

The Eastern Question, Western Europe, and the Balkans in Fin-de-Siècle Literature

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Dedication

To my Grandparents.

Abstract

Traditionally, the British Empire is studied through the lens of British imperial rule in Asia, Africa, or the Americas, while scholars brush aside what was the vortex of British foreign policy in the second half of the nineteenth century—the Eastern Question, or the question of what to do with the Southeastern European subject peoples of the “decaying” Ottoman Empire. Reading closely late nineteenth-century British and Balkan expository prose and fiction that deal exclusively with the Eastern Question, I demonstrate that in the second half of the nineteenth century, Britain’s foreign policy was formed not only in the context of its interests overseas, but also, and perhaps more significantly, in the context of other existing empires in central Europe, as well as in the near east, such as the Russian and the Ottoman.

A defining concern of this dissertation is also to demonstrate that the Balkans’ image of the *other within Europe* is largely a post-Enlightenment Western European construction that was discursively hardened at the end of the nineteenth century by both Western European and Balkan intellectuals. In discursive terms, I claim, this image was virtually parallel to Orientalist constructions of Western Europe’s colonial territories in Asia or Africa. My claim stems from reading in dialogue late nineteenth-century Western European texts (Bernard Shaw’s *Arms and the Man* and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*) and Balkan texts (Aleko Konstantinov’s *Bai Ganio* and Dobri Voinikov’s *The Misunderstood Civilization*). I position these texts in relation to a critical discourse of nationalism and empire, as well as examine how these texts reflect or reconstruct these notions’ accepted meanings and connotations in the second half of the nineteenth century.

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Who is European and Who is Not

Upon Bulgaria's admission into the European Union (EU) on January 1, 2007, a Bulgarian friend of mine made the following remark: "Now that we have become members of the EU, it will either dissolve or we will become the first nation in the history of the EU to lose its membership." Underlying my friend's wry joke—which may very well prove prophetic—was the suggestion that Bulgaria was not ready to "join" Europe, that it was the bad student who would not only slow the learning and progress of the rest of the class, but also disrupt its normative behavior and potentially destroy it. Such an opinion is hardly new or an outlier in Bulgarian public discourse because it rests firmly on a long tradition of imagining Bulgaria as a European outsider. While European by geography, rarely has Bulgaria been viewed or classified as a European state, including by the Bulgarians themselves, who are yet to stop saying that they are going to Europe, when they refer to a trip to France, Britain, or Germany. The closest Bulgaria has been to European status in European historiography is when it was called Eastern-European (some still label it so), but that was an appellation mostly used during the years of the Cold War to emphasize Bulgaria's membership in the Eastern Bloc, rather than its European status as such. Both before and after the Cold War, Bulgaria has most frequently been categorized as Balkan, an appellation that has come to have a number of denotations, none of which, however, is a synonym of European.

Why name a geographically European state, such as Bulgaria, Balkan, and not European; what makes a state Balkan; and what are the implications of calling a state Balkan? This dissertation searches for answers to these questions by looking at patterns of representation of the Balkans in both Western European and Balkan literature from

the end of the nineteenth century—the period that in many ways not only defined, but cemented the Balkans’ status as the *internal other* of Europe. Western Europe, I argue, produced an image of the Balkans that not only echoed, but at times openly mirrored that of the “backward,” “inept,” “ignorant” colonial other, which is regularly found in post-Enlightenment Western colonial discourse. Fin-de siècle Balkan intellectuals only added force to that image, for whether they agreed or disagreed with its denotations and implications, they imagined their own identity through or in relation to that image.

The distinction between Balkan and European, not as geographical designators, but as abstract notions, as concepts, is hardly debatable today. As defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, “Balkan” “alludes to the relations (often characterized by threatened hostilities) of the Balkan states to each other or the rest of Europe.” “European,” meanwhile, according to one *OED* definition, “designat[es] a notional or prospective union or association of the European countries.” The denotative difference between the two concepts is obvious: “Balkan” implies discord and division through force and opposition, while “European” implies unity. But this is only one of the numerous differences that distinguish the two concepts. In the post-Enlightenment period, both concepts developed meanings that were almost mutually exclusive, and thus became signature products in Western Europe’s arsenal for promoting its claims to cultural, political, social, and economic superiority.

For centuries, Western European literature and public discourse have generally produced the Balkans as Europe’s other within, as the under-grown and uncultured distant cousin, who gives the rest of the European family a bad name. Such was not the case, however, when the word “Balkan” was still a neologism in European

vocabularies. Most historians agree that the word was introduced in Europe by the Ottomans. According to Maria Todorova's detailed etymological account of the word, "Balkan" can be found in European texts as early as 1490 in the writings of Filippo Buonaccorsi Callimaco, an Italian humanist and writer who visited the Ottoman capital on diplomatic missions. The word "Balkan," Callimaco observed, was Turkish in origin and used among the Southeast European subjects of the Ottoman Empire as a designation for the mountain range that stretched all the way from the black Sea to the Western border of Bulgaria (Todorova 22). In its conception, then, "Balkan" was simply another word for a mountain range.

In English-language literature, the word appears much later. As Todorova explains, it was at the end of the eighteenth century that British travel writers, such as John Morritt, introduced the word "Balkan" to British reading audiences (22). At the time, "Balkan" was still used interchangeably with the old, or what some Europeans considered to be the classical name of the mountain range: Haemus. The trend of using "Balkan" and Haemus interchangeably continued even when from a geographical appellation of a mountain range, "Balkan" grew into a signifier for the whole peninsula on which the mountain range was situated. The expanded geographical role of the word "Balkan" is usually credited to the Austrian geographer August Zeune. In his *Goea: Versuch Einer Wissenschaftlichen Erdbeschreibung* (1809),¹ Zeune suggested that the European territory south of the Haemus be named *Balkanhalbinsel* ("Balkan Peninsula") and gave it the following geographical contours:

¹ *Goea: Toward a Scientific Earthography* (my translation). In Greek mythology, "Goea," also spelled "Gea" and "Gaea" in English, is "the personification of the Earth as a Goddess" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*).

In the north this Balkan Peninsula is divided from the rest of Europe by the long mountain chain of the Balkans, or the former Albanus, Scardus, Haemus, which, to the northwest joins the Alps in the small Istrian Peninsula, and to the east fades away into the Black Sea in two branches. (qtd. in Todorova 26)

The “new” name did not gain immediate popularity in British or Western European writings about the peninsula. “Balkan” was still used mainly as a geographical appellation, vying for discursive dominance with other appellations of the peninsula, which either signified the Ottoman presence in it—“European Turkey”—or its ethnic make-up—“Greek Peninsula” and “South-Slavic Peninsula.”

Not until well into the second half of the nineteenth century, especially during the 1870s and 1880s, did “Balkan” become the preferred geographical designation among those who wrote of the peninsula and the various peoples that inhabited it. During that period, as Vesna Goldsworthy perceptively observes, the word Balkan “fulfilled a need for a short-hand reference for the new states crystallizing in the territory previously known as Turkey in Europe” (3). Three Balkan states had already won autonomy or independence from the Ottoman Empire before the last quarter of the nineteenth century. By 1830, Greece had become an independent state and Serbia had gained autonomy, and in the following decades both countries and Romania, which had never been under Ottoman occupation, wrote their own constitutions. In the 1850s and 60s, independence and nationalist movements among the people of the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire grew bigger and stronger, culminating in a number of insurrections against the Ottomans. After long and often bloody struggles, in the 1870s,

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Bulgaria won autonomy, leaving only a few Balkan states, including Macedonia and Albania, under the direct rule of the Porte.

Geographically, by the end of the nineteenth century, the adjective “Balkan” became inextricably associated with the European territories the Ottoman Empire used to or continued to control.

It was towards the end of the nineteenth century that “Balkan” became an ideologically loaded concept as well. What was originally an innocent geographical appellation, a Turkish word for mountain, turned into an abstract notion that signified, put simply, Europe’s other from within. The Balkans actually acquired a status very similar to what Edward Said defines as the Orient in his seminal text, *Orientalism*. The Orient, Said argues, is the ideological product of Orientalism, which he defines as the post-enlightenment Western

corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.

(3)

Orientalism, then, is an epistemology that regulates the relationship between Europe and the Orient, a relationship that is based on clear distinctions between Westerner and Oriental, or the “other.” As Said demonstrates through close reading of numerous eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Western European texts, French and English in particular, in contrast to the Westerner, whom he persistently imagines as progressive, rational, and cultured, the Orientalist typically imagines the Oriental as primitive,

backward, incapable of self-rule, and/or as cruel, bloodthirsty, and barbaric. To a high degree, “Balkan” came to denote what “Oriental” already did in Western discourse of the post-Enlightenment period, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century, when, because of Western geopolitical and economic interests in the Balkans, the images of the Balkans became more numerous, sharper, and more detailed. Similar to “Oriental,” during this period, “Balkan” typically stood for and indeed exemplified the opposite of civilized, modern, progressive, and other such positively charged qualifiers, all of which Western Europe had preserved for itself.

The apparent denotative similarities between “Balkan” and “Oriental,” as abstract notions, have led a number of scholars, including Milica Bakić-Hayden, Robert M. Hayden, Vesna Goldsworthy, and Andrew Hammond, to write about the Balkans through Saidean lenses, as if the Balkans were more or less the same entity as the Orient. To Bakić-Hayden and Hayden, for instance, the relationship between Europe and the Balkans is only a variation of the relationship between Europe and what Said identifies as the Orient. In an article that focuses on representations of Yugoslavia primarily in Yugoslav writings, they claim that

Orientalism can be applied within Europe itself, between Europe ‘proper’ and those parts of the continent that were under Ottoman (hence Oriental) rule. The evaluation implied by this distinction can be seen in the rhetoric typically applied to the latter: Balkan mentality, Balkan primitivism, Balkanization, Byzantine, Orthodoxy. (3)

What Bakić-Hayden and Hayden propose here is that “Balkan” and “Oriental” be treated as similar in meaning concepts. In their view, Western European rhetoric about

the Balkans is in nature and logic a branch, an extension of Western Europe's rhetoric about the Orient. Thus they read Western European discourse about the Balkans as largely embedded in, sometimes even directly borrowing from, the centuries-old tradition and tropes of Orientalist discourse.

Not everyone, however, has found the "Saidean approach" to be an effective framework for studying Western discourse about the Balkans. The most famous and vocal critic of this approach is Todorova. Introducing the notion of "Balkanism" in her influential *Imagining the Balkans*, she argues that "Unlike orientalism, which is a notion about imputed opposition, balkanism is a discourse about an imputed ambiguity" (17). The Manichean model Said proposes in *Orientalism*—self versus other, or European (Western) versus Oriental (Eastern)—proves too rigid, according to Todorova, to accommodate the *quasi-other* status (which is, neither European nor Oriental) Western European intellectuals usually ascribed to the Balkans. She thus identifies Balkanism as different from Orientalism, as an independent Western rhetorical praxis that is not "merely a sub-species of orientalism" (8).

More often than not, especially so before the end of the nineteenth century, because of their geo-political positioning, religious and racial identity, and non-colonial status, the Balkans, Todorova claims, were treated similarly to how the "Western lower classes" were treated in Western European discourse. As she expressively puts it, one could find "a virtual parallel between the East End of London and the East End of Europe" (18). In Todorova's view, the West perceived and represented the Balkans in terms that distinguished them from Said's Orient. Along with the negative constructions of Balkan identity, one could, as Todorova shows, often find a number of positive

constructions as well in Western rhetoric. If, then, in the eyes of the West, the Orientals were barbaric and uncivilized, the Balkan people were only under-civilized or improperly civilized, mainly because they were colonized by Orientals, the Ottoman Empire. The Balkans, Todorova contends, were construed not as the West's "incomplete other" but as its "incomplete self" (18), a construction that she believes is due chiefly to the Balkans' racial and religious make-up: white Christians.

One has to agree with Todorova that the Balkans are different in a number of ways from Said's Orient: racially—the Balkan people are almost exclusively white; geographically—the Balkans are situated within continental Europe; and religiously—a large portion of the Balkan population is Christian, Orthodox and Catholic. Additionally, the Balkan territories have had a history that is in many respects different from that of the territories Said studies in his text: notably, the Balkans have never been a British or a French colony, a factor that plays a crucial role in Said's argument in *Orientalism* that Western Orientalism produced the East as the West's irreconcilable, complete other. It is imperative for Todorova, therefore, that Balkan historiographers not only acknowledge these prominent differences between the Balkans and the Orient, but also abandon Said's Orientalist framework as a way of studying Western representations of the Balkans. Balkanism, Todorova concludes, should be treated as a different Western intellectual project from Orientalism.

To account for that difference, Todorova offers an alternative approach to the Saidean, which would not treat the East or the West as homogenous entities. She calls her approach "national," because it focuses on examining each Western nation's

discourse about the Balkans as an individual case. Here is why Todorova favors the “national” approach over the Saidean:

[E]ven within the different [Western] national stereotypes, informed as they were by their respective political realities and political and intellectual discourses, there was a great diversity of opinion and even greater variety of nuance. Moreover, within the whole natural spectrum of positive and negative assessments, one could rarely, if ever, encounter entirely disparaging or scornful judgments addressed to the [Balkan] region as a whole, let alone attempts to exclude it from the fold of civilization. (115)

Dressed in clear and direct idiom, the claim of this passage is hard to misread: the West’s treatment of the Balkans was not wholly negative or positive, but characterized by ambiguity and indeterminacy. Leaving almost no room for questioning the claim’s validity, the interjection of “if ever” in the second sentence enhances even further the already powerful claim that Western assessments of the Balkans generally culminate in ambiguous judgments. The Balkans’ indeterminate status in pre-twentieth century Western rhetoric—as the threshold between the East (Orient) and West (Western Europe), a site where Western Europe met its *true* other, the Oriental East—is, according to Todorova, a defining characteristic of the region, which must be given due attention in Balkan historiography.

Like Todorova, Katherine E. Fleming, another critic of the “Saidean approach,” questions the reliability of “grafting” the premises of the Saidean model onto Balkan

historiography. While she critiques Goldsworthy's use of the Saidean model as a framework for studying Western attitudes towards the Balkans, Fleming writes:

The distinct, particular and myriad geographical, cultural and historical factors (pre- and post-imperial) that are the precise cause of the ambiguous relationship between the Balkans and Western Europe are too easily glossed over by the mere substitution of an "imaginary" colonialism for the real thing. Such factors constitute precisely the terrain that is most rich with theoretical possibility, and through careful study of them, Balkan historiography holds the potential to make a major contribution to the ways in which some of history's most basic categories of inquiry are theorized. (1223)

"Liminality," as Fleming points out later in her article, is one of those "categories" that needs more scholarly attention, especially when considered in relation to Balkan historiography. Favoring a historical reading of the Balkans as "liminal"—between East and West—Fleming critiques those scholars whose eagerness to employ a Saidean framework leads them to erroneously attribute a wholly Eastern status to the Balkans.

But why is it so important to highlight the Balkans' "quasi-civilized" or "liminal" status in Western discourse? Both Todorova and Fleming fail to answer that question and thus fail to consider the ultimate significance of the "liminal" status of the Balkans to Western European understandings and representations of the Balkans. Notably, however, they concede in their writings that even the most "positive" Western representations of the Balkans, such as Gladstone's, for instance, did not dare to treat the Balkans as one with, as an equal of Western Europe. Is, then, their assertion that the

Balkans were produced as a “liminal” rather than an “oriental” space an attempt to show that the Balkans were more European than Oriental, or that Western European writers at times exhibited an affinity for those Orientals who had fair skin and bowed to a Christian God? If that were the case, one must wonder whether Todorova’s and Fleming’s insistence on reading the Balkans as “privileged” in Western rhetoric—as Near East, but not middle East or East—is not inadvertently practicing Orientalism. For, rather than expose the West’s imagining of the Balkans as Eastern, as the *other*, even if within Europe, their arguments remain at the level of showing that the West imagined the Balkans as the most Western part of East/Orient.

In their desire to emphasize the point that the West wrote about the Balkans “ambiguously,” that there was not a “homogenous and monolithic” Western discourse about the Balkans, Todorova and Fleming underestimate the *absence* in that same discourse of statements that treat the Balkans as fully European. By privileging in their writings the “ambivalence” of Western discourse about the Balkans, they seem to render that discourse innocent and candidly confused, devoid of underlying intention and ideology. Such an argument is dangerously close to sanctioning the West as a *patron* of the Balkans, who not only understood the Balkans as superior to the Orient, but authorized and recorded their superiority. One can develop, I think, a better understanding of this ostensibly “ambivalent” rhetoric of the West by closely reading it in relation to concrete Western political policies and practices directly regarding the Balkans. Those practices and policies, as I demonstrate in the first part of my dissertation, characteristically do not fail to serve the geopolitical interests of the West in the Balkans, or to recognize the superior status of the West to the Balkans. In *both*

“the positive and negative [Western] assessments” of the Balkans, the West is consistently presented as the ultimate decider of the fate of the Balkans, and the Balkans must simply agree to whatever the West thinks is best for them.

Liminality, moreover, is a concept that depends ontologically on the East/West divide. Divorced from that divide, the Balkans’ liminal status, which Todorova and Fleming defend with such determination, becomes futile, as the Balkans would then be simply Balkans, not a “bridge,” a “threshold,” or a “liminal” space. The concept of liminality as a tool for interpreting the Balkans is certainly useful in Balkan historiography, particularly because it forces scholars to pay attention to the Balkans’ specific place in Western discourse, to their idiosyncrasies. Nevertheless, conceptually, “liminality” cannot operate outside of the Saidean model; it needs Said’s “rigid” dichotomy—East versus West—in order to be meaningful, for it occupies the space between the East and the West. Paradoxically, as they critique Said’s model for its inability to accommodate the Balkans’ *difference*, Todorova and Fleming are actually asserting that model’s legitimacy. Even though useful as a model for understanding Western views of how the Balkans position or rank in relation to the East/Orient, “liminality” is even more useful, I think, for understanding the West’s imagination of the Balkans.

This dissertation, then, aims at showing that while the West did at times imagine the Balkans as “better” than the Orient, it routinely employed and drew on tropes from Orientalist discourse to ascribe to the Balkans an inferior, non-European status. That these tropes are often strikingly similar to those Said and postcolonial theorists have found employed in Western European representations of the Orient is not a mere

coincidence, but, I argue, a reflection of Western Europe's inability to operate outside of the "us-versus-the-inferior-other" paradigm. As Bakić-Hayden remarks in response to Todorova's criticism of the "Saidean approach" to the Balkans, "While it is important to recognize the specific rhetoric of balkanism, it would be difficult to understand it outside the overall orientalist context since it shares an underlying logic and rhetoric with orientalism" (920). The principal argument of this dissertation resonates with Bakić-Hayden's words, as it relies mainly on textual evidence from fin-de siècle British literature to demonstrate that Balkanism, like Orientalism, consistently served as an ideology for promoting and preserving the superiority of Western European values and culture. Balkanism, I agree with Todorova, is different from Orientalism, but only in degree, not in kind. Indeed, the Balkans were typically imagined and presented through the lenses of a sovereign, superior Western consciousness, which, to use Said's words, was "governed not simply by empirical reality but by a battery of desires, repressions, investments, and projections" (6).

More so than at any other point in the history of European literature, at the end of the nineteenth century, "Balkan," like "Oriental," became a substitute term for backwardness, cultural deficiency, inability to self-rule, and barbarism. A close analysis of the rhetorical strategies and textual aesthetics of late nineteenth-century British expository prose and fiction reveals an image of the Balkans that is not wholly Eastern/Oriental, but caught between the East/Orient and West. Yet, more often than not, the "privileged" liminal status the West granted the Balkans was no less degrading and patronizing than the unprivileged one they typically ascribed to the East/Orient. While Western European nineteenth-century writers, the British in particular, did

recognize the Balkan people as “hard-working,” “frugal,” good Christians, they never failed to recognize either those people’s deficient nature and incapacity for becoming full-fledged Europeans. The Balkans were thus typically presented as the darkest corner of Europe, similar in nature to European colonies in Africa or Asia. Whether in travel literature, expository prose, or popular fiction, the Balkan people were generally portrayed as lacking; at best, they were portrayed as “wannabe European.”

The three parts that constitute this dissertation look at how the Balkans emerged and were produced as the “other” within Europe in the writings of both Western European and Balkan intellectuals. The first part examines the historical, social and political background against which Balkan discourse was constructed and developed at the end of the nineteenth century. In this part, I introduce the Balkans through the lenses of the enormously influential in modern European politics Eastern Question—a predominantly geopolitical question of how to deal with the Southeast European, Balkan subject peoples of the “decaying” Ottoman Empire. I ask several fundamental questions: how did the Eastern Question become a question for Western Europe; what were its implications throughout the ages; and why did it become such an important issue for Western Europe at the end of the nineteenth century?

While it had been continually relegated to the periphery of Western European politics ever since the Ottoman Empire acquired large territories in Eastern Europe in the early centuries of the second millennium, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Eastern Question became a pressing and central issue on the agendas of Western European politicians. A particularly illustrative example for the enormous influence the Eastern Question exerted on fin-de-siècle Western European politics is the so-called

Bulgarian Agitation, a social and political movement in Britain, which produced close to three hundred texts in response to the Ottoman massacre of thousands of Bulgarians after their uprising in April 1876. The Agitation became an impetus for change in both internal and foreign policies in Britain: it played a major role in British elections in 1881 as well as impelled Britain to revise its long-standing foreign policy of supporting economically, politically, and even militarily (during the Crimean War) the Ottoman Empire. The major purpose of this first part, then, is to reexamine the importance of the Eastern Question to the study of the British Empire and, in doing so, revise the current understandings of the relation between Victorian Britain and the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire. A defining concern of the first part is also to demonstrate that in the second half of the nineteenth century, British foreign policy was formed not only in the context of its interests overseas, but also, and perhaps more significantly, in the context of other empires, such as the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman, all of which had explicit geopolitical interests in the Balkans.

The second part of this dissertation aims at showing how Britain's geopolitical interests in the Balkans seeped onto the pages of late nineteenth-century British literature. More specifically, in the two chapters of this part, I read Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* respectively as participating in the establishment and perpetuation of the image of the Balkans as the "other within Europe." I argue that in both texts, Balkan territories function as a backdrop for the deployment of Westerncentric ideology. Shaw and Stoker saturate the Balkans with the Manichean tropes of colonial discourse to assert the Balkans' status as the "other"—not as the "savage" Indian or African "other," but as an improperly civilized "other"—

within the “civilized,” “progressive” West. Ultimately, *Arms and the Man* and *Dracula* not only reassure, but perpetuate the claimed superiority of the West over the Balkans; the West is the norm, and the Balkans are judged and portrayed according to it.

The third part of this dissertation studies Balkan intellectuals’ responses to Western European discourses about them. I focus my attention on two nineteenth-century Balkan texts: Dobri Voinikov’s *The Misunderstood Civilization* (1871) and Aleko Konstantinov’s *Bai Ganio* (1894)² (as yet, neither text has been translated in English). Specifically, I examine how these texts internalize Western discourse about the Balkans, how they assimilate or oppose its claims and arguments. Studying the social, political, and cultural discursive trends through which these texts represent both the Balkans and Western Europe, I argue that the West, even though physically (as a colonizer) and institutionally absent in Bulgaria, where both texts are set, managed to infiltrate the minds of the Bulgarian intellectuals—most frequently through Russian translations of Western literature—and instill a desire in them to engage and interact with it, whether to reject it as a model in the construction of their identity, as Voinikov does in *The Misunderstood Civilization*, or to embrace it as such, as Aleko³ does in *Bai Ganio*. As my readings demonstrate, there is a direct correspondence between how the Bulgarians and the British imagined Balkan and European identities. Both Aleko’s and Voinikov’s texts testify that the Bulgarians imagined their own identity through or in relation to Western formulations of what it means to be civilized.

² The translation of Voinikov’s title is mine. All translations from Bulgarian in this dissertation are mine unless specified otherwise.

³ It is a widely accepted practice among Bulgarian scholars to refer to Aleko Konstantiov as Aleko.

In conclusion to the last part, I develop a framework for establishing a dialogue between fin-de-siècle British/Western European and Bulgarian/Balkan texts. What makes one European was a question that both Western European and Balkan intellectuals discussed in their writings at the end of the nineteenth century. It was mainly the Western Europeans who controlled the answers to that question, however. While they participated in the discussion, the Balkan intellectuals abided by the rules and regulations the West had already established for them, even though these rules and regulations certified the Balkans as non-European. In doing so, the Balkan intellectuals became complicit in their own marginalization as Europe's other from within, for not only did they not debunk the Western European model for European identity, but employed and reproduced it in their own writings as a way to interpret and judge Balkan culture and identity.

This dissertation, in brief, attempts to demonstrate that the Balkans' image of the *other within Europe* is largely a post-Enlightenment Western European construction that was discursively hardened at the end of the nineteenth century by both Western European and Balkan intellectuals. As the earlier-quoted words of my Bulgarian friend suggest, the negative reputation the Balkans acquired at the time as the backward and uncultured corner of Europe, is still alive and kicking today. More significantly, it is still capable of posing as legitimate the question of "Are the Balkans European?" Apparently, Western Europe, or what has been historically constructed as the "true" Europe in both Western European and Balkan discourses, is still the norm according to which Bulgarians and other Balkan peoples gauge their own Europeaness. In 2007 not one, but two Balkan states became members of the EU—Bulgaria and Romania. How

their membership will affect public and cultural perceptions of the Balkans still remains to be seen.

Part I

The British Empire Revisited Through the Lens of the Eastern Question

“[T]he Eastern Question is once more on the European ‘*ordre du jour*,’ a fact not astonishing for those who are acquainted with history.”

“Whenever the revolutionary hurricane has subsided for a moment, one ever-recurring question is sure to turn up: the eternal ‘*Eastern Question*.’”
(The excerpts are from an article Karl Marx published in the *New York Times* on April 7, 1853.)

Eastern Europe, especially the Balkans, has been and continues to be neglected by scholars of the British Empire. More often than not, the British Empire is studied through the lens of British imperial rule in Asia, Africa, or the Americas, while scholars brush aside what was, in fact, the vortex of British foreign policy in the second half of the nineteenth century—the Eastern Question, or the question of what to do with the Southeastern European subject peoples of the “decaying” Ottoman Empire. As Marx’s above-quoted words reveal, the Eastern Question had a long history in Western European politics. That history, as Marx demonstrates in the article from which these quotations are taken, exposes a recurring phenomenon in Western European politics: that whenever they had to deal with the Eastern Question, the *only* strategy the Western European powers employed was to “Keep up the *status quo* in Turkey!”⁴

Indeed, since the Ottoman Empire conquered large portions of Eastern Europe in the early teens of the second millennium, that part of the Old Continent had been a subject that, with a few exceptions, was all but swept under the rug of Western

⁴ This article is only one of more than one hundred articles and letters Marx wrote in the 1850s for the *New York Times* on the subject of the Eastern Question.

European politics. The West was happy to maintain the current *status quo* as long as it was not bothered by the Ottoman Empire. As Malcolm Yapp puts it, the powers of the West were mainly interested in preserving their “prestige” and basically ignored what was happening in South-Eastern Europe or how the Ottoman Empire treated its subject peoples:

Neither the protection of the routes of empire nor economic interest nor even the balance of power in Europe weighed, in the end, against prestige. In order that they might remain great, Great Powers demanded to be treated as great. [. . .] The integrity of the Ottoman Empire was like a bank on which the Great Powers could draw to make the balance of their prestige. (92)

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, however, a new, powerful at that, variable entered the European power equation: Russia. Russia first showed its prowess during the first major Russo-Turkish War (1768-1774) as it defeated the militarily acclaimed Ottoman army. Russia’s victory, which led to the expansion of its territory westward, toward the Balkans, only exposed a problem that the British and Western Europe in general were not willing to face: that the Ottoman Empire would not be able to prevent a potential Russian invasion of the Balkans. The Balkans, a large portion of which were still under Ottoman rule, thus became a site of enormous geopolitical consequence for the Western powers, Britain in particular. Britain’s primary concerns were maritime: that the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, the two straits that connect Europe with Asia, might fall under Russian control, which would allow Russia to contest Britain’s claim to

India.⁵ In addition, were the Slavic nations that lived in the Balkans—Serbs, Bulgarians, and Croatians—to liberate themselves from the Ottoman Empire, they could potentially become allies with the other Slavs in Eastern Europe: the Russians. The fear that Russia might head a pan-Slavic movement in Eastern Europe and cut Britain's shortest access to its Asian colonies turned into what some scholars deem as the leading forces that shaped Britain's relations with the other great powers in Europe, including France and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in the second half of the nineteenth century.

By the late 1870s, the Eastern Question had taken center stage in London, as the British public was deeply disturbed by the news of one of the most atrocious quellings of an insurrection in the history of the Ottoman Empire: the Ottoman massacre of the Bulgarians after their uprising in April 1876. The insurgents were badly prepared and organized, and the Ottoman troops were swift and merciless in their answer: by the end of May, the insurrection was completely smothered.⁶ The number of Bulgarian deaths remains questionable to this day, with estimates ranging from 2,000 to 100,000, according to Richard Millman.⁷ It is hardly important, however, to know the exact

⁵ At the time, both straits were under Ottoman control. As a political and economic ally of the Ottoman Empire, the British had full right of entry in both straits, which gave them direct access to Asia, and, more significantly, undisturbed travel to India through the recently-built Suez Canal (1869), which saved them the almost two times longer travel to India around Africa.

⁶ Insurrections and massacres were almost a daily routine of the Ottoman administration in the second half of the nineteenth century. The Maronite Christians of Lebanon in 1860, the Cretans in 1866-7, and the Serbs from Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1875 all had the same gruesome fate as that of the Bulgarian insurgents.

⁷ Almost all major texts concerned with the Bulgarian massacres, including R. Shannon's *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation 1876* (p. 22), provide an estimate of about 15 000 killed. This is not a proven number; more or less, it is the average of all

number of the dead when the atrocities of the *bashi-bazouks*⁸ in the town of Batak⁹ alone would make anyone's hair bristle: a significant portion of the approximately 9,000 people who lived in the town were massacred, regardless of age or gender, and every building was leveled to the ground. And Batak was not the only Bulgarian town to be razed.¹⁰

At the time, Britain had a great interest in keeping a politically stable Turkey in the Balkans as both a barrier between Russia and Britain's Asian colonies, and as one of the largest markets for British products. Consequently, the ruling Conservative party made several attempts to tone down the Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria. Benjamin Disraeli, the Prime Minister, even described them as "coffee-house babble brought by an anonymous Bulgarian to a consul" (qtd. in *Hansard's* 231: col. 203). Yet numerous prominent men of letters, including Thomas Carlyle, Robert Browning, John Ruskin, Anthony Trollope, and William Morris, expressed disgust at Britain's support of the Ottoman Empire, which eventually led to the formation of the so-called Bulgarian Agitation, a movement in defense of the Bulgarians and in opposition to the government's policy of inaction. William Gladstone, the ex-Prime Minister of Britain

the reported numbers by various journalists and observers. For a detailed discussion on this matter, see Millman, pp. 146-164.

The Muslim population underwent massacres as well. Ottoman authorities gave an "estimate of 1000 Turkish killed in the Bulgarian uprising" (Millman, "The Bulgarian" 222). This number, just like the number of Bulgarians killed by the Ottomans, is debatable.

⁸ *Bashi-bazouks* are "mercenary soldiers belonging to the skirmishing or irregular troops of the Turkish army; notorious for their lawlessness, plundering and savage brutality" (OED).

⁹ Batak is one of the major Bulgarian towns that actively participated in the April Insurrection.

¹⁰ For more on the cruelty of the Turks in Batak and elsewhere in Bulgaria, see Januarius A. MacGahan's *The Turkish Atrocities in Bulgaria*.

and leader of the Liberal Party, came out of retirement to head the Agitation. According to Andrei Pantev, the Agitation produced close to three hundred pamphlets by the end of 1877 (174), including three penned by Gladstone himself. As Richard Shannon remarks, the Agitation “was, in itself, by far the greatest and most illuminating revelation of the moral susceptibility of the High Victorian public conscience” (v).

Surprisingly, very few of these texts have been studied by scholars of the Eastern Question—the exception being William Gladstone’s *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* (1876). Even more surprising is the rare mention of contemporaneous Bulgarian texts, although the Bulgarian press of the time teems with articles and reports in response to the insurrection and to Western Europe’s interest in it. Thus, the purpose of this part is threefold: first, to study the language and rhetoric of the texts produced by the Agitation, and explore the social, political, economic discursive trends they form; second, to introduce some of the Bulgarian texts to Western scholars, and, thus, give voice to the Bulgarians’ view of the British Empire and its foreign policy in Eastern Europe; and third, to show that even the morally and culturally charged pro-Agitation arguments launched by Gladstone and his followers conformed to British national interests, especially as contrasted to Bulgarian viewpoints. A defining concern of this part is to recognize that the Bulgarians were not silently waiting for someone to deliver them from the Ottoman Empire, but actively sought the help of Western Europe and Russia through their writings. I also seek to demonstrate that in the second half of the nineteenth century, British foreign policy was formed not only in the context of its interests overseas, but also, and perhaps more significantly, in the context of other existing empires, such as the Russian and the Ottoman.

The Bulgarian Agitation was not a unique phenomenon for Britain. Such socially and politically engaged intellectual movements had been a regular occurrence in Britain's public life. One finds them during the anti-slavery period, the Indian Mutiny in 1857, and the Eyre controversy of 1865. The Agitation was unique, however, in the amount of literature it produced in a short time span on an issue that did not directly concern Britain; Britain became involved in the Eastern Question, especially its Bulgarian component, as an avowed financial and political supporter of Turkey. From the first news of the atrocities in Bulgaria until the early 1880s, the Eastern Question became an obsession for British society. Pamphlets, books, articles, and reports, including republished materials from the earlier Crimean War period (1853-56) flooded the British literary market. Almost no intellectual of the day, liberal or conservative, remained silent on the subject. As Shannon observes,

Perhaps only the Dreyfus Affair among political *causes célèbres* can compare with the Bulgarian atrocities agitation for the brilliance of the patronage and the opposition which it evoked publicly among the greatest contemporary names in literature, art, science, and philosophy.

(202)

The bulk of the literature the Agitation produced was published between July 1876 and December 1877, especially during the first six months of this period—the nominal lifespan of the Agitation. The cultural and religious arguments employed in the texts of the Agitation, as David Roessel notes, are “firmly rooted in the perceived differences between Europe and Asia, which had been prevalent in the West since the Enlightenment” (132). To use Edward Said's term, these arguments are “orientalist” in

nature—typically viewing the Oriental as weak, backward, in constant need of help, and/or as cruel, bloodthirsty, and unable to control his emotions (3). Almost without exception, the texts of the Agitation portray Christians, in quasi-racial terms, as more progressive and better overall than Turkish Muslims. The killing of Christians, and, more significantly, the raping of Christian women by Muslim men are major *topoi* in these arguments. As Henry Barkley reports his experiences in Gebedji, a small Bulgarian village, “Over and over again, I have seen every woman and girl in the entire Christian village disappear, as if by magic, at the approach of a *Zaptieh*” (vii).¹¹

One of the most memorable depictions of the “cruel” Turks is that of William Gladstone. In the few pages he dedicates to them in his first pamphlet, *Bulgarian Horrors*, Gladstone manages to present the Turks as the most despotic, bloodthirsty, and backward race¹² in the whole world:

They were, upon the whole, from the black day when they first entered Europe, the one anti-human specimen of humanity. Wherever they went a broad line of blood marked the track behind them; and as far as their dominion reached, civilization disappeared from view. They represented everywhere government by force, as opposed to government by law. (13)

¹¹ A *Zaptieh* is a Turkish policeman (OED).

¹² Gladstone speaks of national groups in racial terms in his *Horrors*. For instance, when referring to the Turks and the Greeks in his text, he calls them the “Turkish race” and the “Greek race,” and when speaking of the Serbians and the Montenegrins, he refers to them as “our races,” which I read to be a collective term for the European races. I believe that Gladstone’s purpose in this racializing of nationalities is to further emphasize the distinction between (white) Europe and (oriental/non-white) Ottoman Empire.

This is only a small sample of Gladstone's rhetorical outburst. He does not call the Turks savages—in the long tradition of Western rhetoric about the non-Christian people of color in the colonies, that word is almost a must—but he is close to that mark when he identifies them as the “one anti-human specimen of humanity.” The Turks may look like human beings, but they are not; Gladstone singles them out as a different type of species which jeopardizes humanity's very existence.

Like other self-identified Liberals, Gladstone relentlessly attacks and dismantles any conceivably positive Turkish attribute, including their renowned military might. “Power is gone, and the virtues, such as they are, of power; nothing but its passions and pride remain” (16), writes Gladstone. In his *Evidences of Turkish Misrule*, Richard Henry strikes a similar chord, explaining the Turks' military achievements as a product of their barbaric nature: “[The Turks] can fight desperately enough; but that is the note of barbarism, not of civilization” (3). John Boyd Kinnear only adds spice to these outbursts when stating that “looking back” through the 500 years of Turkish presence in Europe “the mind loses itself in the chaos of slaughter. [. . .] Asiatic cruelty was perpetuated by Asiatic unchangeableness of temper and incapacity of progress” (8). Apparently, these Liberal adherents had harbored an enormous hatred for the Turks and regarded them as malevolent brutes, racially inferior to Christians. The events in Bulgaria seem to have only awakened that hatred and given it an acutely spiteful voice.¹³

¹³ The traditional political divide between Liberals and Conservatives became rather blurred during the Agitation. Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin, for instance, were not liberals in any sense of the term, but took the liberal side during the Agitation. For the purposes of this essay, I call those who were against the government's policy of

Unlike the Liberals, the conservative writers blamed the massacres in Bulgaria on the Bulgarians themselves and on the Russians, whom they often described as the actual instigators of the April Insurrection. In addition, these writers constantly challenged the number of the dead Bulgarians reported in the British press and described the violent measures the Turks took to quell the Bulgarian insurrection as “overly exaggerated.” In the Conservatives’ eyes, the Bulgarians sealed their fate when they rose against the Turks. Thus, the Conservatives usually described the atrocities of the Turkish troops as nothing but a justified retaliation. As Disraeli stated in a speech in the House of Commons, “Wars of Insurrection are always atrocious.” To illustrate his case, he gave as an example what the British themselves did several years previously to quell a rebellion in Jamaica (qtd. in *Hansard’s* 230: col. 1182). In the same vein, H. A. Munro Butler-Johnstone, M. P., defies in a pamphlet he wrote in response to Gladstone’s *Bulgarian Horrors* “any one to point to a single incident in history in which cold-blooded cruelty and lust can be shown to have been more conspicuous in the Ottoman ranks than in those of any other conquering army” (6). Put differently, the Turks did what they had to do as a conquering nation, and the Bulgarians got what they deserved; therefore, the British people should not empathize with their suffering or try to help them.

Russia and Turkey are the two central concerns in the political arguments of the Agitation. The questions most often discussed are 1. what would Russia’s next move be were it allowed to confront Turkey without British interference?; and 2. should Turkey

inaction in relation to the Bulgarian atrocities Liberals, and those who supported Disraeli’s policy Conservatives. Also see page 28 below, where I discuss Liberal and Conservative views of Russia.

remain undisturbed in the Balkans? Pantev is certainly right in his observation that the rhetoric of the Agitation is more often anti-Russian than pro-Turkish. In fact, most writers, especially the conservatives, portrayed Russia as the evildoer behind the Balkan crisis, claiming, as “Warsling” did, that “The Russians were at the bottom both of the Bulgarian insurrection and the Servian war” (17). Still more aggressive and inculpatory are Alfred Austin’s words. He not only believed that the Russians had incited the insurrection, but also that the blood of every murdered Bulgarian was on their hands:

[. . .] I most solemnly declare that I believe the blood of every murdered Bulgarian peasant, the dishonour of every violated Bulgarian mother and maid, the mangled limbs of every mutilated child, to lie at the door of Russian diplomacy and Russian ambition. The punishment of the Bulgarians may have been out of all proportion to the provocation they gave, but it was Russia that incited, fomented, and fed the Bulgarian disturbances. (28)

Like Austen and “Warsling,” the writers who accused Russia of setting up and financing the Bulgarian insurrection did not provide any convincing evidence to support their arguments. It was enough for them to state that Russia had its own purposes in instigating the Bulgarians to insurrect against the Ottoman Empire, namely, to gain influence over Eastern Europe by establishing a pan-Slavic coalition, to get to Constantinople and “bring about the supremacy of the Czar over the entire Greek church in the East” (Wyatt 4), and to “despoil” the Ottoman Empire.

Even the Liberals were not sure how to view Russia. Like the Conservatives, they feared that Russia might become too big and powerful, especially if it formed an

alliance with all the Slavic Balkan nations, which would disturb the existing political stability in Europe. Nevertheless, some of them also claimed that Russia was not as powerful or manipulative as the Conservatives contended, and argued that Russia had learned its lesson after the Crimean War—not to attempt to expand its already large territory because Britain and France would not allow it. The same Liberals also pointed out that the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire were not trying to make an alliance with the Russians, but simply wanted to be delivered from the Ottomans. A few liberals, among whom were Gladstone and * * * G., even saw Russia as a potential friend, primarily on religious grounds. Even though Orthodox Christianity, the official religion in Russia, was not acceptable in the eyes of most Britons and was often presented as “a subspecies of oriental despotism and thus inherently non-European or non-Western” (Todorova 20), the Russians were still Christian, which made them better than the Turkish Muslims by default and, thus, more deserving of Britain’s friendship.

Whereas opposition to the Turks was largely based on racial and religious difference, opposition to the Russians, although also couched in terms of difference, was primarily geopolitical. Thus, the Turks’ political interests are not discussed in the rhetoric of the Agitation as much as those of the Russians. The writers of the Agitation repeatedly ask that the Turks cease mistreating their Christian subjects, but rarely do they urge that Bulgaria or any other Christian province of the Ottoman Empire gain autonomy as a state. The most determined and vigorous opinion on what to do with the Turks is found, once again, in the rhetoric of Gladstone’s *Bulgarian Horrors*:

Let the Turks now carry away their abuses in the only possible manner, namely by carrying off themselves. Their Zaptiehs and their Mudirs,

their Bimbashis and their Yuzbashis, their Kaimakams and their pashas, one and all, bag and baggage, shall, I hope, clear out from the province they have desolated and profaned. (61)¹⁴

Decisive and aggressive though this language appears, as the latter parts of the pamphlet suggest, Gladstone's rhetorical bark is louder than his political bite. Turkey, Gladstone adds, must retain "titular supremacy, which serves the purpose of warding off foreign aggression" (55). Even if he identifies Turkish presence in Bulgaria as "titular," i.e., existing only in title or name, Gladstone must qualify it, lest he be misunderstood: it is not nominal Turkish presence that he is advocating, but actual Turkish presence in Bulgaria, which would allow Turkey to control Bulgaria's foreign affairs. Obviously, Gladstone was not yet ready to give the Bulgarians a politically autonomous state. Neither, in fact, was any other writer of the *Agitation*. As they saw it, the Turks had to maintain control over the Balkans in order to protect the interests of the British in Eastern Europe. An independent Bulgaria, they feared, could fall prey to the Russians, who might then try to take over the Turkish territories in Europe and gain control over the two major Eastern European sea passes, the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles.

Apart from strong interests in protecting its empire, Britain also had great economic stakes in the region. According to John Holms' *Commercial and Financial Aspects of the Eastern Question* (1876), which was the most comprehensive text on the topic and the one best supported by statistics, Britain's trade with Russia was actually

¹⁴ A Mudir is a "governor of a subdistrict in Turkey"; a Kaimakam is "a lieutenant, [. . .], deputy governor" of a region that is under Turkish influence; both Bimbashi and Yuzbashi are military ranks in the Turkish army—major and captain, respectively (OED). The "province" Gladstone refers to is Bulgaria.

much more profitable than that with Turkey. His analysis of Britain's commerce with both Turkey and Russia clearly demonstrated that the latter was the more viable trade partner. He showed that between 1865 and 1875, the volume of trade with Russia increased by nearly "forty-five per cent," while that with Turkey "practically [showed] no increase" (5). Moreover, the Russian volume of trade with Britain in 1875 was almost a third bigger than that with Turkey—£31 986 000 versus £23 000 000, respectively. Such figures, coupled with Holms' prognosis that the rampant corruption of the Ottoman administration would not disappear soon, led him to conclude that there was sufficient evidence "to disprove the assertion that [Britain's] commercial connection with Turkey is more valuable to us than that which we possess with Russia" (6).

These are, in general, the arguments made by both sides of the Agitation, the largely Liberal opponents of Disraeli's policies and the largely Conservative defenders. The Liberals, although not wholly indifferent to geopolitical concerns, were betting chiefly on more humanitarian and emotional arguments: as good Christian people, Britons were obliged to help the Christians who suffered under Muslim misrule. In contrast, the Conservatives relied mainly on political and supposedly patriotic arguments, emphasizing Russia's behind-the-curtains work in provoking the Bulgarian insurrection and dispelling the "myth" of the cruel Turk to preserve Britain's name from a bloody trail that led back to it. Overall, however, the Liberals dominated the discourse on the Bulgarian question. They seem to have caught the Conservatives by surprise, not leaving them much room and time for expression.

The story I have told thus far is relatively familiar to British historians. But what has been omitted is the voice of the Bulgarians themselves. To get a sense of the Bulgarians' relation to Britain, I turn to the Bulgarian press of the period. Before I delve into the rhetoric of the Bulgarians, I should say a few words about the general outlook of the Bulgarian press at the time, for almost all the materials written on the Bulgarian atrocities and the Eastern Question were published in the newspapers. Altogether, there were twelve newspapers published in Bulgarian in 1876. Based on their attitude towards the April Insurrection, one may divide them into three major types: 1. the revolutionary newspapers of the Bulgarian immigrants in Romania, such as *Nova Bulgaria*, which not only supported the insurrection unconditionally, but also advanced revolutionary ideology¹⁵; 2. what Kirila Vuzvuzova calls the "liberal-bourgeois" newspapers, such as *Den* and *Vek* (later called *XIX Vek*), which avoided taking sides on the issue, but did report the cruelties of the Turkish troops; and finally, 3. the Turkophile newspapers, including *Dunav* and *Edirne*, which were published both in Turkish and Bulgarian, and were closely monitored and censored by the Turkish government; these newspapers usually openly denied or diluted the cruelties the Turkish irregular troops committed to quell the insurrection.

¹⁵ To avoid persecution or simply the chains of Ottoman oppression, numerous Bulgarian revolutionaries and intellectuals, including Vassil Levski, Hristo Botev, and Liuben Karavelov, fled to free Romania, where they established the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee and plotted the liberation of Bulgaria. Botev formed a Bulgarian detachment in Romania of roughly 200 people, which entered Bulgaria soon after the April Insurrection broke out in 1876. After several days of fighting with Turkish troops in the Vratza Mountains, the detachment was defeated and Botev was killed.

As one would expect, the April Insurrection was closely followed by and covered in all these newspapers. Most of the information published about the insurrection in them came from eyewitness reports and official documents of the Turkish authorities and foreign embassies, the British and Russian in particular. Materials from foreign presses were also quite often translated or summarized; they actually dominated the Bulgarian press—the Bulgarian journalists followed closely the British press and reported and discussed every important speech of the British government that concerned the Bulgarians. According to Vuzvuzova, close to “1,000 reports, telegrams, announcements, articles, etc. about the insurrection” were published in 1876 in the Bulgarian newspapers (15).¹⁶

Naturally, with the exception of the Turkophile newspapers, the rest of the Bulgarian newspapers, especially the revolutionary ones, overtly condemn the brutal behavior of the Turkish troops and ask the Turkish government, as well as Western Europe, to open their eyes and see what is taking place in the Bulgarian provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Notably, the cultural and religious arguments used in these newspapers are not as florid and aggressive as those of the British writers. Nor are they as sweeping in their claims. The Bulgarian writers aim directly and only at the Turkish troops and the Turkish government. Rarely do they describe all the Turkish people as “the one anti-human specimen of humanity.” This does not mean that the Bulgarian rhetoric views the Turks as angels or fails to expose the vile behavior of their irregular troops during the quelling of the April Insurrection. On the contrary, the brutality of the

¹⁶ “1000 дописки, телеграми, съобщения, статии и пр. за въстанието.” (All translated Bulgarian texts will be provided in footnotes to each translation.)

bashi-bazouks is often the leading news in the non-Turkophile Bulgarian press. Such, for instance, is the following moving excerpt from an eyewitness' report in *Den*, which describes the ferocious acts committed by the Turkish troops in the Bulgarian town of Panagiuriste:

[A]fter a day or two, when the hordes of the Circassians and bashi-bazouks barged in, they turned everything into dust and ash; they dishonored numerous old and young of both sexes; they killed and showed no mercy even to pregnant women, from whose wombs they took out living children! And all this was done with the knowledge of the authorities. ([“Turkish Atrocities”] 1)¹⁷

These words speak for themselves: they show the Turkish troops as brutally merciless soldiers, who do not discriminate between age and gender when it comes to dealing with insurgents. Significantly, the passage also exposes the complicity of the Turkish government in these atrocities, a complicity which the Porte vehemently denied on the grounds that it was not informed about the actions of its own troops.

Moreover, such reports of massacres and mayhem were addressed not only to the Porte but to Western Europe as well, especially Britain, which more than any other Western European state had national interests in solving the Bulgarian crisis as soon as possible. The attitude of the Bulgarian writers towards the British government was ambivalent at best. In most cases, testimonies of the atrocities were used to show how

¹⁷ “[С]ледъ единъ два дни като нахлуха ордите на Черкезите и башибозуците, те направиха сичко на прахъ и пепель; те обезчестиха безброй възрастни и невъзрастни отъ секакавъ родъ; те убиваха и непожалваха нито трудните жени, отъ които на някои изъ утробите живи деца изваждаха! И сичко това е правено съ знаяние на властѣта.”

the British government, in tandem with the Turkish, deliberately overlooked the ferocities of the Turkish irregulars. An anonymous reporter for *Stara-Planina* directly questioned the British government's objectivity in regard to the Bulgarian atrocities. He wrote:

To deny that forty unfortunate Bulgarian girls, after suffering the last dishonoring acts of their miserable attackers, have been burned alive by these same semi-human monsters in the town of Kalofer; to deny this, as Lord Darby does in the House of the Lords, is more than audacious, for in Tzarigrad itself, *Courier d'Orient* published this fact under the nose of the Turkish censorship, and the authorities did not deny it. (“[Bulgarite]”²⁾¹⁸

Such straightforward attacks on the credibility of the British government are not a rarity in the revolutionary and liberal Bulgarian press. The editor of *Den*, for instance, says this about England in response to accusations from the editor of *Levant Herald* that the Bulgarians had “fabricated” the atrocities of the Turkish troops:

Some European kingdoms, especially England, when it comes to their interests, do not choose the means—whether honest or not—they use to achieve their goals. [T]o achieve a certain goal, England has a

¹⁸ “Да са отрича че 40 злочести Български девойки откакъ претеглили последните обезчестения на своите нищожни джелати, съ били живи изгорени от тези човекообразни чудовища при Калоферъ въ Ново-Село, да са отрича това както го прави Лордъ Дерби въ камератъ на лордовете, то е нещо повече отъ смело, защото въ самий Цариградъ *Курие-Д’Орианъ* публикува този фактъ предъ носа на турската цензура, а властите не го опровергахъ.”

manufactory, where lies, calumnies, inconsistencies, perfidies, and all kinds of other vileness are manufactured. (“[British]” 1)¹⁹

Evidently, the Bulgarians were disappointed in the response of the British government to the events in Bulgaria, which also made them rather skeptical about receiving help from Britain. As the editor of *Nova Bulgaria* passionately exclaims in a side note to the political-review column of his newspaper, “God save the Christians if they ever have to wait on England to protect them” (98).²⁰

The discouraging response of the British government to the atrocities did not prevent the Bulgarians from believing firmly in the righteousness of their revolt, however. Their revolutionary rhetoric was filled with vigorous passion and enthusiasm. As one Bulgarian writer stated on the pages of *Nova Bulgaria*, “We will no longer be silent, and will ceaselessly shout until someone hears us and shows mercy on us; our determinate heroes will not let go of their rifles until they free our dear fatherland, Bulgaria” (57).²¹ Indeed the Bulgarians were prepared to give their lives for their freedom. They wanted one thing—*independence*—and this was clearly stated in the first two points of the political program of the Bulgarian revolutionaries, which was published in *Nova Bulgaria*: 1. “To establish a Bulgarian state of Bulgaria, Thrace, and

¹⁹ “Некой европейски царства, а особено Англия, когато са касае до интересите им не гледът на средствата-честни ли съ или не-които употребяват за да си достигнат целтъ. [З]а да достигне известна целъ, Англия има фабрика, дето са фабрикуватъ лъжи, клевети, непостоянства, коварства и други всевъзможни низости.”

²⁰ “Тежко и горко на християните ако чакатъ секога дя ги уварди Англия.”

²¹ “Най-сетне ние нема да мжлчине, и непрестанно ще викаме докътъ са намери кой-годе да ни чуе и са смили зарадъ насъ; а и нашите решителни юнаци не щатъ да испустятъ оръжието отъ ръцете си дордето не освободятъ милото ни отечество, майка България.”

Macedonia, for the predominant element living in these areas is Bulgarian,” and 2.

“This Bulgarian state should be ruled *independently*, by its own organic statutes” (Sept. 23: 133, my emphasis).²² In the words of one of the most revered Bulgarian revolutionary poets, Hristo Botev, the Bulgarians’ existence had come down to a simple choice: “freedom or death” (16).

Not everyone shared the revolutionary spirit, however. The conservative, Turkophile newspapers, *Edirne* and *Dunav*, remained loyal to the Ottoman Empire and portrayed the insurrection of the Bulgarians in mostly negative light. Both newspapers, especially *Dunav*, presented the April Insurrection as a criminal act that was instigated from the outside, by the Serbs and/or the Russians, and that was disturbing the peaceful coexistence of the Muslim and Christian population in the Bulgarian provinces of the Ottoman Empire. In *Dunav*, the insurgents were called “villains” and “criminals,” who had “forced” the Bulgarian people to follow them. According to the newspaper’s first report on the insurrection, the insurgents “slaughtered whomever they met, set villages on fire, destroyed bridges, and cut telegraphic lines” (“What Happened in Panagiuirishte” 1).²³ *Dunav* also ceaselessly praised and emphasized every victory of the Ottoman troops as the following anonymous telegram to the newspaper shows: “The villains [the insurgents in this case], when they saw the troops of the emperor, armed themselves and started shooting, but when they saw the daunting tactics of the troops,

²² “1. Отъ България, Тракия и Македония да са въздигне една Българска държавица, защото главниятъ преобладающаи елементъ по тия местности е българскятъ; 2. Българската тѣзи държавица да са управлява независима, по единъ органически уставъ.”

²³ “да коли кого срещне, палило села, събаряло мостове и прекъсвало телеграфическите линии.”

they sent a priest to give up their arms” (“Telegram” 1).²⁴ In general, both *Dunav* and *Edirne* received the news of the April Insurrection with outrage and indignation, and undermined and belittled the actions of the insurgents. They wrote about the insurrection mainly from an Ottoman perspective, avoiding to mention the cruelties committed by the Ottoman troops, but persistently condemning the actions of the insurgents. They also hurried to announce the victory of the “Emperor” well before the insurrection was indeed smothered, as well as to emphasize the insurgents’ remorsefulness for what they had started.

Finally, the more moderately conservative newspapers, which represented the so-called Bulgarian “evolutionists,” saw the liberation of Bulgaria as a slow, gradual process, one that should not involve the spilling of blood, but, rather, social and political pressure from the inside, from the educated, high-class Bulgarians. The evolutionist line of thought was primarily articulated in the more moderate liberal newspapers, such as *Vek/XIX Vek*, *Den*, and *Napreduk*. Publishing mostly excerpts from letters and telegrams about the insurrection, these newspapers provided a more balanced perspective of what happened in the Bulgarian provinces during the April Insurrection. They usually published very dry, stick-to-the-facts stories about what both the Bulgarian insurgents and the Turkish irregular troops had done.

Yet, as Bojidar Raykov observes, once the insurrection broke out, these newspapers “do not stand indifferent in front of the suffering of the numerous victims and courageously raise their voice to protest in defense of the tortured Bulgarian

²⁴ “Злодейците като видяха императорските войски, заловиха се за оръжие и захванаха да гърмят, па щом видяха мъжествените движения на войските, изпратиха един свещеник за да предадат оръжията си.”

people” (44).²⁵ Eventually, Raykov continues, *Vek/XIX Vek* even changed its evolutionist positions and appealed to the Turkish government that it “disarm” and “pull out” the *bashi-bazouks* sent to smother the Bulgarian revolt. The newspaper also took a strong stance against the censorship by the Ottoman Press Management, which had issued the following decree:

The local newspapers are once again today the object of rigorous monitoring by the Press Management, which often finds itself in need of taking measures against them, to terminate them temporarily or permanently. In the face of all this, the Press Management must double its vigilance to not let the newspapers commit mistakes or allow them to publish such rumors that might agitate the spirits of the population.

(“Censorship” 1)²⁶

In response to this decree, *Vek/XIX Vek* published a brief commentary that expressed that the “decree makes almost impossible the publishing of any newspaper, especially a Bulgarian newspaper, which anyway already has to fight a thousand hardships” (1). *Vek/XIX Vek*’s daring declarations about the Ottoman troops and censorship eventually led to its termination. Similar was the fate of *Den*, which was also terminated for publishing materials that were damaging to the image of the Porte.

²⁵ “не остават безчувствени пред страданията на многобройните жертви и смело издигат глас на протест в защита на измъчения български народ.”

²⁶ “Местните вестници са и днес предмет на деятелно надзирателство от страна на Управлението на Печата, което често се нахожда в нужда да зима против тях мерки за преставане или за всегашно запиране. При всичко това, на Управлението на Печата надлежи да удвои бдителност за да не позволява да вестниците никакво прегрешение и да не ги оставя да обнародват слухове от естество да раздражават духовете.”

In short, what stands out in the rhetoric of the Bulgarians on the atrocities are not the poignant descriptions of raped Bulgarian women, slaughtered children, and impaled heads of Bulgarian men, or the silent support of these acts by the Turkish and, by implication, the British governments, but the Bulgarians' use of the atrocities as a way to be heard and noticed, the assertive and decisive tone of their rhetoric for independence. After hundreds of years of Turkish oppression, the Bulgarians had become almost inured to mistreatment; such atrocities were nothing new to them. What was new was that the West actually noticed their suffering. Thus the rhetoric of the Bulgarians primarily aimed at attracting further the attention of the Western powers, as well as Russia, from whom they expected help in their fight for independence.

Did Britain hear the Bulgarians' rhetoric for freedom and independence? Apparently not, even though at least some Britons had been willing to help in other struggles against the Turks, as in the Greek war for independence. Unlike the Greeks, however, the Bulgarians were not viewed by the British as carriers of the Greco-Roman legacy, a legacy that such British philhellenes as Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley often stated as the main reason why the Greeks needed to be delivered from Turkish oppression; as is well known, Byron even lost his life on his way to help the Greeks in their war for independence. The atrocities themselves were indeed quite thoroughly and compassionately covered by the Bulgarian Agitation writers. Yet, neither the liberal nor the conservative texts of the Agitation discussed openly the future of Bulgaria as an independent state. While these two groups of texts appeared to be different on the surface, they were actually quite similar in that both of them stood behind the *status quo* of the day—explicitly or implicitly, they guaranteed the integrity of the Ottoman

Empire—and were first and foremost interested in saving Britain’s name and protecting Britain’s geopolitical interests in the East. To both groups of writers, the Bulgarian question was about what had happened to the Bulgarian subjects of the Ottoman Empire, not about what would happen to an autonomous Bulgarian nation. In addition, rarely was the Bulgarians’ rhetoric quoted or discussed in these texts. At best, a quotation from a Bulgarian was used to emphasize or give credibility to the cruelty of the atrocities that had taken place in Bulgaria. Ironically, the so-called *Bulgarian Agitation* did not actually include Bulgarians; they were not invited to participate in it.

Thus, while condemning the massacre of thousands of Bulgarian Christians and denouncing the British government’s response to them, the *Bulgarian Agitation* also silenced the Bulgarians. Such an act is certainly in tune with nineteenth-century British imperial policies. As Gayatri Spivak eloquently argues in “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” in an attempt to help the Indian woman subjected to *suttee*, the British force her to “regress to an anteriority transformed into stasis” (32). An analogy between subaltern woman and the Bulgarian people may seem a stretch, but it nonetheless strikes a chord with the point I am making—that the Bulgarian people are rendered static in the rhetoric of the *Bulgarian Agitation*. The British writers speak for them without saying a word about what the Bulgarians actually wanted, without even mentioning that they had risen against the Ottoman Empire for nothing less than their complete independence.²⁷ In other words, the compassion shown for the Bulgarian victims in the rhetoric of the

²⁷ Andrew Hammond makes a similar point in his essay on Victorian travelers’ writing about South-East Europe, when he states that to “vindicate the denial of self-rule to Balkan populations,” British writers projected on those populations “irrationality, savagery, and prejudice,” thus “indicating a region unable to govern itself peaceably and therefore in need of administration from without” (100).

Bulgarian Agitation appears to be sincere only in humanitarian terms while open and direct political solidarity with the Bulgarians is missing from it.

Consequently, Britain's avowed compassion for the suffering of the Bulgarians mutates into what I call *compassionate colonialism*—the showing of sympathy with the colonized, while siding with the colonizer in order to protect the political *status quo*. Regardless of how vociferously most writers of the Agitation condemn the cruelties of the Turkish troops, ultimately they still say nothing, or very little, about the fact that in preparation for the April insurrection the Bulgarians had actually formed several revolutionary committees inside and outside Bulgaria and had established a concrete program for achieving independence. To be sure, it was important to know that atrocities had taken place in Bulgaria. To most Bulgarians, however, it was much more important to know what measures the British and the West in general would take to guarantee that the atrocities were not repeated. The only sure way to avoid that was to establish an autonomous Bulgarian state. As Liuben Karavelov states in his essay “What Do the Bulgarians Want?”, “What the Bulgarians want is a question that is really hard to answer in a few words, but at the same time, it is enough if a person just said: ‘They want complete freedom.’ With these words [this person] says almost everything” (129).²⁸

An independent Bulgaria was too great a threat, however. The British feared that an independent Bulgaria would open Russia a door to Europe and would only fertilize the ground for the formation of a pan-Slavic coalition in Eastern Europe. The predatory

²⁸ “Що искат българите е въпрос твърде тежко, за да се реши с няколко думи, но в същото време е достатъчно, ако каже човек: „Тия искат пълна свобода.“ С тия думи той изрича почти всичко.”

tactics of the “Russian Bear” play a central role in the writings of the Agitators. In the words of the anonymous writer of *The Northern Question or Russia’s Policy in Turkey Unmasked*, “England sees that it is not a question of Christian Slav and Mohammedan Turk, but purely one of Muscovite policy” (10). As Pantev rightly remarks, “The Conservative thesis for the solution of the Balkan aspects of Eastern Question in fact stipulates ‘jumping over’ both the Porte and the Balkan peoples and turning this problem into an organic part of the Anglo-Russian relations” (171).²⁹ Thus, towards the end of the nineteenth-century, the Eastern Question becomes the Russian Question for the British Empire, and the problems of the Balkan Christians, including the Bulgarians, even though rather noisily discussed in Britain, especially by the Liberals, are simply swept under the rug. The Ottoman Empire had to remain in the Balkans as an effective block against Russia, and the British did as much as they could for the majority of the nineteenth century to preserve the integrity of the increasingly weakening Ottoman Empire. Led by the British government’s apparent reluctance to help their cause, the Bulgarian revolutionary writers often portrayed the British as one with the Turks. This anti-British rhetoric only fueled the Bulgarians’ belief that help would come not from the West, but from the East, from Russia. And they were right. Two years after the April Insurrection, in 1878, Russia, with the help of Bulgarian troops, delivered Bulgaria from the hands of the Ottoman Empire.

²⁹ “Консервативната теза за решаването на балканските аспекти на Източния вапрос фактически предвижда ‘прескачането’ както на Портата, така и на самите балкански народи и превръщането на този проблем в органическа част на англо-руските отношения.”

Part II

Chapter I

Arms and the Man: Bernard Shaw and the Bulgarians

Almost two decades after the Ottoman massacre of Bulgarians in 1876 stirred the spirits of almost every British intellectual, Bulgaria was once again at the center of attention in London—Bernard Shaw had employed it as the setting for his critically acclaimed, hit play *Arms and the Man*. The play charmed London theatergoers from its opening night on April 21, 1894, at Florence Farr's Avenue Theatre. It had fifty performances and ran for sixteen weeks, until July 7, giving Shaw the first taste of success and fame as a playwright. In the words of Anthony M. Gibbs, thanks to *Arms and the Man*, Shaw became “on a modest scale, a marketable playwright” (174).

The play is set in a small Bulgarian town, near the end of the Serbo-Bulgarian War (1885), in Major Paul Petkoff's household. The Petkoffs are newly rich and proudly boast to belong to the highest, most affluent, and most cultured ranks of Bulgarian society. On the evening when the Bulgarian army had won the most important battle in the war, the battle for Slivnitsa, Raina, Major Petkoff's daughter, hides in her bedroom a fugitive Swiss mercenary from the Serbian army, Captain Bluntschli. Although engaged to a Bulgarian officer, Major Sergius Saranoff, Raina falls in love with Bluntschli, whom she affectionately nicknames the “chocolate soldier,” because, instead of ammunition, he carries in his pockets chocolate. Sergius, on his part, is secretly in love with Raina's maid, Louka, who is actually engaged to another servant in the Petkoff household, Nicola. The latter, however, is more interested in starting his own shop in Sofia than in Louka. After a string of farcical episodes, all

the romantic mismatches are corrected and a happy ending ensues: Raina is engaged to Bluntschli, who turns out to be the heir of numerous hotels in Switzerland; Sergius is engaged to Louka; Nicola is set to become a manager of one of Bluntschli's hotels; and the Petkoffs are more than happy with their new, very wealthy son in law.

Variations on the play's successes or failures as an attack on romanticism and idealism dominate criticism of *Arms and the Man*. Christopher Innes, for instance, claims that "the characters vindicate romanticism," because in the end, "[e]ven the realist Bluntschli falls in love; and though his sentiments will always be tinged with skepticism, he offers Raina a true basis for the sublime fantasies she has renounced" (28). Charles A. Berst suggests a different reading: "rather than contrasting the fantastic with the prosaic, or portraying an evolution in Raina's vision from the romantic to the realistic, the play expresses the interlocking relationship and mutual dependence of romanticism and realism (199). Similarly, John A. Bertolini argues that

Arms and the Man, at the same time it guides its audience-readers into identifying with the impulse to marry in Raina and Bluntschli, also chafes the audience into abandoning any notions about the heroic and romantic possibilities of war, the destructive antithesis to the generative powers of love and marriage. (10)

In general, critics have read *Arms and the Man* as a sort of *Don Quixote* for its subtle, delicate humor, which relentlessly mocks romantic ideals, military courage, and chivalric conduct. As Archibald Henderson remarks in his authorized critical biography of Shaw, "To many people the play appeared as a 'damning sneer at military courage,'

an attempted demonstration of the astounding thesis that heroism is merely a sublimated form of cowardice” (310).

While certainly viable and fruitful, such readings have ignored two essential components of the play, the *setting*—Bulgaria—and the *characters*—all of whom are Bulgarians, with the exception of one, Bluntschli. Both these components have received surprisingly little critical attention even though they are the play’s bread and butter.³⁰ If *Arms and the Man* were indeed an attempt to expose the defective nature of romantic idealism and military courage, why was Shaw so vocal about the authenticity of the play’s setting? Why did not he set the play in Britain, or his native Ireland, or anywhere else for that matter, but chose Bulgaria, a small country in Southeast Europe, which was still a rather exotic locale for most Britons at the time? More importantly, what are the implications of that setting?

I look for answers to these questions in a postcolonial reading of *Arms and the Man*. While Bulgaria has never been a British colony in the strict sense of that word, in Shaw’s play it functions as a backdrop for the deployment of imperialist ideology, as a

³⁰ The few critics who discuss the Bulgarians usually do not focus on the Bulgarians and their representation as such in the play, but on other matters that are related to them. For instance in “Shaw’s *Arms and the Man*, and the Bulgarians”, Samuel A. Weiss studies the Bulgarian public’s response to the play, and in “Reading War, History, and Historicity in Shaw’s *Arms and the Man*,” Kwangsook Chung centers his argument on Shaw’s general views on writing about and employing historical events, such as the Serbo-Bulgarian War, in his plays. In general, the play’s critics are more interested in the characters as worldly representations of men and women, and not as specifically Bulgarian. In “The Ablest Man in Bulgaria,” Bernard F. Dukore focuses on how Nicola should be read and played, and so does David K. Sauer in “Only a Woman in *Arms and the Man*,” but about Raina’s character. The three scholars who actually engage in a discussion of the characters as Bulgarians, Maria Todorova, Roumiana Deltcheva, and Vesna Goldsworthy (coincidentally, all of Balkan origins) provide insightful but cursory readings of the Bulgarians, mainly because their interests lie not in the play per se. Later in the essay, I refer to all of their readings of the play.

social barometer for measuring the civility of the West. Bulgaria is for Shaw what India will soon be for Rudyard Kipling in *Kim* (1901) and Africa for Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* (1902)—a primitive, undeveloped, uncivilized place. Bulgaria is, to borrow Chinua Achebe’s words, “a foil to Europe, a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar in comparison with which Europe’s own state of spiritual grace will be manifest” (783). *Arms and the Man* does not offer “just a photographic reflection” of Bulgaria and its people (Said, *Culture* 80). Rather, it politicizes Bulgaria, saturates it ideologically by tropes of colonial discourse to assert its status as the “other”—not as the “savage” Indian or African “other,” but as an improperly civilized “other”—within the “civilized,” “progressive” West.

In the Preface to *Plays Pleasant* (1898), Shaw contends that the “real issue” *Arms and the Man* engages is

whether the political and religious idealism which had inspired Gladstone to call for the rescue of [the Bulgarian] principalities from the despotism of the Turk, and converted miserably enslaved provinces into hopeful and gallant little States, will survive the general onslaught on idealism which is implicit, and indeed explicit in *Arms and the Man* [sic] and the naturalist plays of the modern school. (15)

The play does indeed reject certain notions of political idealism and romantic heroism, mainly through the juxtaposition of Sergius’ exalted romanticism and Bluntschli’s prosaic realism. Bluntschli, who acts according to his instincts for self preservation, eventually proves to be more socially useful than the idealistic-to-fault Sergius, “a moral cripple who can only conclude that ‘life is a farce’” (Crompton xviii).

Nevertheless, as a theme, the attack on romantic idealism is largely overshadowed by another, more visibly present theme in the play: the ridiculing of Bulgarian culture and history on the grounds that they fall short of Western Europe's high standards.

Throughout the play, Shaw never ceases to ridicule the Bulgarians, whether for their homes, attire, hygiene, or professionalism. Caustically satirizing the Bulgarians, *Arms and the Man* not only validates, but perpetuates the superiority of the West. The West is the norm, and the Bulgarians are judged and portrayed according to it.

Shaw's willingness to distinguish Bulgaria and its people from the West is evident from the very beginning of the play, where the reader is introduced into the bedroom of a young Bulgarian woman, Raina:

The interior of the room is not like anything to be seen in the west of Europe. It is half rich Bulgarian, half cheap Viennese. Above the head of the bed, which stands against a little wall cutting off the left hand corner of the room, is a painted wooden shrine, blue and gold, with an ivory image of Christ, and a light hanging before it in a pierced metal ball suspended by three chains. The principal seat, placed towards the other side of the room and opposite the window, is a Turkish ottoman. The counterpane and hangings of the bed, the window curtains, the little carpet, and all the ornamental textile fabrics in the room are oriental and gorgeous; the paper on the walls is occidental and paltry. (19)

The first sentence of this quotation does not leave any room for speculation—Raina's bedchamber is *not* Western European. The eclectic nature of the pieces of furniture—"European" and "oriental," "cheap and rich," "gorgeous" and "paltry"—gives the room

an aura of garishness and bad taste, while also highlighting its non-European status. There is a hint of Western European presence, more specifically, Viennese, but that presence is almost completely smothered by the all-pervading oriental fabrics, which seem to cover every corner of the room. Raina's bedchamber is definitely not European, but neither is it Oriental; it oscillates between the two, between the West and the Orient.

Importantly, Raina is unable to see her own bedchamber as tastelessly furnished or cheap. As she explains to Bluntschli, she is really proud of her home; it is the home of the "richest and best known" family in Bulgaria—the Petkoffs—as well as the only one that "has two rows of windows" and a "flight of stairs inside to get up and down by" (34-35). She even boasts, self-importantly, that her family is the owner of a library, "the only one in Bulgaria" (35). Raina's statements about her home are not meant to be taken at face value. As Shaw reveals at the beginning of Act III, the so-called library of the Petkoffs holds hardly any books:

It is not much of a library. Its literary equipment consists of a single fixed shelf stocked with old paper covered novels, broken backed, coffee stained, torn and thumbed; and a couple of little hanging shelves with a few gift books on them: the rest of the wall space being occupied by trophies of war and the chase. (61)

The terrible condition of the few books in the library at once exposes the hollowness of Raina's pompous statements, and, by extension, the Petkoffs' claims to culture. The Petkoffs clearly lack sophistication, and they definitely are not avid readers, as suggested by the fact that there are more trophies than books in the library. What is more, Shaw's sarcasm is geared toward not only the Petkoffs' simplemindedness and

snobbishness, but the whole Bulgarian people. As Raina proudly claims, her family belongs to the richest and most cultured echelons of Bulgarian society, which must mean that the rest of the Bulgarians are, at best, as unsophisticated and ingenuous as the Petkoffs.

That Raina and her family do not belong to Western Europe is also evident in the way Shaw characterizes them—as wannabe Western Europeans. An especially poignant example in that respect is Raina’s mother, Catherine Petkoff. As Shaw presents her, Catherine is completely out of touch with the reality of her surroundings. She always dresses up, wearing a gown as a sign of her high status, but more often than not, her appearance is in stark contrast with her environment. Shaw describes Catherine as

a woman over forty, imperiously energetic, with magnificent black hair and eyes, who might be a very splendid specimen of the wife of a mountain farmer, but is determined to be a Viennese lady, and to that end wears a fashionable tea gown on all occasions. (20)

The reader can only guess what a wife of a mountain farmer looks like, for Shaw does not provide a description of her, but one thing is sure: she is not a European lady. She simply cannot be one. As Shaw’s portrait of Catherine suggests, she is an attractive and strong woman, but only if she remains in her Balkan environment. There is a visible disparity between Catherine’s Viennese gown and the prosaic dullness of her Balkan surroundings. The gown, which is usually viewed as the attire of the western, high-class woman, becomes a symbol of awkwardness and not-belonging on Catherine’s back. Shaw uses it to emphasize that Catherine does not know her place, that she wants to be

a western woman, but her mountainous/Balkan environment does not allow her to be one. The mountains/Balkans are too rough and uncouth, intolerant of gowns and delicate, well-mannered women. Thus, if Catherine ventures outside of the mountains/the Balkans, especially in Western Europe, she would look ridiculous.

Shaw's irony and sarcasm do not stop at the bad taste for furniture and clothes of the women of the Petkoff household. The provincial chauvinism and quixotic heroism of the two men in the household, Major Paul Petkoff, Raina's father, and Major Sergius Saranoff, her fiancé, are next on his agenda to expose the Bulgarians as non-European. In the words of Roumiana Deltcheva, Shaw portrays these two military men as "sorry caricatures with their inferiority complexes, exalted patriotism, and pompous arrogance" (Section 13). Indeed so, for from the moment these two are introduced in the play, they act as buffoons. Major Petkoff is so gullible and inane that his wife manages to convince him not to believe his own eyes; she tricks him into agreeing that his favorite coat was in the "blue closet" while he had seen with his own eyes that it was not. But what makes the old major look even more ridiculous and ignorant are his beliefs about one's washing habits:

I don't believe in going too far with these modern customs [of washing one's neck every day]. All this washing can't be good for the health: it's not natural. There was an Englishman at Philippopolis who used to wet himself all over with cold water every morning when he got up.

Disgusting! It all comes from the English: their climate makes them so dirty that they have to be perpetually washing themselves. Look at my father! He never had a bath in his life; and he lived to be ninety-eight, the

healthiest man in Bulgaria. I dont mind a good wash once a week to keep up my position; but once a day is carrying the thing to a ridiculous extreme. (43)

Major Petkoff's ignorance is fully revealed in this passage, more than anything, because he does not realize the ironic dimensions of his own words. He is so utterly convinced of the rightness of his beliefs that he cannot see that his whole argument hangs on an example that uses false logic; the longevity of his father's life is not necessarily due *only* to his not having had "a bath in his life." Not only is Major Petkoff ignorant and gullible, but, evidently, he has personal hygiene problems, for he finds washing on regular basis to be unnatural and a waste of time.

The ironic sting of Shaw's ink becomes even more potent when he introduces Sergius. Shaw describes the young major as an extremely passionate idealist, a Don Quixote of sorts, who is unable to differentiate between heroism and suicide. In the play, the regiment of cavalry Sergius commands wins the most important battle during the war with the Serbs, the battle for Slivnitza. But as Bluntschli's account of the battle reveals, Sergius' regiment actually wins the battle by pure chance—just when the Bulgarians charged the Serbians, it so happened that the latter did not have the right ammunition to defend themselves. Had the Serbians had the right ammunition, according to Bluntschli, Sergius' regiment would have been completely dismantled: "not a horse or a man" would have made it further than "within fifty yards of the fire" (30). In other words, Sergius put his regiment directly in the line of fire, a clearly suicidal act. Bluntschli's is the only eyewitness report of the battle for Slivnitza provided in the play, and it underscores Sergius' military incompetence:

And there was Don Quixote flourishing like a drum major, thinking he'd done the cleverest thing ever known, whereas he ought to be courtmartialled for it. Of all the fools ever let loose on a field of battle, that man must be the very maddest. He and his regiment simply committed suicide; only the pistol missed fire: that's all. (31-2)

The sarcasm embedded in Bluntschli's judgment of Sergius' charge of the Serbian troops is vicious. His comparison of Sergius to Don Quixote, Cervantes' infamous hidalgo who fought windmills that he took for powerful knights, speaks volumes about Sergius' (lack of) military expertise. To Bluntschli, Sergius is nothing but a mad man, whose incompetence and ignorance are singular in nature; he is the "maddest" among "all the fools ever let loose on a field of battle."

In addition to being the most incompetent officer to have ever lived, Sergius is also a sort of a "sex maniac" (Deltcheva, Section 15). Blinded by his sexual desires, Sergius cannot stop himself from fondling Louka, his fiancé's own maid. He can hardly wait for Raina to be out of his sight, to go after "the tail of Louka's double apron" (50). He is, moreover, abusive. Louka's pleas and attempts to break free from Sergius' arm that was "dexterously" slipped "round her waist" are unsuccessful and unheard. "She struggles," writes Shaw, "[but Sergius] holds inexorably" (50). Unable to control his libido, Sergius even resorts to his manly strength to overpower Louka's efforts to deliver herself from his hold. Sergius' predatory behavior merely highlights what Shaw had already suggested about him earlier in the play: that he is as an "untamed mountain chieftain" and an "imaginative barbarian" (44). An "untamed" "barbarian," that is what

Sergius stands for in *Arms and the Man*—a lethally incompetent officer who cannot suppress his sexual urges and forces himself on women.

Relentless in his desire to bash the Bulgarian officers, Shaw underlines even more boldly their ignorance and incompetence by putting them to work with Bluntschli, the Western character in the play, on an apparently uncomplicated military problem—three cavalry regiments have to be sent on to Philipopolis³¹ from the front line. Sergius and Major Petkoff do not have a clue about how to solve this problem. “[W]e dont in the least know how to do it” (58), plainly admits Sergius to Bluntschli. In contrast, at the moment he hears what the problem is, Bluntschli figures out what is at stake. “The forage is the trouble, I suppose” (58), he tells the two obviously confused Bulgarian officers, and then proceeds to work on the problem. The ensuing scene is probably the funniest in the play. The fun is, of course, at the expense of the two Bulgarian officers who are rendered helpless, even “envious,” at times, of the knowledge and ability of a foreign officer to figure out a way of moving their own, Bulgarian troops through their own Bulgarian land.

Like a child who is willing, but not really sure about how to help his father, Sergius can do nothing but “[gnaw] a pen” and helplessly contemplate Bluntschli’s “quick, sure, businesslike progress” (61). More pathetic than Sergius, Major Petkoff, who is “comfortably established on the ottoman,” can only interrupt Bluntschli’s work flow with offers to help even though he knows very well that he cannot do so. And the fun does not stop here. As it turns out eventually, Sergius can hardly sign his name under Bluntschli’s orders, for his “hand is more accustomed to the sword than to the

³¹ Philipopolis is the old name of Plovdiv, the second biggest town in Bulgaria.

pen” (62); and Major Petkoff is not able to command properly his own soldiers. He needs Catherine’s help, because, in his words, the soldiers are “far more frightened” of her than of him (64). The scene culminates in Bluntschli’s utter disbelief of what he has just witnessed. Unable to hold his tongue, he exclaims: “What an army! They make cannons out of cherry trees; and the officers send for their wives to keep discipline” (64-5). The sincerity of Bluntschli’s exclamation, which is prompted by the Bulgarian officer’s total failure to execute simple military tasks, underscores the Bulgarian officers’ utter ineptitude. They not only lack basic military knowledge, but are pathetic, unconfident, and ridiculous. Even the best Bulgaria has to offer (Major Petkoff and Major Saranof—the highest ranking officers in the Bulgarian army)³² are inferior to the worst of the West (Bluntschli—a regular mercenary soldier).

The last two people in the Petkoff household, the servants Louka and Nicola, are not portrayed differently from their masters, mainly in negative and grotesque tones. Actually, because of her strident stance against Nicola’s servility and her reluctance to accept her own status as a servant, an inferior to Raina and her family, at first sight, Louka may pass for a strong, courageous woman, who is willing to contest the inequalities of the established social *status quo*. Boldly and categorically she states that she would defy her mistress—“I will defy her” (39)—despite Nicola’s warnings that such behavior could lead to her firing. One must note, however, what Louka does to break the chains of the established social order. She is not the hardworking, self-educating-in-the-wee-hours-of-the-night woman, so she exploits her physical beauty. To

³² At the time, the Bulgarian army was under the direct command of Russian officers. The highest military rank granted to a Bulgarian was major.

avoid spending the rest of her life as a servant to the Petkoffs, Louka becomes scheming and manipulative. While playing hard-to-get, she cunningly seduces Sergius in order to make him marry her and thus elevate her to the higher ranks of Bulgarian society.

The other servant in the house, Nicola, or “the ablest man in Bulgaria,” as Bluntschli fashions him, has his own plan for climbing up the social ladder: he wants to establish a shop in the capital, Sofia. To that purpose, his only interest in life becomes gaining money, which turns him into an unscrupulously avaricious man. Nicola’s greed goes so far as to lead him to ask Louka, to whom he is engaged, to find a way to marry Sergius and thus become “one of [his] grandest customers, instead of only being [his] wife and costing [him] money” (71). Yes, that is how unscrupulous Nicola is—he is ready to pander his wife-to-be for money. Nicola’s unscrupulous greed and Louka’s promiscuous behavior complete the picture of the inadequate, uncultured, ignorant, and boorish Bulgarian in *Arms and the Man*, whose claims to European status can only evoke pity or sincere laughter.

My discussion so far provides sufficient evidence for Shaw’s arrogantly patronizing and belittling attitude toward the Bulgarians, but more importantly, it highlights the play’s fundamental dependence on tropes of western colonial discourse. Only through Bluntschli, the westerner, can Shaw expose the Bulgarians as non-Western, as caught between their “oriental heritage” and “childish aspirations to imitate ‘the West’ and appear ‘civilized’” (Goldsworthy 115). This dichotomized relationship between superior westerner and inferior other, the *prima nota* of western colonial discourse, is the most vital and determining component of *Arms and the Man*. A skeptical thinker, a methodical, logical worker, and most of all, a *realist*, the Swiss

soldier is the complete opposite of the ignorant, inefficient, pathetically romantic Bulgarians. Shaw effectively exploits this gap between Bluntschli and the Bulgarians to create comedy, but in doing so, he also presents Bluntschli as superior to the Bulgarians, and thus institutes him, the only Western character in the play, as the play's moral and civil center.

Even more arrogant and patronizing than his literary portrait of the Bulgarians in *Arms and the Man* are Shaw's comments about the high degree of authenticity of that portrait. He proudly boasted in front of Charles Charrington (a fellow Fabian, actor, and theatre director) that his play would give the impression that he had "actually been in Bulgaria" (qtd. in Holroyd 300), and fervently defended the authenticity of his representation of the Bulgarians. In a letter he wrote to William Archer, dated 23rd February, 1903, a conceited Shaw wrote:

I have to inform you triumphantly that in view of the political disturbances in the Balkan states, the Austrian Censorship forbids the Burg Theater to produce *Arms & the Man* [sic] at present. This tribute to the political actuality and ethnographical verisimilitude of my play will, I hope, be a warning to you not to disparage my historical researches in the future.³³ (qtd. in Laurence 312-3)

The implied "I told you so" stands out in this passage. The celebratory, sure-of-victory tone of Shaw's words clearly demonstrates that he had long anticipated the advent of the moment when he would be able to rub in the noses of his critics, like Archer, the

³³ Austrian Censorship found the play ill-timed for production. At the time the Macedonians were disturbing the Balkan peace in an attempt to liberate themselves from the Turks. The Macedonians would eventually revolt in August 1903.

“fact” that from a political and ethnographic point of view *Arms and the Man* was soundly rooted in research. This was not, moreover, the first time when Shaw felt rectified for what he had said about the Bulgarians in his play.

A few years earlier, in his preface to the first edition of *Plays Pleasant*, Shaw addressed Moy Thomas’ criticism that in *Arms and the Man* he “had struck a wanton blow at the cause of liberty on the Balkan Peninsula by mentioning that it was not a matter of course for a Bulgarian in 1885 to wash his hands every day” (15). Here is Shaw’s riposte:

[Thomas] no doubt saw soon [after the play was produced] the squabble, reported all through Europe, between Stambuloff and an eminent lady of the Bulgarian court who took exception to his neglect of his fingernails. After that came the news of his ferocious assassination, with a description of the room prepared for the reception of visitors by his widow, who draped it black, and decorated it with photographs of the mutilated body of her husband. Here was a sufficiently sensational confirmation of the first apings of western civilization by spirited races just emerging from slavery. (15)

Evidently, Shaw felt strongly that he knew well the Bulgarians, that his “sketch” of the Bulgarians in *Arms and the Man* was rather truthful and realistic. Stambuloff’s dirty nails and ferocious assassination provided for him sufficiently strong evidence, even if only one piece of evidence, for what he had written about the Bulgarians in his play—that they had bad hygienic habits and childishly aped everything that came out of Western Europe.

Why was Shaw, who had never set foot on Bulgarian soil, so sure of the truthfulness of his description of the Bulgarians? Had he, from the comfort of his London home, two thousand kilometers away from the Bulgarian borders, managed to capture the Bulgarians' nature and spirit at the end of the nineteenth century? According to one contemporary critic, Shaw had not only captured the nature of the Bulgarian, but also

grasped the essential social changes that followed the liberation of a backward country, such as Bulgaria in 1878, from centuries of feudal Turkish rule: nascent capitalism and an increasingly important bourgeoisie in an overwhelmingly peasant nation. Turkish influence lingered: peasant homes were small and contained little besides a table and a stool; heavy rugs and cushions were used for sleeping, and clothing was homespun. Few homes had running water, and frequently humans shared them with animals. (Weiss 37)

Even if rhetorically burdened by Eurocentrism, Samuel Weiss' appraisal of Shaw's knowledge of the Bulgarians is essentially right. Indeed most Bulgarians at the time relied mainly on the home garden and barn to survive and were not very fond of washing and bathing. "The Bulgarian home, clothes and yards would impress everyone with their tidiness and cleanness, but personal hygiene was not a priority [among the Bulgarian people in the nineteenth century]," writes Raina Gavrilova in her book-length study of the nineteenth-century Bulgarian home (178). "The Bulgarian bathed rarely,"

she continues, “It was deemed plenty if one washed his feet and head on Saturday” (179).³⁴

But who in the so-called civilized world washed more often than the Bulgarians at the time? The British, the people of the allegedly most developed nation in the world in the nineteenth century, were regularly decimated by such diseases as cholera, dysentery, and typhus and typhoid, all of which were mainly caused and spread by bad hygiene. Furthermore, the Britons’ hygienic habits were not much different than those of the “uncivilized” Bulgarians. As Bruce Haley reports in *The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture*, “During the first decades of Victoria’s reign, baths were virtually unknown in the poorer districts and uncommon anywhere” (9). A public intellectual and fervent socialist who was strongly involved in fighting the inequities of the existing social order, Shaw was aware of the dirt and misery that ruled the streets of nineteenth-century Britain, especially those of the lower-class neighborhoods. Actually, in his “A Dramatic Artist to his Critics,” in a half-apologetic, half-explanatory tone, Shaw stated that he “had not the slightest intention of suggesting that [the] Bulgarian major, who submits to a good wash for the sake of his social position, or his father, who never had a bath in his life, are uncleanly people [. . .]” (70). He targeted, Shaw claimed, the washing habits of the British, not of the Bulgarians. Perhaps one must first read Shaw’s article in order to understand “correctly” his play, however. For, while his intentions in *Arms and the Man* may have been to target the Britons, his text suggests otherwise. In the play, Shaw clearly ridicules Major Petkoff’s and his family’s washing habits, and

³⁴ For more on the Bulgarians hygienic habits during the second half of the nineteenth century, see pp. 178-186.

certainly not those of the Britons. On the contrary, only through the comparison between the washing habits of the Britons and the Bulgarians is Shaw able to mock the latter. Intentionally or not, his text exploits the Bulgarians to garner a few cheap laughs.

In *Arms and the Man* Shaw also mocks the Bulgarian soldiers by presenting them as suicidal maniacs who foolishly threw themselves in deadly battles during the Serbo-Bulgarian War (1885). He conveniently forgets, however, to historicize the Bulgarians' "irrational" heroism, to tell that it was most probably a reaction to their recent liberation, in 1878, from five centuries of Ottoman rule. The San Stefano treaty, signed on March 3, 1878, between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, established Bulgaria as an autonomous state with its own government and army. However, worried that a strong Russophile Bulgaria would greatly extend Russian influence in Eastern Europe, the Great Powers, especially Britain and Austro-Hungary, insisted on revising the San Stefano treaty, and they did so through the Treaty of Berlin (June-July, 1878). The new treaty stipulated that Bulgaria should be divided into two parts: 1. Bulgaria, a self-governing, tributary principality, with its own army; and 2. Eastern Roumelia, an autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire. Unhappy with the artificial division of the Bulgarian provinces by the Western Powers, only seven years after the Treaty of Berlin, on September 6, 1885, Eastern Roumelia and Bulgaria united and proclaimed a unified Bulgaria.

The union made Bulgaria the largest state in the Balkans, which immediately became a cause for alarm among its neighboring states, especially Greece and Serbia. To everyone's surprise, Russia did not back the Bulgarians' union, thus making them a seemingly easy target for invasion. Realizing Bulgaria's vulnerability and the

opportunity to expand its territory eastward, Serbia declared war on Bulgaria on November 2, 1885. In his war manifesto, the Serbian king, King Milan, declared that “his kingdom was forced to start the war because the [Bulgarians] breached the Treaty of Berlin” (Statelova and Pantev 129). Against all odds, the Bulgarian soldiers, who were fewer in numbers, and very little prepared for military action, defeated the well-trained, well-equipped, military-savvy Serbians.³⁵ During the war, the Bulgarian army exhibited exactly what Shaw’s *Arms and the Man* aimed to ridicule—extraordinary courage and passionate patriotism, the same romantic ideals for which “Shaw’s rationalism did not have patience” (Todorova 114). These ideals were, moreover, deeply rooted in the Bulgarians’ five centuries of hopes for an independent, united Bulgaria. In essence, thanks to reckless, border-line suicidal acts, such as the one Sergius’ cavalry is shown to commit in Shaw’s play, the Bulgarians were able to achieve victory, and thus earn the right to be one, unified state.

Even thirty years after *Arms and the Man* was first put on stage, Shaw remained adamant in his claims about the truthfulness of his depiction of the Bulgarians. In 1924, in a letter he wrote to the editor of the *Berliner Tageblatt* in relation to potential protests by Bulgarian students against putting the play on stage in Berlin, Shaw maintained that back in 1885, “libraries, electric bells and houses with more than one floor” were still a novelty in Bulgaria, and that it was “possible to assassinate Stambuloff for the reason (among others) that he did not wash his hands often enough” (*Times* 13). What is more, to his long list of Bulgarian shortcomings, this time he added that the Bulgarians did not

³⁵ Eventually the Bulgarian army even invaded Serbia, and only the timely intervention of Austro-Hungary and the Great Powers was able to stop the war. For a complete breakdown of how the war unfolded see Statelova and Pantev, pp. 129-184.

have a sense of humor because they were unable to laugh at themselves, which was a sign, a true measure, in fact, of the civility of a people:

[C]omedy is possible only in a highly civilized country; for in a comparatively barbarous one the people cannot bear to have their follies ridiculed, and will tolerate nothing but impossibly brave and virtuous native heroes overthrowing villainous opponents, preferably foreign ones. Civilized audiences enjoy being made to laugh at themselves, and recognize how salutary that exercise is for them. Civilized Bulgarians enjoy *Arms and the Man* [sic] as much as German audiences do, and indeed more, as they are more directly interested. (Shaw, *Times* 13)

After several more such paragraphs of teaching the Bulgarians how to be a civilized people, Shaw ends his letter on the following note:

When the Bulgarian students, with my sincerely friendly assistance, have developed a sense of humor, there will be no more trouble. (13)

In addition to being an expert on Bulgarian culture and history, apparently, Shaw also thought he could teach civilized manners to the “ignorant” and “backward” Bulgarians. In a similar fashion, Shaw’s fellow Briton, Thomas Carlyle, thought that the noble, strong white hand of the West had to “harness” the people of the world, especially the “niggers” of the West Indies, and teach them the grand ways of the civilized nations. The English, wrote Carlyle, needed to begin to “act as serious men, who have work to do in this Universe, and no longer as windy sentimentalists that merely have speeches to deliver and dispatches to write” (6). Shaw is not as straightforward and aggressive as Carlyle, but the message of the last words of his letter is not very different from

Carlyle's—if only the Bulgarians listened to him, Shaw could assist them to cast off their “barbarous” attire and don the golden robe of the civilized world.

Perhaps the Bulgarians could have learned such matters important to the civilized world as how to have electric bells, libraries full of clean, well-kept books, and “houses with more than one floor.” The sense of humor, however, especially the ability to laugh at themselves, they had already cultivated, well before Shaw had even conceived *Arms and the Man*. If Shaw had indeed done his homework about the Bulgarians, he would have noticed that back in 1871, one “uncivilized” Bulgarian writer had already satirized the newly-formed, newly-rich, blindly-aping-the-“civilized-world” Bulgarian *parvenu* in a play he called *The Misunderstood Civilization*.³⁶ As Voinikov states in his announcement of the book publication of the play, the “moral purpose” of *The Misunderstood Civilization* is “to protect our [Bulgarian] youth from the depravity that surreptitiously creeps into their tender spirits through the introduction of fashion, French idioms, and, generally, outside culture from the so-called European civilization” (qtd. in Lekov 225).³⁷

Furthermore, in the same year when *Arms and the Man* was first put on stage, another “uncivilized” Bulgarian, Aleko Konstantinov, was writing and publishing in installments in *Missul* (a Bulgarian literary magazine) what is considered as the most explosive and scathing satire of the Bulgarian in Bulgarian literature, *Bai Ganio*.

Consider the following passage, which discusses Bai Ganio's filthy body, after he has

³⁶At the time, the play was not translated in English, and it still is not. As previously noted, all the quotations from Bulgarian will be in my translation.

³⁷“да предпази младото ни поколение от разврата, който се вмъква несъзнателно в нежните му духове при въвеждането на модите, алафрангата или въобще външната култура на тъй наречената европейска цивилизация.”

jumped with a splash that renders speechless everyone in the pool of a public bath in Vienna:

And indeed, his feet did not represent the most suitable model for Apollo Belvedere. The patterns of his socks had made an impression on his already dirty, overgrown-with-hair skin. Actually, with uncleanness we cannot baffle the Bulgarians: we cannot make even the most ebullient imagination visualize something more uncleanly than that with which reality itself presents one.³⁸ (140)

Bai Ganio teems with such sadly hilarious episodes that mock with vengeance the Bulgarian who thought that a few trips to Western Europe would make him more civilized. In the words of Maria Todorova, with *Bai Ganio*, “[Aleko]³⁹ was exposing a phenomenon he loathed: the superficial mimicry of civilized behavior without the genuine embrace of real values” (40). Employing irony that often escalates to caustic sarcasm, in their respective works, Konstantinov and Voinikov ridiculed in bold print those Bulgarians who thought that simply changing their clothes with fashionable Western ones and using a few French words in their every-day vocabulary would make them civilized, or European. Like a sharp knife, the Bulgarian writers’ ink pierces through the Western veneer of their characters and exposes the simple-minded, fake Bulgarian under it.

³⁸ “И наистина нозете му не представляваха най-подходящ модел за Аполона Белведерски. Шарките на чорапите му се бяха отпечатали на кожата—и без това нечиста и обрасла. Впрочем с нечистота не можем зачуди българите: не можем накара и най-разпазената фантазия да си представи нещо по-нечисто от туй, което може да ти представи самата действителност. . .”

³⁹ See note 2 in the Introduction.

But the most striking omission in Shaw's so-called "research" of the Bulgarians is Ivan Vazoff's *Under the Yoke*, which was translated in English in 1893 and appeared on the British literary market in January of 1894. In his introduction to *Under the Yoke*, Edmund Gosse described the novel as a "masterpiece," "a romance of modern history of a very high class indeed" (v). It is odd that Shaw, who knew well Gosse and his work,⁴⁰ somehow did not check Vazoff's novel, which, moreover, was also reviewed in *The Bookman* and *The Academy* in February and March of 1894 respectively, almost three months before Shaw finished *Arms and the Man* and put it on stage. If Shaw had read Vazoff's novel, perhaps he would have learned more about the Bulgarians' culture and history, about the long, even if seemingly futile struggle of a small people to throw off a powerful oppressor of close to five centuries, such as the Ottoman Empire. Shaw might have read about Kandoff, one of the characters in *Under the Yoke*, who fought the Ottoman bashi-bazouks with the same courage and madness that Sergius exhibits in *Arms and the Man*. Says the narrator of the novel about Kandoff: "Ognianoff involuntarily turned to the right and saw through the smoke an insurgent who was firing away at the enemy, bolt upright, and completely exposed to their fire. Such boldness was *perfect madness*" (my emphasis, Vazoff 257).⁴¹ Later in the novel, the narrator even calls the Bulgarians' fight with the Ottoman troops "a poetic folly: for young nations, like young people, are poetical" (272). Notably, Vazoff paints an overly

⁴⁰ In a letter to Edmund Gosse's son, who was writing a biography of his father, Shaw writes: "My Intercourse with your father was always viva voce. Until very late in our careers we used to meet only at committees; and as he was a most combative man and had a sense of humor which he could never control, we sparred and chaffed rather than communed on these occasions." He then adds that he "knew" and "valued" Gosse's work (qtd. in Laurence 127).

⁴¹ All quotations from Vazoff's novel are from the translated text in English in 1894.

romanticized picture of the Bulgarians' will to fight for freedom and die for it. But like Voinikov and Konstantinov, he, too, is very critical of the Bulgarians, especially the newly-rich *chorbadjii*, who readily sold Bulgarian insurgents and agitators to the Ottoman troops to preserve the well being and economic security they had acquired as servants of the Ottoman authorities. As the anonymous writer of the review of *Under the Yoke* in *The Academy* writes, "It cannot be said that M. Ivan Vazoff is inclined to veil the faults, the pusillanimity of his countrymen. The tale is an epic, but with all its pathos it does not lack humour" (186).

If one followed the logic of Shaw's earlier-quoted words that only "Civilized audiences enjoy being made to laugh at themselves, and recognize how salutary that exercise is for them," then, fin-de-siècle Bulgarians should be counted as such; for, as shown in the above paragraphs, a number of Bulgarian writers had ridiculed in bold print their own countrymen's weaknesses and foibles, and their works were widely popular in Bulgaria. Aleko even had to rush the book publication of his *Bai Ganio*, as there was already great demand for it on the Bulgarian literary market.⁴² What is more, Vazov, Voinikov, and Konstantinov were not the only nineteenth-century Bulgarian writers who wrote with irony and sarcasm about Bulgaria and its people. Botev and Karavelov are only two other names of nineteenth-century Bulgarian writers that come immediately to mind. One could, in fact, speak of a discernible trend of self-deprecating humor in nineteenth-century Bulgarian literature. According to Shaw's criteria for what

⁴² I speak of *Bai Ganio*'s publication in more detail in the last part of this dissertation. See pp. 112-113.

features constitute civilized audiences, the Bulgarians must be one. Nevertheless, he was not able (or perhaps willing?) to recognize the Bulgarians as such an audience.

Notably, the portrait of the Bulgarians in late nineteenth-century Bulgarian literature is not very different from Shaw's in *Arms and the Man*. In fact, at times, Shaw's mocking of the Bulgarians pales in comparison with that of Konstantinov or Voinikov, for instance. But although similar in tone and style, Shaw's mocking of the Bulgarians is distinctly different from that of the Bulgarian writers in terms of *purpose*. That purpose best reveals itself through a comparative study of the position from which the Bulgarians are mocked in Shaw's and the Bulgarian writers' texts respectively.

Shaw writes about the Bulgarians from an outsider's perspective, assuming a superior and enlightened position from which he satirizes the inferior and culturally lacking Bulgarians. The Bulgarian writers, even though at times exhibiting the same Shavian superiority complex when writing about their own countrymen hardly ever assume a position that separates them from their countrymen. Significantly, their mocking does not stem from the outside, from a distance, but from within, from an insider's vantage point. Unlike Shaw's, the target of the Bulgarian writers' mocking remains within their own community. Their mocking is not based on showing or establishing a superior outsider figure as a paragon of normative behavior, such as Bluntschli is in *Arms and the Man*, but on a discourse that assumes a critical, but at the same time sympathetic role within the community of those who are mocked. While caustically satirizing specific types of late nineteenth-century Bulgarians, the Bulgarian writers also set up in their texts examples of positive Bulgarian characters—for instance, Hadji Kosta and Mariika in *The Misunderstood Civilization* or the student

narrators in *Bai Ganio*. In doing so, the Bulgarian writers strip of aggression their mocking, of telling from above what is right and what is wrong, which allows the audience (the Bulgarian readers and theatergoers) to participate in its own mocking and potentially choose whether to accept it as legitimate or not. Besides working as mere entertainment—as comedy—the Bulgarian writers mocking thus also works as refreshing constructive criticism, as a way to help the Bulgarian people see through their own follies and weaknesses.

Because of its inherent incapacity to reach large Bulgarian audiences—few Bulgarians read or spoke English at the end of the nineteenth century; they preferred Russian and French—Shaw’s caricatural representation of the Bulgarians fails to develop into a constructive critique, and remains solely in service of the play’s comedic purposes: to tickle the egos of the Western civilized audiences, specifically, the British theatergoers. The Bulgarians, as characterized in *Arms and the Man*, suffer from overly romanticized notions of reality, a “disease” that, according to Shaw, is largely due to their inability to think and act as rational, down-to-earth Western European men, such as Bluntschli. With his play, then, Shaw creates specific conditions that allow the British to laugh at what he presents as the “tragic suffering” of the Bulgarians. As such, the Bulgarians’ “suffering” in *Arms and the Man* becomes an object of delight for the British. In short, if the Bulgarian writers’ mocking of the Bulgarians invites a reading of it as an act of social responsibility, as “speaking on behalf of a communal consensus and excoriating those who have made themselves enemies of the people” (Knight 52), Shaw’s mocking of the Bulgarians invites a reading of it as an act of *schadenfreude*, the

manifestation of “largely unanticipated delight in the suffering of another which is cognized as trivial and/or appropriate” (Portmann 186).

Arguably, Shaw was not even interested in whether the Bulgarians read his play or not. The following words, which he uttered in 1941 in relation to suggestions by “RKO bigwigs” for changing the play’s setting from Bulgaria to Canada to produce a screenplay, exemplify Shaw’s general attitude towards the Bulgarians:

The suggestion of changing the location of *Arms and the Man* [sic] from Bulgaria . . . will not bear examination. The population of Bulgaria is 6 million, the theatre-going portion of which is negligible. Their feelings may be disregarded. (qtd. in Pascal 102)

Chillingly direct and unwavering, these statements clearly demonstrate Shaw’s absolute lack of interest in the opinion of those whom he so relentlessly mocks in his play: the Bulgarians. Without giving it a second thought, Shaw erases the Bulgarians’ opinion. To him the Bulgarians’ voice is immaterial; it does not matter. They cannot speak; they can be only spoken of.

Shaw’s complete disregard for the opinion of the Bulgarians or their culture is not surprising if read in light of his unwarranted assumption in *Arms and the Man* that the Bulgarians are able to communicate with Bluntschli, a Swiss, without any linguistic problems. He presumes that, somehow, the Bulgarians and Bluntschli are able to communicate. What language do they speak? Even if Bluntschli, a mercenary in the Serbian army, spoke Serbian, which is the closest linguistically to Bulgarian of all the official languages the Swiss spoke at the end of the nineteenth century—English is not among them—he would still have great difficulty in communicating with the

Bulgarians. Evidently, to Shaw, such linguistic issues were unimportant. He has to assimilate the Bulgarian culture into the British in order to write about it; he has to produce an English text in order to narrativise a non-English people. Shaw's decision to make all his characters speak English, despite their non-English native background, implies that he processed them through imperial lenses, that he believed that English was ubiquitous and everyone spoke it fluently. In a true imperialist gesture, he deletes the significance of one's linguistic heritage, disallowing both the Bulgarian characters and Bluntschli from speaking their native tongues.

Throughout the play, moreover, Shaw never questions the presence of the Swiss soldier in Bulgaria. The Bulgarians are actually more than happy to have Bluntschli as a guest, and they unconditionally invite him to stay with them, as if he were one of them, and not of the enemy they had just stopped fighting. Sure, one could read the Bulgarians' hospitality as Shaw's attempt to draw attention to their inherent goodness, to their ability and willingness to forget the past and forgive those who, only a few days ago, were killing their own countrymen. Given the overall image of the Bulgarians Shaw constructs in his play, however, it would be hard to make an argument that would sustain such a positively charged reading of the Bulgarians. Shaw simply did not think that the Bulgarians would object to the presence of a Western man; he could not imagine that Bluntschli might be unwelcome in a "backward" country, such as Bulgaria, where ignorance, provincialism, artificiality, and, worst of all, hopeless romanticism are the rule, rather than the exception. To the contrary, as the ending of the play suggests—where Bluntschli basically becomes the head of the Petkoff household and everyone in the household is in awe of him—the Bulgarians can only be thankful that a Western

man has graced their front lawn. Shaw thus ascribes to the Bulgarians a behavior that post-colonial theory identifies as *indigenous servility*: after realizing the Westerner's superiority, the natives bow to him and exhibit a sincere desire to serve and follow him. In Shaw's eyes, the Bulgarians need Bluntschli, the Western man, whose confidence, methodical and organized work ethic, and, most of all, realistic point of view are indispensable to the straightening of the otherwise dysfunctional Petkeoff household.

In *Arms and the Man* Shaw exploits the Bulgarians and their history to create a setting for his play, which caters to the colonial tastes of fin-de-siècle British theatergoers. He presents Bulgaria, speaks for it as a space that has not yet been Europeanized, has not been reached by the Midas touch of Western civilization. His depiction of the Bulgarians as squalid, uneducated, simple wannabe Europeans is often crude and tasteless, but more importantly, it is immersed in the tropes of traditional colonialist humor, which typically mocks the colonized for their backwardness and racial inferiority to the white European man.⁴³ This humor is predicated upon the inequality between the colonizer and the colonized—the former being always superior to the latter. The ridiculousness of the Bulgarian characters in the play comes from the fact that they are unable to overcome their own primitive state. Not one or two are the moments in *Arms and the Man* when the Bulgarians are mocked for their inability to live up to the standards of the West. Perhaps that is why *Arms and the Man* is one of the few world renowned dramas that was only once put on stage in Bulgaria.⁴⁴ What is more, to this day, the play has not been translated into Bulgarian. Patrick Bratlinger is certainly right

⁴³ See, for instance, Gilbert and Sullivan's *Utopia Limited*.

⁴⁴ See Richard J. Crampton, *A Short History of Modern Bulgaria*, p. 103.

when he writes that “it would have seemed crazy” to most Victorians and Edwardians “to deny that they were on top of the world, [members] of the most enlightened, progressive, civilized race in history” (14). *Arms and the Man* only demonstrates that Shaw was not among those who were “crazy” enough to oppose such a view of the Britons.

Part II

Chapter II

Representations of the Balkans in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

The Balkans were not only in Bernard Shaw's view in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Anthony Hope's novels, *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1894), *Rupert of Hentzau* (1895), and *The Heart of Princess Osra* (1896); Sydney C. Grier's *An Uncrowned King: A Romance of High Politics* (1896) and *A Crowned Queen: The Romance of a Minister of State* (1898); and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) were all set in the Balkans. Hope's three texts are set in Ruriatania—an imaginary land that will consequently become synonymous with the Balkans; Grier's—in Thracia, a region in the southern part of the Balkans; and Stoker's—in Transylvania, an area that is now a part of northern Romania, the largest Balkan state. As Vesna Goldsworthy points out, after the 1870s, “an increasing awareness of the diversity of [the Balkans] gave the area a mystique which attracted many [British] writers of popular fiction, who moved eastwards and southwards as they prospected for new sources of raw material” (43). With the mystery and outlandishness of its main character—a monstrously evil vampire Count, whose origins remain unexplained throughout the text—Stoker's *Dracula* seizes that Balkan “mystique” as well as and, arguably, better than any other British text at the end of the nineteenth century. Since its publication, Stoker's “gothic masterpiece” has greatly influenced perceptions of the Balkans in the West's imagination, if not the world, mainly because of the enormous popularity it consequently acquired through numerous translations and adaptations on stage and screen.

Actually, the Balkans were not Stoker's first choice for a setting for his gothic novel. His research notes reveal that the original location for Dracula's castle was not Transylvania, but Styria, a locale in Austria that Stoker must have borrowed from *Carmilla*, an earlier gothic novella, written in 1872 by another Irishman, Sheridan Le Fanu. Significantly, Stoker moved the setting of his novel from Styria, a place that was already established in the gothic tradition of writing, to Transylvania, a Balkan state that, as Dracula tells Harker in the beginning chapters of the novel, has had a long history of political turmoil and bloodshed: "Why, there is hardly a foot of soil in all this region that has not been enriched by the blood of men, patriots or invaders" (28). Stephen D. Arata explains Stoker's change of setting by pointing out that Transylvania was "a place that, for readers in 1897, resonated in ways Styria did not. Transylvania was known primarily as part of the vexed Eastern Question that so obsessed British foreign policy in the 1880s and '90s" (627). The changing of the novel's setting from Styria to Transylvania should suggest, therefore, that Stoker viewed the latter as more suitable for his purposes, that he had a particular interest in it.

Nevertheless, few critics have probed the historical, political, or cultural implications of the Balkan setting of the novel qua *Balkan*. Most frequently scholars have been interested in the setting to establish the history and mythology behind Dracula's vampire identity: how Stoker used and revamped Balkan history and historical figures, such as Vlad Dracula (also known as Vlad Tepes—the Impaler), a fifteenth-century Wallachian Prince, to fashion the pervasively gothic atmosphere of his novel. A seminal text in this respect is Clive Leatherdale's *The Origins of Dracula: The Background to Bram Stoker's Gothic Masterpiece*, which provides fragments from the

sources Stoker had access to and most probably used to craft his novel. In compiling the texts for his anthology, Leatherdale relies on Stoker's research notes for *Dracula*—"three packages, made up of eighty pages of notes, summaries, data and photographs" (23)—which were discovered in the mid-1970s in the United States and are currently kept in the Rosenbach Museum in Philadelphia. In short introductions to each of the texts in the anthology, Leatherdale shows what role they might have played in Stoker's text.

But what does the novel tell us about late nineteenth-century British interests in and perceptions of the Balkans and the Balkan people? Among the first to point out the importance *Dracula's* setting and its political implications was Richard Wasson. In "The Politics of *Dracula*," he reads the "locale of the novel" as opposed to the rest of Europe, claiming that Stoker presents the Count as a "threat" to the West's "progress," which he defines as "increasing democracy and improved technology" (20). Matthew Gibson captures the political currents of Stoker's gothic novel in reading it in relation to the Eastern Question, a political issue he identifies as "important to Bram Stoker not simply as a possible topical selling point, but because his own brother, George Stoker, had spent time in the Balkan region" (69).⁴⁵ Gibson explores "how a concrete event, the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 (the year Stoker moved from Dublin to London), coloured Stoker's attitude to Balkan politics in 1897 (the publication of *Dracula*)" (71). In a

⁴⁵ Bram Stoker's brother, George Stoker, spent two years in the Balkans during the Russo-Turkish war (1877-78), and wrote *With the Unspeakables*, a travel account that zeroed in on the Russia's threat to the British Empire. For more on the Eastern Question, see Part I.

similar vein, Elini Coundouriotis positions “the Eastern Question as central to Stoker’s project,” stressing that in his text, Stoker

is setting in motion a delegitimation of Ottoman history of Eastern Europe through the figure of the vampire, whose hybrid identification (a result of his own history) as both Christian and Ottoman, makes him monstrous and ultimately incoherent, a source of history that “logically” (but also anxiously) needs to be silenced. (144)

By silencing the Ottoman history of Eastern Europe, Coundouriotis concludes, Stoker aims “to repress the cogency of Eastern Europe’s claims on Europe” (156). Arata, too, calls attention to the novel’s Eastern European setting as he argues that “by moving Castle Dracula [to Transylvania], Stoker gives distinctly political overtones to his Gothic narrative” (627). In *Dracula*, Arata asserts, Stoker presents the Balkans as a threatening force to the civilized status of Western Europe, Britain in particular. He thus reads *Dracula* as a narrative that expresses Britain’s anxiety of “reverse colonization”—the colonizing of the colonizer by the colonized—the contamination and inevitable, even if unconscious, subversion of the Britons and their culture by the inferior races of the Empire.

As thorough and insightful as these studies are, they seem to take for granted two important characteristics of *Dracula*’s setting—its geographic location and racial make-up. Geographically, the Balkans are *close* to the heart of Empire, London, which makes a potential Balkan invasion of Britain quite plausible. In addition, the Balkans are mainly inhabited by white Christians, who could infiltrate the Empire *unnoticed*. As

the Count tells Jonathan Harker in the beginning chapters of the novel, he strongly wishes to avoid being recognized as a foreigner in London:

Well, I know that, did I move and speak in your London, none there are who would not know me for a stranger. [. . .] But a stranger in a strange land, he is no one; men know him not—and to know not is to care not for. I am content if I am like the rest, so that no man stops if he see me, to pause in his speaking if he hear my words, to say, ‘Ha, ha! a stranger!’
(27)

It is rather important to Dracula, as his double negatives reveal, to remain unnoticed in London, and he does everything within his power to achieve the anonymity he so much longs for: he immerses himself in English culture to the point that he studies *Bradshaw’s* timetables.⁴⁶ Once he arrives in London, the Count blends with the crowd so well that Mina Harker takes him for a regular Londoner when she first sees him on Piccadilly Street. Even Jonathan’s “terrified” expression at the sight of the Count in London does not give Mina a clue that she is watching the “monster” who almost turned her husband into a vampire. When Jonathan asks her whether she recognizes the man in front of them, Mina replies baffled: “ No, dear, [. . .] I don’t know him; who is it?” (184). That is what Harker and his international band of vampire slayers truly fear—that the Count could pass for a Londoner. The ability of the Count, a Balkan man, to pass for a Londoner, as well as the geographical proximity of his castle to London, make him an imminent threat to the British Empire in *Dracula*. He is too close geographically and too white and Westernized to be neglected.

⁴⁶ Bradshaw’s Timetables are the railway timetables.

In the first part of this chapter, I focus my attention on Stoker's rhetoric about the Balkans, the "cursed land, where the devil and his children still walk with earthly feet" (61). To present the Balkans as a threat to the Empire, Stoker, I argue, must first "other" them, and he does this quite efficiently in the opening chapter of his novel. To borrow Abdul JanMohamed's phrase, Stoker "commodifies [the Balkans] into a stereotyped object" (83), and in doing so, denies their right to be a part of Europe. The Balkans, as characterized in *Dracula*, are too savage and primitive, too evil to be European—therefore, a legitimate subject to Western law and order.

In the second part of the chapter, I turn to the Slovaks and the Gypsies, the unscrupulous, faithful-to-death helpers of the Count. Very little has been written about these two ethnic groups, and they are the only actual Balkan representatives who play an active role in the novel. The other Transylvanians make only a short cameo in the beginning of the novel and are presented as ignorant, helpless people, who would rather live in fear than oppose the evil Count who regularly terrorizes their existence. By representing the Gypsies and the Slovaks as Dracula's associates, Stoker not only makes them complicit in Dracula's "monstrous" project, but also endows them with power and authority, thus sanctioning them as the proper, "true" face of the Balkans. Stoker presents the Gypsies and the Slovaks, along with their bloodthirsty master, as the true antithesis of the Western band of vampire slayers. Characterizing them as morally degenerate, malevolent, corrupt barbarians, he employs these two ethnic groups in *Dracula* both to validate and emphasize Britain's anxiety about the potentially explosive effect the Balkans may have on British imperial affairs. To be sure, no Balkan state posed a direct threat to British security at the end of the nineteenth century, but

their neighbors and oppressors—the Russians, the Hapsburgs, and even Britain’s alleged allies, the Ottomans—did.

The Balkans and the Balkan People in Dracula

Dracula is a compilation of journal entries, letters, notes, telegrams, newspaper clippings, and phonograph recordings, which, as the reader learns towards the end of the book, Mina Harker, with some help from her husband, has collected, put together, and typed in a chronological order. As Carol Senf observes in her book-length study of *Dracula*, “Readers should thus conclude that the novel that they see is the result of Mina’s narrative strategy” (27). While Mina does provide the “narrative strategy” of *Dracula*, Stoker does not write her as an omniscient narrator. In fact, there is not an omniscient narrator in the novel. *Dracula* is narrated by four major narrators—Jonathan Harker, Mina Murray/Harker, Dr. Jack Seward, and Lucy Westenra—who rarely allow Van Helsing, Lord Godalming, or other characters to speak for themselves. Unsurprisingly all narrators are Westerners. The Eastern, Transylvanian characters are silenced throughout the text; their thoughts and words, including Dracula’s, which are very few in the text anyway, are expressed only through those of the Westerners. So unwilling is Stoker to allow any non-Western character to speak that even the Russian captain’s log of the *Demeter*, the Russian schooner that brings Dracula to England, is presented to the reader as pasted cuttings from the *Dailygraph* in Mina’s journal. The captain’s story is introduced in the text through the Russian consul’s translation of the log, which is then published in the *Dailygraph*, and eventually cut and pasted in Mina’s journal, from where the reader has access to it. Mina thus becomes the ultimate narrator

of the story, even though she has no direct relation to the story itself. Stoker's choice of narrators clearly privileges the voice of the Western, English characters. They are the only ones who have the power to speak, and more importantly, to decide what and how should be told in the novel.

Stoker privileges the West over the East throughout his text, even if with measured caution at times (as I will show later, Stoker chastises Harker for neglecting the warnings of the Balkan peasants). He sets *Dracula* in three major locations, Transylvania, London and Whitby, the first representing Eastern (Balkan) Europe, and the latter two, Western Europe. The action first takes place in the East, in Transylvania, where Harker, a young English solicitor, has to go to meet count Dracula, a Transylvanian nobleman who is interested in purchasing an estate in London. The very first sentences of the novel, which come from Harker's journal, cut a clear dividing line between the West and the East:

Buda-Pest seems a wonderful place, from the glimpse which I got of it from the train and the little I could walk through the streets. I feared to go very far from the station, as we had arrived late and would start as near the correct time as possible. The impression I had was that we were leaving the West and entering the East; the most Western of splendid bridges over the Danube, which is here of noble width and depth, took us among the traditions of Turkish rule. (7)

In Harker's view, the East starts immediately after Buda-Pest ends, a subtle statement that speaks powerfully nonetheless to what constitutes Europe and what does not.

Because of their status as Turkish (Ottoman) provinces, the Balkans, clearly, are not

included in Harker's map of Europe. The West (Europe), where the Danube is "of noble width and depth" and the bridges are "splendid," is left behind. Harker has crossed into the East, where, he hurries to note, Turkish rule is patently evident. "Jonathan Harker's entrance into the 'Eastern' world could never, in reality, have been so abrupt"; the East seems to be "almost sucking Harker in" at the moment he crosses the bridge (Goldsworthy 79). The abrupt entrance from West to East emphasizes the direct connection between the two—only a bridge stands between them. The Balkans signify that connection for Harker. They are not in, but at the doorway of the West—a short train-ride away.

Despite their relative proximity to the West, the Balkans are still overwhelmingly Eastern, according to Harker. The West's stereotypes about the East rush in full force through Harker's initial impressions. First in line is the stereotype about the backward, unenlightened Easterner, who has not yet learned the value of maps or of scientific exploration. The district in Transylvania where Dracula's castle is situated is not to be found on British maps. Harker's preliminary diligent research in the British Museum in London proved futile, because that part of the world, "the extreme east," as he calls it, is "one of the wildest and least known portions of Europe" (7-8). "I was not able to light on any map or work giving the exact locality of Castle Dracula, as there are no maps of this country as yet to compare with our own Ordnance Survey Maps" (8), writes Harker in his journal. The implicit judgment of this statement is that the Transylvanians are behind the British in their scientific development. Harker's use of the verb "light" only underlines this judgment as it suggests that Transylvania is a place that has not yet been enlightened, that it is still in the dark, pre-Enlightenment

ages. Such a dark spot on the British maps also speaks of Transylvania as an unexplored place by the West. Notably, a few years later, the “blank spaces” on the map of Africa will become the main reason, an impetus, for Joseph Conrad’s Charlie Marlow in *Heart of Darkness* to travel to Africa and “explore” it. Harker’s reason for traveling to Transylvania is not exploration but business, but, significantly, in both texts the unexplored, unfilled spots on the map with names of towns, rivers, and mountains signify ignorant, uncivilized, prehistoric places that need enlightening.

Second in Harker’s journal is the stereotype about the Easterner’s irrationality and helplessness. He describes Transylvania as an extremely superstitious place, where “every superstition in the world is gathered” (8). Superstition, not reason, rules the lives of the Transylvanians, who, even though regularly terrorized by Dracula, would not dare to fight him. All they do to protect themselves from the Count is carry garlic and crosses, and pray that he will not choose them as his next victim. Because of their inability to actively, i.e., reasonably, counteract the Count’s attacks, the Transylvanians are helpless in Harker’s view. The Westerners, not accidentally led by two scientists, Dr. Seward and Abraham Van Helsing, “M.D., D. PH., D. LIT., ETC., ETC.” (Stoker 123), know how to fight such a monster as the Count, and only they can deliver the ignorant Balkan people from his dreadful deeds. To survive, the novel suggests, the Balkan “peasants,” whom Harker insists on calling “peasants,” need the Westerners’ strong, rational, scientific hand.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Harker either directly calls the Transylvanians “peasants” or describes their clothing and carts as “peasant.” See pp. 9, 10, 14.

As several scholars have noted, Stoker's image of the Transylvanians as superstitious people, most probably, was build on information from Emily de Laszowska Gerard's *Transylvanian Superstitions*, which was published in 1885 in *The Nineteenth Century*. In her short, but rich-in-detail article, Gerard, "who had lived in Transylvania for two years as the English wife of a Hungarian cavalry brigade commander dispatched to that province" (Leatherdale 108), provided an extensive list of the numerous superstitions that ruled everyday life in Transylvania at the end of the nineteenth century:

Transylvania might well be termed the land of superstition, for nowhere else does this curious crooked plant of delusion flourish as persistently and in such bewildering variety. It would almost seem as though the whole species of demons, pixies, witches, and hobgoblins driven from the rest of Europe by the wand of science, had taken refuge within this mountain rampart, well aware that here they would find secure lurking-places, whence they might defy their persecutors yet awhile. (130)

Gerard's words are clearly premised on the belief that science and superstition exclude each other—superstition is what science is not. Superstition, the "plant of delusion," as Gerard calls it, could exist only in lands where science is dead or nonexistent. In describing Transylvania as the place that houses "every superstition of the world," Harker echoes Gerard's words, thus boldly underlining the irrational, backward, non-Western status of its population.

Third on Harker's list is the stereotype about the unprofessional, lazy Easterner, who does not value time and punctuality. As Harker's detailed-to-the-minute journal

reveals, time and punctuality lose value progressively, from West to East. Harker's train from Munich to Vienna arrives at 8:35 p.m., but "should have arrived at 6:46" (7). The further East he goes, the problem persists. As an Englishman, born and bred in a capitalist society where time is a requisite component in determining one's wage, thus unequivocally equaled with money,⁴⁸ Harker has learned to value time and punctuality. He, therefore, must "hurry breakfast" (8) in order to be on time before his train leaves Klausenburgh.⁴⁹ However, he is forced to sit "for more than an hour" in his carriage at the station before the train begins to move. Obviously disappointed in how carelessly time is wasted in Eastern Europe, Harker exclaims: "It seems to me that the further East you go, the more unpunctual are the trains" (8). The generalization imbedded in this statement certifies the East, including the Balkans, as the "other" of the West. The tardiness of the Eastern trains only highlights the vastness of the gap that separates the East from the West.

The Oriental-Barbarian look of some of the people who inhabit Transylvania, more precisely the Slovaks, completes Harker's list of stereotypes about the East:

The strangest figures we saw were the Slovaks, who are more Barbarian than the rest, with their big cowboy hats, great baggy dirty-white trousers, white linen shirts, and enormous heavy leather belts, nearly a foot wide, all studded over with brass nails. They wore high boots, with their trousers tucked into them, and had long hair and heavy black mustaches. They are very picturesque, but do not look predispossessing.

⁴⁸ See Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*.

⁴⁹ Klausenburgh is a town in western central Transylvania where Harker spends a night before he goes to Dracula's castle.

On the stage they would be set down at once as some old Oriental band of brigands. They are, however, I am told, very harmless, and rather wanting in self-assertion. (9)

This passage reads like a manual for nineteenth-century British biases about the native people from the colonies. To Harker, the Slovaks are not people; they are strange “figures.” The two adjectives that stand out in the description of the Slovaks are “Barbarian” and “Oriental,” both of them indispensable to traditional British colonial discourse. To highlight their importance to the understanding of the Slovaks, Harker even capitalizes the adjectives. Following closely the well-trodden path of nineteenth-century British colonialist descriptions of native people as lacking in aesthetic values and in need of the West’s help, Harker also depicts the Slovaks as “picturesque,” but not “predispossessing,” and as “wanting in self-assertion.” The Slovaks, in other words, are ordinary Oriental-Barbarians who need to be taught how to act, dress, and express themselves as civilized people do.

The one cultural trait of the Transylvanians that makes a positive impression on Harker is their “excellent” food. He writes in his journal: “I had for breakfast more paprika, and a sort of porridge of maize flour which they said was ‘mamaliga,’ and eggplant stuffed with forcemeat, a very excellent dish, which they call ‘impletata’” (8). So impressed is Harker by the “excellent” dishes he has been served in Transylvania that he includes several parenthetical notes in his journal to remind him to write down the dishes’ recipes for his wife: “(*Mem.*, get recipe for Mina)” (8). Food is all that the Transylvanian peasants can offer to incite the attention of a Westerner. The people who prepare the food are not as noteworthy as the food itself, and they do not deserve

Harker's interest. The little one learns about the Transylvanians is through Harker's few conversations with them, which boil down to "hysterical" warnings about what awaits him in the dark castle of the Count. Unable to control their emotions, the man and woman who own the hotel where Harker stays before he meets Dracula lose their ability to speak proper German. In short, Harker reduces Transylvanian culture to exotic dishes and spices. If nothing else, the Transylvanians are good cooks.⁵⁰

A notable exception to Harker's overall negative impression of the Transylvanian people is Count Dracula. There is not a trace of the needy, uncivilized, uneducated Transylvanian peasant in Harker's first impression of the Count. On the contrary, like Harker, Dracula speaks with a sense of superiority, of aristocratic arrogance about the common Transylvanian peasant, who, in his words, is "at heart a coward and a fool" (29). Dracula is also a wealthy, self-sufficient man, who only occasionally needs the help of Gypsies and Slovaks. He knows what he wants and how to get it, and boasts of being a Szekely, the blood heir of

many brave races who fought as the lion fights, for lordship. [. . .] What devil or what witch was ever so great as Attila, whose blood is in these veins. He held up his arms. Is it a wonder that we were a conquering race; that we were proud [. . .]. Ah, young sir, the Szekelys—and the Dracula as their heart's blood, their brains, and their swords—can boast a record that mushroom growths like the Hapsburgs and the Romanoffs can never reach. (35-36)

⁵⁰ Ironically, Dracula views the British in the same way—as a source of good food (fresh blood). I owe this note to Professor Elfenbein.

As his words reveal, Dracula perceives himself as a royal descendant, in whose veins runs blood that is more “blue” than that of the royal families of the Hapsburg and Russian empires. In addition, the Count is interesting and charming as an interlocutor; quite educated—reads and speaks several languages, including English, which, according to Harker, he has almost perfectly mastered; and owns an enormous library that holds “a vast number of English books, whole shelves of them, and bound volumes of magazines and newspapers” (26). One is reminded here of the Bulgarians’ ragged library in Shaw’s *Arms and the Man*, which, with its single shelf of “broken backed, coffee stained, thorn and thumbbed” (61) old novels, stands in stark contrast to the Count’s numerous shelves of English books and magazines. While Shaw’s Bulgarians are only wannabe Westerners and whenever they try to act as such, look ridiculous, Stoker’s Dracula is able to cross into the Western world with the ease and poise of a true Westerner. Arguably, Dracula is more Western than the Westerners in the novel. In Harker’s eyes, “No one is more rational, more intelligent, more organized, or even more punctual than the Count. No one plans more carefully or researches more thoroughly” (Arata 637). To all that, one might also add that Dracula is a captivating speaker. Regretting his inability to memorize the Count’s remarkable speeches, Harker says “I wish I could put down all he said exactly as he said it, for to me it was most fascinating” (35). To a great extent, then, Dracula has managed to turn himself into a Westerner, to delete his difference as an Easterner, which has an exceedingly positive impact on Harker’s first impression of him.

Very soon, however, the reader learns that Harker’s first impression of the Count is quite wrong, because under the “perfect English” and charismatic persona of

the Count hide monstrous plans and terrific malevolence and cruelty. Count Dracula, Harker realizes, presents a lethal threat to England. The Count's purpose for going to England is to perpetuate himself through replication, to turn all Britons into vampires, to make them look, behave, desire, and do just as he does. He wants to start a new race in England—to use Harker's words, “to create a new, ever-wondering circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless” (60). Not only was Harker wrong in his judgment of the Count, but of the Transylvanian peasants as well. As it turns out, the peasants' fear of the Count was based on actual events and observations, and not on “ignorant” superstitions, as Harker views them. When the Transylvanian hotel-owner's wife begs Harker on her knees not to go to Castle Dracula, he cavalierly comments: “It was all very ridiculous, but I did not feel comfortable” (11). Harker becomes a victim of his own complacency, of his preconceived notions about Transylvania and its people. A superstition is an “unreasoning awe or fear of something unknown, mysterious, or imaginary” (OED), and Dracula is *real*. The Balkan peasants may be “uneducated,” “unprofessional,” and “Barbarian,” but they are right—Dracula does exist. Stoker makes Harker pay dearly for not listening to the Transylvanian peasants. For more than a month, he has to live as an inmate in Dracula's prison-like castle, not knowing what his fate will be. Stoker thus sets up Harker to fall in the trap of his own enlightened arrogance, a move that should serve as a caution to the Empire—that superstitions cannot be brushed away as mere products of ignorance, and more importantly, that although innocently ignorant on the outside, the Balkans do hide on the inside such monsters of incredible demonic power and malice as Count Dracula.

Why is Stoker so deliberately persistent in presenting the Balkans as a monstrously evil place? What is the Balkan evil that so threatens the wellbeing of the British? Franco Moretti provides an answer to these questions by reading Stoker's Count, the monstrously evil Balkan representative, through a Marxist lens—as a metaphor for monopoly capital. “Like monopoly capital,” Morreti claims, “[the Count's] ambition is to subjugate the last vestiges of the liberal era and destroy all forms of economic independence” (92). He continues:

The vampire, like monopoly, [. . .] threatens the idea of individual liberty. For this reason, the nineteenth-century bourgeois is able to imagine monopoly only in the guise of Count Dracula, the aristocrat, the figure of the past, the relic of distant lands and dark ages. Because the nineteenth-century bourgeois believes in free trade, and he knows that in order to become established, free competition had to destroy the tyranny of feudal monopoly. For him, then, monopoly and free competition are irreconcilable concepts. (93)

Morreti's vigorous Marxist analysis of the Count as an embodiment of “monopoly capital” persuasively demonstrates how Dracula's vampirism is a true threat to British bourgeois society, where individual liberty, free trade, and free competition are put on a pedestal, at least on paper. Even though compelling, Morreti's argument remains silent about Stoker's preeminent interest in the Count's racial heritage in *Dracula*. That component of the Count's identity is discussed in more detail by several scholars, including Judith Halberstam, who convincingly argues that Dracula “resembles the Jew of [nineteenth-century] anti-Semitic discourse in several ways: his appearance, his

relation to money/gold, his parasitism, his degeneracy, his impermanency or lack of allegiance to a fatherland, and his femininity” (92).⁵¹

Most often and most vocally, however, owing chiefly to Stoker’s Irish native background, Dracula’s racial identity has been linked to the Irish.⁵² In an essay that is otherwise concerned with the sexuality of the vampire in nineteenth-century fiction, Robert Tracy observes that through their fictional vampires, both Le Fanu and Stoker, who were members of the Anglo-Irish ruling class of nineteenth-century Ireland, expressed their “class’s anxiety about the unhyphenated Irish” (38).⁵³ Cannon Schmitt makes an even stronger case than Tracy about the Irish codes imbedded *Dracula*. In his view,

Within the East/West binary in *Dracula* resides [. . .] another set of opposed terms: Irish and English—or, more accurately, Irish and Anglo-Irish. Consider to begin with Dracula’s own resemblance, not so much to “Orientals,” as to a nightmare vision of the native, unhyphenated Irish. The savage bestiality of his vampiric attacks combined with the aristocratic hauteur of his manner suggests the peculiarly Irish double threat of Fenianism and Catholic feudalism. (34)

⁵¹ Also see Howard L. Malchow’s *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, where he too reads Dracula as Jewish (pp. 153-166).

⁵² As Joseph Valente points out, the last decade of the last millennium could be considered as the decade of “Irish Dracula.” During that time, *Dracula* scholarship turned its attention from “degeneration theory, reverse colonialism, criminal anthropology, inversion theory and the like” to the “specific relevance of Stoker’s homeland.” For more on the “Irish approach” to *Dracula*, see pp. 1-13 from Valente’s *Dracula’s Crypt: Bram Stoker, Irishness, and the Question of Blood*.

⁵³ The Anglo-Irish are “persons of English descent, born or resident in Ireland, or descendent of mixed English and Irish parentage” (OED).

Essentially, such Irish-centered readings present *Dracula* as a conservative text that advocates English supremacy, as an attempt on Stoker's part, notwithstanding his apparent ascription to Irish nationalist ideologies, to defend England's right to rule Ireland.⁵⁴

Like Schmitt and Tracy, Joseph Valente, too, employs the "Irish approach" to study *Dracula*, but he nuances and challenges their claim about the novel's inherent racial conservatism. He contends that

the specifically Irish elements in the novel—far from simply voicing or reaffirming the pervasive late Victorian/Edwardian panic at the prospect of racial degeneration, atavism, or intermixing—serve to modulate *Dracula*'s central metaphors of blood into a spectacular if less than fully systematic critique of this racialist logic and its attendant illogic, racialist paranoia. (5)

Stoker's gothic thriller, Valente suggests, resists, as well as undermines, the enormous weight "blood"—as inherited from one's parents—is given in fin-de-siècle British society as a determining factor of one's social status.

To be sure, Stoker's "vampiric" Count could be read as Irish, Jewish, or as an aggregate image of the racial other of the Westerner, "a composite of otherness that manifests as the horror essential to dark, foreign, and perverse bodies" (Halberstam 90). Such readings, however, treat the "Eastern European setting of the novel as incidental"

⁵⁴ For Stoker's relationship with his Irish roots see, David Glover's "Dark Enough for Any Man': Bram Stoker's Sexual Ethnology and the Question of Irish Nationalism." According to Glover, Stoker was "a cautious, but convinced advocate of Irish Home Rule from at least his early twenties" (54). Also see Chapter I, "Double Born," from Valente's *Dracula's Crypt*, pp. (15-42).

(Coundouriotis 144). More importantly, they ignore the obvious: that Dracula comes from the Balkans, that Stoker specifically writes him as a Balkan native, as a Szekely. In the novel, Dracula emphatically insists on being viewed as a native of the Balkans. He openly tells Harker that, as a Transylvanian, he is very different from the English: “We are in Transylvania; and Transylvania is not England. *Our* ways are not your ways [. . .]” (28, my emphasis). Dracula’s use of the pronoun “our” clearly specifies that he identifies himself as none other than a Transylvanian. Thus, while Dracula’s Jewish or Irish heritage could be read as only suggested, implicit in the novel, his Balkan heritage is explicitly stated. Stoker’s text unquestionably portrays Dracula as a Balkan being, who has not only lived for centuries in Transylvania, but is proud to have fought for the region’s freedom against the Ottomans. Stated bluntly, the Balkans are the explicit target of Stoker’s ink. As Eleni Coundouriotis aptly puts it, “If we overlook this [the Eastern European setting of the novel and the history that surrounds it] entirely, we risk carrying out the historical elision that the novel itself seeks to establish” (156).

Dracula is a text about the West’s fear of the encroaching Balkans, a fear of what might be the product of a potential encounter between the West and the Balkans. Stoker presents the Balkans as a threatening site to England, which, as Schmitt points out, becomes “synecdochically the West itself” in *Dracula*, because “various Westerners are drawn together to foil the [Balkan] attack” (30). The international band of vampire slayers that Stoker puts together in his narrative to annihilate Dracula—three Englishmen, Jonathan Harker, Jack Seward, and Lord Godalming; an American, Quincy Morris; and a Dutchman, Van Helsing—qualifies the vampire problem as confined not only to England, as the Irish Question would be, but to the West in general, as the

Eastern Question was—the question of how to deal with, or rather, how to control the Balkan nations that were recently liberated from Ottoman rule.⁵⁵ Read from such a broader historical perspective, Stokers’ text problematizes, as well as suggests a solution to the Eastern Question: the whole West, under the selfless and self-assured aegis of the British, of course, must rise together to rid the world of the great evil that is bred in the dark, Balkan corners of Eastern Europe. In Gibson’s words, “[i]n *Dracula* we have a portrayal of Eastern Europe as shambolic, wild and primitive, but with a sinister, threatening edge, which argues not for control so much as for execution” (86). If the West were to avoid Balkanization, that is, reverting back to the dark pre-enlightenment ages of feudalism and barbarism, the Balkans must become extinct. The dichotomy Stoker creates in *Dracula*—England (Europe) versus Balkans (East)—clearly denies the Balkans’ right to be called and treated as European, even though, in strictly geographical terms, they are a part of the European continent. To borrow Edward Said’s term, in *Dracula* Stoker practices the most fundamental act of imperialism: “geographical violence” (77); he charts the Balkans out of the European map, an act that not only denies the Balkans European status, but also calls for their control, for subjecting them to the same treatment that any non-European colony of the Empire must receive—civilization according to Western terms. The Balkans, according to Stoker’s gothic text, should be treated as a part of the East, *not* of Europe.

⁵⁵ The Eastern Question is also suggested by Stoker’s decision to send Dracula to London through a Bulgarian seaport (in Varna) on a Russian schooner. As I show in the first part of my dissertation, both the Bulgarians and the Russians, especially the latter, were a major component of the Eastern Question.

Patrick Brantlinger has identified Stoker's *Dracula* as a text that participates in what he terms the "imperial Gothic." Not only does "imperial Gothic" express "anxieties about the waning of religious orthodoxy," explains Bratlinger, "but even more clearly it expresses anxieties about the ease with which civilization can revert to barbarism or savagery and thus about the weakening of Britain's imperial hegemony" (229). The gothic attire of *Dracula* serves Stoker as a vehicle for conveying Britain's imperial anxieties about racial contamination from the inferior "barbaric" Balkan races, as well as for illustrating the difference between civilized West and backward East, between scientifically-based rationalism and primitive superstition. The vampire's demonic look and mind become the ideal tool in Stoker's hands for demonstrating the racial and cultural otherness of the Balkan people, who may be white, European, and Christian, but are still considered inferior to the British; they are Europeans, but of a lower status, not quite as good as the Western Europeans.

Frequently resorting to the rich arsenal of stereotypes his British literary predecessors had established through the ages about the native people of the colonies, Stoker paints a quasi-Oriental, quasi-European picture of the Balkan people, just like his fellow Irishman Bernard Shaw does in *Arms and the Man*. But if in *Arms and the Man* the Balkan people are a source for tongue-in-cheek comments on what it means to be civilized and who is civilized and who is not, in *Dracula*, the Balkans, as represented through count Dracula, are the source of an imminent threat to the West. They are the native land of a bloodthirsty monster who threatens to suck all the blood of the innocent Britons, and, in doing so, make them one of his own flesh and blood. As the Count tells Mina Harker while forcibly breastfeeding her his own blood, he intends to make her

“flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood, kin of my kin” (306). Soon after this forceful breastfeeding, Van Helsing regretfully notes that “Madam Mina is changing” (343), that she is slowly but surely turning into a member of Dracula’s monstrous family. The fear that Britons could be turned into blood-sucking Balkan ghosts is at the center of Stoker’s text. Specifically, it is the fear that the Britons’ pure Anglo-Saxon blood could be mixed with, infected by the bad, racially-inferior blood of the monstrous Balkan people. Dracula, who embodies all the evil of the Balkans, thus becomes the main source for potential racial contamination of the innocent, unsuspecting-trouble Britons. Therefore, the terrifying, racially poisonous Dracula (the Balkans) should be stopped, even better, mercilessly dealt with by the West, just like the Western band of vampire slayers terminates Count Dracula.

The Slovaks and the Gypsies: Count Dracula’s Helpers

As powerful and resourceful as Stoker’s Count is, his freedom is quite limited. At the first meeting of the future vampire-slaying crew, Van Helsing explains in his grammatically incorrect English that Dracula is

more prisoner than the slave of the galley, than the madman in his cell. [H]e may not enter anywhere at first, unless there be someone of the household who bid him to come; though afterwards he can come as he please. His power ceases, as does that of all evil things, at the coming of the day. Only at certain times can he have limited freedom. If he be not at the place whither he is bound, he can only change himself at noon or at exact sunrise or sunset. (255)

Vampire's freedom, then, is almost exclusively limited to the dark hours of the day, between sunset and sunrise, as well as to his home, wherever it is: "his earth-home, his coffin-home, his hell-home, the place unhallowed" (255). In addition, vampires "can only pass running water at the slack or the flood of the tide," and "garlic" and "things sacred," such as a crucifix, can make them lose their powers (Stoker 255-56). Given all these limitations, Dracula is prompted to seek the assistance of outsiders, non-vampires. He thus hires Slovaks and Gypsies to help him with his travel to London.

Even though small, the role of the Slovaks and Gypsies is vital to the plot of *Dracula*—without them, the Count would not be able to reach London. The Slovaks and the Gypsies help the Count on two occasions: on his way to London from his castle in Transylvania and from London back to his castle. The Slovaks furnish the wooden boxes in which the Count must travel; the gypsies handle the transportation of the boxes with the vampire cargo in them from castle Dracula back to the Slovaks. The latter then transport the boxes to the seaport in Varna, Bulgaria, where they are loaded onto a Russian schooner and shipped to London. Forced out of London, where he is chased by Van Helsing and his "holy" band of vampire slayers, the Count once again must resort to the help of the Slovaks and the Gypsies. The former transport him through water, and the latter on the ground. Both the Slovaks and the Gypsies remain loyal servants to the Count throughout the text. Not even once do they question their master's actions. In the novel's climactic scene, in an attempt to save their master vampire, the Gypsies even engage in a deadly fight with the Western band of vampire slayers, and one of them loses his life.

Why are the Slovaks and the Gypsies ready to risk, even give, their lives for the Count? One can only speculate on the answer to that question for Stoker does not provide an explicit one in his novel. For instance, when the “imprisoned” Harker sees Dracula’s Gypsy-helpers for the first time in the courtyard of the castle, he tries to send two letters through them, one to Mina, his fiancé, and the other to Mr. Hawkins, his boss and employer. To ensure the letters’ arrival in London, Harker also drops through the bars of his window “a gold piece” (Stoker 50). The “gold piece” proves to be insufficient to break the Gypsy’s loyalty to their master, however, for the letters end up in Dracula’s hands, not at the post office. As Janet Lyon notes in her reading of this episode, “The Gypsies’ loyalties lie with the vampire, not with the English representative of enlightened modernity” (196). One might fairly conclude, then, that the Count was paying his helpers well enough to keep them satisfied and fully devoted to him, but then, again, one might also conclude that the Gypsies simply liked the Count, that they were mesmerized, just like Harker initially was, by him, or, simply, that they were afraid to oppose him.

While Stoker’s text remains ambiguous about the Gypsies’ and Slovaks’ motivations to help the Count, it is explicitly clear about their character. From the outset of the novel, the Slovaks and the Gypsies are portrayed as cold-blooded, unscrupulous people. What is more, Stoker presents them as complicit in Dracula’s “monstrous” deeds, including his project to conquer London by literally sucking the blood out of its denizens. In light of the mass fear that even a quick passing by Dracula’s castle arouses among the rest of the Transylvanians, one cannot but assume that the Gypsies and the Slovaks were aware of what their master did during his nightly jaunts to the local

villages, and what his plans might have been for the people of London. Yet they do not show even the slightest sign of fear of or opposition to Dracula. Nor do they show any interest in what he does. Loyal to death to the Count, the Slovaks and the Gypsies unconditionally provide him with whatever help he needs.

Harker's first account of the diversity of Transylvania's population does not include the Slovaks or the Gypsies. He identifies only "four distinct nationalities"—"Saxons in the south, and mixed with them the Wallachs, who are descendants of the Dacians; Magyars in the west, and Szekelys in the east and north" (8)—thus deleting the existence of other ethnic groups in the region, including the Gypsies and the Slovaks. Harker's deliberate omission of these two ethnic groups thus situates them as outsiders, as people who exist out of the ethnic makeup of the region. Nevertheless, even though denied official recognition as constituents of the racial make up of Transylvania, the Slovaks and Gypsies are the most obviously present Transylvanian ethnic groups in the novel, with the exception of the Szekelys, perhaps, to whom Dracula proudly pledges belonging. These two ethnic groups acquire legitimacy through the Count; as his faithful helpers, they become one with their master—vampires in human flesh. Moreover, as sole representatives of the Balkans who actively participate in the plot of *Dracula*, the Slovaks and the Gypsies become exemplary of the culture of the region. Stoker's inevitably racist and altogether negative portrayal of the Gypsies and the Slovaks exposes his understanding of and attitude toward the Balkans. He uses both ethnic groups as the main ingredients to build an image of the Balkans that is frightful and repulsive, fundamentally characterized by corruption, lawlessness, and unspeakable evil.

As already discussed in the first part of this chapter, according to Harker, the Slovaks are nothing more than primitive barbarians, and even if somewhat imposing on the outside, with their “high boots, long black hair, and heavy black mustaches” (9), they are, in fact, weak on the inside, unable to assert themselves. The Slovaks, in other words, are the perfect people to serve as Dracula’s servants: physically strong to protect their master, and mentally weak, therefore easy to command and manipulate. Since Stoker never went to Transylvania, most of his information about its diverse population came from nineteenth-century travel narratives that were mainly written by British officials who had spent time in the area, such as soldiers, administrators, or members of their families (Leatherdale 97). Stoker’s image of the Slovaks is almost surely taken from Major E. C. Johnson’s *On the Track of the Crescent: Erratic Notes from the Piraeus to Pesth* (1885). Johnson’s description of the Slovaks is nearly an identical match to Stoker’s in *Dracula*:

These men [the Slovaks] stand on rude rafts, made of the trunks of trees lashed together, and this primitive craft they guide by means of long poles. Some of these men passed while we were there, and wild indeed they looked, in their white linen shirts and loose white trousers, kept together by enormous broad leathern belts, and with long straight hair about their shoulders, heavy black mustaches, and immense hats. I was, however, assured that these apparently ferocious individuals are among the mildest of mankind. Excessive indulgence in vile brandy has, however, reduced their mental capacity below zero [. . .]. (243-244)

Apparently, Stoker did not put much effort in hiding his source for the Slovaks in *Dracula*. Harker's account of the Slovaks repeats Johnson's down to the color of their mustaches. But if Johnson's description expresses only implicitly his sense of British superiority over the "wild"-looking Slovaks on "primitive" rafts, Harker's is much more explicit. As if afraid that his audience might not see through their primitivism and backwardness, Harker directly identifies the Slovaks as "Barbarian" "Orientals" (9). In doing so not only does he highlight the Slovak's inferiority and otherness to the West, but also foreshadows the "dreadful" acts they will later commit as the Count's helpers. Only a Barbarian and an Oriental, Harker's words emphasize, could be capable of supporting such an evil being as Dracula.

The Slovaks' partners in servitude to the Count—the Gypsies—figure in three of the sources that Leatherdale identifies as listed on Stoker's research notes for *Dracula*: Johnson's *On the Track of the Crescent*, William Wilkinson's *An Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldovia* (1820), and Gerard's *Transylvanian Superstitions*. All three texts, especially Johnson's and Wilkinson's, present the Gypsies in overwhelmingly racist tones. Using mainly animalistic imagery, Johnson describes the Gypsy children he meets on the Balkan roads as wild "savages" who were "howling like wolves or jackals" while begging him for money (149). "Generally," he continues, the Gypsies are "wild and nomadic in their habits, rarely working themselves, but living in preference on the toil of others, and apparently in utter unconsciousness of the difference between *meum* and *teum*" (150). Racist rhetoric is at the head of Wilkinson's account of the Gypsies as well. To him, "in many respects they appear little superior to the brute creation" (168); "The propensity to stealing seems inherent in them" (169);

“both sexes are slovenly and dirty;” and “They acknowledge no particular religion as their own” (170). Therefore, Wilkinson surmises, the most “profitable use of them” is to keep them “in a regular state of slavery” (169), just like the Wallachians and Moldavians do. Unlike Johnson and Wilkinson, Gerard is not interested in the Gypsies’ racial and cultural traits, but in the superstitions they have brought to Transylvania. Even so, she is unable to avoid some of the racist rhetoric of her countrymen, and identifies the “gypsy tribes” as “a race of fortune-tellers and witches” (130). In essence, the Gypsies in these three texts function as a projection of the other, the opposite of the law-abiding, hard-working, Christian Briton—the Gypsies are savage, good-for-nothing, dirty, lazy heathens who cannot help but live like parasites, on the back of other people, by stealing and begging.

Stoker’s portrayal of the Gypsies in *Dracula* strongly echoes their portrayal in his sources. When he meets the Gypsies for the first time in the courtyard of Dracula’s castle, Harker writes in his journal:

These Szgany are gypsies; I have notes of them in my book. They are peculiar to this part of the world, though allied to the ordinary gypsies all the world over. There are thousands of them in Hungary and Transylvania, who are almost outside all law. They attach themselves as a rule to some great noble or *boyar*, and call themselves by his name. They are fearless and without religion, save superstition, and they talk their own varieties of the Romany tongue. (49)

In light of the Gypsies’ occupation—the Count’s helpers—it is not surprising that Harker views them as heathens, people without religion, who exist outside any law and

are unwilling to assimilate, as they speak only their own language, Romany. They might be courageous people, but they fight on the wrong side, the evil Dracula. Notably, Harker's view of the Transylvanian "Szgany," the Balkan name for Gypsies, has been formed through research he conducted back home in the British Museum. By mentioning his notes, Harker gives legitimacy to his words about the Gypsies. As a Western document, the notes must be read as a trustworthy, accurate source that consequently allows him to make generalizations not only about the Gypsies in Transylvania, but about "the ordinary gypsies all the world over." Harker's generalizations about the gypsies thus function as a warning to all people in the world: beware of these lawless and godless people.

While it is not surprising that Stoker chose Gypsies as the Count's helpers, his inclusion of the Slovaks as such is rather unexpected. As Deborah Nord remarks in her *Gypsies and the British Imagination, 1807-1930*,

If English literature contains within it a constant marker of otherness, of non-Englishness, or foreignness, it is the Gypsy. A figure of literary origins and anthropological interest, the gypsy could signify social marginality, nomadism, alienation, and lawlessness. (189)

Such a statement cannot be made about the Slovaks, simply because they do not figure in nineteenth-century British literature as prominently, if at all, in fact, as the Gypsies do. If the ruthless, uncontrollable, and frightful Gypsy has had a long and rich history in nineteenth-century British literature, in the name of such emblematic characters as Emily Brontë's "gypsy brat" Heathcliff, Stoker's Slovaks, to my knowledge, are the first of their kind. What could be the reasons for Stoker's inclusion of the Slovaks as

Dracula's helpers? He must have found it important to include them in the novel, for, arguably, he could have constructed it without them, using only Gypsies.

The obvious answer to that question is that Stoker's plot required rafters, who would be able to transport Dracula's box through the Sereth and Bistritza rivers on the way back to his castle in Transylvania. The Gypsies were known as nomads, but they preferred the solid ground over water, and the Slovaks, as Mina explains in her account of Dracula's trip to London and back, are traders at the Galatz port (375). In addition, as the above-quoted passage from Johnson's *On the Track of the Crescent* shows, the Slovaks were also known as rafters, which made them ideal for the novel's plot purposes—they could legally receive Dracula's box upon arrival at the Galatz port, as well as expeditiously transport it on their rafts to its assigned destination. But, then, why could not the Slovaks finish the job themselves and carry Dracula's box through the ground as well?

Unlike the Slovaks, who were little known to the nineteenth-century British reading public, the Gypsies were notoriously "associated" in Britain "with a rhetoric of primitive desires, lawlessness, mystery, cunning, sexual excess, godlessness, and savagery—with freedom from the repressions, both constraining and culture binding, of Western civilization" (Nord 3). What is more, as Mary Burke shows in her study of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sources for Stoker's Gypsies in *Dracula*, "The living conditions of Gypsies lent themselves to comparisons with the bloodsucker of European folklore mined by Bram Stoker's *Dracula*" (56). In the examples Burke provides to support her claim, Gypsies are compared to "ghouls," accused of cannibalism, and shown as living in graveyards and digging up corpses to eat them (56). Even more

important, the Gypsies were a “true” racial other of the British. The Slovak’s racial make up was difficult to distinguish from that of the Westerners—they were white Christians. In stark contrast, the Gypsies were dark-skinned heathens. Stoker exploits the British public’s familiarity with the “dirty,” “criminal,” “heathen” Gypsies, to add to the novel what the Slovaks lacked, a marked racial difference and a vampire-like existence. He relies in his text on the codes of contemporary racial prejudices, on the long history of British gypsophobia, to characterize his Count as the monstrous other. Put differently, the inclusion of the Gypsies in the novel brings the Count’s vampiric identity closer to the literary taste of British audiences who were generally used to reading about dark-skinned, non-Christian villains from foreign lands or the margins of British society. If the Slovaks provide more or less logistical help for the Count, therefore, the Gypsies add flavor to, as well as highlight the Count’s social and racial otherness in *Dracula*.

Most importantly, however, Stoker needed both the Slovaks and the Gypsies to bind his supernatural, bloodsucking “monster” to a specific place, namely, the Balkans. An abstract, divorced-from-reality, de-historicized and de-socialized evil, such as Dracula, is not as powerful as one that is firmly rooted in the culture and politics of its time and space. A narrative that professes an outlandish, nonexistent, fantastic threat is not as powerful as one that speaks of a clear and present danger, such as the Balkans—a real, actually existent locale in Eastern Europe—are shown to be in *Dracula*. The Balkans in Stoker’s gothic text function as a safe-haven for Dracula, and this idea is strongly emphasized through his Balkan helpers. As actual representatives of the Balkan population, the Transylvanian Slovaks and Gypsies become in a way that population’s

definition, which is that they are dreadful, ignorant, and unscrupulous people who are easily manipulated and would give their souls to the devil as long as they are paid. Because of his physical limitations, Dracula's operations are confined to the area surrounding his castle. Thanks to his helpers, however, his power becomes limitless; the Gypsies and the Slovaks substantiate his menace to humanity. Thus, if the Count could be construed as a fictional character in the novel, a figment of Stoker's mind, the Slovaks and the Gypsies add a realistic component to his existence. Stoker needs them to make the Count more believable as a threat to Britain, as well as to human existence in general.

In *Dracula*, the Gypsies and the Slovaks are no lesser monsters than their bloodthirsty master. They do not have an identity, but are identified through the Count; they figure in the novel solely as his loyal-to-death helpers. Stoker depicts both ethnic groups in overtly racist tones—as corrupt, heartless, oriental barbarians—to suggest their otherness and inferiority to the Britons, as well as to rationalize their alliance with the Count. They provide a much needed mobility for the Count, who has almost exhausted the Balkan blood pool, and needs new bodies to satisfy his unquenchable thirst for fresh blood. Precisely because they are responsible for Dracula's "invasion" of London, the Gypsies and the Slovaks become as monstrous as the Count himself. Signifiers of Dracula's mobility, both ethnic groups play a crucial role in Stoker's gothic novel. Without them, Dracula is confined to the Balkans—therefore, a problem for the locals not for the British. Through the Slovaks and the Gypsies, Stoker not only gives the threat that the Count poses a real human face, but also gives it concrete *Balkan* parameters.

Coda to Part II

Before I move on to the next part of the dissertation, I would like to address what I have found to be a prominent trend in the critical treatment of both *Arms and the Man*'s and *Dracula*'s settings—the Western critics', British and American specifically, reluctance to treat and analyze those settings as Balkan, even though they are explicitly defined as such in both Shaw's and Stoker's texts. More often than not, the Bulgarian setting of Shaw's world-renowned play and the Transylvanian setting of Stoker's most famous novel are either completely neglected or read as allegories for British locales. There is an apparent, if not conscious, willingness to treat those settings as mere stages—despite their cultural, economic, or political implications—for the deployment of arguments and ideologies that are closely, even exclusively in some cases, related to specifically British problematics, the Irish Question in particular. To those critics, Bulgaria and Transylvania serve simply as settings, props for the British writers to exploit at their will. As innocently productive as such readings may appear at first glance, however, they also engage into a reading practice that cavalierly disregards the visibly dominant presence of Bulgarians or Transylvanians in Shaw's and Stoker's respective texts.

Arguably, such critical practices are more perverse than the ostentatiously concerned-for-the-suffering-Bulgarians claims of the writers of the Bulgarian Agitation. For even though they disregarded the Bulgarians' political interests in favor of those of the Britons, at least, the Agitation writers expressed compassion for the suffering of the Bulgarians under Ottoman rule, and in doing so recognized the Bulgarians as an element that contributed to their understanding of the Eastern Question. In contrast,

most critics of Shaw's *Arms and the Man*, for instance, show no interest at all in the Bulgarian setting or Bulgarian characters of the play. To them the Bulgarians are uninteresting as a component of Shaw's play. To a large extent, the same is true of *Dracula* criticism, especially of the so-called "Irish Approach," which has played a major role in *Dracula* criticism in the last two decades and has persistently read Stoker's bloodthirsty count as more Irish than his author. Canon Schmitt, I should note, is the only critic of the so-called "Irish Approach" who does not assume Dracula's Irishness before his Transylvanianness. He first reads *Dracula* at its word, "read[ing] East where East is Written" (33), and only then does he show how the East/West divide, "so insistently present in *Dracula*" (34), could be transformed into, read as an Irish/Anglo-Irish divide. Unlike Schmitt, however, the rest of the "Irish approach" critics directly assume that Dracula is an Irishman, thus deleting his explicitly-stated Transylvanian origins.

This general disregard for the actual settings of *Arms and the Man* and *Dracula* reveals an attempt (conscious or unconscious?) to downplay, even erase, the importance of these settings to one's reading of these texts. Such exclusionary critical approaches, I would argue, make those who practice them complicit in the writing practices both Shaw and Stoker engage in in their respective texts: which is, to treat the Balkans as available to use and abuse however they find suitable for their purposes. I realize that my insistence on reading *Arms and the Man* and *Dracula* at their word situates me as a proponent of the literal. Such a critical practice, as Schmitt points out in his discussion of Stoker's gothic novel, "risks missing the figurative nature of literature of terror" (33). Schmitt is right: a reading that works solely on the basis of the literal meanings of a

text's signs cuts that text down in size, robs it of the richness of its signs' allusions and implications. I am not making an argument, however, about which reading, the literal or the figurative, is stronger. As recent literary theorists, most notably Roland Barthes, have shown, such arguments are restrictive and unproductive. What I want to stress here is the importance to recognize the presence of particular places and people in these texts, a presence, the implications of which, we, as literary critics, should not so cavalierly disregard, as it illuminates these texts' participation in particular discursive trends and norms at the time of their writing, namely, fin-de-ciècle Balkanism.

To Shaw and Stoker, the Balkans were unconditionally available for literary exploitation. Shaw wrote about and represented the Bulgarians as he saw fit for his own purposes, which usually aimed at preserving British cultural norms and political interests. Similarly, Stoker appropriated Transylvania as a setting that he turned into a breeding ground for bloodsucking, merciless vampires, whom the virtuous and courageous Britons felt morally compelled to eradicate for the sake of the world's peaceful future. Both Shaw and Stoker thus participate in as well as perpetuate a discourse about the Balkans that imagined the Balkans as a site that needed the West's immediate help and attention. It would be fair to maintain, then, that while failing to discuss the overt prejudices against the Balkans embedded in *Arms and the Man* and *Dracula*, scholars restrict the articulation of these texts' participation in what Todorova identifies as Balkanism, the construction of Balkan identity as the *other within Europe*.

Part III

Western Europe Through the Eyes of Two Nineteenth-Century Balkan Writers

As demonstrated in the previous chapters, in fin-de-siècle British literature, fictional or expository, more often than not, the Balkans were conceived as the “other within Europe.” How did the Balkan intellectuals respond to this generally negative perception and depiction of the Balkans, to the disparaging stereotypes and tropes of the West? Did they see themselves and think of themselves as the backward, barbarian, under-grown, and uncultured cousin of Western Europe? Furthermore, what is the Balkan writers’ view of those who wrote about them, of “civilized” Europe? The Balkan writers were not passive absorbers of the West’s rhetoric about the Balkans. They wrote about themselves, as well as “returned the gaze” to the “civilized” Western European world.

In this last part of my dissertation, I focus my attention on nineteenth-century representations of Western Europe in two Balkan texts— Dobri Voinikov’s *The Misunderstood Civilization* (1871) and Aleko Konstantinov’s *Bai Ganio* (1894)—as I examine how they internalize Western discourses about the Balkans, how they assimilate or oppose them. Not only are these two texts regarded as classics of late nineteenth-century Bulgarian literature, but more importantly, “West” and “civilization” are central themes in both of them. In addition, even though published less than a quarter of a century apart, *The Misunderstood Civilization* and *Bai Ganio* are written during two different epochs of Bulgarian history: the former before, and the latter after Bulgaria’s liberation in 1878 from almost five centuries of Ottoman rule. Significantly, this will allow me to examine how the Bulgarians’ perception of the West evolved

during this short, yet rather eventful and tumultuous period of Bulgarian history. Both *The Misunderstood Civilization* and *Bai Ganio* have not yet been translated in English. Thus I begin with a short outline and analysis of some of the major themes they engage.

The Misunderstood Civilization

Voinikov (1833-1878) is one of the first Bulgarian dramatists. His early plays were usually set in the past, recreating and celebrating events from Bulgarian history before the Ottoman invasion. He described those plays as “historical dramas,” whose aim was to put on stage “heroic” and “noble” historical figures and events, as well as to inspire in the audience “noble feelings, virtuous ideas, altruistic aspirations and expose weaknesses or aberrations” (Voinikov, Preface 93). *The Misunderstood Civilization* was Voinikov’s first play that dealt with contemporary Bulgaria, exploring the relationship between “civilized” Europe and Bulgaria at the end of the nineteenth century. Liuben Karavelov, the famous Bulgarian intellectual of the day and leading literary critic, praised the play for its realism, recommending that the author quit writing plays about the past and seize the present (qtd. in Lekov 228). Voinikov wrote *The Misunderstood Civilization* while he lived in Romania as a Bulgarian immigrant. The play was first performed and published in Romania, but soon it crossed the Danube onto the stages of the Bulgarian theatres in Russe, Turnovo, and Kazanluk. Eventually, *The Misunderstood Civilization* became Voinikov’s most recognizable play.

The Misunderstood Civilization is a five-act play that is set in an unnamed town in Bulgaria, in the late 1860s, early 1870s. Bulgaria was still under Ottoman rule at the time, but the Ottoman Empire was already in a period of steady decline, which gave the

Bulgarians strong reason to believe that their national independence was in sight. As much as this period was defined by renewed nationalistic pride and patriotic zeal, however, it also was a period of reevaluation of Bulgarian culture and traditions. The younger generation, mostly from the newly-rich families who had the means to travel to Western Europe or attend Western European schools, expressed disparaging views of everything Bulgarian, even their own native tongue. In Voinikov's own words, with his play he aimed to expose exactly the Bulgarians who viewed their own culture and traditions as backward and deficient, unworthy of preservation, and favored the more "civilized" Western culture.⁵⁶ As Docho Lekov puts it, Voinikov wrote a comedy, through which, in his own way, he evoked Paisii Hiliandarski's famous words in *Istoria Slavianobulgarskaia* (1762), a text that most Bulgarian historians view as the cornerstone of the Bulgarian national awakening: "“Oh, ignorant race! Why are you ashamed of calling yourself Bulgarian; why do you read not, speak not in your language?”" (10). Paisii's passionate call against the Bulgarians' national nihilism reverberates throughout Voinikov's play. Through irony that often escalates to caustic sarcasm, Voinikov ridicules those Bulgarians who blindly ape Western tastes and values and reject those of their own native land. He has a few words to say about the "civilized" Western world as well, which he portrays through the character of Margaridi, the self-proclaimed-as-"civilized" Greek doctor, as the corruptor of Bulgarian culture. By pitting the established moral and ethical belief system of the Bulgarians against that of the so-called civilized world, Voinikov exposes in bold print the hypocrisy and arrogance of the latter.

⁵⁶ See quotation on p. 65.

The play opens with a heated conversation between Hadji Kosta, a wealthy Bulgarian shop-owner, and Zlata, his wife, about their children, Anca and Dimitraki. Hadji Kosta reproaches his wife for not heeding her house work, but spending too much time with their daughter on tailoring new clothes, or “rags,” as he calls them. Indignantly, Zlata responds that the new times require that a young woman wear fashionable clothes and keep away from house work so that she will be able to marry an educated man, and will not end up “in the hands of some stupid boor, whom she will serve for the rest of her life as a slave” (99). His wife’s comment only enrages Hadji Kosta, who states that today’s “educated men” cannot feed “even a pen” (90), and regretfully adds that his own son, Dimitraki, on whose education in France he has spent so much money, is not much different from them. This short exchange between Zlata and Hadji Kosta sets the stage for the rest of the play, where Hadji Kosta’s old-fashioned, traditional Bulgarian views will clash with the recently-cultivated “civilized” views of his wife, daughter, and son.

A crucial role in the Western cultivation or civilizing of the Bulgarians is played by Margaridi, a Greek doctor, who is the outspoken representative of the civilized world in the town. He dresses according to Western European fashion and insists that the Bulgarian youths imitate his civilized manners. He also claims that all Bulgarian youths should stop listening to their old-fashioned, “simple-minded” parents and learn the ways of the civilized world to which he proudly boasts of belonging. “You, the youth,” Margaridi tells Mariika, Anca’s best friend, in attempt to make her succumb to his “progressive” teachings,

must not listen to the old, rusty heads, but look forward, towards the progress of civilization. You have to imitate us Europeans, who come to visit your town; to meet with us; and to listen to our instructions. You should observe how we dress, how we speak, how we sit, how we eat and drink; and you should so dress, so speak, so sit, so eat, drink and . . .

(110)

Margaridi does not succeed in converting Mariika to “civilization,” but the impressionable Anca and her mother fall under his spell. With his flashy French costumes, knowledge of a few French words, and claims to knowing and being from the civilized world, he manages to charm both of them to such an extent that all they talk about and think about is “the civilization,” as if it were the ultimate goal in their lives.

When she realizes that Margaridi is interested in her Anca, Zlata is excited to help her meet with him at their house, even though Hadji Kosta, whose impression of the Greek doctor is anything but positive, has stridently proclaimed that he is against Anca having anything to do with that “rake.” Dimitraki, Anca’s brother who has just returned from studying in France, also encourages his sister to embrace Margaridi’s courtship, even if he never explicitly vocalizes his encouragement. Dimitraki is really proud to be friends with Margaridi—the only “civilized” person in town, in his estimation—and both of them treat the rest of the youths in town as backward, uncultured simpletons. Dimitraki’s friendship with Margaridi and Zlata’s benevolent attitude towards him pave Margaridi’s way to Anca’s heart.

But Margaridi is not the only one in town who is after Anca’s heart. Mitiu, a young and prosperous Bulgarian bachelor, is also in love with Hadji Kosta’s daughter.

He too dresses *à la* French mode, but in Anca's eyes, he is nothing but an ignorant, uncivilized Bulgarian boor, for, unlike Margaridi, he does not know French, nor does he know how to treat a lady according to the civilized fashion. Hadji Kosta, however, likes Mitiu a lot—he is a Bulgarian, has good standing in town, and owns a successful business. Thus, when Mitiu asks for Anca's hand, Hadji Kosta is more than happy to give it to him, completely ignoring his daughter's and wife's heartfelt pleas to not do so. Hadji Kosta's decision shatters Anca's dreams of marrying a "civilized" man, becoming a "civilized mademoiselle," and traveling to the "civilized" world. She is totally devastated by the turn of events—instead of being engaged to the charming and sophisticated Margaridi, she is engaged, against her will, to a man who "does not know French, nor European dances, nor compliments, nor etiquette, nor anything" (161).

Upon learning that Anca is soon to be married to Mitiu, Margaridi goes to Hadji Kosta's home and confesses to Anca that he loves her and that he is ready to marry her if she would flee with him to the neighboring village, where a priest is just waiting for them. "Once we get married," Margaridi promises Anca, "we will go directly to Europe" (167). Unexpectedly, however, Hadji Kosta returns home, and when he sees Margaridi talking to his daughter, he angrily chases him out, forbidding him to ever set foot in his house again. But Margardi does not give up. He files a complaint with the local Ottoman authorities about being mistreated by Hadji Kosta, and the latter is promptly escorted by two *zaptiehs* to the town hall to explain his actions. Scared for her husband, Zlata follows him to the town hall, thus leaving Anca home alone—her brother is out as well. Ever so sly, Margaridi returns to Anca and showers her with even more promises for a grand marriage and a wonderful, carefree future in civilized

Europe. While initially Anca hesitates to follow her glib lover, eventually she surrenders and elopes with him, only to find out that she has been cruelly deceived. No priest or wedding awaits her in the village where Margaridi takes her. Even worse, he locks her up in a house and treats her just like she thought Mitiu, her future, “uncivilized” Bulgarian husband would—as a “slave” (185).

When Hadji Kosta, who is immediately released by the Ottoman authorities, learns that Margaridi had taken his daughter away in a carriage, in his rage, he chases away his wife, blaming her for the shame their daughter has brought to their home. Meanwhile, when he hears the news about the unfortunate fate of his sister, Dimitraki all of a sudden remembers his Bulgarian origins. He goes to Mitiu’s house—where the latter is celebrating the upcoming marriage with his friends, Gherghi and Penchiu—to ask for help with the avenging of his family’s honor, which, he points out, has been ruined by a *foreigner*. Mitiu and his friends readily agree to join Dimitraki. Armed with guns and swords, they all go in search of the foul Greek doctor, who does not expect any retribution from Anca’s family. When Anca warns him that he will pay for his actions, Margaridi confidently responds that “Revenge could be expected from anyone but a Bulgarian. He does not know anything else but to tremble in front of the other” (187). Margaridi’s judgment of Bulgarian character is proven wrong, however. Mitiu, who is the first one to arrive at the house where Anca is held, fatally wounds Margaridi in a duel, just before Dimitraki, Gherghi, Penchiu, and Zlata, who has followed them, enter the house. The play ends with everyone singing in chorus a song about how all Bulgarian youths should love dearly and respect their own Bulgarian roots and culture.

Bai Ganio

Bai Ganio, first published as a book in 1895, is judged by most Bulgarian critics not only as one of the masterpieces of Aleko's oeuvre, but of Bulgarian literature in general. With its episodic structure, numerous unsavory details, and language that is rife with contemporary colloquialisms and profanities, the text strongly resembles a picaresque novel. Set in the early 1890's, *Bai Ganio* is a compilation of loosely connected stories, told in the course of two evenings by a group of fun-loving Bulgarian students, about the travels through Europe and eventual return home of Bai Ganio, a representative of the post-liberation, *nouveau riche* class of Bulgarian merchants. All stories are structurally uncomplicated and exclusively concerned with Bai Ganio, who functions as the major unifying element of the text. Through the storytellers' frequent, explicit and implicit, critiques and judgments of Bai Ganio's actions and behavior, Aleko launches a scathing satire on the *nouveau riche* Bulgarian, revealing his utter ignorance, voracity, insolence, miserliness—his most unattractive characteristics. In the words of Alexandur Nichev, in *Bai Ganio*,

Confidently and with great creative power, [Aleko] builds a character, in whom live together complacent vulgarity, granite self-importance, unprecedented egoism, militant ignorance, unappeasable hatred for the 'learned', and unremorseful exploitation of the most noble of human feelings. (121)

There is hardly a positive characteristic that Aleko attributes to his main character. Bai Ganio, as Aleko's friend and literary critic, Krustiu Krustev, stated in 1907 in one of his many articles dedicated to Aleko's life and works, is "everything unattractive, crudely-

egotistical, low, impudent, criminal, and unscrupulous that exists in our private and public life” (62). Indeed, whatever Bai Ganio does in *Bai Ganio*, be it abroad or at home, in Bulgaria, is always so gross and ugly, it is repelling.

The original text of *Bai Ganio* is divided into four major parts.⁵⁷ The first part, “Bai Ganio Goes to Europe,” which consists of nine, more or less independent stories, presents the reader with Bai Ganio’s travels through Europe, where he goes to sell rose oil, one of the major Bulgarian exports at the end of the nineteenth century. On his travels, which take him through several European countries, including Austria, Germany, Switzerland, and Russia, Bai Ganio always stands out as the uncultured, loud, and obnoxious Bulgarian. He thus ends up in numerous absurdly ridiculous situations that inevitably leave his traveling Bulgarian companions embarrassed to no end, and the casual European observer in complete shock and disbelief.

In Vienna, for instance, Bai Ganio is taken to the opera to see Josef Bayer’s ballet *Die Puppenfee*. Not only is he inappropriately dressed for the occasion—as the narrator of the story tells us, Bai Ganio’s “drab clothes stood out in contrast to the overall dark costumes” (9)—but he acts in complete discord with the accepted rules of etiquette at the opera house at the time. Amidst the deadly silence caused by the “fantastically decorated stage” and the “magical” performance of the ballet dancers, Bai Ganio is restless (9). A short while after the performance had started, the rose-oil flasks,

⁵⁷ All my references to *Bai Ganio* are from its original edition, which was published while Aleko was still alive (1895). Even if “published in a hurry” because of Aleko’s bad financial situation, as P. Slaveikov, one of Aleko’s friends, claims, this first edition is the only one Aleko had approved. The edition is divided into four major parts. See contents page of the original edition, where each of the four parts is identified by a roman numeral. More recent editions of the text divide it into two major parts.

which hardly ever leave his waist, and if they do, he makes sure he can see them at all time, start to press tightly upon his body. He “puffs” uncomfortably for a bit, and eventually decides to take off his jacket and unbutton his vest. Upon noticing that Bai Ganio is disturbing the peace of the audience, the opera personnel signals him to leave, but he arrogantly signals back as if to say: “who are you trying to scare”? (10) Sincerely amused by Bai Ganio’s actions, a young girl, who is sitting next to him, starts laughing hysterically, and pretty soon the whole audience’s attention is hijacked by what is going on in the seats. Overcome by shame, the Bulgarian student who has brought Bai Ganio to the opera finds himself speechless. Bai Ganio, however, is not bothered the least. Pulling “energetically” the Bulgarian student by the sleeve, he states: “Come on, let’s leave; let these Yids be—they’ll come to me eventually, just wait!” (10). Bai Ganio does not care that he has interrupted the performance or disturbed the audience. His rose-oil flasks are much more important to him than the performance of the ballet dancers. Bai Ganio’s insolence and egotism are unmistakable: in his own eyes, he has not done anything wrong.

The story also exposes Bai Ganio’s racist tendencies. Why does he call the Viennese “Yids” is not clear, but one can safely assume that he intends to offend them as well as point out his “racial superiority.”⁵⁸ In fact, racial slurs are abundantly present in Bai Ganio’s otherwise rather limited vocabulary. He calls the Germans “simple” people and “beggars,” and the Serbians “Bulgarians,” certainly intending to challenge

⁵⁸ This is not, moreover, the first time Bai Ganio does this. During the episode when he is in a public bath in Vienna, once again, for no apparent reason, he calls them “Yids” (15).

their national heritage.⁵⁹ To him, no one is better than the Bulgarians. When it turns out that the “brand new” Bulgarian train to Prague is without lighting, Bai Ganio is quick to exclaim:

I do know that this is not our [i.e. the Bulgarians’] fault; once again, it is them foreigners, god damn them! They have done this on purpose, to denigrate us. All because they envy us. They are all the same. (23)

If Bai Ganio sounds like a fervent patriot who firmly believes in his own people’s abilities and virtues, that is hardly the case. More often than not, his loud patriotism is geared towards gain, to get something out of his compatriots. As the only one who has not brought food on the train, Bai Ganio appeals to the patriotism of his fellow travelers to get some food: “Well, after all, we are Bulgarians; we will look after each other. From this person a piece of bread, from the other some cheese—that will do for a man. Right!” (26) And Bai Ganio does pretty well, as the narrator of the story explains: “His comrades treated him with food and drinks—he treated them with fiery patriotism, mixed with appetite and thirst” (26). Later on, when the train passes by Slivnitsa, where the Bulgarian army had defeated the Serbs during the Serbo-Bulgarian war in 1885, Bai Ganio’s patriotism rises to a boiling point, but yet again, with a purpose in mind. He yells as enthusiastically as he can, “Long live Bulgaria, Hurray!” and then swiftly asks for the bottle of wine: “Hey, let me water my mouth, hurray!” (26) That is how Bai Ganio’s patriotism works—it is driven by his egotistical instincts for personal gain, a way for him to improve his material situation, to get free food and drinks.

⁵⁹ In Nish and Belgrade, Bai Ganio sarcastically asks every Serbian he meets at the stations: “Are not you Bulgarian, admit it? You all are Bulgarians, but pretend to be Serbians” (25).

The rest of the stories included in the first part of *Bai Ganio* are written in the same spirit, relentlessly mocking Bai Ganio's provincialism, misguided patriotism, and, more than anything, his miserly existence, which revolves around making or saving a buck however and whenever possible. Bai Ganio finds all kinds of excuses to avoid spending his own money, and shamelessly exploits the altruistic sensitivities of those who travel with him or with whom he stays, including complete strangers. He literally forces a Bulgarian student, whom he has met in the train to Russia, to invite him to stay at his dormitory, even though the student explains repeatedly that non-students are not allowed to stay in the dormitory. On another occasion, to avoid paying for a hotel in Prague, Bai Ganio decides to pay a visit to a Czech historiographer of Bulgaria, Irechek, who had lived in Bulgaria for some time. Bai Ganio has never met Irechek in his life. This does not prevent him from assuming, however, that he could stay at Irechek's place instead of "giving his money to a hotel" (39). Out of his goodness, even if utterly surprised by the visit, Irechek lets the uninvited guest in his home. When he figures out his guest's intentions, Irechek explains to him that there is not enough room for another person to stay in his home, but still invites Bai Gaio to have lunch with his family. Bai Ganio is, of course, more than happy to accept Irechek's offer—after all it is a *free* lunch, the best item on Bai Ganio's menu.

Such is Bai Ganio's portrait in the first part of *Bai Ganio*: whether in Irechek's home, the dormitory of the Bulgarian student in Russia, or the train to Prague, he is always the same ignorant, crude huckster. In the second part of his text, "Bai Ganio Returned from Europe," Aleko introduces the reader to Bai Ganio's exploits in his native Bulgaria. But if in the first part Bai Ganio is a harmless simpleton, whose sole

purpose in life is to gain, in the second, he grows into a self-absorbed, arrogant individual, who seeks to acquire political power. Structurally and stylistically the second part is not much different from the first, save for a more visible coherence and complexity: new characters, mainly Bai Ganio's Bulgarian pals, enter the text, and they play small roles in the plot.

In Bulgaria, Bai Ganio's element is the local pub, where he thrives as the leader of his loyal comrades, Bai Mihal and Gunio Kelepirchev. The "new" Bai Ganio, as the narrator sarcastically explains, is actually the old one, "only now he has put on a tie and bears a more imposing appearance and a sense of personal pride and superiority over those around him. The man had rifled Europe; Europe had become to him like that . . . like nothing" (91). Like their "well-traveled" leader, Bai Mihal and Gunio are ready to sell their souls to the devil to make money, so they cling to Bai Ganio, a potential figure of authority, who can provide access to new ways of making a quick buck. Thus Bai Ganio's campaign for government office begins. From the outset, the campaign smells of corruption and sycophancy—after learning from the daily paper that Stambuloff's government had fallen, the letter Bai Ganio and his cronies had prepared to send to the local newspaper in support of Stambuloff's government is quickly changed to a contemptuous invective against it. And that is the most innocent of Bai Ganio's strategic moves in search of political power.

The third part of *Bai Ganio*, titled "Bai Ganio Organizes Elections," continues the storyline of the second. In it, Bai Ganio is already a cruel villain, who would not stop before anything, even physical assault, to achieve his political goals. Aleko is merciless towards his main character in "Bai Ganio Organizes Elections," for the

latter's brutal electoral tactics literally destroy the hopes of the Bulgarian people for free and democratic elections.⁶⁰ Nothing is out of line for Bai Ganio's political campaign—he brazenly cheats, threatens, and bribes to win the elections. He hires as his campaign helpers the most repelling and frightening faces in town, the lowest of the low. On the night before Election Day, he gathers them all in a pub, gets them drunk to the gills, and on the next morning orders them to go in front of the school where the votes are cast and intimidate everyone from the opposition. The mere sight of Bai Ganio's electoral mob instills fear: a “wild horde of drunk monsters [. . .]. My God! How much rudeness, how much arrogance, how much deadly fierceness in those bulging, bloody eyes, in those burly moves, in those provocative stares” (126). The graphic nouns and epithets of this passage powerfully show Bai Ganio's supporters for what they are: a scruffy multitude of feral criminals and ruffians. The terrifying band of brigands, along with the police, whom Bai Ganio has paid off in advance, do the job flawlessly: the opposition is prevented from voting, and Bai Ganio undisputedly wins the election.

The fourth and last part of Aleko's text, “Bai Ganio a Journalist,” shows Bai Ganio already in office. As a politician, Bai Ganio does not change. Surrounded by the crooks and criminals who helped him win the elections, he now contemplates an “important” question: “what is the best way to score some money”? (131) Everyone pitches in ideas about how to exploit the Bulgarian people in order to become rich as quickly as possible, but Bai Ganio has the “right” one: to establish a newspaper. The task of publishing a newspaper does not intimidate Bai Ganio at all. For years he has

⁶⁰ The political resonance to contemporary political events in Bulgaria is unmistakable in this story. Stambuloff's regime had disillusioned the Bulgarians who hoped for truly democratic, free elections.

followed the press and developed his own views of how a newspaper should be written. In response to the stares of his cronies, befuddled by their leader's business proposal, he pompously states: "Is it such a big deal to publish a newspaper? Put a blindfold on your eyes (that is even unnecessary!), and then curse left and right" (134). As Bai Ganio sees it, the publishing of a newspaper is nothing but the perpetration of a smear job. All one needs to figure out is who is to be smeared, and to Bai Ganio, naturally, that is the political opposition, those who think differently than he does. So in the first issue of the paper, he goes after his neighbor, who, he says, constantly "flaunts" his education and honesty, "and such rubbish" (140). Thus ends the last part of *Bai Ganio*: with Bai Ganio hard at work on producing a piece that aims to turn not only his neighbor, but his whole family into "phenomenal monsters" (141).

Perception and Portrayal of the "Civilized" West in The Misunderstood Civilization and Bai Ganio

Since "West" and "civilization" will be the central concepts of my critical inquiry in this section, I begin with an examination of how Voinikov and Aleko define them in their respective texts. First, whenever the concept "West" is used in both texts, it usually denotes the Western part of Europe. Second, there is no clear definitional distinction between the two concepts, which in both *Bai Ganio* and *The Misunderstood Civilization* are employed as synonyms: "west" means/is "civilization" and vice versa. In other words, Voinikov and Aleko portray the West just as the West viewed and presented itself in its own discourse—in overwhelmingly positive tones, as the land of true humanitarianism, high culture, progress, and democracy. Finally, another concept

that is frequently found in the vocabulary of Voinikov's and Aleko's texts is "Europe." As Maria Todorova has convincingly shown through several examples in *Imagining the Balkans*, when a person from the Balkans used the phrase "to go to Europe" at the end of the nineteenth century, he (it was exclusively "he" at the time) meant that he was going to the countries in the Western parts of the continent (43). In both *The Misunderstood Civilization* and *Bai Ganio* the phrase is used in a similar fashion: Europe is mainly defined as Western Europe, and the Balkans are not a part of it. Voinikov, for instance, uses the phrase almost exclusively to refer to going or returning from France, and Aleko literally uses the phrase in the title of the first part of his book "Bai Ganio Goes to Europe," thus suggesting that Bulgaria, the starting point of Bai Ganio's travels, is not conceived as European.

Notably, however, both Voinikov's *The Misunderstood Civilization* and Aleko's *Bai Ganio* reveal a notion of Europe that geographically is not confined within the borders of Western Europe proper. Voinikov, for instance, employs a Greek character as a representative of the European in his play. Late nineteenth-century Greece hardly counted as European for many from Western Europe even though Classical Greece was widely assumed, most prominently in Britain, to be the birthplace of European civilization.⁶¹ In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, as David Roessel convincingly demonstrates, more than anything else, Greece was described as Balkan. According to many Western accounts, "modern Greece did not really fit into Western

⁶¹ See Richard Jenkins' *The Victorians and Ancient Greece*.

Europe, because it remained, to a large extent, culturally Balkan” (Roessel 143).⁶² Why did Voinikov choose a Greek character as Europe’s representative? A short history of the relationship between the Greek and Bulgarian church in the nineteenth century could shed light on Voinikov’s choice.

After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the Bulgarian Christians who lived in the Ottoman Empire became subjects to the Greek Patriarchate in Constantinople. This meant that liturgy was conducted in Greek, usually by Greek clergy, in all Bulgarian churches. The church, moreover, was not the only medium through which Greek culture infiltrated Bulgarian society. Most of the schools in Bulgaria were Greek-owned as well. Almost every major city in Bulgaria had a Greek school, where children, usually those of the more affluent Bulgarians, were taught in Greek and brought up and in the spirit of veneration of Greek culture and history.⁶³ By the nineteenth century, Greek influence in Bulgaria was so deep-rooted and visible that, as Spas Raikin eloquently puts it,

the Bulgarians found themselves saddled with a double yoke: under the political authority of the Turks and under the cultural and spiritual domination of the Greeks. [. . .] Deprived of institutions of their own, and socially, economically, and culturally impoverished, the Bulgarians were [. . .] on the verge of extinction. (353)

⁶² For more on the West’s perception of Greece in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, see Todorova, pp. 78-97 and Goldsworthy, p. 6.

⁶³ The first modern Bulgarian school, where Bulgarian was the primary language of teaching was established in 1835 in Gabrovo. The school’s example was soon followed by towns all over Bulgaria. In 1846, Naiden Gerov, a writer and a public intellectual, who was graduate of the Russian Richelieu Lyceum, opened the first Bulgarian school that offered both primary and secondary education.

This all changed, however, towards the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, largely due to a resurgence of Bulgarian nationalism that was for the most part fueled by the weakening of the Ottoman Empire, which seemed no longer able to keep its provinces under control: both the Serbs and the Greeks won their independence in 1817 and 1830 respectively. For the first three quarters of the nineteenth century, the Bulgarians fought bitterly with the Greeks for the establishment of their own independent church. They regularly boycotted the Greek clergy and demanded that liturgy be conducted by Bulgarians in Bulgarian. The establishment of an independent Bulgarian church became as important a cause for the Bulgarians as their political independence from the Ottoman Empire. Eventually, the Bulgarians' demands were granted: a decree by the sultan, issued on February 28, 1870, declared the Bulgarian church as independent.⁶⁴

It is at the height of this clash between Bulgarians and Greeks that Voinikov's play takes place—in the years just before the Bulgarian Church was granted independence. Through Margaridi, then, Voinikov comments on an issue that, even though resolved in 1871, when *The Misunderstood Civilization* was published, still resonated with the Bulgarian public. But Voinikov's choice of a Greek character as the representative of Europe is not prompted only by contemporary events. As Nikolai Genchev points out, “Most intensely, the ideas of the bourgeois West enter [Bulgarian society] through Greece, which first, among the countries of the European Southeast, absorbs [Western] bourgeois culture” (272). For Voinikov, as well as for many

⁶⁴ For more on the Bulgarian Church Question, see Spas Raikin's “Nationalism and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.”

Bulgarians of his time, Europe, or the West, extended as far as Greece. Nineteenth-century Greece was one of the major pipelines through which Western culture and ideologies traveled to Bulgaria, and it clearly functions as such in *The Misunderstood Civilization*, as Europe's representative to Bulgaria.

In *Bai Ganio*, Aleko stretches Europe even further east than Voinikov. Along Austria, Germany and Switzerland, Bai Ganio visits Russia as well, which was not conceptualized as Western European at the time when Aleko wrote the book, and, to my knowledge, has never been conceptualized as such. One could certainly treat this inconsistency as an editorial oversight on Aleko's part, or, as some critics and biographers of Aleko's life and work have noted about other shortcomings of the book, as a product of his bad financial situation at the time of the book's publication. Aleko rushed the publication of *Bai Ganio*, which had already generated a great amount of interest as a serial publication, because he was in a dire financial situation at the time.⁶⁵ Even so, Aleko was also a staunch Russophile—he not only received a law degree from a Russian university, but dearly loved Russian literature, a love that he expressed through the translation of texts by such notable nineteenth-century Russian poets as Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov, and Nikolay Nekrasov. One should not be quick, therefore, to abandon the idea that Aleko, like Voinikov, might have had a more inclusive notion of Europe than most of his Western contemporaries. Russia, moreover, like Greece, was another major inlet for Western culture in Bulgaria. Most nineteenth-

⁶⁵ Aleko himself acknowledged that *Bai Ganio* needed to be revised, and had promised to his friends to edit its second edition. He never had the chance to edit his text, however, because he was killed by a stray bullet only a short while after the book came out on the market.

century Bulgarian intellectuals, including Karavelov, Hristo Botev, Vassil Drumev, and Ivan Vazov, had lived or studied in Russia, where they had access to Western literature in translation. In Russia, for instance, Aleko first read and translated one of the most recognized texts of Western satire, Molière's *Tartuffe or the Hypocrite*.

In geographical terms, then, Aleko's *Bai Ganio* and Voinikov's *The Misunderstood Civilization* demonstrate a different, broader conception of Europe than that of their Western counterparts. Significantly, in both texts that difference never threatens to modify the definition of Europe. Aleko and Voinikov only add new members to the "stellar" European family—a kind of European enlargement, if you will—while holding on to the Western tradition of presenting Europe (the West) as the epitome of the highest stage of human achievement and development. Thus, in both texts, the operative formula is West = Civilization = Western Europe = Europe.

If their conceptualization of "West" and "civilization" is largely similar, however, the way in which Voinikov and Aleko deploy these concepts in their respective texts is different at several levels. In the rest of this chapter I concentrate on that difference, studying the roles both authors ascribe to the West, as well as the overall value the West acquires in relation to Bulgaria: how both texts project the West and the Bulgarians respectively.

From the first scenes of *The Misunderstood Civilization*, Voinikov introduces the reader to two opposing views of Europe or civilization: 1. that Europe is the pinnacle of human culture and progress, and 2. that Europe is a predator and its ideals and values are unfit for the Bulgarians. Anca, Dimitraki, and Zlata, Margaridi's band of faithful Bulgarian followers, express the first view, as they all exhibit an extremely

positive and welcoming attitude toward the West. Blinded by the pretty European dresses brought to her by Margaridi's French fashion magazines, Anca falls in love with everything European. Meanwhile she refuses to listen to her father, because his Bulgarian ways are old-fashioned and backward. The future of the young Bulgarian woman who listens to her father is dire in Anca's view, consisting of nothing but weight-gain and ignorance. "If I decide to listen to my father," she tells Mariika, "I should turn into a fat Bulgarian woman—a simple boor" (103). The prospect of becoming such a provincial "fat Bulgarian woman" disgusts Anca. She thus aspires to be a European lady. For her, Europe, the civilized world, is where women are not only attractive, fashionable, and well-mannered, but are treated as ladies as well, for they do not do anything all day long but "take care of themselves" (106).

Zlata and Dimitraki, the other two members of the first group, share the same excessively romanticized views of Europe. While praising Europe for its prosperity, liberty, and modern spirit, both of them, like Anca, express contempt for Bulgarian culture and heritage on several occasions. In Zlata's words, "What is Bulgarian does not cost a dime anymore" (103). Anything that is Bulgarian is worthless to her; it has no currency in comparison to what the "civilized" European world can offer. Dimitraki takes an even stronger stance than his mother. "There is nothing plainer in the world," he tells Mariika in an attempt to sell her to the civilized world, "than the Bulgarian woman and Bulgarian poetry" (148). For Dimitraki, to be a Bulgarian is a disgrace. He is ashamed of his Bulgarian heritage and openly rejects it: "If I knew there was (he points with his finger) that much Bulgarian meat in me, I am cutting it out and giving it to the dogs" (148). Not only does Dimitraki so readily denounce his Bulgarian heritage,

but he also prefers not to speak Bulgarian, which is too simple for him. Only French is good enough, civilized enough, to express his ideas and sentiments. Like his mother and sister, Dimitraki exhibits strong aversion to everything Bulgarian, while he passionately praises and blindly apes everything that comes from Europe, the center of civilization and progress.

Hadji Kosta, Baba Stoyna, and Mariika are the ones who hold the second, or negative view of Europe in the play. They all judge Europe with skepticism, always questioning its morals and values, and comparing them to those of the Bulgarians. Baba Stoyna, for instance, sees Margaridi, Europe's "true" representative in the play, as "a wicked devil," the "antichrist," who has no business in a Christian home (151). Hadji Kosta, too, strongly opposes the idea of taking the European presence in Bulgaria for granted. Seeing how his son, Dimitraki, has lost all sense of "faith, respect, shame, and fear" after returning from his studies in France has made Hadji Kosta a skeptic about Europe's values and alleged greatness. Still, he believes that it is not the European world that is responsible for Dimitraki's "degradation," but Dimitraki's own misunderstanding of the values of that world. Europe, Hadji Kosta tells his wife in his usual, punctuated-by-Turkish-words language,

has invented thousands of things and looks for simpletons like us to take their money, you know? And our learned men, what do they do? They only know how to talk—that things should be done this way, the other way. (100) ⁶⁶

⁶⁶ "[T]housands of things" and "you know" are the words in Turkish in this quotation.

To Hadji Kosta, Europe is a productive, industrious place where money is made, and that is what attracts him to it. Yet, as much as he respects Europe for its economic prosperity and achievements, Hadji Kosta fears it no less, because it could potentially take advantage of the gullible young Bulgarians, including his children, whose perception of it is excessively romanticized. Europe, therefore, is also a lethal threat to the Bulgarians in Hadji Kosta's eyes, and it must be resisted, left out of the Bulgarian homes.

Like Hadji Kosta, Mariika views Europe as a potentially destructive force for Bulgarian youth. A staunch proponent of Bulgarian mores and traditions, she proudly sticks to her Bulgarian roots and shows unconditional respect for her parents. She is the only youth in town who directly confronts Margaridi by challenging his "civilized" views about how a woman should present herself in the company of a man. When Margaridi explains to Mariika that "For a civilized demoiselle shyness means nothing," she confidently responds: "Shyness is a big thing for us, mister" (109). So determined is Mariika to preserve her Bulgarian heritage that even Anca and Dimitraki, her closest friends, are unable to convince her to abandon her "old-fashioned," Bulgarian ways and accept "the civilization." Mariika is the representative of Bulgarianness in the play; she exemplifies the Bulgarian girl who loves and respects her native roots and culture such as they are. What is more, she acts as a guardian of everything Bulgarian against the corrupting forces of outside, non-Bulgarian influences.

The opposing worlds of these two trios—Anca, Dimitraki, and Zlata versus Hadji Kosta, Baba Stoyna, and Mariika—form the backbone of *The Misunderstood Civilization*. The play hinges on the interaction between these two groups; their conflict

represents the effects of the influence of so-called civilized Europe on Bulgarian culture and society at the end of the nineteenth century. That influence, as the unhappy ending of the play suggests, is pernicious. The civilized world, personified by the Greek doctor, literally debauches Bulgarian traditions and culture. Margaridi not only tricks a young Bulgarian woman, Anca, into running away with him from her family and roots, but also viciously and shamelessly dishonors her.

But Voinikov does not romanticize Bulgarian culture and society either. He often mocks those Bulgarians who call themselves civilized, but, like Zlata, regularly mispronounce the word “civilization” and always use it with a definite article: “the civilization.” The Bulgarians are not innocent victims of Europe’s predatory tactics in Voinikov’s play. After all, Anca willingly elopes with Margaridi. In the dingy room in which Maragridi has locked her, she actually admits to being victim of her own actions and behavior. Speaks Anca to herself:

Ah, father, father! Your words were right, were sacred! And I . . .
unworthy, was not willing to listen to them! Ah, how stupid we were to
succumb to the seductive words of a feigned friend! Where are you now
to see our stupidity unveiled! (189)

As Anca’s interior monologue testifies, her father, whose warnings not long ago she arrogantly dismissed as old-fashioned and uncivilized, was actually right. Dimitraki and Zlata arrive to the same conclusion as well. In chorus with the rest of cast, at the end of the play, they condemn Margaridi and his “civilized” teachings as unfit for the

Bulgarians, and pledge to be “always faithful to their [Bulgarian] mores,” because what is foreign is not “cut out for us” (190).⁶⁷

The moral of Voinikov’s play, then, is that one should not only respect, but abide by one’s own native laws and morals. If at the opening of the play, in most young Bulgarians’ eyes Europe is the source of progress, prosperity, modernization, fashion, and, to an extent, even gender equality, at its end, it is exposed as a dark, corrupting, and indiscriminately exploitive and cruel force. When Anca, already a victim of Margaridi’s schemes, asks Margaridi whether such cruel acts as his constitute “the civilization,” the latter haughtily responds:

Yes, that is from the civilization if you want to know. Only one who is civilized could play such roles. If you were a civilized woman, I would not be able to handle you as I did. Those who are simple and ignorant, for us, the civilized people, are what cattle is for the humans. Can’t you see how the Europeans come to you, manipulate you, entice you with all kinds of shiny and fake things and take your money? Yes, Europe has become richer from such simple nations as yours. (186)

Europe’s mission, according to Margaridi, is to exploit the “ignorant” nations for its own economic benefit. The civilized world, Europe, is thus portrayed as a hypocrite, who hides behind a glossy and attractive mask, patiently waiting for the moment to corner his next victim. Europe is a predator in *The Misunderstood Civilization*; it preys on the weak and helpless, and when the right moment comes, swiftly incapacitates its

⁶⁷ As mentioned earlier in this part, the play ends with a zealously patriotic song, part of which I have quoted in this sentence, by every Bulgarian character on stage.

unsuspecting victim. To Voinikov, Europe, the West, is not an ideal worth pursuing, but a dark, corrupting force that should be kept away from Bulgarian mores and traditions.

While Voinikov condemns European influence as pernicious to the Bulgarian way of life in the *Misunderstood Civilization*, Aleko frequently celebrates it, even presents it as the panacea for all ills of Bulgarian society in *Bai Ganio*. Most references to Europe or the West in *Bai Ganio* are found in its first part, “Bai Ganio Goes to Europe,” and most of what Aleko’s text has to offer about the West is projected through Bai Ganio’s character. The reader thus has to construct the West through Bai Ganio, and, invariably, he is Europe’s foil—what Bai Ganio is, Europe is not. In the Viennese public bath, for instance, Bai Ganio is loud and animated, and the Viennese are quiet and reserved. They become “petrified” at the sight of Bai Ganio’s “grand” entrance with a splash in the pool and subsequent wild swimming that is accompanied with shouts and whistles of pleasure. As the narrator is quick to explain, “In all probability, [the Germans] took my friend for some newcomer, unadmitted-yet-to-the-madhouse Eastern man, and I noticed on their faces not so much indignation as pity” (139). The Western men, with their self-assured and dignified countenances, are clearly the ones privileged in this statement. Bai Ganio, whom the narrator identifies in true Western fashion as “Eastern,” is portrayed as a mad man, someone who needs to be institutionalized, because his behavior is improper and unrestrained. Bai Ganio can only evoke the Viennese men’s pity—he is the primitive barbarian who has not yet learned how to behave in a civilized world. The East, where Bai Ganio is from, is thus wild and untamed, and the West is poised and in control.

The West's superior status is further emphasized in the opera-house episode, where the reader finds out that Bai Ganio not only does not have the "proper" upbringing to restrain his urges, or what contemporary Western psychology has termed "emotional intelligence," but also is educationally and culturally behind his Western peers. Bai Ganio is not interested in watching ballet. Such high-brow cultural events, the beauty and grace of ballet, are not fit for his crude and meager intellectual build-up. As the episode's ending so directly and mercilessly demonstrates—Bai Ganio is forcefully escorted out of the opera-house for disruptive behavior—ballet is for the educated, culturally savvy Westerner, not for Bai Ganio, who neither knows how to dress for a night at the opera-house, nor how to behave on such an occasion. If ballet is not in Bai Ganio's taste, what is his motivation for attending a ballet performance, why does he agree to join the Bulgarian student for an evening at the opera house? Such an act is in complete discord with what Bai Ganio stands for and believes in, and Aleko does not provide an appropriate explanation for it. But he does not have to, for the episode's obvious purpose is to expose how culturally challenged Bai Ganio is, and in doing so, underline the Western man's cultural superiority.

There is, of course, another Bulgarian in this episode—the student who takes Bai Ganio to the opera—who apparently has learned to appreciate ballet and to dress appropriately for such cultural events, for he remains unnoticed until Bai Ganio pulls him by the sleeve and speaks to him. The student, however, who is also the narrator of the story, just like the student in the public bath in Vienna and the rest of the student-narrators in *Bai Ganio*, makes a conscious effort to distinguish himself in his narrative from Bai Ganio. In fact, all the student-narrators in Aleko's text consistently align

themselves with the Westerners and assume a Westerner's perspective when they speak of Bai Ganio. While they never confront Bai Ganio in person, the students readily and openly chastise him *post-factum* in their stories for his choice of friends, usually other Balkanites: "Turks, Greeks, Serbians, and Albanians, whom he is accustomed to meet every day" (60); choice of hotels and cafés, which are always cheap, dirty, stinky, and full of smoke and loud voices, such as the "Greek café" in Vienna; and unwillingness to "truly" explore the Western world, its morals, ethics, and culture, which are the fruit of "centuries of tradition" (60). Too often, moreover, Aleko's student-narrators are ashamed of their kinship with Bai Ganio and those Bulgarians who fail to act and behave like Europeans. "Drowned in shame" (10, 18) and "blood rushed to my head from shame" (29) are some of the phrases they employ to express how they feel about Bai Ganio's actions or those of their uncultured compatriots. The student-narrators' word choices and narrative strategies consistently betray a position of superiority, as if they were a different, higher-quality brand of a Bulgarian than Bai Ganio.

Nevertheless, while positioning themselves as superior to the uneducated, uncultured Bulgarian, the student-narrators cannot and do not position themselves as equals to the Westerners either. They frequently feel obliged to apologize for or explain Bai Ganio's inadequate behavior to the Westerners, as well as to seek recognition and acceptance from them. To the narrators, the Western men's judgment of Bai Ganio is more important than their own; it is not Bai Ganio's failure as a human being, or as a Bulgarian, that bothers them, but the fact that he has failed in front of the Westerners' eyes. This fear of what the Westerners might think and say when they see Bai Ganio is a running theme in the first part of *Bai Ganio*. The opera-house episode, for instance,

ends with the narrator's somber realization that a German family, in which he had been "very well *accepted*," is watching him and Bai Ganio from the boxes of the theatre: "[I]n their eyes I read sincere pity for my desperate situation," laments the narrator (134, my emphasis). Why does the narrator include this observation at the end of the episode? Was it not enough that the whole theater had already seen Bai Ganio's utter lack of tact and tolerance for other people's culture and traditions? Evidently not. It is important to the narrator to underscore the Germans' reaction to Bai Ganio's behavior by adding the above-quoted observation. What these words reveal is the student's own insecurity to be the judge of Bai Ganio's behavior. In other words, what makes Bai Ganio's behavior offensive and objectionable is not so much that the Bulgarian student thinks it so, but that the Germans do. The Germans are the ultimate judges, not the student. They are the superior body that decides what is acceptable and what is not, including who should be "accepted" in their much-coveted world. Literally monitoring Bai Ganio and the Bulgarian student from above, from the "boxes" of the theatre, the Germans have the last word in the episode, the really important word.

Even more obviously, the student-narrators' fear of what the Westerners might think when faced with Bai Ganio is present in the episode when the latter goes to Dresden for the burial of his sister, who had died in a climbing accident along with her American boyfriend. Bai Ganio's arrival and conduct at the Dresden home of the American family, where the funeral takes place, is, predictably, inappropriate and unseemly. The guests at the funeral, most of whom are English and American families from Dresden's high society, to which the deceased man's family belongs, silently await the arrival of the deceased woman's brother. With his entrance, Bai Ganio attracts

everyone's attention. His loud questions break the silence that had set in the house for some time: "Where is she? Here?" (18) The few Bulgarian students who are present at the funeral rush toward Bai Ganio to calm him down and point him to his sister's casket. But the tone of Bai Ganio's questions does not change, and on two more occasions a Bulgarian student has to ask him to lower his voice. As the narrator observes, Bai Ganio's conduct did not resemble that of a mourning man, but of a "bully," and his "rather filthy shirt, unbuttoned to the chest," and unshaven chin only made that impression more plausible (19).

So embarrassed is the narrator by the behavior of his compatriot that he makes up a pretty elaborate lie to justify Bai Ganio's appearance and conduct in front of one of the relatives of the deceased American. He presents Bai Ganio as this really busy farmer who had to leave in a rush his home immediately after receiving the grave news about his sister and come right to the funeral without making any stops on the way, which would explain his disheveled appearance. The animated conduct of Bai Ganio, the narrator continues, could be explained with the great loss of his sister, as well as with the enormous economic losses he endures because of his absence from the farm (19-20). The lie only exposes the inferiority complex of its teller.⁶⁸ In anticipation of the

⁶⁸ The Bulgarian students' projection as inferior to the European in *Bai Ganio* is similar to what Fanon describes in *Black Skin White Masks* as the "inferiority (or dependency) complex" of the black man in relation to the White man in colonized Africa. As he applies Alfred Adler's theory of individual psychology—which he sums up in the phrase "Ego is different from The Other" (Ego here means an individual and "Other" is used not in the Saidean sense, but as a general notion for everyone else)—Fanon exposes its impotence in a colonized or racist society. In the Antillean society, which Fanon uses as a case study, Adler's theory acquires a new component of crucial importance: the White man, whose values and judgments are always projected as superior to those of the "Ego" (black man) and the "Other" (another black man). To

negative reaction the Westerners might have to Bai Ganio's conduct, the narrator prefers to lie to excuse it instead of condemn it. This preemptive reaction of the narrator projects his own insecurities, his inability to perceive himself as an equal to the European. He is afraid that he might be judged by the same standards that Bai Ganio would be, that he might fall in the same category as his crude and uncultured compatriot. The West, therefore, is a supreme authority for the student-narrators; it is the ultimate judge of what is right and wrong, and the Bulgarian student-narrators, along with their unruly compatriot, are but the subject of that judge's ruling.

While the Westerner stands out as the moral, ethical, and cultural center of the first part of *Bai Ganio*, notably, he lacks a Bulgarian equivalent in the other three parts of the text, all of which take place exclusively on Bulgarian soil. The only Bulgarian character who plays a role in the plot of these parts and is not a narrator or a member of Bai Ganio's circle of criminals, is Ivanitsa Gramatikov, the nominee of the party that runs against Bai Ganio's political movement during the elections. Gramatikov is clearly portrayed as different from Bai Ganio and his cronies, but he is not a paragon for emulation either. He is so romantically idealistic in his views of life and human nature that the reader has to wonder whether to like or pity him. As the narrator describes him,

account for this new, enormously powerful component, the White Man, which obviously exists in a racist society, such as the colonized Antilles, Fanon revises Adler's formula as follows:

White

Ego is different from The Other

What is "White," this formula suggests, is superior to both blacks, the "Ego" and the "The Other," regardless of who they are (Fanon 190). While not on a racial basis, the same formula operates within Aleko's text, as the European is always the superior body to both the student-narrators and Bai Ganio himself.

Young, educated, a bit of an idealist, more of a dreamer, with love in his heart, with belief in goodness, with hope in the future, [Gramatikov] was not yet hardened by reality, by life. Carefree to no end, an incorrigible optimist, accustomed to see everything from the bright side, he was gullible to naïveté, to stupidity. (121)

Such is the only Bulgarian character, outside of Bai Ganio's circle, that Aleko offers in his text—an extreme idealist who is lost in the pathos of his beliefs and has not even a clue about how to survive in the harsh reality of the world around him. Although Gramatikov is the principal character that may be read as epitomizing the “good” of Bulgarian society, he is remarkably out of touch with that same society. Ironically, Bai Ganio turns out to be a better politician than Gramatikov, whose idealism renders him impotent in the face of his opponent's opportunistic realism. Bai Ganio, as the text suggests, knows and understands Bulgarian reality better than Gramatikov, even if only to exploit it.

Is Bai Ganio, then, the best Bulgaria has to offer in the eyes of Aleko? Does Aleko offer a *Bulgarian* moral, ethical, cultural center at all in *Bai Ganio*? In Todorova's view, that center is occupied by the Bulgarian student narrators. To her, “the standard against which Bay Ganyo [Todorova's spelling] is measured, although called European, is not an outside one: it is the standard held by a group of his own countrymen” (40). Using Edward Shil's theory of the existence of a system of values that transcends concrete individuals and cultures, Todorova argues that the Bulgarian students' value system should not be read as “intrinsically emanating only from a circumscribed geographic-historical entity (Western Europe) but [. . .] as an

autonomous phenomenon within a universal context” (41). To present the Bulgarian narrators as carriers of an autonomously developed value system that transcends cultural and national difference Todorova must delete the role of the West as a cultural signifier. Aleko’s text, however, does not afford such a deletion, because the West is an integral formative component in the identity and beliefs of the narrators. In large measure, the student-narrators view and represent Bai Ganio and the Bulgarian people through European lenses. Too often, if not always, as I have shown in the previous paragraphs, the narrators explicitly identify with, or openly aspire to be like the Western characters, whose “petrified” countenances and filled-with-“pity” stares they readily use to judge Bai Ganio. Western rhetoric pervades the student-narrators’ judgments of Bai Ganio. Ideologically fed by the Western model of the civilized subject, they even label Bai Ganio as “Eastern,” and present other Balkanites as the uncivilized, uneducated, criminal *other*. The West is a sacred notion for the student-narrators, who are indeed Bulgarian, but through their rhetoric, prominently colored by the superiority complex of Western discourse, they exhibit an intense desire to be identified as Westerners. Western are the standards of the student-narrators, and Bai Ganio is measured according to those standards.

As Aleko’s forward and afterward to *Bai Ganio* demonstrate as well, the text is predicated upon the clash between the non-European Bai Ganio and Europe, and not between Bai Ganio and the Bulgarian students. European, and more precisely, Western European values work as the major determining factors of what is right and what is wrong in the text. In the only sentence that constitutes his forward, Aleko writes: “They helped Bai Ganio take off his back the Turkish cloak, he slipped on a Belgian mantle,

and everyone said Bai Ganio was already a complete European” (3). No word in this sentence suggests that Bai Ganio is a bad Bulgarian or a bad human being. Yet, the irony of the sentence is unequivocally pointed at exposing the superficiality of Bai Ganio’s claim to *European* status. The explicit meaning of the sentence is that one does not become European simply because he has put on European clothes. Bai Ganio is a bad European, and his claim to European status, to civilization, is superficial, because he does not have a true, meaningful grasp of what it is to be European. These words set the tone for what will follow in Aleko’s text: an acerbically sarcastic exposing of Bai Ganio’s inchoate European status. That tone is consistently sustained throughout *Bai Ganio* and acquires its highest pitch with the last sentence of the afterward, where the author directly addresses his protagonist: “I have faith that a day will come when you [Bai Ganio], after you have read this book, will stop and think, sigh, and say: Europeans we are, but not quite! . . . Farewell [Bai Ganio], we might meet again” (142). With these words, Aleko goes full circle—his lamentation that the Bulgarians are “not quite” European reiterates what he had stated in the forward: to be European is not a matter of dress. Importantly, these words also underline the significance of Europe’s role to Aleko’s project in *Bai Ganio*, as well as confer a superior status to Western Europe over Bulgaria. Western Europe is the ideal the Bulgarians should strive to achieve, and Aleko imagines it as the realm of moral, political, and social rectitude.

In *Bai Ganio*, Aleko, for whom one could safely assume the student narrators speak, distances himself from the oriental Bai Ganio and aligns himself with the Western civilized subject. Aleko is not Bai Ganio, and fervently insists on not being like him. He is ashamed of him, but what is probably most frightening to him is his kinship

with Bai Ganio. Aleko adopts the tropes of Western colonialist discourse about the non-civilized “other” to represent and criticize his own people, specifically those who, like Bai Ganio, have not yet fully understood and ascribed to the values of the superior Western cultures. He thus engages in a practice that Milica Bakic-Hayden has aptly named “nesting orientalisms,” a phenomenon that she defines as the appropriation and manipulation of the designation “other” by “those who have themselves been designated as such in orientalist discourse” (922). Indeed, because it insists on representing and judging the Bulgarians as non-European, *Bai Ganio* is strongly reminiscent of an Orientalist project. Despite his European origins, to Aleko, Bai Ganio is still a backward, uncivilized oriental, a fact that Bai Ganio’s “Belgian [European] mantle” cannot cloak.

It would be fair to conclude, then, that *Bai Ganio* and *The Misunderstood Civilization* exhibit two rather different attitudes towards the West. That difference is most evident in the roles both authors ascribe to the West: while the West plays a visibly negative role and is presented as the corrupting force of Bulgarian youth in Voinikov’s *The Misunderstood Civilization*, in Aleko’s *Bai Ganio*, it is a fundamentally positive entity, a moral center of sorts, according to which Bai Ganio, his cronies, and, at times, the Bulgarian people as a whole are judged. Only a few of the Bulgarian characters in Voinikov’s play accept the West as a positive entity, and they do so temporarily; by the end of the play, there is not a Bulgarian character who has not rejected the West because of its pernicious influence on Bulgarian society and culture. In contrast, the West is not even criticized in *Bai Ganio*, let alone rejected as a destructive force by the Bulgarian characters. The nationalism Voinikov’s play so

stridently propagates is almost silenced in Aleko's *Bai Ganio*. If the message of Voinikov's play is anti-European—to preserve everything Bulgarian by steering it clear from European pollution—Aleko's is pro-European, at times even Eurocentric—he wants the Bulgarians to become European, to think and act like Europeans.

Conclusion

If the West is the front and central matter of *Bai Ganio* and *The Misunderstood Civilization*, their explicit and foremost thematic, how does the Ottoman Empire, the primary and only actual colonizer of the Bulgarians, figure in these texts and how is it represented in relation to the West? While almost absent from both their texts, the Turks do play a role in Aleko's and Voinikov's portrayals and perceptions of the West. By responding to the West, the Bulgarian writers are inevitably also responding to the Ottoman Empire.

Voinikov, for instance, portrays the Ottoman authorities as Margaridi's helpers. Even though small, the role the two *zaptiehs* play in Voinikov's play—they take Hadji Kosta to the Town Hall, which gives Margaridi unrestricted access to Anca, who is left home alone—is of crucial importance to the realization of Margaridi's plan to abduct and dishonor Anca. The Turks are thus implicated in Margaridi's malicious acts in *The Misunderstood Civilization*. While seemingly manipulated by Margaridi, the Turks act as his, i.e., the West's accomplices nonetheless. In *Bai Ganio*, Turkish presence is even less conspicuous than in *The Misunderstood Civilization*: there is not a single Turkish character in Aleko's texts. Nevertheless, Turkish presence is felt in this text as well, mainly through *Bai Ganio*'s character, who may have taken off his back the “Turkish

mantle” and replaced it with a “Belgian” one, but still remains “plagued” by Turkish influence—his vocabulary is riddled with Turkish words and idioms. By condemning Bai Ganio, therefore, Aleko also condemns the remnants of Turkish, oriental influence in Bulgarian culture. In his text, Aleko stridently exposes that influence as an obstacle on Bulgaria’s road to civilization, to Europe, and he wants it permanently deleted from Bulgarian consciousness.

To state the obvious: there is a dramatic difference between Voinikov’s and Aleko’s perception of the West. From an accomplice to the Ottoman Empire in *The Misunderstood Civilization*, the West turns into its (better) opposite in *Bai Ganio*. How could this difference be explained; what factors prompted it? It is tempting to argue here that this paradigmatic shift in the Bulgarians’ perception of the West emerged as a straightforward, linear historical process, that it was a straight, one-way street. Such an argument would be generally premised on analyses of the historical moments in which both texts are published. In 1871, when Voinikov writes his play, Bulgaria was still under Ottoman rule. This was a period in Bulgarian history that left few Bulgarian intellectuals untouched by revolutionary fervor and passionate nationalism. Most of the Bulgarian literature at the time, as Lekov points out, “is written with the idea of how to help the [Bulgarian] people in their fight for spiritual, social and political freedom” (340). Indeed, a large portion of the little Bulgarian literature written before the liberation in 1878, especially the poetry and prose of Dobri Chintulov, Georgi S. Rakovski, Vazov, Botev, and Karavelov, celebrates with enormous enthusiasm Bulgarian culture, identity, and patriotism. This literature was, of course, responding to and attacking the primary oppressor of the Bulgarians, the Ottoman Empire. The

formation and growth of such nationalist discourse, as Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and other postcolonial theorists have argued, was an indispensable component of the independence movements of colonized and oppressed peoples, such as Bulgaria.⁶⁹ Nationalist rhetoric and ideology thus became a tool for the Bulgarian people to resist cultural assimilation, a way to reclaim and assert their own identity.

In *The Misunderstood Civilization*, Voinikov resorts to this same nationalist rhetoric to oppose the assault on Bulgarian culture and identity by another, even if physically-absent-in-Bulgaria oppressor—the West (Western Europe specifically)—which was slowly but surely creeping into the consciousness of the Bulgarians through its loyal support of the Ottoman Empire. In the years before the liberation, most Bulgarian intellectuals viewed the West, France and Britain in particular, as a barrier to Bulgaria’s independence. As I have shown in Part I, France and Britain not only supported and guaranteed the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire, but even fought as its allies against the Russians during the Crimean War. As an ally of the Ottoman Empire, the West often acquired the status of its equal, of Bulgaria’s colonizer, in pre-liberation Bulgarian literature. Voinikov certainly echoes that anti-Western Bulgarian sentiment in his play. He presents the West as a force that threatens to assimilate and destroy Bulgarian culture, and offers nationalism as the best way to prevent this from happening.

Sixteen years after the liberation, however, in 1894, when Aleko writes *Bai Ganio*, the West was no longer deemed a potential threat to Bulgarian sovereignty, and

⁶⁹ See Fanon’s chapter “On Violence” in *The Wretched of the Earth*, and Said’s “The Politics of Knowledge.”

the need for chest-beating nationalism and patriotism had started to wane. A free country, Bulgaria had already established its own constitution, had had several democratically elected governments, and had won a major war, against the Serbians in 1885, on its own. The pre-liberation nationalist politics of identity were no longer of primary importance to the Bulgarians, who were now, forced by the political realities of their time, fish caught in the nets of Western European and Russian foreign interests. The first two decades after the liberation were a period of disillusionment for most Bulgarians. This was, to borrow Fanon's words, a period of "trials and tribulations," defined by several demoralizing political crises, unbridled political corruption, totalitarianism, rise in violence, poverty and class division, and overall moral degradation.⁷⁰ Aleko's *Bai Ganio* is a direct response to this disheartening reality of post-liberation Bulgaria. It is a testimony to Aleko's unwillingness to accept Bulgarian reality, such as it was at the end of the nineteenth century, as well as a manifestation of his belief that healing and recovery will begin with Bulgaria's Europeanization or Westernization.

In short, Aleko's and Voinikov's treatment of the West in their respective texts reveals a discourse of nationalism that both reflects and reconstructs this notions' accepted meanings and connotations in the second half of the nineteenth century. If before the liberation Voinikov felt a need to celebrate Bulgaria and its culture and preserve it at all cost, after the liberation that need, as Aleko's *Bai Ganio* shows, has

⁷⁰ Fanon's observations in *The Wretched of the Earth* about post-independence Africa could as well have been written about post-independence Bulgaria: "The unpreparedness of the elite, the lack of ties between them and the masses, their apathy and, yes, their cowardice at the crucial moment in the struggle, are the cause of tragic trials and tribulations" (97).

largely abated. During this short but turbulent period of Bulgarian history, from a threatening and corrupting force, the West transformed into a bright example for emulation, the ideal for cultural achievement and economic prosperity. This conclusion is, of course, too neat and tidy as it assumes that Voinikov's and Aleko's texts speak for and represent the views of all the Bulgarians of their time. To draw it would mean, moreover, to disregard a number of other factors as well—social, political, and economic—that (may) have played an important role in the formation of the Bulgarians' views of the West. In all cases, however, one factor will remain unchanged: that the West, even though physically absent in Bulgaria—Bulgaria has never been a Western colony—managed to infiltrate the minds of the Bulgarian intellectuals and instill a desire in them to engage and interact with it, whether to reject it as a model in the construction of their identity, as Voinikov does in *The Misunderstood Civilization*, or to embrace it as such, as Aleko does in *Bai Ganio*. Both texts testify that the Bulgarians imagined their own identity through or in relation to the West, as a response to Western formulations of what it means to be civilized.

Evidently, the question of who was European and who was not occupied the imagination of both Western (Shaw, Stoker) and Balkan (Aleko, Voinikov) intellectuals at the end of the nineteenth century. It was mainly the Western Europeans who controlled the answers to these questions, however. While they participated in the discussion, the Balkan intellectuals abided by the rules and regulations the West had already established for them, even though these rules and regulations certified the Balkans as non-European. Shaw, as I have shown in this dissertation, presents his Balkan characters, the Bulgarians, as wannabe Europeans, and Stoker presents his own

Balkan characters, the Transylvanians, as an immediate threat to Europe's existence. Much like Shaw and Stoker, Aleko presents the Western characters of his text as clearly superior to their Balkan counterparts, whom he names Europeans—"but not quite." In *The Misunderstood Civilization*, Voinikov, too, presents his Balkan characters, the Bulgarians, as non-European. Some of the Bulgarian characters in the play *strive* to be Europeans, but despite their rigid adherence to European codes of dress and behavior, none of them succeed in passing for one—they all come off as parodies of the "truly civilized" European. The Bulgarians in Voinikov's play are not ready for Europe. They are too weak and too far behind Europe, which only makes them an easy target for Europe's predatory economic and political tactics. Both Voinikov and Aleko caustically satirize, the former even cruelly punishes, their characters' claims to Europeanness. Significantly, in doing so, these two Balkan writers become complicit in the Balkans' marginalization as non-European, for not only do they not debunk the Western European model for European identity, but employ and reproduce it in their own writings as a way to interpret and judge Balkan culture and identity.

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