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The Lexicon of Migrating Ideas in the Slavic Balkans and the Risk of Knowledge: Some Considerations Regarding Two Promotional Events for This Book

In 2021 – the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic – two events were held that promoted a multi-volume scholarly work: *Leksykon idei wędrownych na słowiańskich Bałkanach (XVIII–XXI w.)* [*The Lexicon of Migrating Ideas in the Slavic Balkans (18th–21st centuries)*] (2018–2020; Szwat-Gyłybowa et al., 2018a, 2018b, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d). The organisers associated with the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences committed themselves, on the one hand, to popularising this publication, which is available in Open Access (under the CC BY 3.0 PL license); on the other hand, they committed themselves to a discussion of its scholarly and social significance. Without doubt, the publication is not only a significant accomplishment of Polish Slavic studies scholars (who were supported

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by scholars from a number of international centres)¹ – a result of many years of work under the aegis of the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences and performed on the basis of a grant provided by the National Science Centre (OPUS, 2014/13/B/HS2/01057; Narodowe Centrum Nauki, n.d.) *Idee wędrowne na słowiańskich Bałkanach (XVIII–XXI w.)* [*Migrating Ideas in the Slavic Balkans (18th–21st centuries)*] – but it is also a unique work due to the approach that was embraced in reference to the subject matter and that opened new horizons of thought.

The premises and the results of the project

The *Migrating Ideas in the Slavic Balkans (18th–21st centuries)* project, as summarised by the project leader, Grażyna Szwat-Gyłybowa of the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, is a result of the need to explore the manner in which ideas which carried the impulse of modernisation have been interpreted (and continues to be interpreted) in South Slavic cultures (Bosnian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Montenegrin, Macedonian, Serbian and Slovene cultures) (for more information, see Szwat-Gyłybowa, 2018). A point that should be recalled is that the relative linguistic and areal proximity of these cultures is coupled with their great civilisation-related, religion-related, historical, cultural, and social diversity, which makes this relatively small area an extremely interesting domain of exploration. However, it seems there is no comprehensive reflection concerning the manifestations of modernity in this cultural area. On the one hand, it confirms that the Balkans are still marginalized in research on the intellectual

¹ The core of the research group consisted of the following people: Grażyna Szwat-Gyłybowa (the project leader and the main investigator from the Institute of Slavic Studies, PAS), Dorota Gil, Lech Miodyński (main investigators from Jagiellonian University in Krakow), Anna Boguska, Ewelina Drzewiecka, Ewa Wróblewska-Trochimiuk (investigators from the Institute of Slavic Studies, PAS), Celina Juda, Damian Kubik, Katarzyna Sudnik (investigators from Jagiellonian University in Krakow) Agata Jawoszek (an investigator from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań), Jasmina Šuler-Galos (an investigator from the University of Warsaw), and Nina Dimitrowa (Institute of Philosophy of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences). The following researchers collaborated with them as co-authors: Ida Ciesielska, Marta Cmiel-Bażant, Paulina Dominik, Agnieszka Aysen Kaim, Aleksandra Sfini, Michael D. Konaris, Niketas Siniossoglou, Ikaros Mantouvalos, Xenia Marinou, Dimitris Stamatopoulos, Leonidas Kallivretakis, Przemysław Kordos, Konrad Kuczara and Catherine Brégianni.

history of Europe, and any modern phenomenon is described more by means of geopolitical categories than by philosophical ones. On the other hand, this lack of serious interest in the intellectual history of South Slavic cultures stems from the broadly understood discipline of Slavic Studies. We read the following in a short introduction to the *Lexicon*, which bears the meaningful title: *Some Remarks about the Power and Powerlessness of Researchers of Migrating Ideas*:

Our project is the fruit of the assumption that it is worthwhile to study so-called minor cultures in a relational approach (which does not have to signify a confrontative approach) because they have something to say to the world of humanists – something that (as was expressed by Susan Buck-Morss) eludes “traditional hierarchies of significance” in the development of knowledge. (Szwat-Gyłybowa, 2018, p. 7; cf. Buck-Morss, 2009, p. 13)

Twenty-seven social and political ideas were the object of scholarly attention in the *Migrating ideas in the Slavic Balkans* project: agrarianism, anarchism, evolution, humanism, history, capitalism, clericalization, confessions, conservatism, education, culture, liberalism, nation, modernity, homeland, schooling, enlightenment, politics, progress, rationalism, reformation, religion, revolution, secularization, socialism, tradition, and universalism. As research sources, various texts were used: anthologies, school textbooks, periodicals, treatises, handbooks, the agendas of political parties, scholarly dissertations, belles lettres, theatrical performances, monuments, films, works of art etc. The issues in focus included the sources of ideas, the role of intermediary centres, the routes of cultural flow, and the role of native and foreign mediators. As was summarised by Lech Miodyński, one of the three main investigators of the project, during a meeting which promoted the *Lexicon*, the similarities and differences in the criteria of determining modernity in the cultures that are studied in this project are basically the object of attention, therefore *The Lexicon* constitutes an attempt to demonstrate not only various timelines but also various concepts on these timelines which function as either analogies or substitutes of newly assimilated phenomena.

The Lexicon of Migrating Ideas in the Slavic Balkans was released as a part of a special series of publications issued by the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, “Idee wędrówne na słowiańskich Bałkanach” [Migrating ideas in the Slavic Balkans] (*Idee wędrówne na słowiańskich Bałkanach*, n.d.); it was published on the iRetesław² digital repository thanks

² <https://ispan.waw.pl/ireteslaw/>

to financial support from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education as part of the programme “Działalność Upowszechniająca Naukę” [Activities promoting scholarship] (703/P-DUN/2019). The publication comprises ten volumes. The form of volumes 1–9 is without doubt arbitrary – as remarked by Szwat-Gyłybowa – and they bear signs that some of the original research assumptions may have been modified, but this is also a result of the publication-related pragmatics of the volumes. The volumes contain treatments of basic ideas grouped into triads, and a supplement known as “Anamnesis” (short presentations of the senses of the given ideas in the Western cultural sphere that have been particularly popular and in the context of so-called culture mediators, that is the Greek, Russian, Turkish, and Ottoman cultures). Volume 10 comprises treatments of the so-called subordinated ideas, namely the local conceptualisations and incarnations thereof that are peculiar to specific Slavic cultures in south-eastern Europe. All entries constitute authorial descriptions of the processes of the transformation and “domestication” of ideas by adapting them to local social imaginaria. The analysis involves both the semantic and the pragmatic level. The image that was generated constitutes, on the one hand, a report on the current state of research in specific Slavic countries; on the other hand, it is an attempt to (partially) verify the existing “canon” of knowledge by applying a new scientific approach and introducing new source materials into the analysis. As a result, it fills the cognitive gap in the research on the history of ideas in the South Slavdom; it is also a unique work in terms of the magnitude and the substantive range devoted to the mental history of a specific area in the context of European cultures.

In the opinion of the project participants, its output provides a foundation for further interdisciplinary research on the manifestations of modernity and the intellectual history of both the Slavic Balkans and Europe; therefore, the key question was how to effectively introduce the Lexicon into the scientific circulation and how to involve other researchers in the issues raised therein. This question refers to the dissemination of the results of the research work, the language of publication, the prestige of scientific centres, the influences of institutional circles, as well as the stereotypes and cognitive habits which prevail in particular countries and research traditions. Paradoxically, the fact that it was during the COVID-19 pandemic seemed to help as the online nature of scientific events at that time was an opportunity to include the *Lexicon* as an event in a series of online activities that characterized academia at that time. And so, two online promotional meetings were organized via social

media and other popular communication platforms. Intended for a different audience, the meetings were designed according to the assumed expectations and practices of understanding. Nonetheless, the general desire was to take advantage of the fact that online events are highly accessible and provide an environment which makes it possible for researchers from various countries and even time zones to meet, regardless the possible differences between them. Realization of this purpose, however, depended on the institutional and personal resources of the participants. Indeed, the online events offered direct and easy access to knowledge and provided an opportunity to start a transnational conversation; however, there was a problem as this form of communication often overloaded researchers and colleagues who had been struggling with the consequences of mixing their professional and private life during lockdown and/or shifting to an online, “work from home” mode of working. Also, the impact of the personal dimension was diminished, which limited the precious possibilities that are offered by unofficial/informal contact during or after such a promotional event. Bearing in mind all the presumed advantages and disadvantages, the organisers decided to focus on Slavic language recipients; this was also due to the fact that it was their cultures that constituted the object of research, and the entire project concerns the question of language as such.

The Bulgarian meeting

The first meeting was held on 22 April 2021 in the Bulgarian language. It was organised by the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, with the collaboration of the Polish Institute in Sofia; it was transmitted via the Facebook pages of both institutions (Instytut Slawistyki Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2021; Instytut Slawistyki Polskiej Akademii Nauk & Полски институт в София / Instytut Polski w Sofii, 2021). The purpose of the event was to disseminate knowledge about the project and start a discussion concerning the scholarly and social significance of its general impact. The project’s intended recipients included not only representatives of Bulgarian academia (humanists and representatives of social sciences), but also journalists, opinion writers and diplomats. The meeting attracted many viewers (there is a record of more than 700 views).

SERIA
IDEE WĘDROWNE NA SŁOWIAŃSKICH BAŁKANACH

**LEKSYKON
IDEE WĘDROWNYCH
NA SŁOWIAŃSKICH BAŁKANACH
XVIII–XXI WIEK**

ПРЕДСТАВЯНЕ НА НАУЧНОТО МНОГОТОМНО ИЗДАНИЕ
НА ИНСТИТУТА ПО СЛАВИСТИКА НА ПОЛСКАТА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ –
„ЛЕКСИКОН НА МИГРИРАЩИ ИДЕИ НА СЛАВЯНСКИТЕ БАЛКАНИ”

Разговор за приноса на полската хуманитаристика и за общественото значение
на изданието с полски и български изследователи и участници в проекта.

22 април 2021, 17 ч. (EEST)
<https://zoom.us/j/98617519350>

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ТОМ 1 ТОМ 2 ТОМ 3
ТОМ 4 ТОМ 5 ТОМ 6
ТОМ 7 ТОМ 8 ТОМ 9
ТОМ 10

ПРОМОЦИЯ WIELOTOMOWEJ PUBLIKACJI NAUKOWEJ INSTYTUTU SLAWISTYKI PAN –
„LEKSYKON IDEI WĘDROWNYCH NA SŁOWIAŃSKICH BAŁKANACH”

Rozmowa na temat wkładu polskiej humanistyki i znaczenia społecznego publikacji
z polskimi i bułgarskimi badaczami oraz uczestnikami projektu.

22 kwietnia 2021, g. 17.00 (EEST)
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Il. 1. Poster promoting the Bulgarian meeting

The meeting consisted of three parts and was hosted by Ewelina Drzewiecka. In the first part, the participants of the project (Grażyna Szwat-Gylybowa, Nina Dimitrowa and Ewelina Drzewiecka) presented the main theoretical assumptions and results of the work. Those involved pointed out both the peculiar nature of this kind of research and the concept and structure of the final publication. In the second part, the invited guests expressed their opinions: Nikolay Aretov (the scientific consultant of the project and member of the Academic Board of the “Idee wędrowne na słowiańskich Bałkanach” series, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences); Margreta Grigorova (Slavist, translator, expert in literary studies, St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo); and Kamen Rikev (Slavist, translator, expert in literary studies, Maria Skłodowska-Curie University in Lublin).

Aretov emphasised the broad range of competences of the authors, their reliable commitment to the highest possible standards, and their modern way of presenting knowledge. Among the most important elements indicated by him was the fact that the *Lexicon* project emphasized the significant role of culture mediators, i.e., the crucial role of neighbours in transferring/mediating ideas, and the differences between the sources, which problematised the alleged

cultural unity of South Slavs. In this context, Aretov also indicated the importance of adding a so-called Anamnesis at the end of each volume in order to emphasise diversity in a broader perspective. In his opinion, the genealogies and the pragmatic context of the local functioning of “Western” ideas are also worthwhile for people who are not part of the studied sphere.

While Aretov engaged the perspective of Balkan studies involved in complex intercultural relations, Grigorova focused on the comparative dimension in the light of Slavic studies. She referred to the *Lexicon* as “the most innovative work of Polish Slavic comparative studies” and focused on the comparative perspective, reminding the audience that readers’ engagement is required in the context of European integration and participation in universal values (for more information, see Григорова, 2021). According to M. Grigorova, the *Lexicon* is a “treasury of knowledge” which on one hand provides the possibility of a parallel reading, especially regarding the manner of adapting a given idea in conditions of a lack of statehood and institutional control; on the other hand, the *Lexicon* stimulates the scientific desire to find different ways of applying new knowledge. This study problematizes the so-called small nations/minor languages and presents the deep relations between ideas, thus providing the possibility of dialogue and cultural rapprochement. Grigorova emphasised that the project pointed out the important role of the individual in the transmission of ideas, indicating in this context the necessity of community and sharing. One may ask whether this is not a problem that is faced by every scholar.

It was in this broad perspective that Rikev began his speech by posing a number of fundamental questions (also fundamental, but not exclusively for the researcher!): What is the manner in which ideas that we all use function? What do they really mean? How to understand one another? From the perspective of the researchers who were engaged in the project, these questions were particularly important, as every concept or artefact that was studied had its own “unique fate”. The subject matter of the *Lexicon* concerns the “Balkan-South Slavic version of modernisation-related concepts” and “the Balkan context of absolute dialogue” – as emphasised by Rikev. Nevertheless, the problem of (im)possible dialogues is universal. By making indirect reference to the Bulgarian-Macedonian controversies, Rikev recalled how unlikely real dialogue is in the current political and academic context. He emphasised the importance of gaining insight into one’s own preliminary positions and the significance of separate cultural connotations; what is needed is a careful approach to scholarly discourse as such, the more so that all kinds of scholarship are engaged

in a national way. The differences in languages, i.e., the differences in the perception of one's own world and the manner of the articulation of this world, is the beginning of a discussion. In this sense, the *Lexicon* is the beginning of a pioneering work. Finally, Rikev made reference to the previously raised postulate of translating the *Lexicon* and called for a form that was abbreviated or at least based on the popular science approach. He admitted that, on the one hand, in the conditions of modern scholarly discourse there is a need to function in the English language environment; on the other hand, most significant recipients of the work are representatives of the cultures that are studied.

In this context, Lyubka Lipcheva-Prandzheva of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv expressed her doubt over whether there is any point in translating such a work into English. Perhaps it is better to continue its development or to create relevant or alternative approaches in each of the cultures that are studied? On the other hand, the pragmatic and social dimensions of the project are also important. As was emphasised by Panayot Karagiozov of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", the *Lexicon*, as a contribution to Slavic comparative studies which presents ideas in a broad local context, has educational significance for students and specialists alike. The point is to facilitate common ground for meeting people and understanding.

As the first meeting turned out to be a sort of a litmus test of how the Polish research would be received by representatives of the cultures that are studied, who may be tempted to consider external insight as something that is not well-established in the context and is therefore less competent, the second meeting was conducted in the perspective of the relationships between various specialisations and research trends within Polish academia. Therefore, the issues concerning the possibility of translating/understanding one's own prejudices and accepted ways of thinking were even more prominent.

The Polish meeting

The meeting was organised on 29 April 2021 by the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences in collaboration with the Public Library of the City of Warsaw, the Principal Library of Mazowieckie Voivodship, as well as the Public Library and the 3rd Academic Reading Room in the Wola District of the City of Warsaw; it was transmitted via the Facebook page of

the Institute of Slavic Studies (Wróblewska, 2021). The purpose of this event was to popularise knowledge about the *Lexicon* in a social and educational context, and to initiate a discussion about Volume 3 regarding the ideas of conservatism, liberalism and nation, which seemed to be particularly important in a time marked by pandemic and populism. Various specialisations were represented by the participants of the project, the reviewers of the *Lexicon*, as well as the invited guests from Polish research centres. The recipients included not only representatives of the Polish scholarly community, but also students and people interested in the region.

The poster is a vertical rectangular graphic with a light beige background. At the top, it lists the organizing institutions: 'Instytut Sławistyki Polskiej Akademii Nauk oraz Biblioteka Publiczna m.st. Warszawy i Biblioteka Główna Województwa Mazowieckiego, a także Biblioteka Publiczna i III Czytelnia Naukowa w Dzielnicy Wola m.st. Warszawy'. Below this, it says 'zapraszają' and 'na prezentację dziesięciotomowej publikacji pt. **Lexykon idei wędrownych na słowiańskich Bałkanach. XVIII-XXI wiek,** która ukazała się w latach 2018–2020 pod redakcją Grażyny Szwat-Gyhybowej (we współpracy z Dorotą Gil i Lechem Miodyńskim) w serii wydawniczej **IDEE WĘDROWNE NA SŁOWIAŃSKICH BAŁKANACH**'. The meeting details are: 'Spotkanie odbędzie się 29 kwietnia 2021 roku w godzinach 18.00-19.30 na platformie zoom'. The central image shows the spines of ten volumes of the lexicon, with the third volume highlighted in red and labeled 'TOM 3'. At the bottom, there are logos for 'SLAVAV', 'COTRI', 'Biblioteka Publiczna m.st. Warszawy i Biblioteka Główna Województwa Mazowieckiego', 'III CZYTELNIĄ NAUKOWĄ', and 'Biblioteka Publiczna w Dzielnicy Wola m.st. Warszawy'.

Il. 2. Poster promoting the Polish meeting

The meeting was hosted by Agnieszka Aysen Kaim (a Turkologist, Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences) – the author of an entry devoted to culture mediators. The discussion was introduced by Lilla Moroz-Grzelak (an expert in literary and culture studies, and a Slavic studies scholar from the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences), who began by emphasising the great amount of work that has been done within the project. She indicated that the *Lexicon* is a “mine of knowledge and a source of inspiration” and a “pioneering work for Polish humanities” because it is devoted to ideas which function in humanist thought in the broad context of the role of both Western models and so-called culture mediators. She focused particularly on the value of Volume 10, which contains entries associated with specific concepts and imaginings which function in the collective memory of the studied societies and, as such, facilitate understanding of the described phenomena. Then, she indicated the possible paths of interpretation and the questions which emerge from reading the “liberalism” entry. By elaborating on the Croatian case, she raised the problem of the anti-religious dimension of this idea. She recalled that many of its proponents had close contact with the Church community or even came from it, therefore the popular issue of the “anti-Catholicism” of liberalism requires reformulation. Instead, she suggested that one should reflect on this idea in the light of the “Catholic-Jesuit” relationship. As a result, she addressed the problem – one that is crucial for the participants of the project – of the semantic divergence of concepts and the permanence of stereotypical, i.e., simplified, approaches in modern thinking.

Of the invited guests, Krystyna Pieniżek-Marković (an expert in the field of literature, a Slavist and expert in Croatian studies, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań), one of the reviewers of the *Lexicon*, was the first to voice her opinion. She pointed out the significance of the publication in two basic dimensions. Firstly, she stated that it transcends the boundaries of disciplines because it offers insight which is fundamental for the humanities in general and unites various research approaches. It also transcends temporal boundaries because it goes beyond the determined historical framework and reaches the roots of the phenomena of the adaptation and negotiation of meanings, and it also refers to modern times. Secondly, Pieniżek-Marković recalled that some of the ideas which receive attention in the project are particularly troublesome or controversial in the area that is studied. As an example, she referred to the idea of nation and stated that “the local coryphaei of national self-representations, created on the basis of nationalist ideologies, would like

to correct the results of the work of Polish Slavic studies scholars”; then, she ventured to ask whether the *Lexicon* is already known in the countries of southern Slavdom. She considered the fact that the *Lexicon* destroys the stereotype of a monolithic southern Slavdom because it represents the diversity and complexity of the local development of the same ideas, including their close yet different relationship with problems of religious confession. This diversity corresponds with the diversity of the model of the entries themselves, which “brought forth immanently from the idea itself within the context of a given area, and from the personality of the author”. She added that it is also important that the cultures of Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which heretofore have been marginalised in this kind of research, are presented here as equally important objects of research. When summarising her statement, she emphasised the unique character of the *Lexicon*, in terms of both the comparative approach and the approach that is associated with the exploration of particular cultures.

Jarosław Kiliński (a sociologist, historian of ideas, University of Warsaw) described his standpoint as the opinion not of a specialist or a Balkan studies scholar but of a historian of ideas. He admitted that he liked the premise of the project, its scale, and the selection of ideas. Then he went on to focus on Volume 3, praising the fact that it is situated between two research fields: “the great history of great ideas”, as he remarked, and “discourse analysis”. The reflections concerning the ideas of liberalism and conservatism were referred by him as “a history of various sorts of deficiencies” and supplements. He said that he experienced a feeling that the project was insufficient as far as the manner of presentation is concerned in the entries devoted to the period of socialism, as well as the presence/absence of intermediaries beyond the East-West axis. He admitted that the project is fortunately far from studying “native ideas in native contexts” but is entangled in the finalism of modernisation-related theory. He suggested that one should reflect on the migration of ideas in the light of Marxist tradition, and therefore in the perspective of class structures and the development of institutions of power.

Also Adam Koźuchowski (a historian, Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences) decided to comment upon the work from the position – as he referred to it – of “a curious but incompetent recipient”. As a result, he focused on the dimensions which are the source of (his) doubt: the selection of entries/ideas, as well as their origins and definitions; the variety of sources and the approach to the analysed material; the manner in which the authorial

voice was located in the entries themselves. He admitted that his impressions are determined by the perspective of a historian, therefore the boundary between the perspective of the author and the source, as well as between various approaches to various types of sources, seems to be ambiguous in his opinion. However, he added that perhaps this is the price that the participants of the project had to pay; in this context, he ventured to ask how one should read the *Lexicon*: as an encyclopaedia, or in a reflexive manner, and therefore, in a way, against the linear organisation of the text? In a specific reference to Volume 3, he stated that the world which emerges from it is a rich and complex one, but it is self-contained, therefore one receives the impression that the ideas that were studied developed along separate paths. He expressed his amazement that one sees only rare instances of a perspective in the *Lexicon* “that is so familiar to researchers of ideas and concepts in Central or Eastern Europe, i.e., this feeling of peripherality and receptivity of our cultures in reference to some Western centres”, and he ventured to ask whether this was a result of the evaluation of historical reality on the part of the authors. All serious research in the history of ideas compels one to state, as he emphasised, that almost everything in our region turns out to be an instance of “copying things from someone, or copying things from someone who is a copyist himself”. Finally, he admitted that reading the *Lexicon* may be difficult due to the lack of footnotes and references, therefore it seems to be helpful only for advanced readers. In this sense, Volume 10 represents particular value in his opinion.

Giving a supplementary insight from the position of a historian who specialises in the region, Jarosław Rubacha (a historian and Slavist, University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn) stated that the entire *Lexicon* is very informative for scholars interested in ideological confrontations, but it may also be used by other specialists, not only by Slavic scholars.

As a response to all the comments, Szwał-Gyłybowa first thanked the participants for the good atmosphere of the discussion, as well as for keeping their deadlines and their reliability and commitment; she then recalled the main aims and the context of the origins of the project. She emphasized once again that the migration of ideas was revealed by both going beyond the traditional way of studying Slavic cultures as if they were in isolated capsules, and by investigating further changes of meanings in a local context. She indicated that being a researcher of minor cultures has its privileges and provides an opportunity to study various kinds of sources within the same framework. She pointed out that the paths of the migration of ideas are, in some cases, extremely surpris-

ing or even inconvenient from the perspective of the members of the national communities that were studied and that such is the case of the idea of liberalism, whose first impulse was embraced by Bulgarians by the intermediation of Ottoman Turkey. She admitted that these “migrating ideas” are in fact very diverse and varied, so they cannot be reduced formally to an idea or to (social and political) concepts, but they constitute certain mental structures which set social practices into motion. What is particularly interesting is the fact that a thing that has not manifested itself in a given culture may be of great importance for this culture; she cited conservatism in Bulgaria in the 19th century as an example. As a response to the question asked by Pieniążek-Marković, she cited the Bulgarian meeting, during which one of the guests expressed fear that some of the content of the *Lexicon* may be difficult to accept. Finally, she referred to the problem of the structure of the *Lexicon* and the “constructivist efforts” embedded in this structure. She said that the original premise went against the grain of the traditional idea of a printed book because it entailed the establishment of an internet platform where the work would be freely accessible and open to further development: on one hand, a reading based on cross-references would be possible in terms of both ideas and countries; on the other hand, it would be possible to add new texts and points of view. As she admitted, even though a printed publication blurs this perspective, it gives hope that it is functional and stimulates thinking.

Miodyński admitted that the authors had to face the “cumbersome burden of their own incompetence”. In the community of Polish humanities, the question of competence is perceived rather strictly, as a result of which the paths of social sciences and philosophy rarely cross the paths of philology and area studies. He also admitted that these boundaries were overcome only partially in the work associated with the project, above all in the attempts to make the language of the description uniform. Therefore, the value of the *Lexicon* consists in the fact that scholars may overcome both the boundaries of their own specialisations, and the notion of the alleged unambiguous nature of concepts. The fact that this ambiguity of concepts and understandings was emphasised is part of the premise that the presented research is preliminary in nature, and its aim is to verify the possibilities of the more confident movement of researchers across areas which traditionally have been fragmented.

Moroz-Grzelak raised the question of promoting the *Lexicon* in other countries of the Balkan region, rhetorically asking whether this type of research could manifest itself in one of them. Ultimately, she emphasised the signifi-

cance of research “from the outside” that is therefore distanced, and such research is ensured by the perspective of Polish Slavic studies. Magdalena Koch (an expert in the field of literary studies and Slavic studies, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań) referred to this opinion of Polish Slavic studies scholars as “sympathetically distanced, but critical”. She pointed out that the value of all volumes of the *Lexicon* has not been completely appreciated; then she went on to emphasise the necessity of translating the work into English, because when it is internationalised, it will, in her opinion, “revolutionise the world of Slavic studies”, whereas at the regional level, “if it is going to cause a storm, it will be the better for it”.

In response to these remarks, Szwat-Gyłybowa admitted that during the Bulgarian meeting there was doubt as to whether a translation into English might render uniform the nuances which the authors bring forward and which constitute value for the local recipients. The guests of the Polish meeting protested, expressing their optimism in reference to the question of untranslatability. There was consensus as to whether internationalisation is necessary, regardless of the possible semantic losses that might be sustained.

Finally, in a slightly provocative vein, Kożuchowski asked the participants of the project about the extent to which they are aware which perspective they represent: a Western or a Polish one. He also asked whether this was a relevant issue, whether it mattered, and whether they received the impression that if the work had been developed during the existence of Yugoslavia, the results may have been different. In response to these remarks, Miodyński characterised the research perspective of the project participants as “eclectic, synthetic, and tolerant”; then he went on to point out the apriorism of narrow specialisation as well as the generation-related differences which entail differences in the process of instruction. He recalled that the Yugoslavian perspective is somehow natural for representatives of the older generation; in this sense, diversity is, in a way – as he remarked – “embedded”. Szwat-Gyłybowa added that the research of the authors of the *Lexicon* refers to the premises of two instances of hermeneutics of thought: one is situated in the spirit of Hans-Georg Gadamer and strives to achieve understanding and the flattening of perspectives/horizons; the other one is the hermeneutics of suspicion, which provides an insight into “false consciousnesses” and various constructs of thoughts. In this sense, the project is situated beyond the East-West or North-South axes, even though the embryo of all ideas which were subject to interpretation was situated in the West.

The last speaker was the host of the meeting, who, thanking everyone for attending the conference, expressed a metaphorical invitation to indulge in further explorations with ideas.

The risk of knowledge

The purpose of both meetings was to disseminate knowledge about Polish Slavic research, including *The Lexicon of Migrating Ideas in the Slavic Balkans*, and to provide an impulse for the work to achieve greater social impact. It is difficult to say whether this goal was achieved, but time will tell because this is both a parametric question (which manifests itself particularly in so-called quotability) as well as an epistemological one. The idea was to demonstrate both the diversity of the cultures of southern Slavdom and the close relations between these cultures and Western thought, i.e., the parallel nature of the studied phenomena in regard to Western Europe. Another aim was to subvert/undermine stereotypes and prejudices which persist in many societies and in scholarship in reference to the Balkans. At a deeper level, the point was to sensitise various specialists and experts to the stereotypical nature of their own convictions and associations, in reference to both the region and to specific ideas. For example, liberalism in the south Slavic or Balkan social and cultural context was originally associated with a fight for the liberation/unification of people and the founding of states, just as in the context of Italian or German culture. However, is this fact part of the canon of common knowledge? Is it clear that that conservatism as a desire to maintain the status quo should in fact be seen as a curiosity in the 19th-century Slavic-Balkan cultural context?

It is necessary to be aware of the fact that – especially in this area (but not only in this area!) – these concepts are re-used and re-employed in new contexts; they are transferred to other semantic fields; they undergo metaphorization or “labelling” for the purpose of an ideological struggle, at the level of both members of a national community (specific individuals or cultural elites) and the researchers themselves. In this light, is the history of the Balkans a story of shortcomings or a story of an actual, persistent life of ideas? Traces of ideological ambiguities are significant in the social and political discussions: the concepts are blurred, they become the object of symbolic abuse and an instrument of stigmatisation.

During the Bulgarian meeting, Grigороva discussed knowledge as a question and even a risk. In my opinion, this perspective is most legitimate in reflection concerning both the project and its results, as well as in the course of the discussion during the promotion-related events.

Two questions deserve our particular attention. Firstly, the problem of the publishing medium manifested itself clearly at a number of levels. The participants of the Polish meeting pointed out that the *Lexicon* was published exclusively in the electronic medium, which makes it both accessible (because of the Open Access policy) and inaccessible (because of its non-material form, floating in the oblivious “depths” of the internet). This ambivalence regarding the virtual space could also refer to the organisation and the course of the book promotion itself. Secondly, language turned out to be a particularly important question in both the literal and the metaphorical sense. In the literal sense, it concerns the need to internationalise the research results. In the metaphorical sense, it refers to the idea of mutual understanding, which seems to be possible only if boundaries are left behind – both the boundaries of countries and the boundaries of specialisations. As the discussion demonstrated, especially during the Polish meeting, a number of elements generate opposing evaluations: the diversity or heterogeneity of sources, the non-parallel nature of research approaches and the form of the entries, as well as the structure of each volume. Also, it turned out that the understanding of the object(s) of consideration is sometimes ambiguous, as can be seen in the two main objections that were raised during the meeting. The first one was that when a given idea is not explicitly present in the context that is studied, the attention of the researcher is redirected to epithets. The second one concerns the assumptions that the *Migrating ideas in the Slavic Balkans* project derives from ideas but eventually focuses on concepts.

Therefore, what is the subject? Is it the “initial” Western idea, which is basically petrified by the intermediation of standardised reference works and the fact that it is transplanted to a non-Western context (which means the death of the idea in question)? Or is it the life of this idea in various and variable local conditions (which means rebirth after the death of this idea)? Is the object static or dynamic in nature? Obviously, it is a question of the constructivism and the prejudices of scholarship – the points of departure and the main assumptions. Is the object of research defined as a (failed) copy or as a living tissue of culture?

The perspective of cultural studies seems to be more sensitive to historicity and contextuality; thus, it is more open to the concept of a living organism. In this light, migrating ideas not only *set [a thing] in motion* (cf. Taylor, 2001) but also are set in motion. However, Western scholarship and its local copies are entangled in prejudice that determines research within the “model – copy” framework; on the one hand, this is part of the heritage of positivist scholarship; on the other hand, it is an instrument of oppression – also in reference to itself. If we state that nothing original has ever been developed in the region that we study, in fact we suggest that we define originality in an ahistorical way, in isolation, but we also suggest that we see the object that we consider in a static manner. If we state that we are a copy, then we evaluate ourselves in a specific – usually negative – manner. When we add that we are a failed copy, we commit complete reification. This is the framework in which the humanities function and not infrequently continue to function: directed by national and nation-making instincts, not only in the region that is presented in the *Lexicon*. Is it not one of the foundations of national/nation-oriented humanities to focus on the idea of the autogenesis of the culture that is studied? If the influence of other cultures is studied, the focus is on positive contributions, which in fact serve the purposes of a positive self-image. By this, current social and political tendencies manifest themselves as well. Obviously, all these questions constitute an object of multi-dimensional attention in, for example, postcolonial studies, research on cultural transfer, or postsecular analysis of multiplied modernities.³ The *Lexicon* is without doubt an attempt to find a way beyond the well-established dichotomies and hierarchies in the Slavic *and* (south-) Slavistic contexts. This transgression also involves the fields of competences and languages.

The progressing specialisation and fragmentation of academic life means that we are dealing with an object which becomes increasingly abstracted and suspended in an isolated capsule. As a result, the top-down (and not infrequently illegitimate) division of competences manifests itself in researchers’ resistance to voicing their opinion on questions which are different from those chosen and imposed by themselves, or even in a strong opposition against the right of others to express judgments of a more general nature. Eventually, this division

³ As the literature on the subject is vast, I will point out only few examples which are important from the perspective of my own research: Appadurai, 1996; Asad, 1993, 2003; Broomans & van Voorst, 2012; Daskalov et al., 2017; Szwat-Gyłybowa, 2014; Даскалов, 1998.

of competences leads to an inability to conduct a true dialogue. Educational programmes, i.e., the canon of knowledge (and the hierarchy of significance), in fact determine who can and who cannot express their opinion about culture in a broader context or from the perspective of universal issues. As a result, we are facing a paradox: on the one hand, Slavic studies scholars cannot offer multi-aspectual insights into the regions/countries that they study, at least in the sphere of Polish humanities; on the other hand, a specialist who represents a field other than Slavic studies, e.g., history or philosophy, avoids expressing an opinion in reference to an (allegedly) particular problem of the Slavic studies region. It is as if the only goal of scientific discussion is to provide verification on the basis of hard competences and historical knowledge and not to conduct a dialogue based on mutual trust that concerns the research approach itself, i.e., the questions that are asked and the answers that are generated. Such an open and trusting dialogue requires, however, accepting that our view is fragmentary and dynamic, as is the world itself.

Sensitivity to other languages, approaches and assumptions, questions and methods – this is a requirement that a humanist should meet, i.e., the ability to enter a dialogue in the light of the complexity and the fragility of phenomena in general. This point is discussed by Michał Paweł Markowski in his book *Polityka wrażliwości. Wprowadzenie do humanistyki* [Politics of sensitivity. An introduction to humanities], in which humanities is seen as a political activity (in a broad sense) because the goal is that of *Bildung* (Markowski, 2013). Michał Paweł Markowski refers to it as the *policy of sensitivity* (towards the world, language, tradition, culture). The epistemological sensitivity of the humanist – which after all is becoming increasingly emphasised in anthropology and cultural studies⁴ – means to feel for things, not only in reference to the object of research; however, it also accompanies the researcher's valleys and peaks, and it eventually serves the purpose of opening oneself up to risk and to accepting one's co-relationships.

It seems that in order to neutralise this all-embracing (social and scholarly) fragmentation and reification – this alienating process of establishing more and

⁴ An expressive metaphor of this anthropological sensitivity is the “ontological penumbra”: “The ontological penumbra is a space where the self and the other, ignorance and certainty, as well as the secular and the religious, meet, overlap, and intertwine. It is a reflexive space of dialogue, encounter and engagement, which is marked by ambiguity and plurality, as well as by creativity and productivity, where “the other” includes both human and nonhuman entities who, in turn, need to be recognized as our counterparts” (Merz & Merz, 2017, p. 2).

more distinct boundaries and more and more radical divisions – one should go beyond the institutional dimension or the formal dimension of instruction/cognition and activate its deeply personal and emotive dimension. Perhaps – as was postulated by Olga Tokarczuk – it is worth embracing tenderness. Perhaps it is worth taking a step forward and becoming a “tender researcher”. This Polish Nobel Prize winner, when she spoke about the “tender narrator”, made reference above all to the peculiar power of literature, nevertheless she meant experience of the world in general. Perhaps it is worth activating this notion in the context of research practice.

A tender researcher would then represent a perspective that embraces all aspects of existence and accepts even the least obvious relationships from the point of view of their (fragmentary) positions, for this researcher is ready “to see everything”. As was explained by Tokarczuk:

Seeing everything means recognizing the ultimate fact that all things that exist are mutually connected into a single whole, even if the connections between them are not yet known to us. Seeing everything also means a completely different kind of responsibility for the world, because it becomes obvious that every gesture “here” is connected to a gesture “there”, that a decision taken in one part of the world will have an effect in another part of it, and that differentiating between “mine” and “yours” starts to be debatable. (Tokarczuk, 2019, p. 21; cf. Tokarczuk, 2020, p. 412)

In this sense a tender researcher could be a supporter of an (im)possible holistic view that would not be totalistic in the sense of imposing a complete and absolute meaning. In a way, it is this totalistic view that constitutes the attitude of modern scholarship as such and in fact becomes oppressive because it is constructivist and reductive at the same time. A tender researcher would conduct and present his or her research in a manner that would “activate a sense of the whole in the reader’s mind” and would open the reader to the “capacity to unite fragments into a single design, and to discover entire constellations in the small particles of events” (Tokarczuk, 2019, p. 22; cf. Tokarczuk, 2020, p. 412). However, here the point would be to accept the co-relationship and the constant movement. In this sense, the reader would have to be sensitised but also tender, so that they could “take a close look, with the greatest solemnity, to personalise” every thing and every person (Tokarczuk, 2019, p. 24; cf. Tokarczuk, 2020, p. 415). The activation of a personal perspective posited in such a way would serve the purpose of transcending exclusivist individuality (of insight, method, description) and the constant problematisation of one’s language.

In this approach, tenderness is a cognitive attitude (at the same time emotive and intellectual) and a communication capability which refers to the subject of research, the object, the source, as well as the recipient, the reader, and the fellow researcher. As was explained by Tokarczuk, tenderness is “the art of personifying, of sharing feelings, and thus endlessly discovering similarities” (Tokarczuk, 2019, p. 24; cf. Tokarczuk, 2020, pp. 415–416).

It appears wherever we take a close and careful look at another being, at something that is not our “self”. [...] Tenderness is deep emotional concern about another being, its fragility, its unique nature, and its lack of immunity to suffering and the effects of time. (Tokarczuk, 2019, p. 24; cf. Tokarczuk, 2020, pp. 415–416)

In this sense, the researcher’s attitude is not only empathic but also completely open, transcending the traditional hierarchisations and clichéd binary models of evaluation. This would be the incarnation of this “mode of looking”, which – according to Tokarczuk – presents the world as “living, interconnected, cooperating with, and co-dependent on itself” (Tokarczuk, 2019, p. 24; cf. Tokarczuk, 2020, p. 417). In such a defined sensitivity of a humanist and its effects, there would be room not only for dynamism and the complexity of phenomena, but also for a personal, emotive approach to the world.

In its premise, the *Migrating ideas in the Slavic Balkans* project seems to be a peculiar apotheosis of the co-dependence and complexity of the phenomena that are studied; it is also an expression of the desire to transcend the static and petrifying cognitive models. This is also corroborated by the reference to the philosopher Constantin Noica that was made by the project’s initiator and leader. This philosopher, who perceived existence as fragile and deficient, claimed that “concepts or meanings are not concepts or meanings of a thing (al lucrului), or categories imposed on them from the outside (despre lucru); instead, they are embedded in the thing itself (în lucru), whereas the thought descends to a thing, moves toward it (către lucru)” (Zawadzki, 2009, p. 31, as cited in Szwat-Gyłybowa, 2018, p. 13). Constantin Noica sought a path toward “a desired but never-realised synergy between a word and the thing that it wants to refer to” (Szwat-Gyłybowa, 2018, p. 13).

The final result of the *Lexicon* is that it makes its readers sensitive to the complexity and elusive nature of the phenomena that are presented, even though it also features a certain constructivism and a multi-authorial non-parallel nature of considerations and approaches. It contains insights which are crucial for the region and inspires one to go beyond one’s entanglements.

As was concluded by Miodyński during the Polish meeting, “if one glues together something out of dispersed fragments, the end result is always unknown”. One could add that the result is always surprising, even risky, but it also stimulates thinking and makes one react.

I have a great hope that there will be the financial means to translate the *Lexicon* into English so that its significant contribution would resonate in the comparative light, regardless of the risk of losing nuances. It touches upon the question of both the cultural comparisons in the region, as well as the related images and stereotypes that are formulated from the position of a Centre, which in fact means also from the positions of Western scholarship. While there are already many revaluations in the way in which the Middle and Far East is considered in relation to Western Europe, Southeast Europe is still treated in an unclear and ambivalent manner. It seems to be neither sufficiently Oriental nor sufficiently civilised, and as such it does not constitute an object of research apart from problems such as ethnic conflicts and national minorities, which themselves represent equally oppressive subject matter. The breaking away from the “master narration” of Western modernity and Western (social) science is possible and even necessary for Slavic studies scholars, and the *Lexicon* is a prime example of this.

The question is how this process may be facilitated. What are the means that one should embrace to popularise the *Lexicon* and the general idea? During the Polish meetings, disciplinary differences in the reading of the *Lexicon* were revealed, but their common feature was the postulate of the publication of a paper version, which confirmed the symbolic status of physical books which are considered both a visible result of scholars’ work and a sign of their prestige. Nevertheless, Magdalena Koch pointed out the pragmatic and economic aspect of digital publications, i.e., the role of the internet in the instruction, the cognitive habits, and the financial possibilities of the young generation. However, irrespective of the changes which are caused by “digital civilisation”, an individual becomes the medium. A scholar, a researcher who reads, assimilates and decides to adapt, continue, polemicise and criticise becomes the medium. Just as is demonstrated by the *Lexicon*, in reference to the role of the particular historical figures in the transfer of ideas in the process of the modernisation of the countries of the Slavic Balkans, it is also now that only humans can pass ideas to others, i.e., set them in motion. Therefore, one should thank all the people who participated in promoting the *Lexicon*, including the people who read or downloaded it, and we should encourage

them to engage in further activities in order to set ideas in motion and transcend different boundaries – real boundaries and apparent ones, geographical boundaries and spiritual ones.

Let us then move on to explore the world, let us wander with our ideas, and above all let us be tender!

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***Leksykon idei wędrownych na słowiańskich Bałkanach* a ryzyko wiedzy. Rozmyślenia wokół dwóch wydarzeń promujących publikację**

Artykuł stanowi sprawozdanie z dwóch wydarzeń promujących dziesięcioletnią monografię autorstwa kolektywu polskich sławistów (we współpracy z badaczami z kilku zagranicznych ośrodków naukowych) – *Leksykon idei wędrownych na słowiańskich Bałkanach (XVIII – XXI w.)* (2018–2020), jakie zostały zorganizowane za pośrednictwem platform społecznościowych oraz komunikacyjnych w 2021 roku, a więc w warunkach pandemii COVID-19. Autorka najpierw prezentuje sam projekt naukowy, który legł u podstaw publikacji, wskazując, że *Leksykon* zawiera wiele syntetycznie wyrażonych, oryginalnych, opartych na badaniach źródłowych refleksji na temat spotkania z nowoczesnością na gruncie kultur

południowosłowiańskich. Następnie referuje przebieg dyskusji, jakie wynikły w trakcie obu spotkań promocyjnych, po czym odnosi się do kwestii kompetencji nowoczesnego naukowca, adaptując pojęcia czulego narratora Olgi Tokarczuk.

Słowa kluczowe: *Leksykon idei wędrownych na słowiańskich Bałkanach (XVIII – XXI w.)*, sławistyka, nowoczesność, wiedza, czułość, życie naukowe, idee wędrowne, słowiańskie Bałkany

The lexicon of migrating ideas in the Slavic Balkans and the risk of knowledge: Some considerations regarding two promotional events for this book

The text is an account of two events that promoted the extensive (ten-volume) monograph by Polish Slavic studies scholars (with contributions from scholars from a number of foreign research centres): *Leksykon idei wędrownych na słowiańskich Bałkanach (XVIII – XXI w.)* [The Lexicon of Migrating Ideas in the Slavic Balkans (18th-21st centuries)] (2018–2020). These events were held in 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, by means of social media and common communication platforms. As the *Lexicon* consists of many synthetically expressed, original, and source-based insights on the southern Slavic cultures' struggles with modernity, the author comments on both the research project at the root of this publication and on the course of the discussion which emerged during these meetings. She does so in order to express her view on the capacity of the modern researcher by adapting Olga Tokarczuk's notion of the tender narrator.

Keywords: *The Lexicon of Migrating Ideas in the Slavic Balkans (18th-21st Centuries)*, Slavic studies, Modernity, knowledge, tenderness, scientific life, migrating ideas, Slavic Balkans

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