarian language historians.[30] Still in the first half of the nineteenth century, such prominent Bulgarian intellectuals as Rajno Popovič, Konstantin Fotinov, Neofit of Rila, Ivan Seliminski, Anastas Kipilovski, and many others corresponded with each other in Greek.[31]

Proceeding from scholarly Greek, the situation may be described as follows. To scholarly Greek as a high code corresponded not only demotic Greek as a low code but also vernacular Bulgarian. Jouko Lindstedt describes a case that eloquently reveals the relationship between scholarly Greek and the Greek and Slavic vernaculars. The Konikovo Gospel (ca. 1800) contains fragments from the Gospel both in demotic Greek and a South Macedonian dialect, written in Greek script.[32]To vernacular Greek and Bulgarian/Macedonian might be added also *karamanlıca* (Turkish) or *karamanlidika* (Greek), the language of the Turcophone Orthodox Christians in Anatolia—Turkish, written in Greek script.[33] The Karamanlides themselves called their language "*τουρκτζέ*" (*türkçe*), "Turkish." The authors of books in *karamanlıca* defined that language as "*σάτε*" (*sade*) or "*ατζήκ τουρκτζέ*" (*açık türkçe*)—"plain" or "open," "accessible," "understandable" Turkish—terms that correspond to "simple" and "common" as used by Damaskinos and the *damaskinars* referring to the vernacular they wrote. The high code corresponding to low code *tourktzé* was, again, scholarly Greek. More or less the same situation, by the way, existed for Albanian and Vlach. Thus the core Greek diglossia—"scholarly Greek vs. demotic Greek"—was extended not only with vernacular Bulgarian, but also with Turkish, Albanian, and Vlach, constituting a multiple "Romaic diglossia."

There is no doubt that scholarly Greek was considered to be a (more) prestigious and even a sacred language. However, the use of the terms "simple" and "common"

did not refer to any social distinction or aesthetic judgement. Neither is there any indication that, as some Bulgarian literary historians suggest, the *damaskinars* used the native tongue of their readers/listeners out of concern for the preservation of their Bulgarian ethnic identity.[34] The "simple" and "common" language was used pragmatically to convey more effectively religious messages to the undereducated believers. The *damaskinars* had the intention neither to reflect whatever Bulgarian ethnic identity in their writings, nor to instill in their readers/listeners an awareness of Bulgarian national belonging. The *damaskinars*' only purpose was to keep the flock "on the path of the Lord."

A "Romaic Literary System"

The multiple "Romaic diglossia" generated a "Romaic literary system," consisting of a "high literature" in scholarly Greek and a "low literature" in various vernaculars, one of which was Bulgarian. High literature in scholarly Greek was written by Orthodox Christian intellectuals of various ethnic appurtenance (though predominantly Greek) and read by Orthodox Christian educated people of equally various ethnic appurtenance, who all together considered that literature as their common intellectual property. To what extent Greek books—or, more precisely, Romaic books in Greek—were read by Bulgarians is revealed by the fact that from 1750 to 1840 in Bulgaria and Macedonia 1,115 titles were in circulation—not copies, but titles—of printed Greek books, compared to only fifty-two Bulgarian ones.[35] The thematic overview compiled by Manjo Stojanov indicates that among them were not only religious books (a number of which in low code demotic Greek), but also scholarly books, manuals, belle-lettre, books on philosophy, and so on, briefly, what is understood by "high literature."[36] A "high literature" in Bulgarian, comparable to that produced in Greek, did not exist. These printed books in Greek were read not only by Greeks residing in Bulgaria. They could be found also in the private libraries of educated Bulgarians, in Bulgarian monasteries, in public and school libraries, and so on.[37] The library of Neofit of Rila, teacher and writer (of, among many other things, Greek grammar), contained 270 books in Greek, eighty in Russian, fifty-six in Church Slavonic, about forty in Bulgarian, and thirteen in Serbian.

Bulgarians not only read but also wrote books in scholarly Greek. In the nineteenth century, about thirty Bulgarians are known to have written in Greek and some of them—like Nikola Pikolo (Nikolaos Pikkolos) and Grigor Părlichev (Grigorios Stavridis)—acquired fame as Greek writers and literates.[38] Even more Vlachs contributed to the corpus of high Greek literature: from the seventeenth through the first half of the nineteenth century about forty names of Vlach authors and scholars writing in Greek have come down to us.[39] About six Albanian intellectuals are also known to have written in Greek[40] as have many Karamanlides.[41] In addition to this high literature in scholarly Greek, accessible only to educated "Romaeans," several low literatures existed in the Balkan vernaculars, intended to serve the undereducated.

These literatures, comparable, to some extent, to the medieval *Volksbücher* in Western Europe, rendered Romaic theological thought in vernacular language and in a simple phrasing. In Bulgarian and Karamanlıca, there is large corpora of such texts, mostly handwritten, but some also printed.

To be sure, collections of liturgical texts, sermons, hagiographies, exegetical treatises, and so on in Church Slavonic continued to be copied over and over, and to be used during the divine services in those churches and monasteries where the Church Slavonic tradition had been preserved. However, an increasing number of such edifying texts were translated from vernacular Greek. Since only highly educated Bulgarians were interested in high literature and understood scholarly Greek, the texts translated from vernacular Greek were meant to be read or listened to by the undereducated. Trained Bulgarian monks and priests usually knew vernacular Greek and had no problem translating Damaskinos Stouditis's *Thesaurus* into vernacular Bulgarian. The *Thesaurus* was rarely translated completely; most often a codex contained only a selection of sermons or a selection of sermons was included into a codex together with translations from sermons, hagiographies, and various edifying stories borrowed from other books, written mainly in Greek and occasionally also in Church Slavonic or in some other language. Not all *damaskinars* translated themselves; many of them included in their codices *damaskins* that were translated by others.

The *damaskinars* translated and copied freely, abbreviating the original text or including passages of their own making. They also created totally new sermons and biblical explanations, which were still called *damaskins*, since they were conceived after the model of Damaskinos Stouditis's sermons. *Damaskins* of all kinds were included in so-called "compilations of miscellaneous content" (*сборници със смесено съдържание*) that also contained stories of a more secular, even entertaining, though always edifying nature. Most of these "secular" stories were translations from Greek as well; a few reached Bulgaria via translations from Greek into Russian or into some other languages. The *damaskins* and the stories in the compilations, dealing with miracles, the exploits of saints, superstition, witchcraft, girls' and women's decent behavior, soberness, *et cetera*, may seem obsolete to a twentieth- and twenty-first-century reader. However, they often give a charming picture of the daily life and the mental makeup of the Balkan Orthodox Christians under Ottoman rule.

In the seventeenth and mainly the eighteenth century in the Balkans and Russia, the writings of the Cretan monk Agapios Landos gained great popularity. In 1685–1686, about one third of his *Αμαρτωλών Σωτηρία* (Salvation of sinners, Venice 1641) was translated into Church Slavonic—as *Спасение грешным*—by the Ruthenian Samuil Bakačič.[42] At about the same time, some of the stories in the third part of the book were published by Bakačič separately in the book *О чудесах святой Богородицы* (*The Miracles of the Holy Virgin*). Some of the latter stories found their way to Bulgarian "compilations of miscellaneous content." Tellingly, they were eventually translated again, this time directly from Greek, by Josif Bradati and others.[43] It is indicative of the particular relationship between Greek and Bulgarian language and literature that, although there existed a translation of Agapios' work in Church Slavonic, the *damaskinars* preferred to translate it once again from Greek.

The Romaic literary system is an eloquent illustration of the linguistic and cultural interconnectedness of the various ethnic groups that constituted the Romaic community. It resulted from that interconnectedness, while at the same time contributing to it. Some Balkan languages did not fit entirely into the "Romaic diglossical system,"[44] but they participated in their own way in the "Romaic literary system." The same kinds of texts—sermons, hagiographies, edifying stories, historical accounts and suchlike—circulated also among Romanians and Serbs and their literatures fully served as channels through which texts were exchanged.

Conclusion

The corpus of literary texts, written in Bulgaria in the period that is labelled in Bulgarian literary history Late Middle Ages or Early National Revival era, represents an integral part of Bulgarian literature in the sense of "literature written in Bulgarian." It is, however, not "Bulgarian literature" in terms of a literature displaying distinctly ethnic, let alone national features. The authors were aware of their Bulgarian ethnic belonging, but ethnic identity was not their major concern. They considered themselves and their readers merely as Bulgarophone Romaeans. To them, the Bulgarian texts they produced were "Romaic" in the first place.

Given the circumstance that the Bulgarian high literature was in fact "high Romaic literature in Greek," shared with the other Orthodox Christian Balkan peoples, and that Bulgarian low literature did not differ from that written in demotic Greek, *karamanlıca*, and other Balkan vernaculars, it appears that Bulgarian literature in the pre-national period should preferably be studied in the context of a Romaic literary system. What Bulgarians considered *their* literature was not only literature written in Bulgarian; educated Bulgarians read (handwritten or printed) books in scholarly Greek and many of them also copied and wrote books in scholarly Greek. Since Greek functioned as the ethnically unmarked, shared language for intellectual communication within the Romaic community, there is no reason to assume that these educated Bulgarians perceived literature in scholarly Greek as "foreign" literature. It was the high literature of the religious community they identified with: the multi- or supra-ethnic community of Ottoman Orthodox Christians. When exploring the spiritual habitat of pre-national Bulgarians and their intellectual horizons, we should take into account also the entire corpus of Romaic books in scholarly Greek that was available to them. Limiting Bulgarian literature to the *damaskins*, accepting only them as an indication of the scope of Bulgarian cultural life and, thus, denying the Bulgarians a high culture of their own, is a distortion of historic reality. This observation is valid, by the way, also for the Karamanlides and even more for the Albanians and the Vlachs who, given the scarcity of literary texts in Albanian and Vlach, would appear to be all but completely "cultureless."

Consequently, rather than studying the *damaskins* and "compilations of miscellaneous content" as parts of separate national literatures and the product

of influences transmitted from one national literature to another, it seems more appropriate to think of them as literary works constituting one single Romaic literature, written in several languages. This is the case all the more so because "national literatures," with clearly distinguishable national features, among the Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman empire did not exist at that time. As Vasilka Tăpkova-Zaimova and Pavlina Bojčeva observe, the distinction between "one's own literature" and "a foreign literature" was no longer valid in the Balkans after the fifteenth century, "when the idea of a common Orthodox unity of all Christians had materialized."[45] Of course, pre-national Bulgarian literature can still be studied diachronically in the context of Bulgarian literature as a whole. However, Bulgarian literature in the pre-national era did not develop within the framework of a nation, but within that of a religious community. The literary historian, insisting too much on alleged ethnic particularities risks overlooking the functionality, the social distribution, the supra-ethnic character, and the religious nature of Romaic literary texts and ignoring the way the authors and readers (or listeners) of these texts themselves dealt with them. Briefly, in the pre-national era Bulgarian literature did not produce any masterpiece that could be reckoned to "world literature" as Goethe understood it. Goethe would probably consider that "It is very well to acquaint yourself and the world with them; to our moral and aesthetic education they are of little use."[46] Considering, then, Bulgarian literature as one of the many budding "national literatures" that all together constitute "world literature" engenders the risk of missing the very essence of this literature—its belonging to the literary legacy of a particular multiethnic and multilingual Romaic "world" in its own right, occupying an admittedly modest, but unique place in world civilization.

Notes

1 Десислава Лилова, *Енциклопедичен речник на литературните термини* (София: Хейзел-Дуден, 2001), 280–1.
2 Лозан Николов et al., eds., *Речник на литературните термини* (София: Наука и изкуство, 1980), 487–8.
3 Cf. Herder's famous statement "Has a people, especially an uncultivated people, anything dearer than the speech of its fathers? In it resides its whole wealth of ideas, its tradition, history, religion, and principles of life, all its heart and soul. To deprive a people of its speech or to disparage [its speech] it is to deprive it of its sole eternal possession, transmitted by parents to children." Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Sämmtliche Werke: Zur Philosophie und Geschichte*, vol. 30 (Stuttgart & Tübingen: In der J.G. Cotta'schen Buchhandlung, 1829), 68 (translation mine). (Nationalists, quoting Herder, usually omit the parenthesis *zumal ein unkultiviertes Volk*, "especially an uncultivated people.")
4 See Petar Dinekov (Петър Динеков) et al., eds., *История на българската литература*, vol. 1. *Старобългарската литература* (София: БАН, 1963) and, more recently, Анисава Милтенова, ed., *История на българската средновековна литература* (София: Изток-Запад, 2008). To Boyan Penev, eighteenth-century

Bulgarian literature is a part of "new Bulgarian literature" (Боян Пенев, *История на новата българска литература*, vol. I (София: Български писател, 1976).

5 Κωνσταντίνος Οικονόμος, *Εγχειρίδιον περί επαρχίας Φιλιππουπόλεως*. Βιέννη, 1819, quoted in Надя Данова, "Българите и гръцката книжнина през XVIII и началото на XIX век," *Балканистика* 1, (1986): 267.

6 The poet and musician Dimitrakis Georgiadis Papasymeonidis or Dimităr Georgiev Popsimeonov, a Greek according to Greek scholarship and a Bulgarian according to Bulgarian scholarship, but most probably just a *Romaios*, an Orthodox Christian, to himself, calls his native town Arbanasi, with its ethnically mixed Orthodox Christian population, a *Romaion katoikia*—a "settlement of Romaeans." Маньо Стоянов, *Опис на гръцките и други чуждоезични ръкописи в Народната библиотека "Кирил и Методий"* (София: Наука и изкуство, 1973), 157. See also the comments in Paschalis Kitromilides, "In the Pre-Modern Balkans … : Loyalties, Identities, Anachronisms," in *An Orthodox Commonwealth: Symbolic Legacies and Cultural Encounters in Southeastern Europe*, ed. Paschalis Kitromilides, Variorum Reprints IV (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 26–8.

7 Љубен Лапе, ed., *Домашни извори за македонската историја*, vol. 1 (Скопје: Институт за нациобална историја, 1951), 21, 26, 31, 32, 33, quoted in Bernard Lory, *La ville balkanissime. Bitola, 1800–1918* (Istanbul: Isis, 2011), 263.

8 Archival Unit No. 31 of the Archives of the Bishopric of Adrianople, kept in the Historical Archives of Macedonia, Thessaloniki.

9 Sir Harry Luke wrote in 1936 (!): "[But] to this day Orthodox peasants, not only in Greece, but even at times in Serbia and Bulgaria speak of themselves as 'Romans' … The word 'Roman' thus included not only the Greeks of Hellas, the islands, the capital city and the various Greek centres of Asia Minor, but also the Serbs, the Rumanians and the Bulgarians of the Balkan Peninsula and the Arab-speaking Orthodox communities of Syria, Palestine and Egypt." Harry Luke, *The Old Turkey and the New: From Byzantium to Ankara* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1955).

10 Димитър Ангелов, "'Българи,' 'българска земя,' 'българско име,' 'българска вяра' в песенния фолклор XV-XIX век—терминологични проучвания," *Palaeobulgarica* 4, no. 3 (1980): 5–30.

11 For an in-depth discussion, see Raymond Detrez, "Pre-national Identities in the Balkans", in *Entangled Histories of the Balkans*, vol. 1. *National Ideologies and Language Policies*, eds. Roumen Daskalov and Tchavdar Marinov (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 35–45.

12 Bernard Lewis and Benjamin Braude, eds., *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, vol. 1–2 (London, New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982), 3.

13 Gagauzes and Karamanlis are Turcophone Orthodox Christians, the former in the Balkans, the latter in Anatolia. Vlachs speak an Eastern Romance language, close to Romanian.

14 Милтенова, *История*, 712–13.

15 In one of his sermons, the writer and monk Josif Bradati (Joseph-with-the-Beard) blames Christians who convert to Islam after they had sinned, hoping thus on the Day of Judgment to stand before God's throne with a slate wiped clean. Донка Петканова-Тотева, *Дамаскините в българската литература* (София: БАН, 1965), 152.

16 Mark Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews, 1430–1950* (New York: Random House, 2004), 85–7.
17 Published in Климентина Иванова, *Стара българска литература*, Vol. 4. *Житиеписни творби* (София: Български писател, 1986).
18 Ирина Ф. Макарова, *Болгарский народ в XV–XVIII вв. Этнокультурное исследование* (Москва: URSS, 2005), 94.
19 Донка Петканова, "Четивото на българина през XVI-XVIII век," in *Народното четиво през XVI-XVIII век*, ed. Донка Петканова (София: Български писател, 1990), 17.
20 For instance in Ohrid; see Кузман Шапкарев, *За възраждането на българщината в Македония* (София: Български писател, 1984), 267–8.
21 Джузепе Дел'Агата, "Гръцко-български успоредици по въпроса за езика в епохата на Възраждането," in *Студии по българистика и славистика* (София: Български месечник, 1999), 53.
22 Charles A. Ferguson, "Diglossia," *Word* 15 (1959): 325–39.
23 Full title: Δαμασκηνός ο Στουδίτης, *Βιβλίον ονομαζόμενον Θησαυρός, όπερ συνεγράψατο ο εν Μοναχοίς Δαμασκηνός ο υποδιάκονος και Στουδίτης ο Θεσσαλονικεύς* (Венеция, 1557–1558).
24 Пенев, *История*, 422; Джузепе Дел'Агата, "Гръцки и славянски встъпителни формули към словата на Дамаскин Студит", in *Студии по българистика и славистика* (София: Български месечник, 1999), 42–3.
25 On the *damaskins* and the *damaskinari* in English, see Charles A. Moser, *A History of Bulgarian Literature, 865–1944* (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1972), 34–6.
26 Петканова-Тотева, *Дамаскините*, 202.
27 Димитър Ангелов, *Българската народност през вековете* (Стара Загора: Идея, 1994), 230.
28 An exception are the writings by Partenij Pavlovič, a Bulgarian from Silistra. However, Partenij lived and worked among the Serbs, who had never discontinued writing in Church Slavonic.
29 Карл Гутшмит, "Към за връзката между развоя на културата и книжовния език в епохата на българското национално възраждане," in *Езиковедска българистика в ГДР* (София: БАН, 1973), 100.
30 Елена Георгиева et al., eds., *История на новобългарския книжовен език* (София: БАН, 1989), 18–19.
31 Nadia Danova, "La modernisation de la société bulgare aux XVIIIe- XIXe siècles: la communication et le rôle de la langue grecque," *Bulletin de l'Association Internationale d'Etudes du Sud-Est Européen* 32–34 (2002–2004): 200–1.
32 Jouko Lindstedt, "When in the Balkans, Do as the Romans Do—Or Why the Present is the Wrong Key to the Past," *Slavica Helsingiensia* 41 (2012): 110. At variance with Lindstedt, I do not consider Church Slavonic to be a high code to low code vernacular Bulgarian in the same way as scholarly Greek.
33 Richard Clogg, "A Millet within a Millet: The Karamanlides", in *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism*, eds. Dimitri Gondicas and Charles Issawi (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1999), 116–17; János Eckmann, "Die Karamanische Literatur," *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta* 2 (1964): 820.
34 See, for instance, the claim that in eighteenth-century *damaskins*, when "the germs of the early National Revival (Renaissance) ideas" had appeared, a "purposeful selection

of new Bulgarian linguistic features" can be observed "as an expression of a new collective consciousness," which allegedly explains the archaization of the language as a means to avoid "words of Turkish, Arab, and Persian origin and Greek words." Елена Георгиева et al., *История на новобългарския книжовен език* (София: БАН, 1989), 28. (In fact, the *damaskins* abound with Turkish and Greek words and the archaic words and grammatical forms are due to the influence of Church Slavonic.) The same monograph states (quoting Румяна Радкова, "Националното самосъзнание на българите през XVIII и началото на XIX в.," in *Българската нация през Възраждането*, eds. Хр. Христов et al. [София: БАН, 1980], 51) that the "common" or "simple language" used by the *damaskin*-writers is "mainly the fruit of the ongoing processes of turning the language into a means of national self-awareness."

35 Маньо Стоянов, *Стари гръцки книги в България* (София: Народна библиотека "Кирил и Методий," 1978), 47–168; Маньо Стоянов, *Българска възрожденска книжнина*, vol. 1. (София: Наука и изкуство, 1957), 471–2. The figures are based on the collection in the National Library H. H. Cyril and Methodius in Sofia. One may assume the Bulgarian librarians collected Bulgarian books more carefully than Greek ones. That is what Stojanov himself warns the reader of; see Стоянов, *Опис*, 13.

36 Стоянов, *Стари гръцки книги*, 291–313.

37 Danova, "La modernisation," 200–1.

38 Надка Николова, *Билингвизмът в българските земи през XV–XIX век* (Шумен: Епископ Константин Преславски, 2006), 109; Стоянов, *Стари гръцки книги*, 455–75; see also the anthology of Greek literary works by Bulgarian authors: Афродита Алексиева, *Книжовно наследство на българи на гръцки език през XIX век*, vol. 1, *Оригинали*, (София: Гутенберг, 2010).

39 Έξαρχος, Γιώργης. *Αυτοί είναι οι Βλάχοι* (Αθήνα: Γαβριηλίδης, 1994), 51–53; Peter Mackridge, "The Greek Intelligentsia 1730–1830: A Balkan Perspective," in *Balkan Society in the Age of Greek Independence*, ed. Richard Clogg (London: MacMillan, 1981), 71.

40 Robert Elsie, *History of Albanian Literature*, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 122–30.

41 Peter Mackridge, *Language and National Identity in Greece, 1766–1976* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 64–5.

42 Боньо Ангелов, "Самуил Бакачич в южнославянских литературах," *Труды Отдела древнерусской литературы* 23 (1968): 293–9.

43 Петканова, *Четивото*, 9–10.

44 In Serbia, Church Slavonic continued to execute all functions and was not replaced by Greek as "high code." In Wallachia and Moldova, from the seventeenth century onward, the Romanian vernacular started executing also "high" functions that so far had been performed by Church Slavonic and from then onwards, due to the influence of the Greek Phanariotes, (also) by Greek.

45 Василка Тъпкова-Заимова и Павлина Бойчева, "Св. Варвар във византийската и среднобългарската традиция," in *Българската църква през вековете*, ed. Петко Петков (София: Св. Климент Охридски, 2003), 153.

46 Goethe refers to Chinese, Indian, and Egyptian ancient literature. Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke. Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche*, eds. Friedmar Apel, Hendrik Birus et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, I, 13, 1993), 175.