Jordan Ljuckanov

Towards Paired Histories of Small Literatures, To Make Them Communicate

Cooperation between comparative literature scholars and translators of literary texts could help societies caught in a trap much like that of the post- or neo-colonial condition to combat it, and in particular such its constituent as the international division of (intellectual) labour[1]. The colonised are portioned (or, rather: portion themselves) to communicate with the coloniser but not with each other. They produce knowledge about themselves and for him; they produce it neither about nor for each other. The preoccupation of the national scholarly communities with the literatures of their own nations, with sporadic glimpses at the "big", is a symptom of the same condition. In what follows, I rethink the agenda of comparative literature against the contexts of critically adapted post-colonial theory and of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the cultural field. Thereby I sketch a programme of research which, I claim, could help literary cultures like the Bulgarian escape the mentioned trap. Appealing, thus, to the visionary and culturally-performative potential of literary scholarship, I suggest, in particular, a geo-cultural relocation of Bulgarian literature.

1. *The Subject*

1.1. *Hegemonic/Dominant/Big, Minor, and Small Literatures*

A recent paper by Heinrich Stiehler, only hinting at the potentially offending implications of the evaluative use of the designations "small" and "big" with regard to literatures, starts with a threefold definition of "small literature" (*kleine Literatur*): it is a (a) literature with a limited circulation, predominantly within a single national community; (b) literature relying on a limited number of producers and depending, besides, on the time and degree of its commitment to paper and to letters (alphabet) (not) of its own (thus tending to coincide with the literatures of minorities and of émigrés); (c) literature with limited lexicon and inventory of forms (to coincide with what some call "trivial literature") (Stiehler 2006: 233-235). In fact we relate the word "small" to the first group of cases and, to a very limited extend, to the second one.

[1] The contemporary international division of labour and its complicity with the strategies of neo-colonial imperialism is a core concern in Gayatri Spivak's version of postcolonial studies (Childs *et al.* 2006: 95, 112).

Let us try now not an atomist but a relational definition of what a small literature is. As a point of reference, we shall use Franz Kafka's reflections on the writing condition of Prague Jews and on his own choice to write in a kind of German (and neither in Yiddish nor in Czech). They have already been referred to in conceptualisations of "marginal" literatures (by Györdy M. Vajda [1983: 9-10]) as well as of "minor" ones (by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari [Deleuze *et al.* 1982-1983]), both conceptualisations implying a dichotomic typology of literatures (marginal vs. core, minor vs. major). "A minor literature is not the literature of a minor language but the literature a minority makes in a major language" (*Ibid*.: 16). However, Kafka's situation suggests a tri-chotomic typology of literatures.

The corresponding types can be designated as minor, small, and big/major/dominant/hegemonic. The former two types are, generally, subject to the domination and, at least potentially, even to the hegemony of the latter type (a recent reflection on the way in which literatures like the Bulgarian are portioned to marginality within the system of world literature [political] economy appeals to Ernesto Laclau's and Chantal Mouffe's understanding of hegemony and defines the latter as "any knowledge which is so powerful that it makes the knowing of the opposite indefensible" [Hristov, hereafter]).

In addition, we doubt whether minor literatures have the revolutionary potential Deleuze and Guattari invest in them (a point particularly discrediting their position, at least in our view, is the fact that they attached the concept of minor literature to the first of two opposing chains of concepts: de-territorialisation, non-representation, metamorphosis, intensity vs. [re]-territorialisation, representation, metaphor, extensity). We guess that self-constituting as an agent of minor literature inevitably happens in a place, time and relation to agents with a different affiliation; evading interpretation does not destruct a situation characterised by hegemony but contributes to a new constellation of power and provokes renewal within the agency of hegemony: it is, or at least it could be, an affirmative act. The "minor mode" suggests evasion while the "small mode" suggests subjugation or resistance. Developing our doubts, we hope to arrive to a "post-postmodern" understanding of what is called "world literature"[2] and of its structure.

Reconsidering our speculations against the context of post-colonial studies, we might say that we wish to go beyond the epistemology that seems to be professed by Homi Bhabha[3]. In our opinion, Bhabha's accent on hybridism, mimicry etc.[4], despite its multilateral

---

[2] As Nikola Georgiev suggests, the concept of *Weltliteratur* might indicate not so much a discovery but rather an invention (Georgiev 2000: § 19). Quotation marks allude not only to Goethe's well-known yet alleged authorship of the concept but also to its ambivalent status, and I consider the latter crucial.

[3] In my discussion of post-colonial authors, concepts and issues, except for Edward Said and Orientalism, I depend gravely on the abovementioned opus of Childs, Weber and Williams (Childs *et al.* 2006).

[4] Unlike, as it seems, Bhabha, cf. Childs *et al.* 2006: 89, we regard multiculturalism, or the plurality of cultural selves, as an ethical and hence methodological imperative. This is not to deny the fundamental ambiguity of all such "selves".

heurism, is profoundly monist (for us, the alleged resultant dissolution of the difference between a coloniser and a colonised (Childs *et al.* 2006: 112) is only one of the problems at issue); and we think that some kind of "strategic essentialism" (Ghayatri Spivak)[5] on behalf of multiculturalism and even nationalism is more timely and appropriate. Postulating a third type of agents in/of the interliterary field, beside and together with the dominant/hegemonic[6] and the minor, could well serve as the point of departure here.

Delineating the habitus of a "small" literature beside the one of a "minor" could challenge the all too affirmative writing about deterritorialisation, fluidity, hybridity etc., or what can be called the self-unquestioning nominalism in postmodern humanities. We share Djelal Kadir's militant scepticism towards whatever "exceptionalisms", but we think he underestimates the enslaving potential of what, remaking his words, can be called the myth of good-doing fungibility, a convenient complement to the idea of the invisible (and, most likely, good) hand of the market (cf. Kadir 2006: 132, 133). Can the mentioned myth conceive of its own conditionedness, undisinterestedness and tacit exceptionalism?

We are aware that "dominant/hegemonic" suggests a sociologising perspective whereas the case with "minor" and "small" is different, but we find this heteronymy/heteronomy in the trichotomy a lucky one. And, of course, we find it open to criticism and modifications. Thus Yana Boukova (here above) suggests speaking of minor, small, dominant and hegemonic literatures, whereby the condition of being "minor" is a parallel one to that of being "small" or "dominant" or "hegemonic".

1.2. *Imperial, Colonial and In-Between*[7] *(Self-Colonising? Self-Sustained?) Literatures*

Our interest would be focussed on a particular group of "small" literatures, more precisely on those which belong neither to colonial empires (consider Portuguese, Dutch) nor to colonised countries and/or peoples. Of course, the literatures of our focus-group should have benefited from what can be designated as a post-colonial turn in humanities. Yet we wonder whether that benefit would have resulted from a turn which was theoretically aware in addressing the group or just from side effects of that turn in the process of consuming and/or adapting. Whatever the case, we believe that the following two conceptualisations (belonging in fact to the domain of cultural studies) could be very helpful in addressing our focus-group: Maria Todorova's "Balkanism" (conceivable as adaptation of Said's "Orientalism") and Aleksandăr K'osev's "self-colonising cultures" (K'osev 1994)

---

[5] Childs *et al.* 2006: 96.

[6] Lawrence Venuti is one of the scholars to insist that the contemporary market of literary translations as well as of literature worldwide is characterised by Anglo-American, or English-language, hegemony (cf. Munday 2001: 153-157).

[7] In fact we invest here a narrower meaning than Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek in his concept of "in-between peripheral literatures" (Tötösy de Zepetnek 2001). And we guess that the condition of "in-between peripherality" is probably characteristic, in some degree of another, to all literatures except for a/the hegemonic one.

(voluntarily or not adapting a concept of the late 19th-early 20th century Russian historian Vasilij Ključevskij[8] and thus probably revealing an intellectual genealogy which is parallel to, that is, distinct from, that of postcolonial theory). The two mentioned conceptualisations may be considered insufficient for our purpose, for we are interested precisely in the intermediary, neutral, or second-world group of literatures which continues to exist in a still lasting postcolonial (Childs *et al.* 2006: 3-10) situation (consider Persian, Turkish, Ethiopian, Siamese etc. literatures).

This triad (imperial – colonial – in-between), like the previous one (dominant – minor – small), is imbued, in fact, with political sense. Broadly speaking, it tries to maintain a stance that is anti-neocolonial and that is alternative to the postcolonial one. It delineates a group of literatures which can benefit neither from the legacy of having been dominant nor from the counter-legacy of having been dominated. If these literatures have political-symbolic capital at all, it may be considered definitely outdated, hence non-functional. Take, for example, the ideologeme of having served as a protective belt between "barbarity" and "civilisation" ("Asia" and "Europe"), which must have been in use in and by cultures like the Bulgarian[9]. Academic centres of the "First World" hardly pay any credit to it. Moreover, in the case of Bulgaria, the devaluation of the mentioned identification strategy, alongside with the devaluation of nationalisms is likely to be more acute than in cultures that have survived or emerged as a consequence of colonialism. Nationalist tendencies in cultures like the Bulgarian cannot win the sympathies even of the "leftists" (who could sympathise for nationalisms in the former colonies), for even a superficial coherence with decolonisation agendas is hardly recognisable in them. I doubt whether a literature could live without commitment to a political agenda. What would nourish the literatures of the "*beside*-colonial" world?

1.3. *"Our", Alien and Semi-Alien Literatures*

Looking at the map of the "Old World", one can localise a large and branching belt of literatures which neither belong to the cluster of unquestionably "European" literatures nor are associable with one or another major/recognised Eastern "Other" (Japan, China, India, Persia, Arabia) (surprisingly or not, all these recognised "Others" are major in purely qualitative and/or political sense). Consider, instead, Ethiopian literature(s), the literature of the Copts, Caucasian and Balkan literatures etc.

---

[8] Ključevskij 1904. As Alexander Etkind showed (and Kevin Platt agreed), the Russian self-awareness of taking part/being involved in self-colonisation preceded the famous formulation of Ključevskij (Platt 2012).

[9] It is another question whether the historiography of arts and esp. of literature, as one different from political, social and economical historiography, could benefit from such a strategy.

1.4. *Coda*

We hope to be able to examine literatures belonging to the intersection of all three sets ("small", "second world" and "semi-alien"); though, even focussing only on "small" *and* "second world" *or* "semi-alien" would suffice.

2. *A Possible Agenda*

It might be built by the following items:

2.1. Exploring the presence of hegemonic literatures in the literary canons of small literatures; and of small literatures in the literary canons of big ones;

2.2. Exploring minor literatures and literatures of minorities on the territory considered by a small literature as own; exploring the (lack of) contacts, type of contacts, mediators;

2.3. Exploring the (non)roundabout-ness of the contacts between small literatures;

2.4. Delineating grouping(s) of literatures, upon discriminating between relationships by origin, by neighbourhood and by choice: horizontal and vertical groupings and/or communities of literatures; collocations and neighbourhoods of literatures; (provisional definitions of some of these terms see here below);

2.5. Drafting a Bourdieuan map of a (inter-literary) collocation:

It remains unclear to us whether a minor literature and a literature of a minority written in the minority's own tongue represent variants of a single position (habitus?) within an inter-literary collocation, or represent two positions in the latter. We guess that a group of collocating literatures (say, German, Czech, of Jews in German, and Yiddish, plus the close to hegemony and super-territoriality French, in Prague) can be conjoined in a Bourdieuan field of production (in the sense of his *The Rules of Art*). Next, a comparative typology of collocations could be drafted, for example: a collocation with (that is, characterised by) hypertrophied dominant literature; a collocation with hypertrophied small literature; a collocation with hibernated circulation of texts/values between the collocating literatures; a collocation with high penetrability of borders between languages and literatures (writers writing on more than one of the languages and participating in more than one of the literatures of the collocation...)[10]; and so on;

2.6. "Pairing"[11] of two neighbouring small literatures that do not know each other;

2.7. Posing the question of how and to what extent a literature is connected with the territory of the ethnic and/or cultural agent which produces and consumes it? (De-/

[10] "Dioicous" and "polyoicous" authors, in Dionýz Ďurišin's terminology (of him see below), like Grigor Părličev or Sajat-Nova.

[11] We borrow the concept from Nikola Georgiev, who spoke of "paired images" (or "paired characters"). Cf. Georgiev 1992.

Re-)territorialisation; urban, suburban, rural; regular, random or aggregated distribution. Possible types of connection[12];

2.8. Exploration of what small literatures do (or do not) say about their great past and what hegemonic literatures do (or do not) say about that part of their past which is not considered remarkable.

Whatever themes from this agenda we choose it would be optimal to rely on at least a one or more pairs of test cases: thus, for point 2.1 we need two pairs (consider, for example: hegemonic literatures in the canons of Bulgarian and Georgian literatures, and small literatures in the canons of French and Russian literatures), but for point 2.2 one pair would suffice.

3. *What To Start With?*

We suggest starting with the "pairing" of two small literatures, to include acquainting them with each other. For various reasons (cf. § 5 and 7 below on the methodological reasons) we prefer the first pair to be Georgian-Bulgarian. Of course, it can be paralleled by another one (Lithuanian-Latvian, but also Czech-Hungarian, Greek-Armenian etc.). The only work familiar to us to pair Georgian and Bulgarian literatures (Bizadse 1987) is ideologically biased and theoretically one-sided. Hence it is debatable from the perspective of literary-historical conclusions. Yet it could serve as a kind of point of departure. The bibliographical references in that work could witness, by the way, to the mutual disinterest of Bulgarian and Georgian literatures and literary scholarships, even at the heyday of state-sponsored internationalism. Our own investigation of the translational reception of Georgian literature in Bulgaria gives reasons to consider the Bulgarian interest in Georgian literature a weak one[13].

By "pairing" we mean 1) juxtaposition and comparison, 2) exploration of reception (incl. translational) in both directions (Georgian-Bulgarian and vice versa) and of ideas about/representations of each other[14], and 3) translation of texts we consider representative of each literature and adequate for the given context.

This triple goal could be best embodied in a multilingual commented anthology of two "paired" literatures (to follow the interpretation of comparison as constituting a pair, cf. the Latin *pār*, *comparo*). Such a book should contain specimens of both literatures in

---

[12] The tetralinguistic model of Henri Gobard for language functions (vernacular, vehicular, referential, mythic; cf. Deleuze *et al.* 1982-1983: 24) appears as a possible theoretic landmark to deal with the issues mentioned in § 2.7 and § 2.5.

[13] See a general explanation, to be checked against the context of translational reception of other literatures, in Ljuckanov 2013: 207-208.

[14] In Bulgarian literary scholarship, comparative imaginistics/imagology was a domain of Veličko Todorov who produced works on the Bulgarian-Serbian and the Bulgarian-Czech cases. Unlike those cases, the Bulgarian-Georgian one, most likely, would not abound with sources, which suggests a reconsideration of methodology.

original and in an intermediary language (for translators do not exist neither from Bulgarian to Georgian nor from Georgian to Bulgarian), and even in two intermediary languages (one "big"/dominant from the region and one "big"/dominant from outside the region; or one "big"/dominant and one hegemonic); it also should contain commentaries and research papers in intermediary language(s).

It is reasonable to leave only some of the research papers within the body of such an anthology, and according to thematic criteria. The rest might constitute a draft of a comparative history of the two literatures with focus on topics that are coherent with the broader agenda we are interested in (cf. § 2 above), to comprise comparisons of: 1) places, periods and/or personalia through which the literatures take part in lively collocations and/or neighbourhoods; 2) genres, aesthetic movements and comparable constellations/phases within the corresponding national fields of artistic production; 3) the (in)visibility of collocations, neighbourhoods and communities of cultures/literatures from the standpoints of the historiographic traditions of the cultures/literatures under comparison (the ideology of Slavonic mutualism is one occasion of such visibility).

4. *What Can Be Done Next or Alongside?*

As an extension and complication of the above referred "pairing" of small literatures, we could confront or conjoin a larger number of literatures to construct and explore (or: to explore) an inter-literary communicative situation that involves more than two literatures and not on a single base[15]. We could supplement the Georgian-Bulgarian pair of communicants with the Russian literature (which may be considered – though with some limitations in various senses – the last regional hegemon literature), with the French literature (for a period a more or less global hegemon), and with other literatures from the region as well.

The general framework of such an investigation would be, I guess, to explore "elective (non)affinities" between neighbouring and non-neighbouring literatures, of equal and unequal status, sharing or not sharing linguistic and/or ideological origin (consider the cases of Bulgarian/Russian and Bulgarian/Georgian/Russian[16] correlations).

It is desirable to arrive at a comparative inter-regional comparison based on paired histories of small literatures (the Black Sea region on the one hand and the contact zone between the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Baltic region on the other, while the Bulgarian-Georgian pair may be flanked by the Lithuanian-Latvian one).

5. *(Dis)similar Research Agendas*

I guess that the main point of departure for the research agenda proposed above could be the mega-project lead and managed by Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer, *A History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe*.

---

[15] Such bases, we guess, can be genetic affinity, collocation, domination, equality of status, elective affinity....

[16] Mind the confessional (Christian-Chalcedonite, Greek-oriented) commonality.

We share the political and ethical awareness[17], as well as the (implicit) communitarist perspective on literary histories demonstrated by that project (on "communitarism" in recent comparative literature cf. Bessière 2007). Yet, not much like Cornis-Pope, Neubauer and other similar scholars, we prefer to emphasise those implications of communitarist comparativism which undermine universalism and nominalism[18]. And we do not regard linear and totalising visions of history (characteristic, for example, of the so-called organicist histories) too much flawed to be totally disregarded (that is, to be allotted to a paradigm considered not combinable with "ours") merely because they have the reputation of methodologically, politically and ethically rigid. Literary histories of the nations which we hope to at least juxtapose, are worth juxtaposing even in their monologically nationalist versions (and not for the sake of showing their – alleged or real – narrow-mindedness)[19]. Monologically nationalist reconstructions may be used only as temporary points of departure. Most important, we choose as a geographical area of our inquiry not "East-Central Europe" but a wider area, which has its epicentres in the Black Sea region. We believe that rethinking comparative literature and literary history needs an empirical terrain conveying a structure to inhibit our Eurocentric interpretative habits, which lean to monism. Indeed, their power may be felt in the work of Cornis-Pope and Neubauer and in review-articles on their project[20]: they imply a kind of reifying of "Europe", "the (one and coherent) world", even if their declared intention supposedly was to construct a plural or polyphonic history. We are interested in a more multifaceted and a deeper interim than the predominantly inter-imperial and intra-civilisational one of East-Central Europe. We are interested, instead, in avoiding a research agenda and a method which could easily be adopted within a neo-colonialist thrust for internal colonisation of European peripheries or provinces.

The ideas we would like to support are intended to substantiate counter-universalist regionalism/communitarianism and not "reverse ethnocentrism"[21]. What we claim is based

[17] Like Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer, we believe "that images and texts shape rather than merely reproduce the social world and its institutions" and that this applies to scholarly representations and texts as well (cf. Cornis-Pope, Neubauer 2002: 19).

[18] We view, for example, national and nationalist myths and symbols as stories and representations which need an attitude beyond the alternative "deconstruction or faith".

[19] We believe that such juxtapositions would be counter-positive to the inferiority complexes nourished by the traditional pairing of writers from "small" with writers from "big" literatures and nourishing, in turn, impulses to shape the corresponding "small" literature in a homogenising and monumentalising fashion, in a hope of reaching a comparability with the "big", or the normative, the normal one.

[20] Many of them are available via the web-site of the Antverpen University. Cf. the page *Coordinating Committee for the Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages Series*: <http://www.ua.ac.be/main.aspx?c=.CHLEL&n=64469> (accessed 01.08.2013).

[21] "By reverse ethnocentrism, Spivak refers to the valorization of the colonized culture, particularly in its pre-colonial forms [...] She sees this as a nostalgia for lost 'origins' that are themselves fabricated within the colonialist fantasy [...]" (Childs *et al.* 2006: 106). The concept of "reverse

on the belief that, if "love for the neighbour" (apart from being more timely) has an ethical primacy, it ought to have also a gnoseological primacy over "love for the distant", hence, it should be considered preferable as a rationale behind scholarly comparison of literatures.

Another fruitful point of departure could be the investigations of "interliterary communities" initiated in the 1980s by Dionýz Ďurišin[22].

Let us return to the concept of "world literature". Its communitarianist understanding leads us to juxtapose the interliterary process perspective (Ďurišin) with that of the field of (literary) production (Bourdieu). We understand "world literature" as "a global literary field" (Guttman *et al.* 2006) characterised by spatially and temporally fluctuating coherence on a global level, as well as on interliterary, "individual literatures" and intra-literary levels[23]. Fluctuations in time could probably be described in quasi-biological terms (emerging, growth, ageing etc.; adopting Lev Gumilev's theory of ethnogenesis with its elaborate differentiation of developmental phases[24] seems to us heuristic). Interliterariness is tense or meagre, implicit or explicit, symmetrical or asymmetrical, horizontal or vertical; it goes alongside linguistic or geographic or else (non)proximity. In that field we distinguish three (major) types of habitus a literature could occupy – the habitus of a big, of a small and of a minor literature. On a local and individual scale that field oscillates between being given and being forged, or it is the projection of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The concept of interliterary community, especially after it has been contextualised within the framework of Ďurišin's theory of interliterary process, needs to be contrasted against the concept of interliterary collocation (compare above, § 2.5) and related concepts. Sometimes the agents of literary production and consumption of different literatures can occupy roughly one and the same territory (say, a city). This condition can be designated as one of collocation of literatures. A collocation with a certain degree of structural integrity (that is, with rather strong, intense links between the collocating literatures) could form what we suggest to call a sociotope, whereby the collocating literatures occupy different habituses. Sociotope is used here as an exact analogue of "biotope", to be distinguished from

ethnocentrism" has arguable applicability to cultures possessing written tradition predating the colonial conquest and uninterrupted by it.

[22] The probably major outcomes have been: Ďurišin 1987-1993; Ďurišin, Gnisci 2000. We rely on the concise accounts on Ďurišin's approach and its heurism that are available in: Gálik 2000; also in: Domínguez 2012.

[23] I prefer to speak of individual and not of national literatures in this context. I accept César Domínguez's critique of the "national teleology" in Ďurišin's writings, displayed for example in that Ďurišin considered national literatures "the minimal units of the interliterary process" (cf. Domínguez 2012: 102). But there is some other teleology within the theory of interliterary process which Domínguez fails to discriminate: speaking of or implying a growing interliterary "integration".

[24] Cf. Gumilev 1989. For example, the disinterest between Georgian and Bulgarian literatures might be explained as indicating the relations in an interliterary community in the phase of "obscuration" or of "memorisation".

"habitat": "the subject of a habitat is a species or a population, the subject of a biotope is a biological community"[25]. We guess that not every interliterary sociotope can be viewed as an interliterary community. A sociotope may conjoin and/or confront (members of) different communities. And we must note that the participants in an interliterary community can inhabit different sociotopes. Sociotopes and communities, being formed by diverse kinds of structural coherence, pertain to different conceptual series but the concept of interliterary centrism (Ďurišin; cf. below) probably links these series. In brief, we suggest distinguishing the registers of interliterary collocation (but also neighbourhood), interliterary "sociotope" or "field" and interliterary community, and subsequently coordinating them.

If there is an epistemological difference between the theory of interliterariness and the concept of global literary field, on the one hand, and comparative literature, on the other, the agenda we are proposing joins the former perspective.

6. *Prospects for Collaboration in Pursuing the Agenda*

I have discussed an earlier version of this research agenda with colleagues from Tbilisi (from the Šota Rustaveli Institute of Georgian Literature) and Vilnius (from different institutions), most of them members of Georgian, respectively Lithuanian Comparative Literature Association.

The structure of the group of collaborators should not move the centre of gravity towards the former or current centres of hegemony (regional or global). Hence Cornis-Pope–Neubauer's project is in one more sense a point of departure (and an epistemic stance to be modified and overcome): scholars from institutions of the (at least symbolically) offshore and extra-territorial West (USA, Netherlands), though East-Central Europeans by origin, manage a team of natives[26].

I insist on underlining the importance of the pragmatic or performative aspect of the research I propose: to start producing regional (Balkan-Caucasus, Black-Sea or like) expertise on regional matter, concerning literary studies; that is, to initiate departing from what can be called a (post)colonial or (neo)colonial state of affairs in that field of research. Switching the disciplinary focus from the one of post-colonial studies to the one of intercultural communication and the studies on "otherness", we can reformulate the pragmatic aspect of our intended research thus: we aim to bring an invisible neighbour to the status of an at least visible "other"[27]. Thus the epistemological and hence methodological differ-

[25] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biotope> (accessed: 01.08.2013).

[26] This resembles the condition in post-colonial theory pointed at by Arif Dirlik, Anthony Appiah and others: the major proponents of this theory are in fact part of the Western (why not neo-colonial by intention) academic establishment (Childs *et al.* 2006: 14, 17 etc.). Consider also Hassan 2001.

[27] I follow the theoretical premise, and conform to the intuitions of dialogical hermeneutics, that leaving someone outside one's field of attention is even more downgrading than imaging him/her as one's feared or despised "other". Both of them – s/he who is invisible and s/he whom we fear/

ence between Balkan Studies and Caucasus Studies (if we are to introduce the context of area studies), on the one hand, and Black-Sea Studies (within which we place our intended research), on the other, becomes apparent.

I suggest, in fact, to trial the potency of literary scholarship to instigate a change in the polit-economic condition of a literature or a group of literatures. What is more important in this intended attempt, is not to measure the relative power of scholarship among the other agents of literary socialisation; but to performatively vote against the market economy which seems to govern the exchange of literary and scholarly symbolical capital, and for an economy of gift.

Distancing myself from, but without rejecting this pathetic stance, I would suggest the co-existence of different economical regimes (or modes) within the (inter)literary field: of market economy, barter economy and gift economy (whereas the book of Pascale Casanova is likely to imply the soleness of the first one throughout the *World Republic of Letters* [cf. Sahota 2007]). The supposedly non-hegemonised (that is, not under hegemony) condition of the latter two regimes within the mentioned field immunises it against becoming an imitation of global capitalism's economy (cf. Sahota 2007). Yet this is not a secured configuration, it needs involvement.

The contribution of Todor Hristov to this volume hereafter, revisits the idea of a world literature polit-economy governed by the logic of exchange of gifts. It demonstrates, however, that the exchange of gifts cannot inhibit the rise of interliterary inequality and even enhances it. I would speculatively add that if the market economy mode (or its political analogue) determines with whom and how to exchange gifts then a rise of inequality is inevitable. I hope that a non-market motivated choice 'with whom' to initiate a gift exchange could be a breakthrough.

The same contribution makes us aware of a particular communicative complication that can appear in whatever interliterary community: a participant can be involved in an economy of indebtedness to another participant which makes any derogatory statement of the latter unanswerable.

Choosing a region, a number of regions or a number of literatures as a priority subject of investigation is a step towards forging an interliterary community and a centre or various centres of alternative "worldling"[28].

"Between the poles of literary particulars (national literatures) and literary universals (world literature) of the integration process, Ďurišin distinguishes two stages which

despise – are probably just beside a kind of an "Uncanny valley" (cf. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uncanny_valley>, accessed 01.08.2013), but flank it from the opposite sides.

[28] "Wordling" is a concept introduced by Gayatri Spivak alongside with "epistemic violence" to designate the imperialist act of letting someone (in particular, the communities under colonisation) "enter" "world" history (in particular, being granted the status of, or the right of being represented as a "Third World") (Childs *et al.* 2006: 101). We wish to designate the possibility of initiating analogical, and counter-establishmental, processes on a regional scale.

are subject to change, namely, interliterary community (either standard or specific) and interliterary centrism" (Domínguez 2012: 102). Ďurišin defines the latter "either as regional bodies larger than communities, or as communities that play a large-scale integrative role" (Domínguez 2012: 103). Thus, the boundary between a "community" and (a) "centrism" is traversable, in the sense that any "community" could attain the appeal of "centrism". In other words, "centrism" *in potentia* is inherent to any "community". Switching to another idiom, we could identify, then, the "appeal" with symbolic capital. Using Ďurišin's terms, I suggest investigating clusters of neighbouring interliterary communities that participate in different interliterary centrisms, hoping to initiate a long-term movement towards a new interliterary "centrism" for the Black Sea region and its neighbourhood.

The desired process of alternative "worldling" suggests a 'cross-marginal territoriality', instead of the a-territoriality of universalist comparative literature and the one-side-of-the-margin territoriality of, for example, Balkan studies.

The fascination with hybridity, multiculturality, cross-culturality, intercultural encounters and... success drives the review of three works in comparative literature, among them the Ďurišin-inspired investigation of the Mediterranean interliterary community and a history of the literatures of Malta (Pireddu 2002: p. 4 of 6). The Black Sea region is no less a hybrid space than the Mediterranean, and is more interesting besides, for the lasting underestimation of the cultures of that space in the "centres of worldling". In addition, its emblematic multiliterary or at least multilingual site, Istanbul, does not possess the lucky quasi-extraterritoriality of Malta. But, unlike the Mediterranean space, the Black Sea space seems to exert less attraction to the cultures and literatures which inhabit it: thus the question whether a Black Sea interliterary community, not to say centrism, exists is open. Quite probably, the Black Sea interliterary neighbourhood constitutes only a sociotope. The Black Sea space, just like the Mediterranean, "requires [...] a pluralist and dialogical vision of literature as encounter and exchange" (Pireddu 2002: 5 of 6); but it requires acute awareness of one more dimension of interliterariness (and interculturality): that of tacit and/or "zero" links, of unhappy disruptures. Such seem to be the links between Bulgarian and Georgian literatures, but what conditions them remains unclear to us. One possible explanation might lie in the hypothesis that interliterary neighbourhoods (and probably communities as well) have an invariant structure which favours the links between some of the positions within itself while disfavours others. Another explanation might find the reason in the impact of centres of power that lie outside the neighbourhood: for example, the strife for Europeanisation might prevent the Bulgarian and the Georgian elites from interest in each other though the intermediate position of these nations between Russia and Turkey could have presupposed such an interest. A third possible explanation refers to the actual capacity for interliterary contacts those particular literatures actually had; it may be speculated whether a certain excess of power, energy, "passionarity" or the like is a necessary prerequisite for entering an encounter instead of avoiding it (within a strategy of preserving one's powers or because

of lack of them)[29]. In brief, the Black Sea space might turn to be an unhappy collocation that lacks the kinds of integrities which create a community or at least a sociotope.

Adopting a regionalist/communitarianist perspective and choosing to deal with an interliterary collocation like the Black Sea, we focus on what might be called "cross-marginal territoriality". Such a focus, inasmuch as it is aware of scholarship's culture-performative power, is analogical to the stance of multisided ideological disentanglement in Djelal Kadir's project of negotiated comparative literature. "As part of its engagement with the world, Comparative Literature must engage and actively negotiate its own strategies in their diversity and dialectical paradoxes, lest it leave itself vulnerable to the charge of sidestepping the intricacies of specificity and of the particular through strategies of "distant reading" (Moretti), or succumbing to the anodyne wishfulness of neoliberalism and the purported "free" market circulation of literary culture (Damrosch, "world literature"), or replicating the hegemonic discourse of the metropole in its translocation to a Southern Hemisphere and in the idealized utopia of "interplanetarity" (Spivak)[30]. A *negotiated comparative literature* would not, as I have noted already, aim to forge a consensus among these strategies [...]. It would, rather, ensure that none of the strategies the discipline generates becomes uncritically subsumed [...]" (Kadir 2006: 137).

Yet, the suspicion may rise that my focus just relocates (and provincialises) Spivak's utopia. I take the risk, minding that interliterary studies, no less than comparative literature, are in need of "strategic essentialism" and strategic re-territorialisation and, moreover, of personalist epistemology.

Bibliography

Bessière 2007: J. Bessière, *Comparative Literature and Ethics. Reinterpreting the Universalism/Relativism Dichotomy (Summary)*, in: D. Dolinar, L. Vidmar (eds.), *Comparative Literature in the 20th Century. A Symposium Marking the 100th Anniversary of the Birth of Anton Ocvirk (Summaries of the Papers)*, Ljubljana 2007, p. 8, cf. <http://reelc.net/files/Primerjalna%20knjizevnost%20v%2020-1.pdf> (accessed: 01.08.2013).

[29] Kees van Rees delineates the concepts of, first, a (national) literary field's "significance", that is, power to cause and process "ripple effects"; and, second, a field's level of "organisational development" (measured probably by publisher, distributor and reviewing density, annual output of new titles *per caput* etc.). See Rees 2012: 31-32. These concepts can be used as scientific complements to the too metaphysic concept of "passionarity" or at least to its sociologically measurable effects.

[30] I guess author's sarcasm rather than a misprint behind the substitution of "planetarity" with "interplanetarity".

Bizadse 1987: I. Bizadse, *Historische und politische Voraussetzungen für das Entstehen der Typologie der bulgarischen und georgischen künstlerischen Literatur*, "Georgica", x, 1987, pp. 52-57.

Childs *et al.* 2006: P. Childs, J.J. Weber, P. Williams, *Post-Colonial Theory and Literatures. African, Caribbean and South Asian*, Trier 2006.

Cornis-Pope, Neubauer 2002: M. Cornis-Pope, J. Neubauer, *Towards a History of the Literary Cultures in East-Central Europe. Theoretical Reflections*, New York 2002 (= ACLS Occasional Paper, 52), <http://www.acls.org/uploadedFiles/Publications/OP/52_Literary_Cultures_in_East_Central_Europe.pdf> (accessed: 1.8.2013).

Deleuze *et al.* 1982-1983: G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, R. Brinkley, *What Is a Minor Literature?*, "Mississippi Review", xi, 1982-1983, 3, pp. 13-33.

Domínguez 2012: C. Domínguez, *Dionýz Ďurišin and a Systemic Theory of World Literature*, in: T. D'haen, D. Damrosch, D. Kadir (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to World Literature*, London 2012, pp. 99-107, cf. <http://www.academia.edu/1146429/Dionyz_Durisin_and_a_Systemic_Theory_of_World_Literature>.

Ďurišin 1987-1993: D. Ďurišin *et al.*, *Osobitné medziliterárne spoločenstvá*, i-xvi, Bratislava 1987-1993.

Ďurišin, Gnisci 2000: D. Ďurišin, A. Gnisci (eds.), *Il Mediterraneo. Una rete interletteraria*, Roma 2000.

Gálik 2000: M. Gálik, *Interliterariness as a Concept in Comparative Literature*, "CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture", ii, 2000, 4, <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol2/iss4/6>.

Georgiev 1992: N. Georgiev, *Citiraštijat čovek v hudožestvenata literatura*, Sofija 1992.

Georgiev 2000: N. Georgiev, *Ženitbata na literaturata săs sveta*, in: Id., *Mnenija i sămnenija*, Varna 2000, <http://liternet.bg/publish/ngeorgiev/m_s/zhen.htm#1a> (accessed: 01.08.2013) (or. ed.: *Die Ehe der Literatur mit der Welt. Weltliteratur zwischen Utopie und Heterotopie*, in: M. Schmeling [ed.], *Weltliteratur heute: Konzepte und Perspektiven*, Würzburg 1995, pp. 75-84).

Gumilev 1989: L. Gumilev, *Ètnogenez i biosfera Zemli*, Leningrad 1989.

Guttman *et al.* 2006: A. Guttman, M. Hockx, G. Paizis, *Introduction*, in: Iid. (eds.), *The Global Literary Field*, Newcastle 2006, pp. ix-xx, cf. <http://www.c-s-p.org/flyers/9781847180537-sample.pdf> (accessed: 01.09.2013).

Hassan 2001: W. Hassan, [Review of:] E. San Juan, *Beyond Postcolonial Theory*, "Bryn Mawr Review of Comparative Literature", iii, 2001, 1, <http://www.brynmawr.edu/bmrcl/Fall2001/SanJuan.html> (accessed: 01.08.2013).

Kadir 2006: D. Kadir, *Comparative Literature in a World Become Tlön*, "Comparative Critical Studies", III, 2006, 1-2, pp. 125-138, cf. <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/comparative_critical_studies/v003/3.1kadir.html>.

K'osev 1994: A. K'osev, *Beležki za samokoloniziraštite se kulturi*, "Godišnik na SU: Centăr po kulturoznanie", LXXXVII, 1994 (1999).

Ključevskij 1904: V. Ključevskij, *Lekcija vtoraja*, in: Id., *Kurs russkoj istorii*, SPb. 1904, <http://www.runivers.ru/lib/book3102/9767/>.

Ljuckanov 2013: J. Ljuckanov, *O perevodach gruzinskoj literatury na bolgarskij i na russkij. Vvodnye zamečanija bolgarskogo rusista*, "Sjani", XIV, 2013, pp. 206-241.

Munday 2001: J. Munday, *Introducing Translation Studies. Theories and Applications*, London-New York 2001.

Pireddu 2002: N. Pireddu, *Comparative Literature as a Messenger of Diversity. New Books by Cassola, Durisin and Gnisci, and Cushner and Pageaux*, "CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture", IV, 2002, 1, <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1146&context=clcweb> (accessed: 01.08.2013).

Platt 2012: K. Platt, *Vnutrennjaja kolonizacija: granicy imperij / granicy teorii* [Review of: A. Etkind, *Internal Colonization*, Cambridge 2011], "Neprikosnovennyj zapas", LXXXII, 2012, 2, <http://magazines.russ.ru/nz/2012/2/pl21.html>.

Rees 2012: K. van Rees, *Field, Capital and Habitus. A Relational Approach to "Small" Literatures*, in: G.-B. Kohler, P. I. Navumenka, R. Grüttemeier (eds.), *Kleinheit als Spezifik. Beiträge zu einer feldtheoretischen Analyse der belarussischen Literatur im Kontext "kleiner" slavischer Literaturen*, Oldenburg 2012, pp. 15-56.

Sahota 2007: B. Sahota [Review of:] P. Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, "Bryn Mawr Review of Comparative Literature", VI, 2007, 2, <http://www.brynmawr.edu/bmrcl/World%20Republic%20of%20Letters.htm> (accessed: 01.08.2013).

Stiehler 2006: H. Stiehler, *Kleine Literaturen und Literaturplurlismus. Zur Problematik der Terminologie am Beispiel Rumäniens*, "Philologica Jassyensia", II, 2006, 2, pp. 233-239, cf. <http://www.philologica-jassyensia.ro/upload/II_2_stiehler.pdf> (accessed: 01.08.2013).

Tötösy de Zepetnek 2001: S. Tötösy de Zepetnek, *In-between Borders and Central European Life Writing*, "Limen", 2001, 2, <http://limen.mi2.hr/limen2-2001/totosy.html> (accessed: 01.08.2013).

Vajda 1983: G. Vajda, *Einleitung: Marginale Literaturen*, "Komparatistische Hefte", VII, 1983, pp. 5-14.

Abstract

Jordan Ljuckanov
Towards Paired Histories of Small Literatures, To Make Them Communicate

The A. suggests a geo-cultural relocation of Bulgarian literature, within an agenda of reforming comparative literature studies. First, comparative literature should develop an awareness of the cultural worlds which, being neither metropolitan nor colonial, benefited insubstantially from the post-colonial turn in humanities. It should leave the "universalist" perspective behind and commit to a "communitarianist" perspective, trying a synthesis between Dionýz Ďurišin's theory of interliterary communities and Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the cultural field. In a pragmatical communitarianist epistemology experts affiliated to scholarly institutions belonging to, for example, the Black Sea states, should start producing expertise on the Black Sea region. This may lead to overcoming the neo-colonised status of, for example, Bulgarian scholarship vis-à-vis the international division of scholarly labour and, subsequently, to a reformed state of the collective mind of the Bulgarian cultural field. Such a geo-cultural relocation of Bulgarian literature to a hypothetic cross-Black Sea interliterary community, or at least neighbourhood, could be both a means for and a side-effect of the invoked act of emancipation.

Keywords

Interliterary Communities; Black-Sea Literary Space; Bulgarian Literature.