

COLLOQUIA



HUMANISTICA

Jolanta Sujecka

Institute of Slavic Studies  
Polish Academy of Sciences  
Warsaw

Faculty of 'Artes Liberales', University of Warsaw  
Warsaw

[jolanta.sujecka@al.uw.edu.pl](mailto:jolanta.sujecka@al.uw.edu.pl)

## Introductory Comments

As the main theme of the seventh issue of the annual *Colloquia Humanistica* we have chosen the image of strategies that authors and artists use towards any restrictions of space and/or time (*Against Homogeneity. Transcultural and Trans-Lingual Strategies in Cultural Production*). A kind of transcultural “in-between movement” is illustrated through an analysis of a novel by South African writer Nadine Gordimer (Ewa Niedziałek), and also in a portrait of Japanese Buddhist monk Kūkai, who represents enlightened transcultural thought (Keiko Takioto Miller).

Very different exemplification of transcultural strategies is provided by texts dealing with the post-Yugoslav space. The motif of exile and creating imagined homelands in post-Yugoslav novels is linked to a need to put down roots and simultaneously be nomadic (Miranda Levanat-Peričić). Meanwhile, an analysis of the transformation of Kruno Quien’s novella *Kaya* into a screenplay for a film adaptation illustrates being anchored in an image of the space of Mediterranean Trogir and in its unique dialect (Amir Kapetanović).

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The concept of Yugoslavism, controversial from the very beginning, as both a proposal of homogenous identity and a legacy that today needs dealing with by Serbia treated as its main and most important heir, definitely warrants separate research. An analysis of the unity of South Slavs after the country's breakup in fact reveals an image of an unwanted heritage, an operation on their own body of an imagined homogenous nation that has ceased to exist but which has left behind museums, art, literature, memories both wartime and everyday (which are not a part of the text presented here, but we can feel them like invisible baggage). Let's try to listen to them by following Tijana Vuković, a Serbian author who suggests a look from the inside, from where the events unfolded.

Separate space in our volume has been given to two eminent scholars, Vitomir Mitevski from the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts, a classical scholar, Byzantologist and Slavist, and Tomasz Kamusella, an anthropologist from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, fellow of the Royal Historical Society. We see both their contributions as providing a conceptual framework for our main theme. Mitevski's comparative analysis of what we might call "heroes on borders", i.e. the most distinctive characters of Byzantine and Macedonian epic poetry, is a chronological, historical introduction to the subject matter, as a signal of how border thinking dominates our minds, our choices "between", as well as being a scientific discovery because it confirms close contacts existing between these two cultures over a long period. Kamusella's paper, on the other hand, discusses the hot topic of Russian language identity and the state of awareness of Russian elites. The proposal to de-ideologize the Russian language, recognizing its different variants depending on territory, is a frank declaration in favour of Russia's Occidentalization.

This time the section *Discussion. Presentations. Book Reviews* features an article by Daniela Toševa-Nikolovska from the University of Skopje on the Byzantine law code known as *Nomos Georgikos*, discussing an issue already analysed by researchers, i.e. the probable causal connection between the code and Slavic settlement in Byzantium. The adoption of the code by South and East Slavs in the Middle Ages reveals a network of cultural influences and gives the document new meaning, even though traces of how it functioned in the Slavic world have been blurred because of the Arab invasion.

Similarly to previous issues, the *Materials* section presents a discovery of Joanna Panasiuk, who this time discusses a late Baroque manuscript, *Supplication of a Sinner to the Lord Jesus*, found in a manuscript collection dated to 1744 and belonging to the Discalced Carmelite Nuns in Kraków. I cannot resist sharing the thought that including the medieval idea of *contemptus mundi* invoked by this late Baroque hymn in the context of our

discussion with homogenization, serves as a fitting comment on the world of dying ideas of global ambition.

*In Memoriam* presents an obituary of Professor Endre Bojtár (1940-2018), a member of the *Colloquia Humanistica* Scientific Council. I had the pleasure of knowing the Professor personally. We met many years ago at a conference in Prague sponsored by the Central European University and the George Soros Foundation. The conference was devoted to comparative literary studies and attended mainly by then-young researchers from the former Eastern Bloc. I remember Professor Bojtár as a critical observer and commentator of our research proposals, but also as a scholar with an unparalleled instinct for seeking out young talent, glad to share his research experience and very friendly. He remained so to the very end, often suggesting interesting contacts or reading matter. He will be greatly missed at *Colloquia Humanistica*.

*Jolanta Sujecka*

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### Note:

Jolanta Sujecka, Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw; Faculty of “Artes Liberales”, University of Warsaw, Warsaw.

[jolanta.sujecka@al.uw.edu.pl](mailto:jolanta.sujecka@al.uw.edu.pl)

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