Glimpses of the Bulgarian Other in British Travel Literature

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I wish to dedicate this book to the loving memory of my grandmother, who always supported my efforts to expand my horizons and excel.

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ABSTRACT

Until its emancipation from the Ottoman yoke, from the very beginnings of the country's mention in Western travelogues, Bulgaria occupied an unprivileged and unfavorable position in British imagination. However, since the late eighteenth century the Bulgarian nation has been subjected to the scrutiny of the British traveller, owing to its proximity to other nations whose national struggle had received more prominence, and consequently overshadowed the Bulgarians' National Renaissance, such as Serbia and Greece.

Persistently described as the fringe of Europe, Bulgaria never ceased to function as the epitome of backwardness in British imagination, which was neither exoticised nor aestheticised as a utopian land, but rather served as a significant dystopian locus which enabled British thinkers to address the geopolitical pursuits of the British Empire at the expense of the peripheral nations of the Balkan Peninsula.

This volume concerns all the depictions of Bulgaria as a dystopian land, from the eighteenth century until the country's emergence as an important military power after its Liberation movement in 1878. In these travel narratives, the notion of the Bulgarian nationhood is described as an antithesis to the British civilised aspect, as well as a threat to the stability of the Ottoman Empire. With the rapid decline of the latter, from a mere Ottoman province Bulgaria gradually transforms into a nation, whose National Revival efforts come to the fore to question the British and Ottoman depictions of the Bulgarian nation as subaltern and uncultivated.

Emerging as a newly-founded stated in the 1870s, Bulgaria needed to rely on different nation-building theories from the ideological paradigms of the neighbouring countries: under the threat of a potential absorption into the Greek or Serbian nation-making myths, Bulgarians followed a different path in their attempt to achieve sovereignty and forge a distinct national identity, free from the stereotypes and conventions attached to their nation by the average Victorian travellers. Therefore, this volume records all the travel accounts pertinent to that path of the Bulgarians – that is, the path towards emancipation.

INTRODUCTION

The present volume pertains to the representation of Bulgarian identity in Western travel literature of the nineteenth century. Given the marginal position of Bulgaria until the restoration of its independence in 1878 after being emancipated from the Ottoman Empire, few Western travellers chose Bulgaria as a travel destination, and a scarcer number of travel writers opted for the Bulgarian setting as the main point of reference in their travelogues. As Maria Todorova purports,

> during the 18th and early 19th century Bulgarians appear only episodically in travellers' accounts. They seem somehow additional to the beautiful landscapes pictured by the travellers or appear abruptly and for a short time in the description of a certain event. (26)

This concept of terra incognita that British travellers adopted when they came into contact with the Bulgarian setting was anything but surprising, given the British proneness to reproduce images of Otherness that aimed to depict Britishness as the ultimate cultural condition. In my previous work *A Balkan Tour: Dystopian Depictions of Serbia in British Travel Literature*, I sought to address the negative depictions of Serbdom in British travel discourse, owing to the Serbian nation's long allegiance to the Ottoman rule until its independence in 1830, its remote connection to the Anglo-Saxon nationalist agenda of the Victorians, and its close ties with Russia during the Russo-Turkish Wars which gave rise to the flourishing of the pan-Slavic movement amongst Serbian intellectuals. Allegedly, all these negative qualities would contribute to the systematic projection of the Balkans as a backward region, inhabited by savage populations of mixed origins and dubious cultural accomplishments, summarised under the concept of Balkanisation (Ivana Živančević-Sekeruš 105). Even less popular with Western travellers was the pivotal role of the Greek Orthodox Religion as a nation-building factor, which both consolidated Serbian national identity and defied British presence in the Balkans (Martha Meyer 12).

If Serbia is persistently portrayed as a country entirely antithetical to the British notion of improvement, epitomising the obscure and dark Other, based on the travelogues that I include in this volume Bulgaria occupied an even less favourable position in Western imagination, stimulating the

appetite of Western travellers for a systematic exploitation, appropriation, expansion and potential extermination of the Bulgarian populations that inhabited the provinces of the Ottoman Empire. As maintained by Todorova, the majority of the travel narratives that revolved around the Balkan provinces are oblivious towards the Bulgarian nation altogether, marking the country's sole status as a geographical notion "in most cases being considered as part of Moesia or simply the region between the Balkans, the Danube, the 'Black Sea and Serbia" (26). From that perspective, Bulgaria remained in obscurity for many decades before the surge of British Nationalism in the 1850s; this marked a shift in the country's function, from a mere toponym to a significant military power that precipitated the decline of the Ottoman Empire.

One of the main reasons why Bulgaria was either ignored or sporadically mentioned in the narratives of Western travellers was its function as an Ottoman province for many decades after the independence of Serbia and Greece from the Ottoman yoke: having acquired their autonomy in 1878, to the British eyes Bulgarians were perceived as an apathetic people, whose lack of rebelliousness constituted a point of criticism. However, one should bear in mind that Bulgarian uprisings did not receive the same attention as the revolts of the neighbouring countries, mostly because of the country's geographical proximity to the Ottoman Empire. According to Katrin Bozeva-Abazi,

> Geographic location may help explain why Bulgarians were the least rebellious subjects of the Ottoman sultan. The Bulgarian lands were among the closest to the Ottoman capital and hence, the easiest to control and keep in order. (47)

Another reason for the contemplation of Bulgaria as a third-class destination was the popularity of Greece and European Turkey amongst Western travellers, who were either intrigued by the ancient Greek sites or driven by a geopolitical interest in the conditions attached to the Ottoman Empire. As argued by Cy Mathews, in the case of Greece, it overshadowed all the other nations of the Balkan Peninsula, having acquired a prominent position in the travel canon of the eighteenth century - a fact which increased Western travellers' eagerness to pay homage to contemporary Greece in order to draw a comparison between the country's past and contemporary condition (67).

Apart from the overshadowing of Bulgaria by Greece both culturally and politically, Greece also posed a challenge to the British approach to Bulgarian nationhood, given that the Bulgarian nation was formed from its very beginning in juxtaposition with the greater civilisations of Europe

such as the Greco-Roman tradition and the Byzantine Empire. As Jordan Ljuckanov purports,

> till the mid-ninth century, the Bulgarian state, being a close neighbour of Byzantium, had belonged to a cultural world that is different from the Roman, Byzantine or Mediterranean – to the oecumene of the Eurasian steppe. (95)

Considering the above argument, Bulgaria occupied a marginal position in the European cultural map, positioning the nation as part of the fringe of the Orient, attributing to the country the status of the European Oriental who neither conformed with nor was relevant to the great cultural paradigms of the European past (Daniel R. Van Winkle 92).

As regards the representations of the Balkan nations by nineteenth-century Britons, a significant number of travel narratives reproduced an Oriental, non-European aspect of the Christian populations under the Ottoman rule, which aimed at introducing the reader to the binary opposition between the civilised West and the decadent or indolent East. In the light of the Saidian concept of Orientalism, the Bulgarian cultural setting allegedly triggered discourses on Otherness and prompted the British imperial beholder to utilise narrative strategies that perpetuated the myth of the savage European East by disseminating images of darkness and backwardness. Based on the Saidian concept, Orientalism came to epitomise "the representation of the Self or Occident and the Other or Orient in which the Self is privileged and has upper hand to define, reconstruct the passive, silent and weak Other" (Sayyed R. Moosavinia and N. Niazi 103). In the case of Bulgaria, the country's long enslavement by the Ottoman Empire and the relatively scarce rebellions of the Bulgarian nation nurtured the images of the Bulgarian as an indisputable part of the Orient, constituting a typical Orientalist nineteenth-century narrative strategy with the aim of "legitimizing civilizing mission, essentialism, expansionism and imperialism and on the other hand, convincing natives of their own inferiority" (Gina Wisker 10). It is far from coincidental that, at the beginning of the nineteenth century and well until the mid-nineteenth century, Bulgarians as well as all the other Christian citizens of the Ottoman Empire are referred to by the pejorative Turkish term Rayah, persistently used to designate the non-Muslim, lower-class ethnic groups (Milena Kirova 62).[1] This indicated the reluctance of British travellers to address Bulgarians as a distinct ethnic group, thus undermining their overall position in the European mapping.

[1] Member of the flock (Turkish)

An additional factor that contributed to the reading of Bulgaria as a savage or dystopian locus by British travellers was its ethnogenesis as a peripheral nation, always posited on the margins of more famous empires. Drawing upon this dichotomy between Bulgaria and the imperial world of early European history, Ljuckanov asserts that

> Bulgars were the only ones to consistently use the script and, afterwards, adopt the faith of their main sedentary enemy (ibid. 86). And, he reminds us, Bulgars had invaded and populated a territory spanning along and across the boundary of East Roman oecumene – the lower Danube (ibid. 31 etc.). Early medieval Bulgarians exemplify borderline formation. (96)

Given this binary opposition between the Bulgarian nation and the Greek hegemonic role in medieval Europe, British travellers tended to reproduce this historical condition by treating Bulgaria as a culturally inferior country that had appropriated both the scripture and the religion of its Orthodox neighbour. From this perspective, in the Middle Ages Bulgarians always fulfilled the role of a peripheral nation – one which lay unchartered and uncultivated because of its peculiar state as an invader and a sedentary kingdom. Regarding this duality, Ljuckanov contends that the vague and complex delineation of Bulgarian nationhood by Westerners is far from coincidental, since Bulgarian national discourse also nurtured this contradictory image of the Bulgarian as a borderline European, with strong links to a space outside the European continent:

> the Bulgarian Tsardom viewed itself as an embodiment of the Western half of the Byzantine (Romaic, Roman) state, and the Byzantine elite was not far from accepting this claim. Besides, and peculiarly enough, Bulgarian Tsardom seems to have refrained from creating its own official historiography. Being a Bulgarian meant to be simultaneously an insider and an outsider, within and without Romaic identity. (97)

Owing to the country's loose connection to the neighbouring cultures and nationalist movements, British travellers often tended to ascribe to the Bulgarian populations that they encountered in their voyages the generic term "Rayah", overlooking the important developments that underlay the gradual amalgamation of the Bulgarian nation as a sovereign state. A key point in this cultural and political effacement of Bulgaria in British travel discourse was the denationalisation of all the Ottoman provinces since 1453. According to Stavros Stavrianos, the Ottoman conquest "'denationalised' Balkan towns, and during most of the Ottoman period big towns in the region reflected the "nationality" of those who held political and economic power" (99). Therefore, when British travellers visited Bulgaria, they often

addressed the country as a mere province of the Ottoman Empire, entirely devoid of cultural or political essence, at least prior to the country's active involvement in European political affairs towards the last decades of the nineteenth century.

On the one hand, this dystopian, generic use of the term Rayah to refer to the Christian populations of the European East pointed to the increasing tendency of the Britons to stress the backwardness and the subalternity of nations like the Bulgarians, whose enslaved state was treated as a natural outcome of their supposed cultural inferiority. On the other hand, upon their exposure to Bulgarian towns, British travellers touched upon their multiethnic character, which prompted the portrayal of the people encountered as a patchwork of savage nations. As suggested by Bozeva-Abazi, the multicultural aspect of Balkan cities in the first quarter of the nineteenth century posed a challenge to Western representation of the European East, triggering discourses of Otherness and hybridity:

> the romanticized vision of nineteenth-century Bulgarian and Serbian communities as ideologically homogenous, and historically complete entities owed more to a state-promoted national agenda more than to anything else. The historical record suggests that the process of national homogenization was far from complete and required the active involvement of many agencies. (Bozeva-Abazi 80)

Discussing cultural diversity in relation to the Bulgarian national struggle for the promotion of a distinct cultural identity, Veselin Bosakov claims that "in the Bulgarian case, cultural diversity continues to be perceived as something given which we must comply with, and not as a resource for nation building" (43). This reluctance of the Bulgarians to embrace a culturally diverse reality stemmed from their traumatic experience during the Ottoman period, in which all the unique features of the Christian populations were effaced under the umbrella term of the "millet". Ottoman provinces were often founded on the basis of the millet system, a fact which permitted the exclusively administrative division of the religious minorities of the Empire by excluding any cultural or ethnic distinctions (Bozeva-Abazi 128). British travellers persistently used these vague terms of the rayah and the millet instead of focusing on the differences of the various Christian citizens of the Ottoman Empire, thus revealing a British desire to support the suppression of peripheral identities in the European East in order to safeguard the British imperialist interests southwards.

With the rise of Bulgarian nationalism in the 1850s, and the subsequent involvement of the country in the Crimean War, Bulgaria ceased to remain a terra incognita by the majority of Western thinkers and travellers. The emergence of the Eastern Question as a vital political condition for the maintenance of the Pax Britannica exacerbated the relationships of the British Empire with all the Christian populations of the Balkan peninsula that attempted to overthrow the Ottoman yoke, and instead side with the rival Empire, the Russians. Inevitably, Bulgaria would also be affected in its rise from geopolitical obscurity - a fact which also explains the sudden interest of British travellers in devoting chapters of their travelogues to this remote corner of Europe. According to Kirova, the dystopian depiction of Bulgaria as a land of brigands and savages was in tune with the anti-Russian rhetoric of the British travel cannon; one should bear in mind that the most cherished political aim of the British Empire was

> Turkey in its present boundaries but thoroughly dependent on the British Crown; a vast space, moreover, only "five or six days distant", to be economically colonized, […] Great Britain is far from unique in cherishing a colonial ideal on the Balkans; it was more or less the same with the rest of the 19th century monarchies. (62)

The abrupt shift of focus on the Christian populations of the European East signals the British anxiety to preserve the status quo of Ottoman Turkey, assuming a hostile attitude towards peoples and political events that defied the dominant role of the Ottomans and espoused a Russophile outlook on European political affairs. As observed by Maria Todorova

> Up to the 1830s, Britain had not come out with a specific programme on the question of the preservation of the integrity and inviolability of the Ottoman Empire. It was only the emergence of Russia as one of the central figures on the European stage and its territorial successes against the Ottoman Empire that proved decisive in shaping a definite line of action (9)

Based on this remark, the attempts of the Bulgarians and other Christian populations who still lived under the Ottoman yoke were met with the disapproving glance of the British traveller, who constantly interpreted these rebellions as signs of anarchy, posing a threat to the British geopolitical interests in the area.

Despite the indisputable tendency of certain British travel writers to prioritise Britishness over the projection of the country visited, rendering Bulgaria a modern dystopia inhabited by the uncultivated and uncivilised Other, the hostile and partly confusing portrayal of the Bulgarian nation

within the British travel discourse was also linked to the problematic ethnogenetic process of the Bulgarians themselves throughout the nineteenth century. As claimed by Ljuckanov, the strenuous efforts of nineteenth-century Bulgaria to forge a national identity stemmed from the fact that Bulgarians belonged

> neither to the rational and lawful West nor to the intuitive and anarchic East but that, being "the most primary and virgin-elementary" people, had to venture self-cognition in order to "redeem paganism" and to say their own word to the world. (91)

Anxious to shape their own nation-building agenda, Bulgarians could neither fit neatly into the pan-Slavic movement that emerged to unite all the Slavic nations of the Balkan Peninsula with Russia, nor embrace a national identity which could draw on the Byzantine historical past of the country, given that such nation-building theories partly attributed to Bulgaria a subordinate role and would be conducive to the nation's fusion with either the Serbian or the Greek nationalist paradigms.

If Serbian and Greek nation-building strategies posed a threat to the very existence of Bulgaria as an autonomous, self-conscious nation, an alternative theory of the Hun Origin flourished during the 1850s. This theory both rejected the country's Europeanness and endorsed a revival of the Bulgarian Turkic past, while at the same time dissociating Bulgaria's racial association with rival nations. Regarding the Hun Theory, Evgenii Koloskov asserts that it constituted a convenient theory that disputed the country's allegiance to the Western and Eastern cultural coalitions:

> It was during this period that the main approaches to the issue of the origin of Bulgarians and the theory of Hunno-Turkic ethnogenesis took shape to be reproduced afterwards. In accordance with this concept, "the prehistory of Bulgarians should be traced to the history of those Asian Turkic peoples which are known under a common name Huns (Hiong-nu, Hiung-nu) in Chinese chronicles and as Hunni in works by European authors. (1251)

Adopting an alternative approach to their own ethnogenesis, Bulgarians attempted to dissociate themselves from more collective national identities, such as the pan-Slavic, the Mediterranean and the Anglo-Saxon, by forging Bulgarstina based on several nation-building factors that could provide their nation with a distinct identity.[2]

[2] Bulgarianness in Bulgarian.

In search of a distinct culture and identity, Bulgarian national discourse foregrounded the Asiatic origins of the nation in view of a potential Hellenisation, which increasingly expanded northwards since its independence in 1830. Taking into consideration the Philhellenic wave across Europe which threw an approving glance at the annexation of several Ottoman territories to the newly founded state of Greece, Bulgarian nationalism needed to be constructed in an entirely different vein, subverting all Greek expansionist theses on the incorporation of Macedonia and Thrace as neuralgic ingredients of nineteenth-century Greece. Thus, the term Hun was compatible with the Bulgarian distance from the Ottoman, Slavic and Greek rivals, contributing to the establishment of a separate Bulgarian historiography. According to Koloskov,

> During the era of Turkish dominance, the idea of "Turkic" origin of the Bulgarians, obviously was negatively perceived by Slavicists. However, there was another threat making the Oriental theory appealing: independent Greece after 1830 had claims upon the regions, which, according to Bulgarian intellectuals, used to be inhabited by the Bulgarians. The Greek concept aiming at appropriating the ancient history of Hellas had to be challenged by a more powerful concept. (1248)

Inevitably, a crucial nation-building component which played a decisive role in the shaping of Bulgarian national identity was the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Bulgarian identification with Orthodox Christianity on various levels (cultural, political, and racial, for instance) was reluctantly observed by nineteenth-century British travellers, who were eager to touch upon the detrimental influence of the Greek Orthodox Church on the political and cultural conditions in the Ottoman provinces, evidencing a Russian intrusion into the political affairs of the European East (Mathews 70).

As mentioned by Bozeva-Abazi, the Rila Monastery functioned as a significant religious centre, within the framework of which a monastery cell school was established until the eighteenth century (130). Concerning the influential function of the Rila Monastery in the preservation of relics of the country's glorious past, and considering the strenuous efforts made by Bulgarian monks to revitalise the nation's ties with its history, Dennis Hupchick argues that the Rila Monastery "facilitated the spread and maintenance of Slavic Orthodox literacy, and it promoted the development of a Bulgarian literary language" (8).

With respect to religion as a nation-building component of Bulgarian nationhood, it is also worth stressing the establishment of a Bulgarian Church which was considerably autonomous from the Greek Patriarchate

of Constantinople, a condition that attributed to the Bulgarian nation a distinct identity amongst other Slavic nations such as the Serbs and the Croats. The other nations' religious life relied entirely on foreign religious institutions - that is, Popish Rome and the Greek Patriarchate respectively. As affirmed by Bozeva-Abazi,

> The establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate Church on February 28, 1870 signaled a major accomplishment for Orthodox Slavs, though it was still required to mention the name of the Patriarch in its liturgy, to allow him control in procuring of Chrism, and defer to him in matters of doctrine. (131)

As could be deduced from the above argument, the Bulgarian Exarchate Church contributed to the indoctrination of the Bulgarian population, and accelerated the Bulgarian uprising movement a few years later (when Bulgaria achieved full sovereignty in 1878). The gradual development of the Bulgarian nationalist movement, therefore, challenged Greek dominance over the Church hierarchy which "came to be resented by all non-Greek members" (Richard Clogg 10).

An emblematic religious figure prior to the Bulgarian National Revival was Paisius of Hilendar, a Bulgarian monk who might be regarded as the first to formulate the idea of national awakening of the Bulgarian nation through their differentiation from their Muslim rulers, and the Greek intellectuals who had spiritually invaded Bulgaria with the introduction of the Greek language and customs to Bulgarian society. Discussing the significance of Paisius of Hilendar as a mobiliser of the Bulgarian independence movement, Bozeva-Abazi claims that this Bulgarian monk made alarming remarks on a potential assimilation of the Bulgarian nation to Greek culture and bestowed considerable attention on the preservation of Bulgarian historic memory:

> Bulgarian historiography suggests that the period of Bulgarian national awakening began with Paisii and his appeal to the Bulgarian people to recall their glorious past, an appeal he used as a springboard to develop Bulgarian identity further. For Paisii, Bulgarians were all people who were Orthodox Christians and who spoke Bulgarian. The idea which made the monk from Hilendar influential and popular was his cyclical view of human history. If Bulgarians had shared a glorious past, they would certainly enjoy a bright future; therefore, they had to preserve their identity and resist any attempt to be assimilated. (69)

It is also worth emphasising that Paisius of Hilendar formulated a different hypothesis on proto-Bulgarian origins, since he put forward an

alternative viewpoint to the Hun Theory in his *Slavic-Bulgarian history* in 1762 by highlighting the Slavic element in Bulgarian culture, propagating the hypothesis that "Bulgarians as the Slavs who borrowed their ethnonym from the river Volga where they had resided before migrating to the Balkans" (Koloskov 1247).

On the basis of Paisius' early concerns on the preservation of Bulgarian language and religion, one can discern that the other key element in the shaping of Bulgarian national identity was its distinct linguistic situation compared with its Ottoman ruler and the neighbouring countries. The adoption of the Cyrillic alphabet by the Bulgarian nation during the medieval period impacted the forging of a Bulgarian nationalist ideology that sought to attribute to the nation a primordial role as diffusers of the Slavic language and ecclesiastical customs across the Balkan peninsula. Chelsey Norman refers to a Cyrillic orthography ideology that became an integral part of the Bulgarian nationalist rhetoric on Bulgarian cultural superiority in earlier periods of Christianity, thus stressing the holy mission of Bulgaria as protector of the Orthodox Church values within the realm of the Ottoman conquest, as

> the much like the year 681 CE Bulgarians' claim to the Cyrillic alphabet further roots national identity into a long and glorious history. Appealing to this historical longevity strengthens the nationalist ideology of Bulgaria while standard language and orthography ties all Bulgarians together into an imagined community that shares one nation, one language, and one culture. (5)

At a time when language was still perceived as a major factor for the classification of races and cultures, Bulgarians developed this Cyrillic orthography ideology which strengthened the country's presence in the Balkans, and provided its national cause with a more solid basis. Even though the Greek role in the development of the Cyrillic script could not be entirely silenced, due to the Bulgarian projection of the brothers Cyril and Methodius (of mixed Greek and Bulgarian origin) as the Bulgarian founders of the Slavic alphabet, the story behind the creation of the alphabet turned into one of the fundamental nation-building myths of the Bulgarian nation. According to Richard J. Crampton,

> One of the most salient features is the Bulgarian language and script. This script was first created by Cyril and Methodius. These brothers/monks came from Thessaloniki and were commissioned to create a script for the Bulgarian language that could be used in the Orthodox Church. They ultimately created the Glagolithic alphabet which was then reformed by Cyril's student Kliment of Ohrid. This reformed version was closer to the

> modern Cyrillic alphabet. Having a Slavic script allowed the Bulgarian Church to have autonomy from both the Greek and Roman Church but also allowed Bulgarians to understand their church services. (4)

In that respect, Bulgarian efforts to develop a standardised language, and diffuse an image of cultural longevity through the constant reference to the Cyrillic script, substantiate Benedict Anderson's claim that the European nationalist movements manifested themselves in the nineteenth century as 'one nation, one language, one culture' ideologies (19).

Apart from the Bulgarian linguistic nationalism, which brought into focus the Cyrillic script ideology in order to secure the nation's cultural position in the European map, Bernard Lory maintains that an anti-Turkish myth-making process was manifest through the oral epic tradition of the Bulgarians. This tradition constantly emphasised the tragic events that surrounded the Ottoman ruling of the country, considering that the

> motifs of "national sacrifice" and five "tragic centuries" marked by suffering and destruction is characteristic not only of Serbian folk poetry and historiography. In his study of these themes in Bulgaria, Bernard Lory examines the myth of five 'devastating' centuries of Ottoman rule and proves how deeply rooted in the Bulgarian national psychology is the notion of systematic Ottoman oppression, massacres and forced conversions of local populations. (8)

One can deduce from the above comment that Bulgarian national literature developed as an essentially anti-Ottoman set of texts, which revolved around the centuries of Ottoman oppression and highlighted the valiant aspect of the Bulgarian nation under a possible obliteration by its ruler. According to Lory, Bulgarian historiography and folklore culture did not depart from the literary conventions of other Balkan nations under the Ottoman yoke, namely the Serbians and the Greeks, who produced a bulk of folk poetry and nation literary works imbued with an anti-Ottoman ideology.[3]

Despite the strenuous efforts of Bulgarian nationalism to voice the desire of the Bulgarian nation to acquire full sovereignty and defy the Ottoman yoke, Bulgarian national literature did not receive international acclaim - contrary to the folk culture and literature of the neighbouring countries. A more systematic cultivation of Bulgarian historiography occurred during the Bulgarian National Revival, manifest from 1762

[3] Balgarsko natsionalno vazrazhdane (in Bulgarian)

through the contributions of Paisius of Hilendar until the country's independence in 1878 (Jan Blommaert and Jef Verschueren 5).

With reference to the specific period, it coincided with a remarkable socio-economic development of the Bulgarian nation under Ottoman rule, which was conducive to the national awakening of the people and the forging of a modern Bulgarian nationalism (Rumen Daskalov 10). Besides the socioeconomic dimension of the particular period, the so-called Bulgarian Renaissance was characterised by the production of literary works by authors such as Ivan Vazov and Hristo Botev, whose contribution led to the April Uprising of 1876. This, in turn, gave rise to the Russo-Turkish Wars of 1877-1878 (Daskalov 11).

Owing to its considerable duration, the National Revival could be distinguished into three main periods: from the late eighteenth century until the start of the nineteenth century, coinciding with the Bulgarian National Awakening; from the Ottoman Reforms of the 1820s until the Crimean War of the 1850s; and the last period spanning from the end of the Crimean War until the independence movement and the liberation of the country in 1878 (Crampton 5). As for the main characteristics of the nationalist movement, they pertained to the Cyrillic script and the autonomy of the Bulgarian Church from the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Concerning the first chapter of this volume, it concentrates on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *The Letters of Lady M. W. Montagu during the Embassy to Constantinople.* As an introductory text, Lady Montagu's travel narrative provides the reader with sporadic references to Bulgaria as a geographic location in the early eighteenth century. Lady Montagu's travelogue sheds light on the importance of Bulgarian peasantry as a major national component in pre-revolutionary Bulgaria, when the Bulgarian National Revival moment had not manifested itself.

Regarding the second chapter of the volume, Francis Hervé's travel text *a Residence in Greece and Turkey, with Notes of the Journey through Bulgaria, Servia, Hungary and the Balkan* concentrates on Bulgaria as a peripheral world that is remotely related to his Grecian tour. Anxious to pay a pilgrimage to Greece and European Turkey, the writer treats Bulgaria as a subordinate destination. Hervé's tendency to read Bulgarian culture in relation to ancient Greece constitutes one of the early attempts of British travellers to approach Bulgarian national identity, when Bulgarian historiography had not received any prominence to voice more vehemently the Bulgarian national cause.

In regard to the third chapter, Charles Boileau-Elliott's *Travels in the three Great Empires of Austria, Russia, and Turkey* constitutes one of the first attempts to define Bulgarian nationhood in alignment with a more

scientific, history-oriented perspective on the eve of the Crimean War. In his text, Boileau-Elliott introduces the Victorian reader to the Bulgarian Other, an image repeatedly evoked in his text to address the anti-Russian spirit that permeated British imagination before the outbreak of a series of wars between Russia and the Ottoman Empire.

With respect to the fourth chapter, Edmund Spencer's *Travels in European Turkey in 1850* criticises pan-Slavism and Filiki Eteria as a token of the Greek and Russian appropriation of Bulgarian political life. In addition, Spencer addresses major events surrounding Bulgarian nationhood prior to the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish Wars.

As pfor the fifth chapter, William Nassau Senior's *A Journal kept in Turkey and Greece in the Autumn of 1857, and the Beginning of 1858* is concerned with the image of Bulgaria after the Crimean War. In his narrative, Nassau Senior propagates an Anglo-Ottoman alliance against the rising tide or Russian expansionism, a sign of which is the Bulgarian national struggle for independence, persistently viewed as a violation of the pax Britannica in Europe.

With reference to the sixth chapter, it centres on Stanislas Graham Bower Saint-Clair and Charles Brophy's travel narrative *A Residence in Bulgaria: or, Notes on the Resources and Administration of Turkey*. This travelogue was produced a few years before the liberation of Bulgaria from the Ottoman Empire, and it achieved notoriety as a text which persistently demonised the Bulgarian national awakening. This text is of major importance, given that Bower Saint-Clair and Charles Brophy inaugurate a new image of Bulgaria as a modern dystopian locus, where the Rayah conspires to undermine the political and cultural foundations of Europe.

With regard to the seventh chapter, its primary focus is on Henry Charles Barkley's travel narrative *Between the Danube and black Sea; or, Five Years in Bulgaria (1876).* Barkley's voyage to Bulgaria triggers gendered perspectives to address the idea of womanhood and motherhood as national representations of Bulgarian nation-making. In his journey across Bulgaria, Barkley intersperses his text with utopian elements when addressing seminal components of Bulgarian nationhood.

The last chapter of this volume includes Herbert Baldwin's *War Photographer in Thrace*, documenting the clashes between independent Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire in the First Balkan War. Unlike all the other travelogues, Baldwin's text was produced after the independence of the country, concentrating on Bulgaria's transformation into an ascending military power. Baldwin touches upon the victories of the Bulgarian army, evoking the nation's self-projection as protectors of the Christian faith both in medieval times and in early twentieth century.

CHAPTER ONE

LADY MERRY WORTLEY MONTAGU: *THE LETTERS OF LADY M. W. MONTAGU DURING THE EMBASSY TO CONSTANTINOPLE,1716–1718*

The first chapter of the book opens with one of the most influential female writers of her time, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, born Mary Pierrepont in 1690. According to Sarah Josepha Hale, from her early childhood Lady Montegu possessed a genius that enabled her to easily acquire "elements of the Greek, Latin, and French languages with the greatest success" (vii). As argued by Hale, a token of Lady Montagu's writing skills can be discerned in her letters to her daughter, Lady Bute, which give a detailed account of her voyages as well as the "scenes and persons she met and observed. They show also her tender care for her daughter, and that the ties of domestic life were the sweetest to her heart" (xvi).

A key point in her life was her marriage to Edward Wortley Montagu, the ambassador to Turkey in 1716, which gave her the opportunity to visit European regions off the beaten track during a period in which voyages to unknown lands were overwhelmingly regarded as a "male enterprise" (Kassis 20). Her best-known travelogue was entitled *Letters of the Right Honourable Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: Written during her Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa, to Persons of Distinctions, Men of Letters and in Different Parts of Europe*, penned at a time when she resided with her husband in Constantinople. Thanks to her travel pursuits, she received European prominence as an eighteenth-century Grand Tourist. She died in 1762.

With respect to her voyage across the Balkan provinces, it coincides with a tumultuous period in the history of the region, given that the travel writer witnesses a Serbian insurrection in the city of Belgrade against the Austrian regime which accelerated the formation of the Kingdom of Serbia (Kassis 16). Inevitably, Lady Montagu reflects on her own narrative

position as a British traveller, who undertakes a journey into the wilderness of the European East. Upon entering the city of Carlowitz, she immediately refers to a battle scene that stimulates her view of the Balkans as a dystopian terra incognita, where acts of violence and military clashes occur on a daily basis:

> This little digression has interrupted my telling you we passed over the fields of Carlowitz, where the last great victory was obtained by Prince Eugene over the Turks. The marks of that glorious bloody day are yet recent, the field being yet strewed with the skulls and carcasses of unburied men, horses and camels. (131-32)

Drawing upon this extract, the writer is immediately struck by Lady Montagu's stress on the perilous character of her journey, which is beset with frequent clashes between different imperial coalitions such as the Austrian against the Ottoman Empire, focusing on the Christian inhabitants' revolts against the Ottoman rule. Her reading of the European Orient typifies the representations of the Balkans as "a zone of backwardness, barbarism and violence which threatened to engulf the civilized and democratic West" (Andrew Hammond 135). At the same time, the writer's interest in highlighting the dangers involved in a journey to the Balkans is closely related to the Orientalist view of the region as a location "discursively dangerous in ways that lead to our perpetuate oppression" (Saad Nawras Baradan 34) - that is, the notion of Otherness comes to the fore as a key ingredient of a British voyage to the Balkan peninsula.

Lady Montagu moves on to explore Bulgaria, as she approaches Constantinople, focusing her gaze upon Bulgarian peasantry. According to the writer, Bulgarian peasants seem dirty and destitute, systematically forced to abandon their abodes to save themselves from the atrocities of the Turkish army:

> At these mountains we lay at the little village Kiskoi, wholly inhabited by Christians, as all the peasants of Bulgaria are. Their houses are nothing but little huts, raised of dirt baked in the sun; and they leave them, and fly into the mountains, some months before the march of the Turkish army, who would else entirely ruin them, by driving away their whole flocks. (76)

Interestingly enough, in her portrayal of the Bulgarians Lady Montagu throws a sympathetic glance at the hardships of the peasants, while she does not hesitate to stress their decadent aspect as well as their loyalty to the Christian faith as important components of their nationhood. At a time when Bulgaria was solely mentioned as a geographical term, entirely devoid of cultural or political significance (Todorova 26), Montagu makes a direct

reference to the difficulties attached to the lifestyle of the Bulgarian peasant who constantly lives under the threat of a potential forced conversion or extermination. What is more, it is equally significant that Lady Montagu chooses to address the status of the Bulgarians as a Christian nation, done in order to draw a distinction between the Bulgarian subjects to the Sultan with their Muslim rulers. This allusion to the Christian faith of the Bulgarian peasantry adheres to the eighteenth-century presentation of the Bulgarians as simple Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire, when the racial or cultural mapping of the Bulgarians did not systematically concern the British travel canon on the Balkans (Todorova 77).

Lady Montagu's remark on the position of the Bulgarian peasants as endangered Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire is in tune with the early manifestations of Bulgarian national identity; as Bozeva-Abazi contends, "most of the people who were to become conscious of themselves as Bulgarians and Serbs saw themselves as peasants and Christians" (12). In that respect, Lady Montagu's early reference to the Bulgarians conforms to the self-identifications of the Bulgarian nation prior to its independence from the Ottomans and the acquisition of a sovereign state.

After formulating her initial comment on the general condition of the Bulgarian nation, the writer moves on to depict the Bulgarians as industrious agriculturists and husbandmen, who can freely engage in the cultivation of wide tracts of land:

> for such vast tracts of land lying in common, they have the liberty of sowing what they please, and are generally very industrious husbandmen. I drank here several sorts of delicious wine. The women dress themselves in a great variety of colored glass beads, and are not ugly, but of a tawny complexion. (76)

According to Kermal I. Karpat, Bulgarians had plenty of opportunities to excel in agriculture and husbandry within the Ottoman Empire, assuming an active role in the economy of the Empire due to their fertile lands and strong economic spirit. They gradually replaced nations, such as the Greeks, who sought to defy the Ottoman rule and regain their sovereignty (50).

In addition, Lady Montagu's emphasis on the Bulgarian peasant as a key component of Bulgarian national identity stems from the important role of Bulgarian peasantry in the forging of a distinct identity outside the main urban centres which were foreign to the authentic Bulgarian culture (Krassimira Daskalova 2).

On the whole, Lady Montagu's travelogue obviously functions as a pace-setting travel narrative, which contained both stereotypes and new

ideas on the Balkans from a West European perspective. For one thing, the writer introduces the reader to the conventional view of the Balkans as part of the savage European East, which constitutes a peril to the average British traveller. For another thing, notwithstanding her visit to Bulgaria in a period which preceded the Bulgarian National Revival of the nineteenth century, she successfully summarises religion and the peasantry as fundamental aspects of the pre-revolutionary Bulgarian nation-building agenda, which gradually mobilised Bulgarian peasants to acquire a more solid national identity. From that perspective, Lady Montagu's travelogue corroborates Bozeva-Abazi's argument that "incapable of subscribing to notions of national loyalty they could not understand, [Bulgarians] peasants invariably defined themselves in terms of religion, locality and occupation" (265).

CHAPTER TWO

FRANCIS HERVÉ: *A RESIDENCE IN GREECE AND TURKEY: WITH NOTES OF THE JOURNEY THROUGH BULGARIA, SERVIA, HUNGARY, AND THE BALKAN*

The French-born British traveller Francis Hervé was born in 1781, many decades after the publication of Lady Montagu's travelogue. Despite having received prominence for works such as *A Residence in Greece and Turkey, with notes of the journey through Bulgaria, Servia, Hungary and the Balkan* (1837), *How to Enjoy Paris in 1842*, *A Companion and Monitor* (1842) and *Memoir and Reminiscences of the French Revolution* (1838), he was also recognised as an artist who accompanied his travel texts and memoirs with artwork and sketches (Kassis 20). He died in 1850.

The focus of this chapter is on his travelogue *A Residence in Greece and Turkey, with notes of the journey through Bulgaria, Servia, Hungary and the Balkan*, written after undertaking a journey to the Balkans in 1833 with the aim of concentrating on the Greek political and cultural developments following the independence of the Greek people from the Ottoman yoke. Hervé's original purpose was to visit European Turkey; however, as the writer states, he changed his plans due to becoming intrigued by the Greek War of Independence and motivated by a pilgrimage to the ancient Greek sites:

> I began to listen to the very eloquent persuasion of the General and his family, to relinquish my intentions of pursuing my voyage to Turkey, in favour of a visit to the still more classic territory of Greece. (9)

Hervé's infatuation with Greece, compared with other Christian nations in Southern Europe, is intimately linked to the Philhellenic movement that surged during the country's struggle for independence. It also stems from the growing interest of British travellers in countries emerging as ascending military powers, defying the Ottoman Empire in the first quarter of the

nineteenth century. As maintained by Todorova, Hervé's eagerness to pay homage to the cradle of the ancient Greek civilisation typifies the attitude of Western travellers of the 1830s, who showed no interest in exploring other regions which still formed part of the Ottoman Empire, namely Bulgaria:

> there was no special interest in this [Bulgarian] population (as for example there always had been in the Greek because of the interest in Ancient Greece, its language .and culture, later reinforced by the Philhellenic movement; or, in the Turks, their manners, way of living, institutions, language, etc. because of the political presence of the Ottoman Empire. (Todorova 15)

Far from a mere coincidence, the writer chooses to structure his travelogue based on the two countries that stimulate his appetite for antiquarian pursuits and novel geopolitical conditions, Turkey and Greece. However, as has been pointed out by Kassis, Hervé's comments are not solely confined to the Greek and Turkish context; the writer adorns his travelogue with observations on the Serbian and Bulgarian nations that foreground the "Saidian term of Orientalism which reinforces the idea of Western cultural superiority over the backward and static Orient, that quickly transformed into a wider view of all the alien cultures as 'Oriental'" (22).

Todorova's point on the overshadowing of Bulgaria by Greece and Turkey becomes obvious when Hervé explicitly mentions his desire to witness some of the remains of the ancient Greek sites in Philippopolis, alleging that in Bulgaria there is nothing worthy to stimulate the antiquarian interest of the European traveller except for Trajan's Gate, found in a decrepit state:

> You will expect I should say something to you of the antiquities of this country; but there are few remains of ancient Greece. We passed near the piece of an arch, which is commonly called Trajan's Gate, from a supposition that he made it to shut up the passage over the mountains between Sophia and Philippopolis. But I rather believe it the remains of some triumphal arch (though I could not see any inscription); for if that passage had been shut up, there are many others that would serve for the march of an army. (76)

Visiting Bulgaria at a time when the National Revival movement had not evolved into a systematic nation-building agenda, Hervé appears to depreciate all the cultural vestiges that do not pertain to either the ancient Greek or the Ottoman cultures. His reluctance to address some of the unique