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HISTORY OF BOSNIAK LITERATURE – A DRAWING IN THE SAND?

Summary

This work is an introductory study of the Poetical Cultural Narrative of Bosniak Literature project, which analyzes the causes and reasons of revival of the traditional concept of the national literature's history in the South Slavic cultural space, as well as the possibility for its redefinition through liberation from the national-romanticist forms of national spirit's apotheosis of the sacrosanct ethno-cultural identity. Obsolete models of literary historiography in the South Slavic space appear even today, both due to delays in the theoretical self-reflection conditioned by long-standing ideological repression of soc-realistic practice and because of the absurd competition concerning the seniority of cultural and civilisational continuities as proof of national primacy and indigenosity in this area. The literary and historical paradigm considered in this way will erase all traces of "foreign spirituality", thus, the geographical topography is transformed into the sanctity of spiritual topography, while historical events become sacral toposes of national existence transcending time. Such forms of cultural and historical narratives have always "fed" themselves on fear and resistance against the Other and have been accompanied by rigid forms of ethnocentric culture based on political ideology of extermination of the Other. A special dimension of this experience of denying identity was seen in the case of the multicultural community of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Bosniak micro-culture in particular, in the shape of the denial of the B&H and Bosniak literature throughout the entire 20th century. The stigmatization of Bosniaks as traitorous converters, the denial of any cultural and historical particularity on their part as opposed to that of other South Slavic cultural communities, orientalist stereotypes and xenophobic excommunication of all forms

of Islamic spirituality and culture from the sanctified literary culture of the Christian Europe; all this resulted in an enormous corpus of texts, in which the destruction of identity truly carried all features of a preparation for the final settling of accounts with the “hostile Other”. Today, it is undoubtedly vital to renew the concept of Bosniak literary history; however, such a project should not be reduced to mere illustration of particularities of the ethno-cultural identity, especially not to antagonization towards the parallel and neighboring cultural and historical presences. History and poetics of Bosniak literature can only be established with preference for the particularity of a literary identity’s cultural grammar, the precious uniqueness of a micro-culture which enriches both the B&H and the South Slavic literary mosaic with esthetic values characterized not only by autochthonous features, but also by hybrid and syncretic forms of dynamic intertwining of the “Eastern” and “Western” literary culture.

Key words: *literary history, literary poetics, the culture of memory, intertextual theory, Bosniak literature, B&H literature, interliterary communities, ethno-cultural identity, literary periodization, orientalism, Eurocentrism, postcolonial criticism, cultural imagology, hybrid cultures, syncretism.*

National Library, a Sacral Topos of the Memory Culture

“There is not and there cannot exist a single civilization of the world in the absolute sense, which is often attributed to such a notion, for civilization implies coexistence of maximally diverse cultures, so it could be said that it comprises of such coexistence.”
(Claude Lévi-Strauss: *Structural Anthropology, Vol. Two*)

“Is there a way to divide human reality, and if it truly appears as naturally divided into definitely defined cultures, histories, traditions, even races, is there a way to survive the consequences of such divisions?”
(Edward W. Said: *Orientalism*)

Traditional conception of the history of national literature, determined by the European experience, endures even today, parallel to all the changes in theoretical conceptions of literary science and its different forms,

with the basic task of shaping the special cultural identities which have formed, transformed and/or disappeared in the stratification processes of historic and social changes of the past two centuries, and always with new configuration, relationships and meanings. Resilient to the emergence of numerous literary theories, some of which have radically brought it into question, it has always had enough strength to partially or completely disregard and reject them, adjust them or “tame” them. It has also changed in the process, in different spatio-temporal articulations, becoming ever more complex and enriched in each of the new practical realizations in which it adopted the new instrumentarium and constructive status, rejecting the surviving patterns; all as a result of the new theoretical discoveries and insights, but still preserving, until the very day, the basic task of presenting the special characteristics of national cultural identity.

Emerging in the period of the formation of nations in the modern sense of the word, it is primarily a reflection of the efforts to tell “all that has happened in literature of a nation or of a civilizational circle from the beginning (i.e. from the first literary monuments) until the modern age”¹, and that makes it one of the basic metanarratives, characteristic of Enlightenment and Modernism. Thus defined, the history of national literature significantly determined the task of literary historians: to research, systematize and canonize a congruent image of development processes and priceless values of the national literature, in the wholeness of social and historical events, and, at the same time, find similarities and differences with the parallel literary and historical narrations of other peoples, primarily of the European cultural and civilizational circle. Back in 1969, Aleksandar Flaker wrote the following, in accordance with the then-dominant way of understanding of literary historiography:

“Ideal history of a national literature would be the history which would, by showing the literary history within the national literature, keep in mind the unity of the process within bigger, superior, transnational wholes; which would emphasize the general patterns of literary history together with national particularities, not only of the entire process, but also of every single writer and work.”²

¹ Zdenko Lešić, *Književnost i njena istorija*, Veselin Masleša, Sarajevo, 1985, p. 184.

² Aleksandar Flaker, *Književne poredbe*, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1969, p. 10.

When reduced to a segment of the overall socio-political articulations of a national collectivity's cultural emancipation, it necessarily demands a linear-historic conception which should affirm continuity of the tradition transformed through history in a special way. That is why its ideal is *a national library*, in which representative literary works of undisputable value and resistant to corrosiveness of time are vintaged, periodized and hierarchically distributed.

Even in the processes, characteristic and crucial for postmodernism, which stratify strict normativeness found in canonically codified national culture, once the dominant, institutionally favored cultural metanarration is "undermined" by the multiplicity of alternative canons, regardless of the diverse changes of explicative models of literary-historical methodology, the metaphor of a national library is even today considered to be an ideological symbol of ownership over a carefully systematized culture, from which all that could darken the purity, eminence and luminosity of the "national spirit" placed in the "holy chest" of tradition is extracted and eliminated. Understood in such a way, the history of national literature appears as a holy place of cultural memory, a sacral topos of always-living tradition from which the past powerfully, yet latently, manages and determines our future; and as a place of the reverse process of reconstructive reading and sacrificing the past in the flow of now theoretical achievements or (concealed) ideological reinterpretations of literary and historical heritage. Both the cases refer to the issue of traditional understanding of historical science which – as explained by Jurij M. Lotman – "by the historian's pen is given almost a mystical character", for, "he understands culture as an ordered space", hence, in the act of retrospective transformation of chaotic past events "that which has happened is shown as the only possibility, as something basic, historical, predetermined", albeit the essence of everything is "a coincidence covered by a layer of arbitrary assumptions and quasi-persuasive cause and effect relations."³

However, the attitude of complex, two-way intertextual relations between tradition and modernity prevails in the contemporary theory of intertextuality. Following Barthes' definition that every text is an intertext containing, among other and in different ways and at different levels,

³ Jurij. M. Lotman, *Kultura i eksplozija*, translated by Sanja Veršić, Alfa, Zagreb, 1998, p. 24–25.

texts from a previous culture and that every text is a new tissue formed of past citations, Milena Stojanović emphasizes that two-way nature of intertextuality:

“Intertextuality is frequently a two-way process: old texts influence the reading of a new text via intertext but, at the same time, the new text affects the new reading of the prototext. Frequently, this reading is a new reading. That is how tradition, which normally forms new texts to a certain extent, becomes innovated in the contemporary texts.”⁴

Tradition and *periodization* are key terms around which the sash of history of literature has been sewn for two centuries already; those are, in fact, also the terms which largely determine the understanding of culture characteristic of Enlightenment and Rationalism in the West-European cultural and civilizational circle, with an everlasting effort of balancing the universal values of the European spirituality and its particular ethnocultural articulations. That effort of balancing the opposites of the national and universal dates back to the 18th century, to the time of moving away from the Classicist poetics in the program texts of Johan G. Herder and Wilhelm T. Schlegel, and remains, to this day, a binary opposition.

“Not a single man, not a single nation, not a single national history, not a single state resembles another. Accordingly, all that is true, beautiful and good in them is not the same. If that is not studied, if some other nation is blindly taken as a pattern, all suffocates,” wrote Herder⁵.

Opposite Herder, Schlegel warned that one cannot become “a true scholar without the universality of spirit, that is, without the elasticity of spirit which enables us to neglect personal affinities and blind habits and to identify with characteristics of other peoples and eras.”⁶

⁴ Milena Stojanović, *Intertekstualnost i citatnost kao književni postupci*, *Književne teorije XX veka*, Collection of Works, Institute for Literature and Arts, Belgrade, 2004, p. 224.

⁵ Cited from: Fric Martini, *Istorija nemačke književnosti*, Nolit, Belgrade, 1971, p. 276.

⁶ Cited from: Zdenko Lešić, *Teorija drame kroz stoljeća*, II, Svjetlost, Sarajevo, 1979, p. 133.

This binary *national-universal* opposition was interpreted, even in diversity of ethnonational literary-historical articulations and in the dynamic transformations of academically institutionalized literary-theoretical thought of the 20th century, until the disintegration of theoretical universalism in postmodern era, primarily in the light of the West-European cultural and civilizational circle and through unwillingful acceptance and canonization of the poetic experience of non-European cultures, but only once they had been softened, “tamed” and adjusted to the already-established European patterns, forms and values. Both history and poetics of the European national literatures are based on the founding principles of sacral Judeo-Christian culture and, introduced by the Arab people and language, Hellenistic culture and tradition, later canonized in the Latin medieval period, from the residual repository of which branch, constitute and continue certain literary-historical sequences that, besides all the peculiarities of syntax, also keep and renew, but also undermine and disturb the canonical grammar of classical European culture.

Continuation of the long-lived artifacts shaped by tradition should, in that sense, prove the existence of Europeanly codified canons, while, on the other hand, also patterns and examples of the specific national poetics, which makes it a sacrosanct value and ever-recognizable element of transcendently dedicated “national spirit”. Hence, tradition is seen as a “holy history”, a mythopoetic sanctity which serves to establish a firm and obliging system which, along with the general forms canonized through the European experience, also preserves and gives prominence to peculiarities and exceptionalities of one’s own identity by which it is differed and separated from others; sanctifying and projectively suggesting or imposing that difference to a contemporary or to some future production as an obligation and heritage. That concerns both the formal-structural poetic forms and ideational-semantic content of ethno-cultural heritage and memory; it, of course concerns the latter even more, every time the history of literature is understood as an expression of national spirit stored in the collective experience of history.

History of literature, and history of culture in general, is a form of commemoration and revocation of a lost sense of the past world, an attempt made by our transient and contingent being to (re)construct an image of the collective identity out of the scattered fragments and pale traces, and, in that way, by continuing the common values and content of

tradition, again establish a myth-ritual participation of history through the experience of “community of those who hearken” (Walter Benjamin). All literary-historical narratives are unstable drawings in the sand of human transience which are inevitably erased, especially in our liminal areas of cultural meetings, worldviews and ideologies, by harshness of historical events, only to later be re-imagined and reconstructed from the scattered and pale traces and fragments by every community that again establishes a commemorative cultural memory. Walter Benjamin emphasized the instability, as well as necessity of every historical description and has warned of fragility and instantaneousness of our perceptions of the past which we, in fear from both personal and existential transience, feverishly turn into a historical narrative, convinced that “there is a secret agreement between the past and our generations” and that “we have inherited, just like any other past generation, a messiah-like strength upon which the past has a claim”⁷.

“The true image of the past quickly vanishes. Past can only be maintained as an image which irretrievably and for a short time bolts in the moment of cognition. For, it is an irrevocable image of the past, an image threatening to disappear with each present age which has failed to comprehend itself the way intended in that image. The joyful epistle, announced by a historian from the past in feverish pulse, comes from the mouth which, perhaps, speaks into the air the moment it opens.”⁸

Traditional forms of the history of national literature appear as the basic and inseparable part of cultural self-reflections, collective memory culture and search for permanent values of the tradition for which there exists an obligatory respect that helps surpass the feeling of transience of individual fates and of the *irrevocable image of the past* Walter Benjamin writes about. The history of national literature is, as a rule, written and read as a romanticized narrative of individual existence in search of essential values of the collective identity within a community, which recognizes and preserves its culture from oblivion and disappearance, without un-

⁷ Walter Benjamin, *Istorijsko-filozofske teze, Eseji*, translated by Milan Tabaković, Nolit, Belgrade, 1974, p. 80.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

derestimating the force of subconscious desire of an individual for collective self-identification. Anthony D. Smith thus describes it:

“The feeling of national identity is a powerful means for determining and locating the individual Is in the world, through a prism of collective persona and its characteristic culture. That shared, unique culture enables us to find out ‘who we are’ in the contemporary world. By re-discovering that culture, we ‘reveal’ ourselves, the ‘authentic personal I’, or, at least, that is what had appeared to many split and disoriented individuals who had to bear with all the changes and independencies of the modern world.”⁹

This basic urge for belonging, for the sense of security and fateful connection with the homeland and ethnos was suggestively expressed by Mesa Selimovic in his novel *The Death and the Dervish*, when Hasan, after a violent outburst, in an autoreflexive vivisection of the collective Bosniak ethnopsychological mentality in the end suggests, through a mystical metaphor (a drop and the sea), the inseparable tie between an individual and nation, opposite the trans-historical loss of identity in Ahmed Nurudin’s religious universalism:

“And on top of everything, they’re mine and I’m theirs, like a river and a drop of water, and everything I’ve said about them I might as well say about myself.”¹⁰

says Hasan, unlike Ahmed Nurudin, who represents an understanding of religious identity which is timeless and without homeland:

“I’ve never suffered that historical and homeland disease, since I am bound to the eternal truth and wide spaces of the world by faith.”¹¹

Conceived as a preterite story, narrative of the national literature, especially in the first stage of self-definition and differentiation towards the

⁹ Anthony D. Smith, *Nacionalni identitet*, translated by Slobodan Đorđević, Biblioteka XX vek, Belgrade, 1998, p. 34.

¹⁰ Meša Selimović, *Derviš i smrt*, Muslimanska književnost XX vijeka, Svjetlost, Sarajevo, 1991, p. 393.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 463.

hitherto hegemonic culture, it conceptualizes particularities of its poetics, cultural and ethnic identity in the discovery and revelation of ancestral heritage reconstructed in an image in which “differences towards the outside are highlighted, while those towards the inside are neglected.”¹² Establishment of canonically-codified particularities of the national literature occurs as part of the overall socio-historical attempts of a community to separate and differentiate itself towards the hitherto homogenous forms of a wider cultural-historical identity. “Social identity rests on the difference”, Pierre Bourdieu says, “which is confirmed in that which is the closest; which represents the biggest threat.” This statement may serve as an example of processes that have occurred lately in South-Slavic interliterary communities as well.

By emphasizing longevity and antiquity of continual development and permanence of poetic toposes tried in the diversity of formal-structural experience, which should bare witness to and attest the inner treasure and peculiarities of one’s own tradition, history and poetics, such a history of literature is, inevitably antagonized against the different, primarily the most closely related literary communities, because it homogenizes its content into “cultural grammars” of its own. In the process of constitution and construction of a cultural and political identity, societies antagonize themselves against one another and homogenize internally, thus in the processes of canonization of one’s own historical poetics, to use the words of Bahtin, the centrifugal force of the language (culture) is suppressed, while the centripetal is favored. The centripetal force is the one which inclines towards “equalization, closing of the system, towards monologue, demanding to rule alone over the only truth. It is the power which saturates the entire language system, which forces it to unify, which purges the language of literature by distancing from it all traces of dialect and sub-language elements.”¹³ This disciplining of internal differences by strict shapes of “prescribed” obligativeness primarily appears in processes of constituting a literary community “by calming the traditional tide” into

¹² Jan Assmann, *Kulturno pamćenje: Pismo, sjećanje i politički identitet u ranim visokim kulturama*, translated by Vahidin Preljević, Vrijeme, Zenica, 2005, p. 47.

¹³ Renate Lachmann, *Phantasia / Memoria / Rhetorica: Bahtinova karnevalska utopija*, selected and translated by Davor Beganović, Matica hrvatska, Zagreb, 2004, p. 375.

sacrosanctity of the canon which is fortified in the form “in which the highest level of content compulsoriness and the most expressive formal determination has been achieved.”¹⁴ Established as a legislative model of the Eurocentrically-verified forms with variants of regional systematizations towards the kindred languages and ethnogenetical roots, it then appears as a reductive narrative, frequently contaminated with xenophobia, in which the superiority of one’s own cultural tradition is emphasized.

That is the form of cultural-historical narratives which are “inspired by a strong idea that community implies a wish for presence, a wish which implicitly includes nostalgia for the time in which (as is claimed) a community should be tied, homogenous and harmonious”¹⁵ and that myth about homogenous identities lies in the very essence of “cultural fundamentalism” (Verena Stockle¹⁶) canonized by the European tradition upon which the modern ethnonational narratives rest as well.

“Unlike racism, this fundamentalism” David Campbell concludes “does not organize the peoples hierarchally, but it separates them spatially in a way that all have a right to be different, a right that is firmly marked and defended.”¹⁷

By warning against the mythologem about the “kernel-culture” as the essence of a nation which afresh overflows the contemporary socio-political discourse on national identity, Campbell, in fact, emphasizes that behind the seeming multiculturalism of *spatially separated* cultures “which enjoy the right of being different”, a quiescent essentialist thesis on racially dominant cultures frequently emerges “because the racial has always been entangled in the cultural.”¹⁸

“Every people which is perceived as such in opposition to other peoples somehow imagines to have been chosen” Jan Assmann emphasizes

¹⁴ Jan Assmann, o. c., p. 123.

¹⁵ David Campbell, *Nacionalna dekonstrukcija. Nasilje, identitet i pravda u Bosni*, translated by Dražen Peħar, Forum Bosnae, Sarajevo, 21/2003, p. 191.

¹⁶ See: Verena Stockle, *Talking Culture: New Boundaries, New Rhetorics of Exclusion in Europe*, *Current Anthropology* 36 (February 1995). Cited according to David Campbell, o. c., p. 320.

¹⁷ David Campbell, o. c., str. 191-192.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.192.

in his paraphrase of Max Weber, warning against the extremes of cultural self-identifications in the process of forming a “connective structure of common knowledge and image of self, which relies, on the one hand, on a bond of common rules and values, while on the other it relies on the memory of commonly domiciled past.”¹⁹ Such a metaphysical network of identity perceived in the essentialist manner, which consecrates tradition by heavenly arshin of *chosenness*, in the final outcome inevitably stigmatizes or denies values of the Other, in the implacability of heavenly and earthly manichaeism, which Skender Kulenovic brilliantly ironized in the sonnet *Putnik (The Traveler)*, dedicated to Zuko Dzumhur:

“He’s set off to see if hell of others is like ours
And if our heaven is like that of others.”

History (and history of literature, of course) has always been “a problematic and incomplete reconstruction of something that exists no longer (...); an encroachment of that which we know does not belong to us anymore”²⁰, a repetitive act of harboring in the lost past, in the pilgrim search for the feeling of safety and experience of collective memory, duration and continuation in the mythical unity of language, world and identity. Every national culture, every form of collective self-definition, even the history of national literature, is a result of imagining the peculiarities, a product of subsequent reconstruction, selection and representation of the cultural heritage and memory in the historically changeable patterns of explicative models, which often help assemble frequently heterogeneous, disseminated and as often as not invented fragments of the past²¹ into a single historical narrative. And that is exactly that “want of a system” (Z. Lesic) which infuses every effort of a literary

¹⁹ O. c., p. 19.

²⁰ Pierre Nora, *Između Pamćenja i Historije. Problematika mjestâ*. In the book: *Kultura pamćenja i historija*, edited by Maja Brkljačić and Sandra Prlenda, Golden marketing and Tehnička knjiga, Zagreb, 2006, p. 24 i 25.

²¹ According to Eric Hobsbawm, “invented tradition” is used in subsequent reconstruction to imagine the everlasting continuities, and it is made up of “a set of practices of virtual or symbolic nature which serve to principally adopt rules, either publicly or tacitly accepted, that are aimed to establish certain values by repetition.” See: Eric Hobsbawm, *Izmišljanje tradicije*. In the book: *Kultura pamćenja i historija*, Zagreb, 2006, p. 139.

historian to recognize, in seemingly chaotic spatial-temporal dispersion of literary texts, the regularities and values of a literary community, in both synchronically selected canonized forms and in causality of diachronic processes:

“Indeed, every, and by any means serious literary historian sees the ultimate goal of his work in a systematic ‘history of literature’, in which the individual literary phenomena will be presented as ‘links of a chain’, as essential constituents of a whole which is always developing. After all, we usually attribute that sense to the term *history of literature*, and it is exactly that sense which allows us to talk about the *history* of literature of a period, of a people or of a culture.”²²

Theoretical thought about literary history, naturally, changes all the time, becoming more modernized and methodologically supplemented in foundations and forms, thus, alongside all the epistemological changes we have witnessed in the past thirty years, its achievements and insights cannot be rejected as complete delusions, while deconstruction of that kind of narrative discourse is unnecessary. Even at a time of general disbelief in metanarratives, and history of literature is, as we have stated already, undoubtedly one of them, as a consequence of the disintegration of universalist understandings of central and peripheral cultures, when, in an overwhelmingly interactive process, the self-awakening layers of voices, subdued by historical violence, as well as marginalized cultures and alternative canons, using the instrumentarium of postcolonial criticism, oppose and/or join pretentious legislators and patrocenicities, the conception of literary history has its full and irreplaceable meaning and sense, but on a radically redefined basis, free of delusions and extremes characteristic of enlightenment-romantic ecstasy and apotheosis of the “national spirit”.

The philological-positivist attempt to narrate everything that *occurred from the beginning to the modern age* in a people’s history is being replaced today – alongside theoretical and interpretative models and strategies which are, admittedly, numerous – with a form of representation

²² Zdenko Lešić, *Književnost i njena istorija*, Veselin Masleša, Sarajevo, 1985, p. 172.

which “excludes the fresco, wide panoramic paintings; instead, we are casting the light on particular images and selectively intervene into the past and take representative samples.”²³ Abandonment of the strict conventions of evolutionist theory, finding the extraordinary possibilities of intertextual literary-historic transformations and synchronies outside the traditional spatial-temporal stratifications of the literary facts in the spirit of an old Curtis’ account that for literature “all past is presence or at least it may become such”²⁴, has undoubtedly determined a different understanding of literary-historical narratives. A static conception of traditional history of literature, which was based on the description of diachronic concatenation and stylistic-formative succession of literary periods and epochs, is now being replaced by a synchronic mosaic of intertextual reticulation of the text of a culture, in which each text is a new thread and mosaic of re-systematized, renewed and re-figured traces and elements of the past texts, an intertext in a continual dialogue and semiotic process of illuminative and illustrative quotability of the entire text of a culture. Thus, in what could be seen as a certain reaffirmation, amendment and modernization of Curtis’ understanding of palimpsest-renewable and always lively-present literary past, the theory of intertextuality appears as an incessant “relationship of approval or denial, but a relationship in which continuity of tradition is recognized, in which the entire culture is again made actual, thus saved from self-oblivion or implosion in space and time.”²⁵ Muhsin Rizvic predicted that deep structural-cohesive foundation of affirmation and reintroduced actualization of the text of a culture, intertextual illuminative quotability, reticulation and renewability of poetic toposes in which the traditional literary-historical description of diachronic concatenation of continuity of the writer and the work becomes more dynamic and complex, and defined it in his text *Poetics of Bosniak Literature* as “inner genesis and close continuation, reflexion and renewal within itself, structural circulation of spirit and beauty”²⁶ with always living intertextual permeations of poetics of the East and West and synchronic juxtapositions, similarities

²³ Pierre Nora, o. c., p. 24.

²⁴ E. R. Curtius, *Evropska književnost i latinsko srednjovjekovlje*, translated by Stjepan Markuš, Zagreb, 1998, p. 23.

²⁵ Esad Duraković, *Orijentologija, univerzum sakralnoga teksta*, Tugra, Sarajevo, 2007, p. 45.

²⁶ Muhsin Rizvić, *Poetika bošnjačke književnosti*. In the book: *Panorama bošnjačke književnosti*, Ljiljan, Sarajevo, 1994, p. 7.

and symbiosis with Serb and Croat literatures. Understood this way, the dynamic concatenation of intertextuality, although it prefers the poetics of affirmation, metonymic consistency and intertextual harmony and neglects the poetics of denial and deconstruction of the established values of the tradition, should overcome the limitations of the positivist history of literature to which Rizvic himself had reasonably and praiseworthily contributed. Sadly, the philological-positivist concept of literary history anachronically survives on the monumental conception of illuminative-vintage representation of the national culture, therefore to the renewed literary-historical practice, especially in the South Slavic space, the claim that “periodization could be slightly anachronous topic in the time which turns its past into a postmodern museum”²⁷ is difficult to maintain. Even positivist filing of materials and the renewal of principles related to cultural-historical continuities again become constituent elements of contemporary literary-historical narratives, with a concurrent paradigm which places the poetics of intertextual permeations before the evolutionist successiveness. Alongside the undisputedly emphasized reflexes of contemporary opposition to mondaine globalizations and opposing processes of particular cultural articulations, this renewal of traditional practice of literary criticism is a consequence of redefinition of ethno-cultural literary-historical layers, conditioned by the turbulent processes of “Balkanization”, on an unreliable map of South Slavic literary identities. “Today, the entire society has accepted the religion of conservation and archive” Pierre Nora says, thus the pestilence of non-selective filing, which appears in the form of positivist piling of material, should be overcome by the transformation of the archive-like into cultural memory, which would canonize the essential toposes of a national culture, at the same time establishing them on the principles of dynamic openness and possibility of continual deconstructive rereading and reevaluations.

Following all the great turbulences and an epistemological breakdown that appears in the postmodern age, in the shape of an overwhelming disinheritance of the traditional canons shaped in the long-lasting philosophy of metaphysics of presence, in the necrological atmosphere of all kinds of “endisms” and “postisms”, disempowerments and decentralizations of various critically acclaimed paradigms, finally, with the crucially

²⁷ Vladimir Biti, *Periodizacija kao identifikacija*. U knjizi: *Strano tijelo pri/povijesti*, Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, Zagreb, 2000, p. 82.

important promotion of the reader into an active participant of the “production of meaning”, history of national literature can no more be understood as the most significant form of systematization and interpretation of literature sacrificed by tradition. In a word: disintegration of universalist theories of essentialist thought radicalizes the demands for respect of the different readings of the world; understanding, production and reception of the text of a culture in monophony of the *sea of stories*, of the polyphonic discursive practices none of which can rely on transcendental consecration anymore. The deceptive “language confusion” of postmodern age “marked by hermeneutic doubt in the enlightenment heritage of positivism, progress, humanism and rationalism”²⁸ consequently leads to this loss of the privileged literary-historical methodology based on the unique idea of “literature”, which in traditional understanding of “Babylonian blunder” causes the experience of a blasphemous desacralization of Art:

“The subject-matter of literary studies is truly more scattered than ever, with its minorities and majorities, with its sects and different ideologists – they are after something: their body, image of the other and of self, their femininity or masculinity, national identity, ideological constructions...”²⁹,

Vladimir Gvozden describes the literary image of postmodern era, emphasizing that “maps of the world called ‘literature’ change, but that world is not the only one”³⁰ and that, it is exactly in such diversity and manifold, polycentrism and polymorphism of the literary worlds and theoretical-interpretative procedures that one should look for the sense of the contemporary text of cultures. Thus, the history of national literature may appear even today, but without the authoritarianism of the central, unifying text out of which the backwaters of “minor” forms of understanding of literature are conflowed. What is more, it only now needs to take into consideration the subversive activities of other and different practices of literary criticism. Goals and methods of the history of national literature, which is undoubtedly necessary, need to be redefined at the core and in

²⁸ Vladimir Gvozden, *Izazovi savremenih teorija: Nove mogućnosti ili opasan nihilizam?*, in: *Književne teorije XX veka*, Institute for Literature and Art, Belgrade, 2004, p. 99.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

that sense, Jürgen Fohrman claims, “there is no reason for abandonment of the literary history project; we can only take up a different position towards its constructive status.”³¹ That would mean reexamining some of its canonized forms and a continual dialogue with the recent, yet different paradigms of literary criticism. That primarily relates to abandonment of the long-lasting and destructive understanding and reduction of culture to one of the many attributes of the nation and, in that sense, also reduction of literature to a homogenous, entire narrative of national exclusiveness and analogue confrontation with other, contemporaneous cultures. Of course, that is not a denial of the social and historical function of national literature and its significance in the natural, self-awakening analysis of complex self-identifications. Today, however, and especially so in our area, the history of national literature can easily appear in those anachronous forms of profane, and by the force of ideological and political dictate completely impoverished pattern of mere illustration of a national identity, in which the *national spirit* is seen both as a narrator and as the main character of the holy narrative. And in such cases, every attempt to reformulate the literary-historical methodology is rejected, thus “theoretical intervention may even progress to the point of sacrilege when history becomes the guardian, either of the national past or of the so-called universal human values.”³²

History of national literature understood in such a way is even today written and perceived as a story in which a literary historian, similarly to the antic rhapsode, narrates an exciting holy history of genealogical continuity, preservation and passage of a national culture’s sacral values which, in the dynamics of historical changes and temptations, appear as a purified, crystallized historical experience of the collective spirit to which every creative gesture or act is subordinated. Similarly, the outlived and obsolete models of literary historiography – *a guardian of the national past* in the South Slavic area – remain viable to this day, not only because of the frequently-mentioned impediment of theoretical self-reflection, conditioned by ages’ long ideological repression of soc-

³¹ Cited according to: Vladimir Biti, *Pojmovnik suvremene književne teorije*, Matica hrvatska, Zagreb, 1997, p. 298.

³² Vladimir Biti, *Povijest književnosti nakon poststrukturalizma*. In the book: *Pripitomljavanje drugog: Mehanizam domaće teorije*, Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, Zagreb, 1989, p. 157.

realist practice, but also because of the absurd competition related to the duration of cultural and civilizational continuities as proofs of the national priority and autochthony on this soil. That is the form of anachronous, in our case still present, sacrificed history which, in fact, by *the cult of the dead, holy land and luminous graves* sanctifies the “territorially established ethnicity as a constructed complex of spatial and ethnocultural factors of identity”³³, thus establishing profanity of the current ethnonationalism on “primordial myths of ethnic, that is, national, ‘purity’, ‘authenticity’, etc.”³⁴ In such cases, in the complex processes of socio-historical self-determinations, in imagining an authentic and autochthonous ethnonational cultural tradition, all traces of “someone else’s spirituality” are erased, while “geographical topography” is transformed into sanctity of “spiritual topography” and historical events become toposes of national extra temporal existence.

Obsessive understanding of the entire culture as an unequivocal illustration of continual spatial-temporal foundedness of ethno-political identity, especially at times when historical narratives are reconfigured because of the deep historical turbulences, causes also that feverish ambition to fill in the cultural raptures, discontinuities and floating gaps of the collective cultural memory with epic folklore tradition, revived fantasies of national mythology, pliable to ideological instrumentalizations of ethnoconfessional self-reflexions. This imagining and illumination of the monumental and glorious past in South Slavic literary-historical texts frequently occurs with the renewal of the national-romantic consciousness, which imposes upon historical sciences an obligatory construction of cultural-historic images, in which the purity of national identity will be recognized and narrated, imagined and reconstructed in the unambiguous authenticity and autochthony of seniority and indigenoussness, enrooted in the distant past out of which the historical mission of preserving the relict values of the holy tradition continues.³⁵

³³ Kristijan Đordano, *Ogledi o interkulturnoj komunikaciji*, translated from English and German by Vladislava Gordić and Tomislav Bekić, XX vek, Belgrade, 2001, p. 239.

³⁴ O. c., p. 132.

³⁵ Olivera Milosavljevic wrote about the instrumentalization of historical science subordinated to the glorification of the national past in the book entitled *In the Tradition of Nationalism*, in which she provided examples from Serb historiography of

Paul Garde emphasized in his book *The Life and Death of Yugoslavia* that the renewal of anachronous mythologems as holy figures of ethnic identity in modern pseudoscientific Balkan (hi)stories is retrograde

“appealing to the distant past, sometimes real but also idealized, sometimes overtly mythical, and typical of South Slavic peoples. The rule of Dusan for Serbs, of Tomislav for Croats, both real but very much limited in time, a millennium-long dream of Slovenians who only became aware of their nation in the 19th century, the old Illyrians for Albanians and disputes related to the ancient arrival of certain people to a certain territory – all this plays an enormous role in the argumentation they use today.”³⁶

In that sense, we have also faced, in the past thirty years, a renewal of traditional forms of literary-historical science subordinated to ideological endeavors of confessional narratives reduced to a mere illustration of a political identity and such processes are undoubtedly present in the newer Bosniak literary and historical science and literature in general. Such a conception of history, and of the history of national literature as well, which has been brought down to ultimately negative consequences, feeds on fear and resistance to the Other and always carries a danger that those seemingly benign contents and stereotypes about the different cultural identities and narratives will “go wild” and form a specific imagological lexicon about the opposite and hostile Other. And then even the complete

the 20th century (and those conclusions may as well be applied to any Balkan historiography). In the book, she ironically emphasized the danger of reducing history to exclusiveness of ethno-national narrative: “A nation needs to have a history; history of ‘one’s own’ nation is of the favourite kind; history serves to establish a nation as deep as possible into the past; history needs to confirm the continuity of a nation’s exclusiveness; history needs to prove a nation’s ‘character’; history needs to prove ‘the character’ of ‘others’; history ensures the ‘rights’ of a nation; history needs to show that a nation is right..., or – a nation creates its own history; a nation forms history by its own ‘characteristics’; a nation has the most beautiful and most exclusive history; a nation is the founder of a deep history...” (Olivera Milosavljevic, *U tradiciji nacionalizma: ili stereotipi srpskih intelektualaca XX veka o „nama“ i „drugima“*, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, Biblioteka Ogledi, Belgrade, 2002, p. 18-19.)

³⁶ Paul Garde, *Život i smrt Jugoslavije*, translated from French by Živan Filipi, Ceres – Ziral, Zagreb – Mostar, 1996, p. 184.

200-year-long tradition of enlightenment-rationalist myth about a humanistic base of development and progress of a culture falls apart, for it has been instrumentalized too many a time or ruthlessly initiated by the historical reality (especially in the 20th century), giving way to that extremely negative realization of search for identity, described compactly by Abdulah Sarcevic:

“A subject establishes its identity, in principle, whenever it cannot hear the death rattle of its victims, whenever it removes and banishes all else.”³⁷

And this is exactly how one should today understand that fierce demystification of “lewd humanism”, which Claude Lévi-Strauss described, facing barbarism of the modern history, tragically marked with mass crimes of holocaust and genocide:

“All the tragedies we experienced first with colonialism, then with fascism and finally with the concentration camps, are neither in opposition, nor in contradiction with the ostensible humanism, in the form in which it has existed with us for several centuries, but are, I would say, its natural continuation.”³⁸

Sadly, not even the realization that firm identities do not exist, as promoted by essentialist (primordial) theory³⁹, but are, instead, shaped, produced and consolidated through process and by certain power centers, themselves exposed to the regularities or even vagariousness of historical

³⁷ Abdulah Šarčević, *Kritika filozofije i teorija moderne*. In the book: *Evropska kultura i duhovne znanosti*, Svjetlostkomerc, Sarajevo, 2007, p. 151.

³⁸ Cited according to: Cvetan Todorov: *Mi i Drugi (Posledice nacionalizma)*, translated from French by M. Zdravković, XX vek, Belgrade, 1994, p. 79.

³⁹ It is that kind of essentialist understanding of ethnic, national and cultural groups, which insists on the a priori samenesses and differences, about which V.P. Gagnon Jr. wrote the following: “Such emphasizing of essentialist or existentialist form of belonging to a group means that identification with the group is the basic value of all its members and that boundaries between groups or between a group and the outside world are at the same time the basic and essential boundaries among the irreconcilable differences” (V.P. Gagnon Jr., *Jedan drugačiji pogled na narav grupa i granica*, translated from English by Ivo Zanic, Erazmus, Zagreb, October 1996, No. 18, p. 420.

events; not even the cognition on manifoldness, polymorphism and unreliableness of belonging to an identity and self-definitions, is able to relativize that rigid form of ethnocentric culture based on political ideology of extermination of the Other, present even today, especially in the Balkan areas. Could it not be, in that sense, that even the two-centuries long denial of the existence of Bosniak literature and ethnicity, which through an unrelenting production of various texts complemented the enormous cultural archive and corpus of Serb and Croat narratives, and which intended to subvert “the authentic Bosniak identity of the Bosnian autochthonous population”⁴⁰, is also an expression of precisely such collective mystifications which, by denying the other the right to cultural, religious and national identity, the right to a proper self-reflective narrative, ultimately deny them by force of law the right to existence⁴¹.

The tragic experience of *identity dispossession* in South Slavic cultural narratives had a special dimension in the case of the multicultural community of Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially in the case of Bosniak micro culture, and that is why the realization of tragic confrontations of modern history in the Balkans, with diluvial political projects of inquisition of the Other in all aspects of his existence, also legitimizes the right of Bosniaks to a narrative of their own. However, that narrative should also be stripped of all forms of xenophobia and, particularly, of the essentialist concept of identity which sees the other as a historical incarnation of transcendental principle of Evil. In that sense, one should always evoke the thought of H.G. Gadamer that to live means “to experience the Other and the Others as the Other of ourself” or Said’s understanding of otherness which, it appears, dominantly determines the understanding of cultural identities’ constitution in the postmodern age:

“Construction of identity – whether of Orient or Occident, French or British, as an apparent repository of different collective experiences, *is finally a construction* – involves establishing

⁴⁰ Esad Zgodić, *Bošnjačko iskustvo politike. Osmansko doba*, Euromedia, Sarajevo, 1998, p. 420.

⁴¹ See more in: Norman Cigar, *Uloga srpskih orijentalista u opravdavanju genocida nad muslimanima Balkana*, Institute for Research of Crimes against Humanity, Sarajevo, 2000.

opposites and others whose actualities are always subject to the continuous interpretation and reinterpretation of their differences from us. Each age and society recreates its ‘Others’”.⁴²

That is why in the long-lasting and often fierce resistances to the Bosnian and especially Bosniak national and cultural self-identifications, it is also possible to discover with little effort those concealed and overt reasons of political-ideological denial of identity in the profane equation that an empty cultural identity equals an empty national identity; which in turn amnesties evil and crimes over the unidentified, culturally unshaped mass of individuals. Herbert C. Kelman reflected upon the inevitability of existence and acceptance of different cultural narratives, reasons of their denial and radical deconstruction in the name of pretended globalism, as well as upon dangers that stem from the violent deprivation of collective memories and identities of other and different communities and groups, by writing the following:

“Sanctioned massacres become possible when we reach the point of depriving a group of human beings close to us their identity and community. Specifically, when a group of people defined as such and completely in relation to a category it belongs to is excluded from human community and family, then moral obstacles not to kill that group are overcome more easily.”⁴³

After the tragic ordeals experienced in modern history of the 20th century, and because of the “deprivation of identity and community” and pronounced islamophobia inside certain political circles and power centers of the contemporary Europe, Kelman’s text appears as a belated echo of the long-ago written, but even now current warning of Suljaga Salihagić from 1940, that as long as the other two Bosnian communities of our “people of three religions [...] hide their religious features under a national name, we will remain with our mass under the religious flag, and therefore will be continually shown and attacked as a religious and ‘ethnically

⁴² Edward W. Said, *Orientalizam*, Afterword to the 1995 edition, translated from English by Rešid Hafizović, Svjetlost, Sarajevo, 1999, p. 412.

⁴³ Herbert C. Kelman, *Violence without Moral Restraint: Reflections on the Dehumanization*. Quoted in: Norman Cigar, o. c., p. 37.

uncommitted' group."⁴⁴ And this deprivation of national and cultural identity became a common site of the ramified corpus of literary, socio-political and publicistic texts that overflowed, with overt xenophobia of orientalism, the Serb intellectual elite's homogenized public discourse and stigmatized every form of the Bosniak culture and tradition. In the novels of Vuk Drašković, Milorad Pavić and Vojislav Lubarda; in the poems of Rajko Petrov Nogo, Matija Bećković or Gojko Đogo; in the flood of popular quasi-historic belletristic and xenophobic orientalist texts of Dobrica Ćosić and Ljubomir Tadić, Milorad Ekmečić or Aleksandar Popović, Darko Tanasković or Miroljub Jevtić, the unhidden hatred nested ever more and war rhetoric reverberated which, in the light of Milošević's Kosovo speech, called for revenge and defense of the sacral values of the Kosovo myth "in the battles and before the impending battles". Those texts exemplarily confirmed the strategy of orientalist stereotypes which have the effect of "a priori amnestying all and all kinds of efforts to establish a relationship of cultural and civilizational hegemonism, that is, those efforts are put into function of preparation of justification of all kinds of fight against something that is authoritatively declared inferior and decadent, civilizationally unnecessary, etc."⁴⁵ That can be seen in the renewal of the tribal-epic views of historical guilt and hereditary ethno-genetical sin of the Bosnian Muslims that the Serb nationalist intellectual and political elite, in the conjunction of homogenized social nationalism and state racism, continually repeated with unhidden calls for revenge and "investigation of the Turkicized":

"Those who converted to Islam – Miroljub Jevtić wrote – betrayed the idea of Bosnia and accepted the conquerors as *de facto* their brothers, and their crimes as their own. That means their hands are stained with the blood of their forefathers."⁴⁶

Stigmatization of Bosniaks as treacherous convertites, denial of any form of their cultural and historical peculiarity and historically attested

⁴⁴ Suljaga Salihagić, *Mi bosanskohercegovački Muslimani u krilu jugoslovenske zajednice*, Banja Luka, 1924, quoted in: Muhamed Hadžijahić, *Od tradicije do identiteta* (geneza nacionalnog pitanja bosanskih Muslimana), Muslimanska naklada Putokaz, Zagreb, 1990, p. 39.

⁴⁵ Esad Duraković, *Prolegomena za historiju književnosti orijentalno-islamskoga kruga*, Connectum, Sarajevo, 2005, p. 202.

⁴⁶ Miroljub Jevtić, *Rezervisti Alahove vojske*, Duga, 9 – 22 December 1989, p. 26.

autochthony in relation to other South Slavic communities, orientalist stereotypes and xenophobic excommunication of any form of Islamic spirituality and culture from the sacralized area of Europe, all this resulted in an enormous corpus of texts in which that *destruction of identity* truly carried all signs of preparation for the final confrontation with the hostile Other. In that sense, Dobrica Ćosić sees Muslims from Montenegro (together with Macedonians and Montenegrins) as “products of the most reactionary and shameless of all lies about oneself, that is, about one’s own identity, non-existent in history”; they are “ideological freaks” and “spiritual rubbish by which the self-governing ideology envenomed the Yugoslav soil for centuries.”⁴⁷ Today, on re-reading these lines filled with overt racism, it becomes absolutely clear that Ćosić, as early as 1985, through the voice of his hero-reasoner in the novel *Grešnik (The Sinner)*, heralded and sanctified the crime and genocide in the name of grand national ideals:

“Petty crimes are committed for gain and habit; great crimes are acts of religion and convictions. Only great idealists commit great crimes without regrets: ideals absolve them from guilty consciousness.”⁴⁸

Ćosić’s amnesty of crimes in the name of “higher ideals”, which he, by a shameless inversion typical of an undoubtful inspirator and accomplice in crime, cynically denies even today through the denial of genocide in Srebrenica⁴⁹, is, in fact, a radical version of the same hegemonistic discourse of colonial consciousness described by the protagonist of Joseph Conrad’s novel *The Heart of Darkness*:

“The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look

⁴⁷ See: Dobrica Ćosić, *Promene*, Novi Sad, 1992, cited in: Olivera Milosavljević, o. c., p. 194.

⁴⁸ Dobrica Ćosić, *Grešnik*, BIGZ, Belgrade, 1985, p. 21.

⁴⁹ “We contemporaries face an epochal inversion of a historic event: the lie about the Srebrenica genocide has become a sacral and global truth.” Dobrica Ćosić, *Demokratske laži o Bosansko ratu*, Oslobođenje (Sarajevo), 18. 2. 2009, p. 35; text taken from the *Politika* magazine (Belgrade), from 6. 2. 2009.

into it too much. What redeems is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea – something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to.”

The baffling cynism of Čosić’s xenophobic belief and Milošević’s anti-Muslim propaganda campaign, projected, impassioned and strengthened by the SANU (Serb Academy of Arts and Sciences) Memorandum, which amnestied future crimes by reviving tribal hatred and the epic vow “the one who does not revenge will not be sanctified”⁵⁰, will soon be satanically verified by the genocidal Srebrenica inferno, as well as by the systematic destruction of sacral toposes of the Bosniak cultural tradition and memory through which we are reliably, quietly and subtly recognized, while facing the merciless processes of historical inevitabilities of dissolution, collapse, disappearance. In the flames of the burnt National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina or the Oriental Institute in Sarajevo, on the ruins of the Aladža Mosque in Foča and Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka, Hadži Alija’s Mosque in Počitelj and the Emperor’s Mosque in Stolac; as well as on the ruins of the Plehan Monastery and Petričevac in Banja Luka or on the ruins of the Žitomislići Monastery and Orthodox Cathedral in Mostar; on the ruins of the leveled and burnt archives and libraries, domed markets and hamams, manuscript genealogies and necrologies; an entire world and the last traces of written and unwritten memory culture disappears. Describing the causes and reasons for the barbaric culturocide, planned and systematic campaign of incineration of libraries, museums and archives; destruction of mosques and graveyards of the Bosnian Muslims by the Serb Army and later by Croat Defense Council (HVO), Michael A. Sells stressed that “their goal was eradication of a people and all proofs of culture and existence of that people.”⁵¹ In that way, in the late 20th century, with the renewal of the irrational-mythic, tribal-

⁵⁰ Ratko Mladić announced that epic-tribal formula of “holy revenge” having committed the slaughter in Srebrenica with the chetnik hordes: “Here we are on 11 July 1995 in Serb Srebrenica. On the eve of another great Serb holiday I present this town to the Serb people. The moment has finally come after the uprising against the Dahi (the Turks) to take revenge against the Turks in this place.”

⁵¹ Micheal A. Sells, *Iznevjereni most. Religija i genocid u Bosni*, translated by Zoran Mutić, Sedam, Sarajevo, 2002, p. 19.

diluvial pledge of “revenge against the Turks”, as an inseparable part of the genocidal project, the destruction of the last traces of Oriental-Islamic culture in the Balkans, which started in Serbia in the early 19th century during the liberation wars and continued until modern times in the consecrated epic-heroic semantization of Serb romantic literature and xenophobic national historiography, has been completed. In the book *Istorija srpske literature (History of the Serb Literature)*, Miodrag Popovic commented the deadly consequences of the “anti-Turk” hysteria in Serb romantic literature which, by means of “irrational-mythic inspiration”, contaminated Serb literature with “certain revengeful, otherwise untypical tendencies”⁵² and wrote the following conclusions tragically current even today:

“The negative consequence of this irrational-mythic, that is, unhistorical consideration of the Serb people under Turkish rule will be intolerance of Islam in general. It will result in anathema of the congeneric Mohammedan population from the Serb nation, as well as in a spiritual and political gap between the Orthodox and Mohammedans. Intolerance of Islam, that is, of everything that reminds of the Turkish feudal government in our areas, will result in barbaric destruction of precious monuments of the Islamic culture in Serbia.”⁵³

That is why, especially today, after the horrible experiences of devastations inflicted by war and destruction of the entire Bosniak cultural tradition and denial of any form of their cultural identity, Alija Isaković’s words, written long ago, sound evermore cautionary and obliging:

“Even today, forty years after the Liberation, Muslims [Bosniaks] do not have an anthologized political history, history of literature, history of journalism, history of social thought, history of art, history of painting; language, mythology, folklore, architecture have not yet been researched.”⁵⁴

⁵² Miodrag Popović, *Istorija srpske književnosti: Romantizam*, Book 2, Thrid Edition, Belgrade, 1985, p. 28

⁵³ Ibid., p. 28.

⁵⁴ Alija Isaković, *O „nacionaliziranju“ muslimana*, Globus, Zagreb, 1990, p. 12.

Like national libraries and encyclopedias, museums or archives, history of national literature is a *place of memory* storing the symbolic capital of national culture, which, for the small peoples who are burdened with the feeling of insecurity and possibility of extinction, even today carries special significance and privileged cultural sense just like the commemorative toposes and cult places of pilgrimage and memory Pierre Nora writes about:

“When certain minorities create protected enclaves as preserves of memory to be jealously safeguarded, they reveal what is true of all *lieux de memoire*: that without commemorative vigilance, history would soon sweep them away. We buttress our identities upon such bastions but if what they defended were not threatened, there would be no need to build them. If history did not besiege memory, deforming and transforming it, penetrating and petrifying it, there would be no *lieux de memoire*.”⁵⁵

And there rests the sense of renewal of traditionally-based literary-historical narratives, which, in the past few decades, have become a dominant form of ethno-national self-reflexions in the South Slavic area. In a complete disintegration of what used to be an institutionally coherent network and ostensible harmony of integrative and particular components of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s complex cultural identity, the feeling of immediate endangerment or some earlier denial of a possibility to affirm one’s own cultural identity is constantly emphasized, be it justifiably or not. In that way, Ivan Markešić explained the meaning, reasons and sense of renewal of such cultural-historic narratives among small nations, when he promoted the *Hrvatska enciklopedija Bosne i Hercegovine* (*Croat Encyclopedia of Bosnia and Herzegovina*). That same explanation could be applied to the Bosniak cultural and ethnic community:

“Great nations have no need of publishing national encyclopedias. Their history cannot and, if you want, must not be suppressed. However, small, I dare say, ‘pocket’ nations, such is the Croat nation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, have been forced to do that;

⁵⁵ Pierre Nora, o.c. p. 28-29.

they have been forced to publish national encyclopedias, for their history has been suppressed and forged continually.”⁵⁶

While strongly judging the aggressive obsession of self-realizations of identity as a tragic experience of denial of the different and the complete deprivation of culture from the multitude of individual and collective realizations by reducing it to the poverty of a monochrome ethnocentric image through the monomania of one’s own world and tradition, it should be noted that “not every quest for identity, not every renewal of tradition, is evil *per se*.”⁵⁷ And then it becomes that form of understanding of *memory culture* which appears in a community, with full respect of both internal and external differences, competitive discourse practices, in the form of a “symbolic world of sense and creates a common space of experience, expectations and actions, which, by its linking and obligatory force, provides trust and orientation.”⁵⁸ Finally, even in postmodern critical thought, alongside all the diversity of theoretical orientations disposed toward any form of essentialist metanarratives, occurred a renewal of interest for the history of literature (announced by the “radically traditionalist reversal” of Terry Eagleton), both in the cultural studies or the new historicism and in – first and foremost – maximally dissected postcolonial criticism in which the experiences of both Lacan’s psychoanalysis and Althusser’s political philosophy, imagological and cultural-anthropological studies ranging from Claude Lévy – Strauss to Clifford Geertz are collected, with the decisive demand to finally listen to and recognize, on the ruins of long-lived patrocentric ideology of West-European culture, the peculiarities of silenced voices of – until recently – marginalized cultures. Every culture is a peculiar and precious kind of interpretation of the world and life, based on normative patterns formed on the collective experience and memories, each of which bares authentic and autochthonous values in the endless simultaneousness of diverse ethno-cultural narratives, but – also – “cultures influence one another, in social sense they intertwine, and each of us necessarily belongs to a number of lower-ranking wholes – depending

⁵⁶ Dr. Ivan Markešić, *Zašto je enciklopedija i hrvatska i bosanska*, Oslobođenje, KUN 30. July 2009 p. 34.

⁵⁷ Vladimir Biti, *Upletanje nerečenog*, Matica hrvatska, Zagreb, 1994, p. 36.

⁵⁸ Jan Assmann, o. c., p. 18.

on the origin, profession and age – popularity of cultures should neither surprise us nor degrade us.”⁵⁹ Hence, even today, every literary-historical narrative, even the history of Bosniak literature, needs to recognize that multitude of cultural interspersions that enrich the peculiarities of its literary-historical articulations which we carefully reveal fully aware that “earthly power, just like divine, is primarily power over words, control over the meaning of the basic writings that regulate society and relationships in it (...).”⁶⁰

Traditionally based reviews of national literature are, even in the very act of canonization of peculiarities of a “cultural grammar”, inevitably compared and, as we have seen, antagonized against other literary-historical narratives, and in that process of differentiation, the act of self-reflexion of a literary-historical narrative as the “earthly power over speech” frequently appears as the power of denial of a different cultural interpretation of the world and life. Contemporary Bosniak literary historiography has to be freed of such kind of self-definition exactly because of the negative experience of the two-century long tradition of South Slavic literary-historical research, systematizations and divisions, during which our literary heritage was scrutinized.

And, exactly in that sense, all those discontinued and by violence of historical events frequently crushed attempts of finally narrating Bosniak literature should be understood and re-read, but with complete awareness that it cannot be self-sufficient and that it has appeared simultaneously with the other, frequently different and opposing, but also harmonized and similar narratives, so it needs to be freed from pathos and of the “messiah-like strength upon which the past claims rights.” First pages of Bosniak literary history were written by Ljubušak and Bašagić, followed by brief and shy voices (Mehmed Handžić or Rizo Ramić, Mehmed Mujezinović or Hazim Šabanović, Salko Nazečić or Abdurahman Nametak) and then after a long and enforced silence and serf-like self-sacrifice, it was meticulously upgraded and systematized by Midhat Begić and Muhsin Rizvić, Alija Isaković and Kasim Prohić, Sulejman Grozdanić and Džemal Čehajić, Lamija Hadžiosmanović and

⁵⁹ Cvetan Todorov, o. c., p. 245.

⁶⁰ Dževad Karahasan, *Sjene Vrta, Knjiga vrtova – O jeziku i strahu*, Izdanja Antibarbarus, Zagreb, 2002, p. 15.

Hanifa Kapidžić – Osmanagić, Đenana Buturović and Hatidža Dizdarević, Muhamed Huković and Munib Maglajlić, Husein Bašić and Gordana Muzaferija, Fehim Nametak and Esad Duraković, as well as a number of younger literary historians and critics.

It is also necessary to stress the unsustainability of the opinion on the dark vilayet clash of irreconcilable national conceptions. Unsustainability of his opinion is clearly discernable from the fact that within the major, anthological selection of the most suggestive pages of critical understanding of our tradition and literary contemporariness are also texts about Bosniak writers and Bosniak literature in general, which reflect pure joy of meeting with beauty, written in the past fifty years by Radomir Konstantinović and Ivo Frangeš, Nikola Kovač and Ljubica Tomić – Kovač, Radovan Vučković and Radoslav Rotković, Zdenko and Josip Lešić, Dejan Đuričković and Dragomir Gajević or Risto Trifković, Ivan Lovrenović and Zvonko Kovač, Slobodan Blagojević, Marko Vešović and Stevan Tontić, Vojislav Vujanović and Gradimir Gojer, Marina Katnić – Bakaršić or Mile Stojić.

However, one cannot disregard that enormous number of texts in which the peculiarity of Bosniak literature and culture was denied, a position that continued to play a role in various forms of Serb and Croat literary critical thought through the entire 20th century and which rears up its ugly head even today, always for reasons unrelated to aestheticism and with unhidden animosities, denials or wrongful claims.

Cultural Archive of Denial and “Taming”

“They won’t even accept our prayer
as a prayer or curse as a curse”
(Mak Dizdar)

A negative relationship towards the Bosniak literary tradition and culture in general, in both Serb and Croat literary historiography, is observed in two ways: on the one hand, repugnance and, essentially, an irrational denial of its legitimacy for, in part, it was formed in time of the Ottoman imperial reign, as part of the oriental-Islamic cultural-civilizational circle; and, on the other hand, whenever that opus was accepted as a cultural phenomenon of “our environment”, it was considered a marginal flow or a tiny backwater of Croat or Serb literary history.

Irrational resistance to and lack of understanding for the phenomenon of Bosniak culture, whether in the form of xenophobia of orientalism and ideological discourse of hegemonic cultures, or in the form of patrocetric espousal, cultural custody and “taming” of the Other, which has, since the 19th century, taken hold and grown like cancer in various texts of Serb and Croat literary historiography, excludes the entire heritage which, in the Bosniak tradition, wound a spool of the Islamic spirituality, culture and civilization on the Bosnian base, although the “Ottoman cultural heritage” was also assimilated in both Serb and Croat literature and culture, in different forms. We should recall Jovan Skerlić who wrote about this issue with a lot of understanding, and who warned against the inexplicable turkophobia of Serb poets, whose poems, in a strange mixture of attraction and repulsion, radiate a strong symbiosis of the “Slavic and oriental poetry”.

“Our poets, turkophobs as can only be imagined, have paradoxically become the ecstatic devotees of Muslim poetry. Several hundred years of slavery to an oriental race, immediate neighborhood of Mohammedan Turks, has made Serbs closer to the true poetry than Germans. The Bosnian *sevdalinkas* (oriental-style love songs), characterized by Arabic melody and music, were a product of that hybrid Slavic and oriental poetry.”⁶¹

About a hundred years later, Mile Stojić, like Jovan Skerlić, emphasized the importance of these symbiosis and esthetic permeations of the “eastern and western diwan” in the poetry of Bosnia and Herzegovina, emphasizing that the “space of oriental influence has had a significant influence, from Šop’s thematic occupations, through Andrić’s quieted gnomes, all the way to Veselko Koroman’s language esoterism.”⁶²

A significant corpus of texts spread between Skerlić’s and Stojić’s understanding of cultural symbiosis and recognition of values of oriental-Islamic tradition, and these texts, both in Serb and Croat literary criticism, treat that phenomenon with respect. However, throughout much of the 20th century fictional and non-fictional texts prevailed, saturated with a strong resentment towards that world and its culture. Thus spread

⁶¹ Jovan Skerlić, *Omladina i njena književnost* (1848–1871), *Sabrana dela*, Book. 10, Prosveta, Belgrade, 1966, p. 377.

⁶² Mile Stojić, *Predgovor antologiji Iza spuštenijeh trepavica: Hrvatsko pjesništvo XX stoljeća*, Svjetlost, Sarajevo, 1991, p. 21.

“a negative and aggressive attitude and relationship towards the entire cultural contribution and development, which was formed under the influence and as a consequence of penetration and long prevalence of the Islamic and Ottoman culture in our areas. That attitude was at times extreme to the extent that it negated both in particularities and in the whole the significance of contribution and influence of Oriental culture to the development of culture of our peoples, both in the past and in a possible future, that is, in the sense of a possible dialogue and synthesis, or permeations and meetings of those cultures; all that was only seen as a dark age which should be forgotten as soon as possible.”⁶³

It was that Balkan form of orientalist discourse recognizable even today which frequently appears as a “hysterical convulsion and hostile attitude of fierce Europeism towards everything that is not composed or designed on its own accord”⁶⁴, thus all until the mid-1960s Bosniaks faced protracted denial of national and cultural identity and were declared an amorphous, uncultivated and “uncommitted” mass which, allegedly, missed the deadline for processes of national and cultural diagenesis. It is also impossible to neglect a corpus of texts by Bosniak authors who, by paradigmatic patterns of self-colonizational consciousness, denied their own cultural identity by appropriation of orientalist discourse and by a kind of ethno-cultural self-denial, more often because of quite profane, mercantile reasons and interests than because of a true drama of identity. Skender Kulenović wrote about this issue as early as 1936 in the text *Jedna žalost i jedna potreba (A Grief and a Need)*, published in the *Putokaz Magazine*:

“Haven’t we had individuals who adopted a national conception? Amongst such intellectuals, there have been those who changed national orientations as shirts, so to say – over night, and what is even more important, for pure careerist reasons [...]. The consequence of that was: uninformed Croats and Serbs created an opinion that Muslims are some oriental doubledealers.”⁶⁵

⁶³ Muhamed Filipović, *Uvod u razvoj teorijske misli u Bosni i Hercegovini*, Treći program Radio Sarajeva, No. 3, 1980, p. 485.

⁶⁴ Abdulah Šarčević, o. c., p. 138.

⁶⁵ Skender Kulenović, *Jedna žalost i jedna potreba, Miscelanea, Izabrana djela*, Book 8, 1983, p. 44.

Of course, these self-demeaning, self-colonizing denials of one's own culture because of "careerist reasons" are present today as well, however, contemporary protagonists hide their self-denial by scornfully raising their frog legs to be shod by the quasi-poststructuralist hoof, while being, at the same time, blind and deaf for the grotesque swinging of maces and sabers of national combatants of the neighboring, traditionally written literary narratives, which suit perfectly with "an ample platter of pilau", to use the words of Derviš Sušić.

Diabolized by the "Turkish sin", reduced to the level of subcultural dark-vilayet-like isolation, Bosniak literature was in that way left outside institutionally organized scientific research, systematizations and evaluations, both in peculiarities of individual developments and continuities and in the wholeness and competitiveness of the BiH mosaic and milieu. And in the flow of national-romantic Serb and Croat cultural self-reflexions from the middle of the 19th century, completely in the spirit of Lacan's understanding of the *paradox of otherness*, but frequently also by far more aggressive demonizing of oriental-Islamic spirituality in the process of constituting one's own cultural, national and, in the end, political identities, all that brought to the establishment, continual renewal and upgrade of a vast catalogue of orientalist texts in Serb and Croat cultural and historical imagology, which satanize and exclude or underestimate and marginalize the entire cultural-historical heritage of Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) tradition as a "trace of an unpleasant and unlikable past", as Jovan Dučić once wrote. That is why that ideal of sacrosanct values deposited in the luminous *national library*, of both Serb and Croat (and also, in a reverse image, in Bosniak) literary-historical narrative, especially in the first phase of constitution and construction of the cultural identity, is shadowed by the dark, obscure library, a meticulously formed orientalist "cult archive", with a vast catalogue of different texts filled with animosities, because, let us recall, "construction of identity includes the establishment of opposites of the others as well, whose reality is always subject to a continual interpretation and reinterpretation of their difference from that of our own."⁶⁶

Following the model of earlier texts written by Midhat Begić and Muhsin Rizvić, Muhamed Filipović and Atif Purivatra, Alija Isaković and Mustafa Imamović, Sulejman Grozdanić and Fehim Nametak, about

⁶⁶ Edward W. Said, *Orijentalizam*, o. c., p. 412.

miscomprehension and usurpation of Bosniak literature and consequences of *deprivation of identity*, other authors, like Esad Duraković, Gordana Muzaferija and Nihad Agić or Vedad Spahić and Muhidin Džanko, Hadžem Hajdarević or Ever Kazaz, have more recently written about this issue very convincingly. Thus, Esad Duraković emphasized that we “could have permanently observed the shading of the Bosniak cultural heritage, prior to the latest genocide over Bosniaks, which had taken the form of difficulties which the scientists working in this field experienced, as well as the form of an ideological aggression against the Bosniak culture and Islamic tradition as a whole.”⁶⁷ On the occasion of the *Bošnjačka književnost u književnoj kritici (Bosniak Literature in Literary Criticism)* edition being published Kazaz, in the text entitled *Poetika i struktura raskršća i ukrštanja (Poetics and Structure of Intersections and Interweaving)*, also emphasized, by summarizing the other authors’ attitudes, the long-term processes of political instrumentalization of literary historiography which, in the end, serves to legally produce genocidal projects, by delegitimizing the right of Bosniaks to their own historical reflexion:

“During the centenary process of nationalization of Muslims, Bosniak literature, usurped by others, marginalized and repressed to the degree of literary-historical liquidation, has endured not only because of its own identity, esthetic value, but also because of the strength of universal values, authentic and humane essence which it produced in a creative manner, in the context of a bloody scene of murder and genocidal political projects towards the Bosniak nation.”⁶⁸

Later, however, in an uncritical apotheosis of exactly those books and texts in which Bosniak literature is “usurped by others, marginalized and repressed to the degree of literary-historical liquidation” and in which the entire Bosniak cultural tradition is frequently stigmatized “by Turkish sin”, Kazaz himself overlooked and thus supported the renewed processes of those usurpations, marginalizations and repressions.

⁶⁷ Esad Duraković, *Andrićevo djelo u tokovima ideologije evrocentrizma, Prolegomena za historiju književnosti orijentalno-islamskoga kruga*, Connectum, Sarajevo, 2005, p. 204.

⁶⁸ Enver Kazaz, *Poetika i struktura raskršća i ukrštanja*. In the book: *Morfologija palimpsesta*, Centar za kulturu i obrazovanje, Tešanj, 1999, p. 315.

Tzvetan Todorov wrote about the unsustainability of prejudices towards cultural-religious “transformations” and, consequently, about the dangers of depravation of identity because of such “convertism”, as well as about important and complex processes of acculturation and cultural permeations, sensing both the advantages and pains of that experience:

“We see the difference between a person who belongs to several cultures, who feels good in two cultures and a person who has lost his culture, who has forgotten his mother tongue... By acquiring another culture, my initial situation will not significantly change; but the loss of my only culture leads to impoverishment and even disappearance of my world.”⁶⁹

Naturally, it would be completely wrong to draw conclusions about the dominance of orientalist discourse in Serb or Croat modern literary and cultural history. That is only one of the numerous forms of literary-historic descriptions of one’s own literary and cultural peculiarity. That is only one of many forms of literary-historical descriptions of one’s own cultural peculiarity, but of extreme importance for the Bosniak cultural self-identification, especially in a careful and reasonable understanding of that kind of political imaginations of the Balkan national-identity stereotypes which are anachronically based on the sacral tradition of the exalted defense of the Kosovo myth and, of course, the still living mission of acting as the “bulwark of Christianity” in a grotesque renewal of the “prayer against Turks” and “inquisition of the Turkicized”. That kind of still living Serb and Croat “border-guard” stereotypes and myths which completely erase the difference between the epic and historical world and time, literary imagination and historical reality, is best presented in (alongside numerous other texts of, let us say, Ivan Aralica and Željko Ivanković or Darko Tanasković and Miroljub Jevtić) a text written by Karadžić’s Minister of Culture and Education, a pre-war professor of oral literature at the Sarajevo Faculty of Philosophy, Ljubomir Zuković, entitled *Preci kao saborci* (*Ancestors as Fellow Fighters*)⁷⁰. “With Andrić’s Radislav,” writes Zuković “the liberation struggle against the Turks and the Turkicized, which lasts to this day began” and so “tomorrow, when this liberation fight

⁶⁹ Cvetan Todorov, *Mi i Drugi*, o. c., p. 246.

⁷⁰ Ljubomir Zuković, *Preci kao saborci*, Javnost, 227/228, 5. 8. 1995.

of ours ends victoriously, a monument should be raised next to the Višegrad bridge to him as the first victim of rebellion against the Turks and the Turkicized.”⁷¹

Proof of the renewal of the tribal longing for an epical missive calling for “the inquisition of the Turkicized”, even after the terrifying experiences of the Srebrenica genocide, by anachronous representation of the Serb-Orthodox mission of defending the Christian Europe against the invasion of Islam, lies in the claim presented by Dobrica Ćosić, at the posthumous promotion of Nikola Koljević’s book entitled *Stvaranje Republike Srpske (Creation of the Republic of Srpska)*:

“Serbs in Bosnia, struggling for their freedom, again defended the Christian Europe from the jihadist Islam.”⁷²

This “border-guard” mindset of epic-heroic struggle at the bulwark of European culture, religion and civilization is an expression of centuries of antagonization, clashes and intolerance by which the orientalist literary-historical and ethno-cultural narratives of the Balkan area are contaminated. Todor Kuljić wrote about this issue rather suggestively:

“From the point of view of other processes (in which mythisation had sedimented in various forms of cultural consciousness, from frescos to guslas), the latest ethnic cleansing is, in a way, a direct consequence of the aforesaid imperial heritage and border-guard mentality. One should observe, in the abovementioned myths, an effort for radical demarcation from the Ottoman Empire and fear of Islamic civilization that is overcome by increased identification with the West via one’s own, ANTE MURALE myths interpreted in a missionary fashion.”⁷³

Faced with the latent presence of the border-land *ante murale* myths that in the past twenty years again came to life in texts of Serb and Croat literary-historical narratives, with emphasized Islamophobia, we should not forget that, both in Serb and Croat literary historiography

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Dobrica Ćosić, *Demokratske laži o Bosanskom ratu*, o. c., p. 35.

⁷³ Todor Kuljić, *Kultura sećanja: Teorijska objašnjenja upotrebe prošlosti*, Čigoja štampa, Belgrade, 2006, p. 194.

appeared, at first weak – thus more precious, and later ever more dominant voices that warned about unsustainability of those prejudices, especially the ones that came as a result of ideologized literary imagination which demonized an entire world, its religion and culture. Thus, in 1877, Nikola Šumonja, in the text *Muhamedanstvo i naša književnost* (*Mohammedanism and Our Literature*) which, in actual fact, together with other texts, marked the start of Serb attempts to usurp Bosniak literature, warns against the insubstantiality of orientalist discourse which, sadly, as an anachronous form of the 19th century nationalist consciousness, survives to his day:

“Subject-matter in poems, stories and other works of many of our writers in the sixties and seventies,” Šumonja wrote “was life of the oppressed Christian peasantry in the Turkish Empire. Whoever, even a bit, observed the development of literature of the time, will easily remember how Turks, their Allah, the prophet, mosques and crescent were depicted, and will also remember that it was not at all in velvet gloves. So many poems by Zmaj and Jakšić emit avenging wrath against the ‘bloodthirsty’ and ‘bestial’ Turks; and stories by Vladan Đorđević, dramas by Matija Ban and works of many other writers were the same. (...) That kind of writing reached its peak during the Bosnian rebellion, Serb – Turkish war, Montenegrin – Turkish war and Russian – Turkish war. Sources were not lacking: it was only necessary to think of a terrible event, present the reader with several Turkish troops with gory eyes, with *khanjars* and other guns; several rifles fired and – all on paper, of course – several mothers and innocent children hacked to death, a dungeon, gallows and there you go – a wonderful poem, story or whatever you prefer, depicting the life of oppressed Christian peasantry. A task less difficult than magnanimous.”⁷⁴

Emphasizing that “one must admit that Mohammedans were not as ‘bestial’ and ‘bloodthirsty’ as described by the writers who had never seen them”, Šumonja will point out in the end that such writing needs to

⁷⁴ Nikola Šumonja, *Muhamedanstvo i naša književnost*, Stražilovo, 3, 21 (21. 5. 1887), p. 335.

cease, especially such aggressive forms of “nationalization of Muslims”, if they are to be brought in and integrated in the Serb literary and cultural pattern, in the propaganda game with Croats:

“Some of us like to call the Bosnian Mohammedans ‘Serbs of Mohammed’s faith’. That should not be done, for it makes no sense. Everybody will understand that it is almost impossible to call by a Serb name those who vividly remember the days of Turkish glory and dominance; who have been brought up in the Turkish nation, for it could not have been otherwise. That is why this practice should be abolished; let time do its thing, let circumstances bring Mohammedans to acknowledgment of what and who they are. And for the time being – they are Bosniaks and nothing else.”⁷⁵

These same transformation processes of the border-land “anti-Turk story writing” (which, in Croat renaissance literature imitated the patterns of oral epic poetry), in the trend of Starčević’s right-wing program of nationalization of the “Bosnian Mohammedans”, were observed well by Milan Marjanović, in the study *Iza Šenoë*⁷⁶ (*Beyond Šenoa*); and later, that transformation, which started with the poetry of Nikola Botić and that continued in the “pseudo-Bosnian” novellas and novels of Josip Eugen Tomić, Antun Barac described almost the same way Nikola Šumonja did in Serb literature:

“Entire Croat and Serb literature in the first half of the 19th century, written mostly as an extension of folk poetry, is an expression of the hatred of Turks. The extent to which that hatred could go is best seen in the glorification of common murders in *Smrt Smailage Čengića* (*The Death of Smailaga Čengić*) and *Gorski vijenac* (*The Mountain Wreath*). Croat novellas of the fifties are solely about Turks in Slavonia, Serbia, Bosnia, Kordun, etc. Nowhere in those novellas is the Turk depicted as a man, but always as a tyrant.”⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Ibid, 3, 22 (28. 5. 1887.), p. 344.

⁷⁶ Milan Marjanović, *Iza Šenoë*, Zadar, 1906.

⁷⁷ Cited in: Muhamed Hadžijahić, o. c., p. 123.

“Haiduk-Turk novellas of the fifties end with the demand of extermination of Turks; Botić, contrary to his predecessors and contemporaries, pointed out the absurdity of such hatred, for it concerns not different peoples, but one people of different faiths. Botić’s works mean, in a way, liquidation of a literary fashion, in which everything was red from the Turkish blood and when a writer did not know what else to write about.”⁷⁸

The border-guard *ante murale* myths are one of the basic forms of self-awakening ethnonational narratives in the South Slavic area and, in fact, they are a tragic and grotesque version of imperialistic metanarratives of the defense of the eternal values of transcendently sanctified West-European civilization. Emphasizing that, together with a contemporary vision of Europe as a community of free peoples, cultures and individuals, there also exists a tendency of “European unification on the basis of [...] Christianity as worldview and ideology”, Šaćir Filandra warned that in such a “view, instead of Protestants and Jews, Muslims may become the *European others*”⁷⁹, which could have devastating consequences for Bosniaks:

“On the basis of such attitude,” Filandra writes “a contemporary, Europeanly dominated conception of Islam as otherness, as a danger, and of Bosniak Muslims as something ‘non-European’ within Europe, something alien which should be purged, was formed.”⁸⁰

In that sense, the two centuries long stigmatization of Bosniaks by the Turkish sin of convertism is even today persistently renewed by the border-guard mentality championing the Eurocentric conception of the lethal Ottoman cultural-historical, religious and political heritage as a *foreign narrative body*: Bosniak converts are a “disturbing factor” which even today prevents processes, started during the Medieval Bosnia and interrupted by the Ottoman occupation, in the Europeanly globalized area

⁷⁸ Antun Barac, *Hrvatska književnost od Preporoda do stvaranja Jugoslavije*, Knjiga II, književnost pedesetih i šezdesetih godina, JAZU, Zagreb, 1960, p. 131.

⁷⁹ Šaćir Filandra, *Bošnjačka politika u XX. stoljeću*, Sejtarija, Sarajevo, 1998, p. 394.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

“based on universal values of Christianity interpreted on the political and artistic level, that is, unified on the socio-political and economic-cultural level”⁸¹. Such outright prejudiced conceptions according to which at the political level even today the “Ottoman heritage is still a burden” and a hereditary sin, because “during the Ottoman period, the base for common political identity of the Bosnian population was largely destroyed”⁸², while the Ottoman conquest of Bosnia “interrupted the thread of Bosnia-Hum culture, which had integrated the country into the universe of European middle ages”⁸³ are, in fact, a collective renewal of, as Ivan Lovrenović precisely stated on the occasion of Andrić’s doctoral thesis, “christian-centric and Eurocentric elements in Andrić’s conception of (Bosnian) cultural history”⁸⁴. Unlike today’s increasingly frequent uncritical apotheoses of Andrić’s doctoral thesis, Ivan Lovrenović emphasized, in the 1996 text *Bosanski Andrić (Bosnian Andrić)*, that it is no coincidence that Andrić “prevented translation of that text from German, as well as its publication. Probably not because he would have thought differently, but because he knew best how unimportant, unliterary and worthless that text was. One of such wheedled texts is that ominous study on the Albanian issue, written on orders by the Belgrade Ministry.”⁸⁵

The uncritical renewal of Andrić’s *Christiancentric and Eurocentric conceptions* is seen even in cursory comparisons of Andrić’s attitudes presented in the doctoral thesis⁸⁶, defended in Gratz in 1924, with this, but

⁸¹ Dubravko Lovrenović, *Povijest est magistra vitae*, Rabic, Sarajevo, 2008, p. 211-212.

⁸² Srećko M. Džaja, *Konfesionalnost i nacionalnost Bosne i Hercegovine. Predemancipacijsko razdoblje 1463-1804*, translated by Ladislav Z. Fišić, the second, revised edition, Ziral, Mostar, 1999, p. 223.

⁸³ Nela Rubić, *Stara hrvatska književnost u Bosni i Hercegovini*, II, Matica hrvatska, Magazine for Art and Science, Sarajevo, 2001, V, No. 21, p. 24.

⁸⁴ Ivan Lovrenović, *Ivo Andrić, paradoks o šutnji*, Novi Izraz, Sarajevo, No. 39, January – March, p. 29.

⁸⁵ Ivan Lovrenović, *Bosanski Andrić, Bosna, kraj stoljeća*, Durieux, Zagreb, 1996, p. 126.

⁸⁶ “It is of decisive importance that Bosnia, in the most critical moment of its spiritual development, in the time when turbulences of spiritual forces reached their peak, was conquered by an Asian war people, whose social institutions and practices meant negation of every Christian culture and whose faith – formed under different climatic and social conditions and unadaptable for any adjustments – interrupted the spiritual life of the

also with many other historical, cultural-political and literary-historical texts that have appeared in the past twenty years as a paradigmatic expression of a consciousness “preoccupied with the construction of a new useful national history”⁸⁷.

However, it should be emphasized at this point that, in the past twenty years, the “Bosniak interpretative community” *has also been preoccupied with the construction of the new national history*, so in the reconstructive retelling of the past, along with many significant texts, we have seen a number of scientifically unsubstantiated national-historical imaginations of the heroic tradition “standing in defense of the Islamic civilization”. In the overall intellectual confusion and consternation caused by the indifferent silence of the West in the time of the renewal of nationalist Serbo-Croat myths that culminated in the realization of genocidal projects, ethnic cleansing and concentration camps; with the intellectual elite incapable of articulating a modern, democratic program, in which the proper memory culture would be rid of residual reflections of epic heroics, renewal of the Bosniak *ante murale* myths occurred as well, together with the renewal of one’s own historical mission on *the border*, in a grotesque presentation of the heroic defense of Islam before the invasion of European Christianity. Orientalist discourse in which a part of Serb or Croat historiography denies or stigmatizes the Bosniak literary tradition and history also conditions the sometimes concealed, sometimes overt obnoxiousness and intolerance towards “the dark heritage of West-European Christian tradition”, seen in the texts of Bosniak authors, in the further antagonization of cultures, with superficial reading and simplifications of the postcolonial criticism onto the profane, in our case tragically affirmed local version of the global conflict of civilizations. It should not be forgotten, however, that the radical criticism of imperial history and hegemonistic discourse of the West-European

country, deformed it, and made something quite specific”, Ivo Andrić wrote and added in an appendix: “This place, as well as all other places in discussions which focus on the influence of the Turkish rule, should not be understood as a criticism of Islamic culture as such, but simply as criticism of those consequences which resulted from its spread onto the Christian, Slavic land.” (Ivo Andrić, *Razvoj duhovnog života u Bosni pod uticajem turske vladavine*, translated by Zoran Konstantinović, Sveske Zaduzbine Ive Andrića, god. I, sv. 1, Belgrade, June 1982, p. 51 and 201.

⁸⁷ Todor Kuljić, o. c., p. 8.

Christian civilization in the processes of collective Eurocentric self-defining by antagonizing the world of Islam as the “normative Other”, but also reverse cultural-religious processes of self-identifications by diabolizing the Christian culture, was formulated by several scientists in the West, which can be as well proven by Tomaž Mastnak’s book *Križarski mir: Kršćanstvo, muslimanski svijet i zapadni politički poredak* (*Crusading Peace: Christendom, the Muslim World and Western Political Order*)⁸⁸:

“An important moment in the articulation of the self-awareness of the Christian community” Mastnek writes “was the construction of a Muslim enemy. The antagonistic difference between them and Muslims was the essential element of the collective identity of Latin Christians. The work of that new collective identity was a new holy war against that essential enemy, for Muslims represented infidelity as such.”⁸⁹

Mastnak ends the book in bitter recognition that the centuries’ present sacral narrative of the crusades had come to life again (and was tolerated by the European political bias or indifference), articulated in the language which continually renews that story to which, notwithstanding all the tragic experience, “the end still does not seem near”:

“Persistency of the crusade was certainly clear to both perpetrators and victims of the war against Bosnia in the late 20th century. Both perpetrators and victims saw in language of the crusades a way to describe their goals and unpleasant position. Those who stood aside and watched the crimes unfold were frequently unable to find words to express the absurdity of that postmodern crusade or to condemn it. Their talk of peace only helped the success of the crusade.”⁹⁰

In the text *Kršćanstvo, Kultura i globalizacija* (*Christianity, Culture and Globalization*), Željko Mardešić (Jakov Jukić) sees the tragic ex-

⁸⁸ Original title: *Crusading Peace. Christendom, the Muslim World and Western Political Order* by Tomaž Mastnak, University of California Press, Berkley and Los Angeles, California; University of California Press, Ltd., London, England, 2002.

⁸⁹ Tomaž Mastnak, *Križarski mir: Kršćanstvo, muslimanski svijet i zapadni politički poredak*, translated by Janko Paravić, Prometej, Zagreb, 2005, p. 124.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 347.

perience of the European history in three consecutive and connected kinds of *Catholic globalization* (warlike, cultural and ideological) and emphasizes that, starting from the first crusade, “peace was invoked only amongst the Christians to achieve a better efficiency in the war against the others, Muslims”⁹¹. Starting with the crusades – Mardešić writes – which “were regularly initiated by the Church, and which the states eagerly allowed and supported”⁹², through the colonialistic genocidal campaigns when “after the persecution of Jewish and Muslim communities in the homeland the time came to wipe out the superstitious autochthonous inhabitants in the colonies across the seas... the royal conquest by the sword and Christian expansion by the cross advanced together, and after that followed the regular robbery of gold and erection of the baroque-style churches. First came the war, then the culture of the foreigner and conqueror”⁹³. The devastating consequences of Counter-Reformation church’s activities, Mardešić emphasizes, were especially visible in the conquests of South America, in the “merciless profane colonialism and, at the same time, forceful evangelization of the new peoples”⁹⁴.

However, it should also be stressed that in the Islamic world, as well as in many contemporary Islamic societies, religious extremist movements have existed and that expansionist power of the Islamic states spread (to the Balkan area as well) in the past, similarly to the crusades, *in the name of Islam*, and that today “Islam, just like other global religious traditions, has its extremist margin”⁹⁵. That is why it should always be noted that “religious traditions are a unity of text and context – Revelation and human understanding within a specific socio-historical frame”⁹⁶, and that history of holy wars does not rest upon the order of the Revelation, but on the interpretations of the Holy Scriptures.

Similarly, Abdelwahab Meddeb warns of dangers of the semi-educated commentators of the Koranic text in the contemporary Islamic world

⁹¹ Željko Mardešić, *Kršćanstvo, kultura i globalizacija*, Znakovi vremena, Sarajevo, Winter 2006, vol. 9, No. 34, p. 30.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁹⁵ John L. Esposito, *Nesveti rat. Teror u ime islama*, translated by Dušan Janić, Šahinpašić, Sarajevo, 2008, p. 62.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

who, through incompetent interpretations, support radical integrationist movements and projects. At the same time, he emphasized the equally devastating practices of diabolizing Islam as sub-text of the imperialist strategies of the West, which, in fact, confirmed the tragic heritage of historical renewability of the extremist ideologies, based on malicious and manipulative exegesis of the sacral narratives:

“If fanaticism used to be a disease of Catholicism, Nazism of Germany, it is certain that integrationism is a disease of Islam.”⁹⁷

Exactly because of that, in an open intellectual dialogue, we should observe both inner and outer causes, as well as reasons of identity crisis of the Islamic world and unquestionable dangers that reside in the aggressive integrationist movements. We are constantly faced with a possibility that, even in occasional instances, the disease of integrationism may spread onto the fragile community of Bosnian Muslims, wounded by the historical fate of being a marginal, border-guard existence between the lines of two civilizations and imperialist strategies and, as such, also prone to uncritical rereading and interpretation of its own culture, history and, consequently, holy tradition. That is why the Bosniak intellectual community should, alongside the difference in ethno-cultural heritage, historical experience and modern social realities of integration into the currents of European modernity, and exactly through the part of its being which is deeply enrooted into the world of Islamic spirituality, culture and tradition, accept dialogue which will not spare even those forms of Islamic tradition and contemporariness that have already been diagnosed as an undoubtedly sick “body of Islam”. Abdelwahab Meddeb commented those inner and outer causes by saying:

“Instead of pointing out the difference between the good and the bad Islam, it would be better for Islam to again find places of dispute and initiate discussions; to again reveal a multitude of opinions; to create a place for disagreement and difference and understand that the neighbor has a right to a different opinion; that intellectual disputes again gain the right of citizenship and

⁹⁷ Abdelwahab Meddeb, *Zloupotreba islama*, translated by Nuriya Hadžić, IMIC – Rabic, Sarajevo, 2003, p. 11.

adjust to the possibilities offered by the multitude of different voices, so that the number of gaps increases as much as possible, so that the monovoicedness disappears, so that the firm substance of One disperses into a stream of elusive particles.

As far as the outer causes are concerned, it should be immediately emphasized that they are not the causes of the disease which eats away the body of Islam. However, it is beyond any doubt that they are catalysts of the disease. What are those causes? One by one, it is nonrecognition of Islam in the West as representative of inner otherness; it is the way in which Islam is given the permanent status of the excluded, it is the way in which the Westerner (in our times, an American citizen) gives up his own principles and in that way, without punishment, implements his hegemony towards the policy called 'two principles'.⁹⁸

The tragic experience of imperial European history whose ideological heritage undoubtedly influenced political bias or indifference towards the tragedy of Bosnia and Bosniaks in the past war, caused, which is entirely understandable on a human level, wrathful but also uncritical and equally prejudiced rereading of European history as a history of general dishonor, with characteristic stereotypes and generalizations which serve to write a specific imagological lexicon of "European rot":

"Europe is the cradle of genocide, uricide, inquisition, crusades and colonial and robbery-conquest wars, and of holocaust, and nationalism, and racism, and chauvinism, and apartheid, and reservations, and ghettos, and enclaves, and ethnic cleansing, and fascism, and Nazism, and Communism, and Bolshevism, and Stalinism, and concentration camps, and Gulags and Kolims, and of confessions before people not before God, and of 'Communist self-criticism' and 'comradely criticism at the party meeting'.⁹⁹

The muted, often traumatic experience of excommunication and rejection from the "European family" because of the Islamic thread in the

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 14.

⁹⁹ Mustafa Spahić, *Zadah evropske truhleži; Da, mi smo muslimani II*, Ljiljan, Sarajevo, 1996, p. 112.

cultural sash of the Bosniak ethno-religious identity, an experience that mounted in the subconscious, *narratively unarticulated* representation of the modern Bosniak history, appeared after the Srebrenica genocide in texts of Bosniak authors in a symbolic and archetypal divide between the two seemingly antagonized worlds. Facing the hypocritical activities of the European centers of political power, which, by empty declarations and resolutions, had covered the tacit approval of disappearance of an ethnos, it appeared even to the author of these lines that after Trnopolje and Dretelj concentration camps, Ahmići and Srebrenica, Europe, from the time of the French Revolution to this day, is repeatedly telling successive lies about the democratic principles of equality, freedom and brotherhood and that their “speech about peace enabled the success of the crusade”. However, that is how the scientific discourse of theoretically based criticism of orientalist and Eurocentric strategies, verified by the tragic circumstances of immediate experiences, has transformed itself into irrational presentations of seemingly irreconcilable differences, allegedly built into the very core of both historical and religious-confessional identities.

“Turning Spain into the nucleus of Catholicism by banishing Islam and Judaism, Europe, in the medium of spirit, begins its constitution, which coincides with the period of establishment of Islam in Bosnia. Whereas Bosnia, mostly Islamic, accepts Jews under its skirt, at the same time preserving both Catholicism and the Orthodox faith, Europe owes its formation to the destruction of different religions and worldviews. This constitution on anti-Islamic principles, not in confessional but in ontological terms, distances Europe from the habitus of Bosnian Muslims.”¹⁰⁰

“The Islamic world, countries and nations have become more conscious, learned and politically determined through the fate of Bosnia than through all the events of the 20th century. Relationship of the West towards Bosnia has taught Muslims more than all the Islamic movements and books written in the 20th century.”¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Šaćir Filandra, *Bosanski Muslimani i Evropa*, u: *Bosna i Hercegovina i Svijet*, Institut za istoriju, Sarajevo, 1996, p. 220–221.

¹⁰¹ Mustafa Spahić, *Tri demona zla; Da, mi smo muslimani II*, Ljiljan, Sarajevo, 1996, p. 98.

“The historical sense of suffering of the Bosnian Muslims Bosniaks is in the defense of the state singularity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Islamic identity of the people.”¹⁰²

Of course, one cannot deny the frequency of this kind of Bosniak publicistic, historiographical and literary-historical texts based on the simplified representations of centuries' long opposition of the “heretic, polyphonic and multilateral Bosnia”¹⁰³ towards the Christian unilateral Europe, but the apodictic claim of Dubravko Lovrenović that “Bosniaks have been, throughout most of their history, fed with the ideology of *Islamic ante murale* towards that same Europe” is both incorrect and unacceptable, and equally stereotypical; especially the conclusion that “the Muslim-Bosniak elite feeds its people even today with such offensive-like ideology.”¹⁰⁴

Neither is orientalist discourse of Christocentric *ante murale* myths the only and the most dominant flow of Serb or Croat historical, cultural and literary-historical texts, nor is the ideology of anti-European Islamic imprisonment the fundamental constituent of the Bosniak history, culture and politics. In dreadful historical moments of ethno-confessional antagonizations, such political prejudices and generalizations which serve to stigmatize the entire history of different cultural-civilizational communities again and as a rule come to life, overseeing the peculiar treasure that every culture has, as well as the precious diversity – the characteristics upon which a culture is based and by which it is recognized as authentic. The dynamic historical reality of Bosnia rests upon the pattern of diversity, socio-historical and ideological-political strivings irreducible to a monochromous image of the static concept of ethnical identity; it resists all kinds of exclusivistic interpretations, especially the radical antagonization in the spirit of Lewis-Huntington theses on an inevitable clash of civilizations. It is for that reason important to emphasize that, in the ongoing permeations of the Slavic-Bosniak profane home-culture and oriental-Islamic spirituality in the period of the Ottoman reign, and later in those rich symbiosis with

¹⁰² Esad Hećimović, *Vrijeme Mehmeda Handžića i naše vrijeme, Zbornik radova sa znanstvenih skupova o Hadži Mehmedu Handžiću*, El-Hidaje – Udruženje uleme BiH, Sarajevo, 1996, p. 111.

¹⁰³ Šaćir Filandra, o. c., str. 221.

¹⁰⁴ Dubravko Lovrenović, o. c., p. 240.

experience of the European modernity that was successfully formed in the late 19th century and lasts to this day in the search for cultural, confessional and ethnic peculiarities “as a South-Slavic people between Serbs and Croats, expressing an anti-Turkish (not anti-Oriental) and, later, an anti-Austrian (not anti-Western) attitude and determination”¹⁰⁵, Bosniaks, in fact, have shared a tragic border-guard destiny with the South-Slavic peoples in general. That is why, with all contradictions of the complex cultural-civilizational differences, similarities or opposites “the literature of Bosnia and Herzegovina is an extraordinarily attractive and rich resource for imagological research [...], primarily because the Bosnian man did not perceive otherness through the walls of imperial civilizational borders, but rather lived it in the most concrete of all terms as a reality and immediacy of his own, daily life.”¹⁰⁶

In a grotesque border-guard competition in authentic purity and primacy of our cultural identities, we keep forgetting that all identities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and all South-Slavic identities for that matter, are borderline identities, formed at the crossroads of grand cultural and civilizational systems and historical processes, thus along with their unquestionable and precious peculiarities, we must not overlook that variety of syncretic forms that resist “hygienic purification” of the national culture, lustration and exorcism of “the evil spirits of an unpleasant and dislikeable past”. That is why our understanding of history and cultural tradition of Bosnia and Herzegovina should be freed of pseudo-mythical representations of national romanticism, according to which we are the “wall of Christianity and the sword of Islam and the core of Bogomilism; according to which we are at the border of the empire, religions, civilizations, the East and the West while, as a matter of fact, the issue is only a lack of reasonableness and cultural level in order to equalize all religions and to equalize all the occupiers as proponents of hegemonistic aspirations and consequences”¹⁰⁷ and to, we should add, acknowledge the entire and various cultural patterns,

¹⁰⁵ Muhsin Rizvić, *Poetika bošnjačke književnosti*, in the book: *Panorama bošnjačke književnosti*, Ljiljan, Sarajevo, 1994, p. 24.

¹⁰⁶ Vedad Spahić, *Slika drugog u „Ljetopisu“ Mula Mustafe Bašeskije*, in the book: *Prokrustova večernja škola*, BosniaArs, Tuzla, 2008, p. 17.

¹⁰⁷ Alija Isaković, *Epska tradicija i naša zbilja, Neminovnosti*, Univerzal, Tuzla, 1987, p. 75.

regardless of the wave of historical events that had brought them, assimilated and adjusted. Reasonable warnings of Alija Isaković, written long ago, on the necessity of demystification of history of Bosnia and Herzegovina in which we have, in fact, tragically participated in interceine conflicts “either for the honorable emperor, either for the glorious sultan, either for the powerful ruler”¹⁰⁸ have still not truly echoed in our ideologized historiography, burdened with ethnocentric exclusiveness. “A reader should always know that impartiality has not been a virtue of the Balkan historiography”¹⁰⁹, Eric Habsbawm said warning against the scientific unreliability of a historiography which even today offers representations of the “made-up past”, constructed upon the epic heritage of heroic victories of sacrifice and imprisonment. It is, however, a paradox that those processes of demystification were conceived even in the epic poem, when, in place of the epic-agonizing heroic and decasyllabic combats in which the people of Krajina are symbolic-allegorical figures and proponents of *totius Christianitas* and of *the entire Islamic world*, appears a general experience of the tragic border-guard existence at the dividing lines of historical battlefields:

“O, Krajina, you bloody dress!
This is the way bloody Krajina is:
Everyone chews the bloody morsels
The white day of rest never comes.”

(Lički Mustajbeg and Orlanović Mujo)

Ultimately, this was also the form of the frequently quoted letter, written in 1684 in *bosančica* (Bosnian Cyrillic script) by Captain Mustafaga Hurakalović (epical Mustajbeg Lički) to Petar Smiljanić, congratulating him on the reward presented to his son, chieftain Petar Smiljanić, by Leonardo Foscolo, the Dalmatian proveditor. In the letter, there is no trace of the cliché-ridden refinement of the diplomatic style, or of the epic rhetoric of religious-national intolerance; rather, the full consciousness of closeness and common roots of the tragically collided people of Krajina is revealed in an illuminative form of intertextual citatory permeations of the afore-

¹⁰⁸ O. c., p. 75.

¹⁰⁹ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nacije i nacionalizam, Program, mit, stvarnost*, translated by Nata Čengić, Novi Liber (Biblioteka Erasmus; IV), Zagreb, 1993, p. 70.

mentioned epic poem about Mustajbeg Lički and its epistolary pamphletary renewal.¹¹⁰

Three hundred years later, again in a fictional text, in a story entitled *Kaimija*, Derviš Sušić further demystifies the romantic-national visions of the past and ultimately deconstructs the mythical-legendary concepts of national-confessional battlefields and heroes, which, in a suggestive stylistic change of the register of an epic narrative, is uttered by Budaletina Tale, as well as by Skender Kulenović in his novel *Ponornica*, through a burlesque parody of the epic duel of circus clowns “Švabo” (“Bosch”) and “Turčin” (“Turk”), allegorical characters and comical masques representing the “two empires – ghosts” hovering above the abyss of the Bosnian curse, as well as through the image of the tragic outcome of a horserace, which, in the end, turned into an agonizing clash of the “two faiths”.

“I better not say a word about the truth of heroisms, pure shame. You see, Mustajbeg Lički once sent me to Kotare, to snatch two fine oxen. And I snatched two fine oxen. I was chased from the sea by horsemen but I, in prayer, got away somehow. Mustajbeg gave me a ducat and a barren ewe. I would have lived my life peacefully had a gusla-player not sung a vicious lie, for the cost of one plate of pilau and a mutton thigh, about how I took away Anđelija, sister of Ilija, from the land of Giaour.”¹¹¹

“At the traditional race this afternoon, three faiths, Islamic, Orthodox and Catholic will ride their horses once again; two in fact, our “Turkish” and their two, which are, one for us, ‘giaour’.

¹¹⁰ A present and kind regards from us, master Mustafaga, Captain of Udvena and Lika, to chieftain Petar Smiljanić, our brother and friend. We are surprised never to have received a letter from you, friend of our father. Do you think we are worth nothing now that our father is gone? If you see peace will not last, please let us know secretly and friendly. Our mother sends regards and asks you to free a Turkish female slave and we will pay you whatever the cost. Please, send our regards to your son, chieftain Ilija. We hear he is a hero in that border-land. God knows we are glad because he is ours. And we send him a hawk’s feather to wear before the heroes. And we ask of him a breech-loader which we will, we swear on our faith, pay fairly. And we ask you Ilija to send us a bottle of brandy to drink. And may you be joyful. Amen. (Quoted in: *Krajišnička pisma*. Selected and edited by Muhamed Nezirović, Bošnjačka književnost u 100 knjiga, Book 5, BZK Preporod, Sarajevo, 2004, p. 245.)

¹¹¹ Derviš Sušić, *Pobune, Izabrana djela*, knj. 2, Oslobođenje, Sarajevo, 1986, p. 61.

‘Our’ has remained here to protrude like a rotten root of the age-decrepit empire which has retreated, and ‘their’ is under the firm protection of their own scepter, which has, like a lake, stabilized on these sides, with never before seen order of everything, but still, at its bottom and evermore frequently do those signs appear, something menacing is stirring up and rising, and coming from the Orthodox; so the race between the empires – ghosts, one which now is only that and the other which is likely to meet the same fate.”¹¹²

However, such examples are exceptionally rare, thus twenty years after Isaković’s text, Nirman Moranjak – Bamburać similarly warned, in her text *Poetika i ideologija (Poetics and Ideology)*, that within our understanding of literary tradition nothing has changed and that we should at last start speaking about the change of cultural paradigms and literary processes that had changed in centuries before us, instead of speaking about the good and the bad masters.

“Upon looking at the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina, one can see that the shift of cultural imperial patterns also brings along the shift of different poetics, so the instrumentarium of postcolonial criticism should be used for new readings and creation of a reconstructive speech about the collective identity which, unlike the normative, in an ideological sense, does not portray an image of reality false to such an extent, an extent seen beneath the confirmation of a single reality.”¹¹³

In such reconstructive reading the tragicalness of Bosnian and South Slavic idiosyncrasies mirroring subconscious-irrational urges and contradictory sensations of repulsion and attraction in the perception of the Other is perhaps best seen in two paradigmatic scenes from Andrić’s story *Kod kazana (By the Brandy Still)* and in the novel *Na Drini ćuprija (The Bridge on the Drina)*, in a dialogue between Tomo Galus and a young bey Bahtijarević, and then as a consequence in all the contradictory understandings of orientalist stereotypes in the work of Ivo Andrić.

¹¹² Skender Kulenović, *Ponornica*, Muslimanska književnost XX vijeka, knj. XI, Svjetlost, Sarajevo, 1991, p. 351.

¹¹³ Nirman Moranjak-Bamburać, *Ideologija i poetika*, Radovi Filozofskog fakulteta, Sarajevo, 2000, p. 108.

In the story *By the Brandy Still*, Mehmedbeg Biogradlija, “a janissary and a true warrior” who “along with raki (...) poisons himself with poppy-seeds which he takes in date or orange peel jam”, in a profane, blasphemous understanding of his own culture reduced to the beauty of sensual experience and enjoyment, sacrilegiously and with overt hatred denies every sense of the Christian religion and culture, in a midnight conversation with friar Marko Krenta:

“A dark thing, the cross! Dark is everything that crosses with the sign of cross! You’ve been kneading darkness for a thousand years to no avail! You do not raise your heads above the cross. That is your punishment. You are against the gift and creatures of God! What can you do? Baptized people – unfortunate people.”¹¹⁴

On the other hand, in the novel *The Bridge on the Drina*, the frequently quoted Marx’s attitude: “Sie können sie nicht vertreten, sie müssen vertreten werden” (“They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented”) appears in our Bosnian version, in the exalted attitude of Andrić’s character Tomo Galus who, thrilled by the ideas of South Slavic nationalistic youth, denies capability and possibility of scientific self-recognition of the Bosniak intelligence:

“You are Orientals, but you are wrong to think that you are suited to be orientalists. You neither possess the vocation nor true predilection for science.”¹¹⁵

The ferocity of Galus’ denial of the capability of Bosniaks to scientifically research their own culture and capability to represent themselves is followed by the narrator’s conclusion that “they, like this Muslim young man, the grandson of beys, carry their philosophy in their blood, they live and die according to it, but do not know how to express it in words, nor do they feel the need for it.”¹¹⁶

Of course, one can easily recognize in Galus’ attitudes the literate paraphrase of stereotypes on “characterology of the Bosnian Moham-

¹¹⁴ Ivo Andrić, *Kod kazana, Sabrana djela*, knj. VI, Mladost – Prosveta – Državna založba – Svjetlost, Zagreb – Beograd – Ljubljana – Sarajevo, 1967, p. 68.

¹¹⁵ Ivo Andrić, *Na Drini ćuprija, Sabrana djela*, knj. I, navedeno izdanje, p. 270.

¹¹⁶ O. c., str. 270.

medans”, described by Stojan Novaković and Jovan Cvijić as the mainstay of the “orientalist archive” of Serb national-romantic ideology of the second half of the 19th and first half of the 20th century. “Language of abstraction, language of thought, that which is, so to say, most beautiful in any language, has been sealed for them”¹¹⁷, Stojan Novaković wrote, while, according to Jovan Cvijić, “the Bosnian Mohammedans” are incapable of producing a modern scientific thought, for they have preserved “a fossilized, clearly medieval way of thinking”¹¹⁸.

The literary opus of Ivo Andrić is overwhelmingly seen and understood today as a paradigmatic “place where an ideology is formed”, a “battlefield and theatre” of fierce rereadings of “textual traces of the past” in a simplified understanding of rhetoric strategies of the new historicism and criticism of orientalist discourse on the one hand, and a traditional, essentialist estheticism on the other, which by a hypostasis of autonomy of the literary world denies contextual and cotextual “contamination” of a literary text by ideological content. That consequently results in parallel and antagonistic rituals of demonization or beatification of Andrić’s “character and opus”. In the process, neither of the approaches takes into consideration the fact that ideologically unbiased narratives do not exist, the same way that “innocent” interpretations do not exist, and that a continual process of various interpretations takes place in poetics of every culture, together with the “processing” of the historical sense in single-voicedness of explicative forms and rhetorical strategies which, among other, reveal the “historicity of texts” and “textuality of history”, and that the new-historicist method is but one of the many understandings of literature, irreducible to simple illustration of ideologically, allegedly monolith discursive practice. The same could be said about the perception of the “esthetic autonomy of the literary world” established in the time of Romanticism, as if the literary text – as Nirman Moranjak – Bamburać emphasized – reflects nothing from the historical reality:

“The beautiful dream of a ‘free genius’ is nothing but a utopia, for his ‘freedom’ may, very much so, serve for different ideological moldings; and it always serves for molding a national

¹¹⁷ Stojan Novaković, *Balkanska pitanja i manje istorijsko-političke beleške o Balkanskom poluostrvu 1886–1905*, Belgrade, 1906, p. 21.

¹¹⁸ Jovan Cvijić, *Govori i članci*, I, Beograd, 1921, p. 260.

identity as the fundamental ideologeme of the contemporary history.”¹¹⁹

In exactly that sense, Ivo Žanić, in the text *Pisac na osami (Upotreba Andrićeve književnosti u ratu u BiH)* [*A Writer in Isolation (The Use of Andrić's Literature in the Bosnian War)*], warns about the complexity of relations of literary and historical reality in Andrić's work, of ethical and esthetical synchronization and responsibility upon which both the literary text and interpretative act *equally* rest:

“Literary reality is an autonomous reality; it exists within its own rules and it lives a life of its own; yet, it is formed within a subconscious reality and, once created, it retroactively affects that reality by partly shaping and completing it the way that, for example, Andrić's novels and stories are read nowadays by those who decide on Bosnia and Herzegovina and who, on that basis, draw different conclusions. In that sense, the ‘Andrić case’ truly opens many realistic issues about the relationship between literary and extraliterary reality, postulates of the creative process, author's responsibility regarding the reception of his work, tendency in literature and its ideologization – regardless if it comes from the author himself or from interpreters, both invited or not; benevolent or malevolent.”¹²⁰

Critical approach to a literary text in that sense necessarily requires, even today, the analysis of both the “kind of yarn and the way of weaving” (V. Šklovski) and of the submerging, polyphonic and heteroglossic production processes of ideological content in the way of writing and the in way of reading because “every literary fact emerges (...) as a result of two forces: inner dynamics of a structure and outer intervention”¹²¹.

However, the variety of different interpretations of Andrić's literary text is not solely based on the collective horizon of expectations or literary competence of interpretative communities. An interpretative act means

¹¹⁹ Nirman Moranjak-Bamburać, *Ideologija i poetika*, o. c., p. 107.

¹²⁰ Ivo Žanić, *Pisac na osami (Upotreba Andrićeve književnosti u ratu u BiH)*, Erasmus, Journal for Culture of Democracy, Zagreb, October 1996, br. 18, p. 48.

¹²¹ Jan Mukaržovski, *Uz češki prevod „Teorije proze“ Viktora Šklovskog*, Književna kritika (Belgrade), VI/1975, str. br. 3, p. 67-68.

also individual competence of reading and understanding of *the literary world*, the same way Andrić's fictional and non-fictional texts are, among other, an expression of unquestionable ethno-cultural, ideological and traditional interpretations of the *historical world*, but also of the individual act of transposition of *the fact of life* into *an artistic fact* by the force of the author's expression and esthetic suggestion (un)submissive to violence of collective ideological edicts, but also of personal idiosyncrasies. Neither in the act of writing, nor in the act of reading are meanings of a literary text produced by an abstract, "transcendental consciousness" of the Author and the Reader; a literary text, in every new reading, reveals a dynamic, always changeable image and individual and collective ideological semantizations of social reality, through the effect of "inner dynamics of a structure and outer intervention".

All this signifies the need for a calmer discussion on Andrić's orientalist views, because at the end of the day, even among those literary scholars who in every other case insist with all reason on the differentiation, but also the conditional relationship between the text and extratextual relations and between the content of historical reality and esthetic imagination, in the final judgment on Andrić's "love" or "hatred" towards the Bosnian-Muslim world, expressed through identical rhetoric yet with different conclusions, that difference has completely disappeared:

"I dare say that in the entire Bosnian (even in the Bosniak-Muslim) literature there hasn't been a writer who understood the historical and civilizational fate of Bosnian Muslims with such refined empathy and deep co-sentiment like Ivo Andrić."¹²²
 "There almost hasn't been a writer in 'Yugoslav literature' who, like Ivo Andrić, painted the image of an entire people and its history with such repulsiveness and dark tone because it belonged to another civilizational circle."¹²³

To these irreconcilably opposed attitudes on the nature of relations towards Bosniaks in Andrić's work, reduced to psychological-emotional

¹²² Ivan Lovrenović, *Bosanski Andrić, Bosna, kraj stoljeća*, Durieux, Zagreb, 1996, p. 127.

¹²³ Esad Duraković, *Andrićevo djelo u tokovima ideologije eurocentrizma*. In the book: *Andrić i Bošnjaci*, BZK „Preporod“, Tuzla, 2000, p. 139.

categories of love and hatred in texts which, allegedly, “threaten” to become the summary of homogenous Bosnian “interpretative communities”¹²⁴, Zdenko Lešić, in the spirit of Said’s orientalism, without amnestying Andrić from his undoubtedly orientalist views present both in his fictional and non-fictional texts, includes at the same time the Lacanian *paradox of otherness* (which is in the essence of Said’s teachings), in which we are able to see a reverse image of ourselves in the other:

“Here” Lešić states “we cannot but remember Andrić and his images of the ‘East’ and ‘Easterners’, which undoubtedly represent our contribution to the Western tradition of orientalism, with a characteristic mixture of repulsion and attraction. But we must add that neither in Andrić’s images, nor in the majority of texts Edward Said analyzed, is there space for hatred, contrary to the opinion of some, because those images are realized exactly as the Lacanian paradox: images of others lure us for we believe to be able to see the image of ourselves in *otherness*.”¹²⁵

We should add to this, by and large, acceptable, but also to some extent simplified interpretation of both Lacan’s and Said’s, and consequently Andrić’s understanding and representation of otherness as a benign, reverse image of ourselves, that it is not about a rational *belief* but a *subconscious*, irrational process in which, through the ambivalent experience of attraction and repulsion, a cultural demonological archive and catalogue of orientalist images are formed, which we are also unable to foresee.

Exactly that mixture of “repulsion” and “attraction” can be seen in friar Marko’s obsession with a terrible thought that “what comes from God and what comes from the Devil is not clearly or straightforwardly divided”: as Mehmed Biogradlija utters his blasphemous words, friar

¹²⁴ Principal attitudes of the reception theory, from Jauss’ collective *expectations horizon*, Iser’s *implicit reader* and *narrative strategies* as means of communication, all the way to Stanly S. Fish’s understanding of the complex kinds of *interpretative strategies* and literary competence of interpretative communities, have sadly been reduced nowadays onto the profanity of ideological content of ethnonational perception of the *expectations horizon*, by consensual antagonization towards supposedly “hostile”, different and competitive communities.

¹²⁵ Zdenko Lešić, *Nova čitanja: Poststrukturalistička čitanka*, Buybook, Sarajevo, 2002, p. 106.

Marko recognizes in his image the image of a saint he once saw in some Roman church:

“Friar Marko would unintentionally look up and observe the Turk. That tilted head, that pale face with green shadows, burning eyes – all reminded him of something remote and sublime: it reminded him of a saint’s head he had once seen on a painting in one of the churches of Rome. Regardless of how much he fought against that sinful comparison which confused him, it kept coming back, imposing itself irresistibly like a pest. That was the head of an unknown saint, a martyr: the same rapture, the same glow of the eyes and expression of the exalted pain. And to make the pest complete, that head which reminded of a martyr spoke now incomprehensible, shameful and blasphemous things. All that came to friar Marko, like a bad dream, full of dark contradictions.”¹²⁶

Of course, in the analysis of Andrić’s dissertation and other texts “engineered, written owing to circumstances” (I. Lovrenović), it is not difficult to recognize “what other hybrid ideas, enormous complex prisms and idiosyncrasies he kept within”, but it is important to notice, as Vedad Spahić puts it, that “within the story itself, however, a bad non-esthetic intention does not define the function of the text” because “the text (structure, the world of literary work) is sometimes highly self-reliant and possesses its own defensive mechanisms against misuse.”¹²⁷

It seems to me that all this obliges us to finally leave the epic-agonistic base of our South Slavic literary-historical narratives, and to always keep in mind during the critical rereading of Serbo-Croat orientalist residue collected by “our eyes’ cataracts” (S. Kulenović) that we are also the Other to someone else and, as such, object of collective mystifications, stereotypical views and hereditary socio-historical representations and burdens. That is why it would be completely wrong to make our own catalogue of an obscure library of orientalist texts in the reconstructive postcolonial discourse and rereading. Instead, we should only center on paradigmatic patterns

¹²⁶ Ivo Andrić, *Kod kazana*, quoted issue, p. 69.

¹²⁷ Vedad Spahić, „Hljeb od javorove kore“, in: *Tekst, kontekst, interpretacija*, p. 156-157.

that bare witness that negative perceptions and usurpations of Bosniak literature happen today as well, almost according to inertia of the inherited stereotypes which are seen practically as a general site of imagology.

In that sense, we will firstly illustrate the opposite conclusions Dean Duda draws in the book *Priča i putovanje*¹²⁸ (*A Story and a Voyage*), depicting two *identical* views, burdened by the *a priori* prejudice, presented almost at the same time by the Anglican priest Gleig after a voyage to Croatia (1837) and Croatian travel writer Matija Mažuranić after a voyage to Bosnia (1839 – 1840).

The case of Mr. Gleig, an Anglican priest whom peasants beat up during the journey in Croatia and who “upon departure from Croatia published journal entries in several foreign newspapers from his voyage, in which he stated how the Croat ‘barbarians and ruffians’¹²⁹ had made him suffer”, is doubly mediated in explanation. Dean Duda, citing the first reaction to Gleig’s writing in a text entitled “Obrana proti klevetnomu jednom nasernutju na Horvate englezkoga putnika Gleiga” (“Defense against a Libelous Attack on Croats by the English Traveler Gleig”) by Slovak Dragutin (Karel Georg) Rummy¹³⁰, carefully deconstructs Gleig’s Eurocentric stereotypes and, completely in the spirit of Said’s criticism of orientalism concludes: “For him, everybody’s the same. His perception knows not of differences, for it is simply not ready for them. (...) Is his roughness the consequence of a previously-created image or had the Croat peasants really given a reason for it?” – the author asks and makes a suggestion in the end by using Rummy’s comparison with “English relationship towards Irish Catholics” that “Gleig is becoming a representative of treatment of people who share the same religion with Croats”¹³¹.

However, Duda’s approach to interpretation of Mažuranić’s 1842 travelogue *Pogled u Bosnu* (*A Glimpse at Bosnia*) in which, as Duda states, “an uninformed traveler travels from one civilizational or cultural circle into another”, “his itinerary was placed in probably most dangerous part of Europe at the time” and that is why, in this voyage, he faced “one peril

¹²⁸ Dean Duda, *Priča i putovanje: Hrvatski romantičarski putopis kao pripovjedni žanr*, Matica hrvatska, Zagreb, 1998.

¹²⁹ O. c., p. 19.

¹³⁰ Danica, Zagreb, V/1839, No. 35, p. 138-139.

¹³¹ Dean Duda, o. c., p. 21.

after another, in an unknown world, both *savage* and *mystical*” because “mental attitudes of Bosnia, more precisely *Turkish* environment differed from that of the travel writer’s”¹³² (emphasis by E.D.) In the end, the author illustrates that with the writer’s conflict with children and, unlike Gleig’s conflict with the peasants, he will conclude that Mažuranić’s travelogue “leaves the final impression of humiliation of the Christian world in Bosnia” and so “anyone possessing a better literary experience will gain a good insight into the Bosnian situation”, even more so because Mažuranić in the end provides *Različne opaske o Bosni (Various Remarks about Bosnia)*, “the Bosnian lexicon”, in which “he wrote down the acquired knowledge as a series of entries about the Bosnian everyday life”¹³³. And in order for that orientalist discourse of Duda’s interpretation (which is more orientalist than Mažuranić’s travelogue) to gain full confirmation in diabolicalness of the “Bosnian Turk border”, he will completely “orientalize” that world and antagonize it with that of the travel writer’s the same way he antagonized Gleig’s Anglicanism against the Irish and Croat Catholicism:

“Finally, if an itinerary represents a sign, than Mažuranić’s voyage across Bosnia at the turn of the 1830s is, surely, a true adventure, similar in a way to the experience of the Dutch scientist Alexandrine Tinne, who lived in Cairo in the mid-19th century, dressed in the Oriental fashion and with Arab servants and black slaves, and was killed in the end, on an expedition at the edge of the Sahara desert by Tuaregs.”¹³⁴

Secondly, untenability of Serb-Croat usurpations of Bosniak literature, which can be traced 150 years back, is also an unhidden form of deprivation of identity, denial of the Bosniak cultural identity, which can easily be seen even by casual citing of paradigmatic excerpts from the texts of, for example, Jovan Deretić and Slobodan Prosperov Novak about the *al-hamijado literature* (works in Bosnian language written in an adapted Arabic script), in which that enormous effort of explaining the unexplainable is seen. Thus, Jovan Deretić, in an attempt to reconstruct Vuk Karadžić’s national-romanticist thesis about Serbs of three religions, writes that “multiethnicity and multiculturalism of the Serb literature are characteristics

¹³² O. c., p. 160 and 161.

¹³³ O. c., p. 160.

¹³⁴ O. c., p. 162.

which give it the power of assimilation more than any other characteristic”, and, owing to those characteristics, since “the Serb Church Slavonic literature during the Turkish reign had lost the former creative power”, that creativity gap may be filled with “the Islamic literature written either in the oriental languages or in the domestic idiom in the Arabic alphabet (alhamijado literature) and in Cyrillic alphabet; the Catholic Franciscan literature in the domestic dialects and in Latin; literature of the Spanish Sephardic Jews in the Jewish idiom of Spanish (Ladino) and in Hebrew”¹³⁵.

Opposite Jovan Deretić, Slobodan Prosperov Novak proclaimed *alhamijado* literature a part of Croat literary heritage:

“During the 17th century in Bosnia, as well as in the areas north of the Sava River, a number of poems were written in the Arabic alphabet, but in the language that Matija Divković and Bartul Kašić called Slavene, Illyrian or Bosnian, that is, in the same language Ivan Gundulić and Juraj Habelić, Ivan Tonko Mrnavić and Junije Palmotić wrote”, and emphasized that “the most famous among them is certainly Muhamed Uskufi Havaji (!), who wrote an interesting Turkish – Croatian dictionary (!), entitled Potur Šahdi (!), or, if we translate it to the contemporary language, The Small New Turk according to Šahdi’s Method (!!!)”¹³⁶.

Thus, with Prosperov Novak, Hevaji becomes Havaji, Turkish – Bosnian becomes Turkish – Croatian dictionary, Potur – Šahidija becomes Potur Šahdi, and his translation *The Small New Turk according to Šahdi’s Method* is a “new-Croatian” version of equally caricatured “old-Serb” translation “made” by Stojan Novaković in his 1869 text entitled *Srbi Muhamedovci i turska pismenost (Mohammedan Serbs and Turkish Literacy)*:

“Potur-šahidije according to Mr. Blau’s interpretation is translated into the Serb language as ‘The Turkicized according to Šahid’, that is, instructions for learning Turkish according to Šahid.”¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Jovan Deretić, *Put srpske književnosti*, Mala biblioteka SKZ, Belgrade, 1996, p. 326.

¹³⁶ S. P. Novak, *Povijest hrvatske književnosti*, svezak I, Raspeta domovina, Split, 2004, p. 171 and 172.

¹³⁷ Stojan Novaković, *Srbi Muhamedovci i turska pismenost*, Glasnik Srpskog učenog društva, Belgrade, 1869, p. 238.

Vedad Spahić also observed Slobodan Prosperov Novak's incompetence and a bizarre combination of arrogance and ignorance in his text: "Literature cannot be stolen and non-scientifically motivated inclusions cannot be prevented", Spahić emphasized and showed in a careful analysis that underneath Novak's appropriation of older Bosniak literature rests "a misery of ignorance, inappropriate for a scientist of Novak's reputation."¹³⁸ The same could also be said for the way in which, in more recent times, Dubravko Jelčić, Krešimir Nemeć or Božidar Petrać, that is, Predrag Palavestra, Jovan Deretić or Staniša Tutnjević have systematically or incidentally included Bosniak literature into the Croat or Serb literary-historical line. Their texts are frequently an unusual mixture of unhidden orientalist views and grotesque attempts of "taming" and adaptation of the Bosniak writers with the seeming renewal of thesis on voluntary and continual "determination" of Bosniak writers for either Serb or Croat national literature. Political violence of denying cultural and national identity of Bosniaks and refutation of a possibility of their own ethno-cultural identity and representation, which had lasted until the mid-1960s (and that is where the extorted "determination" of Bosniak writers for either Serb or Croat literature comes from) is used today as well as an argument of appropriation of Bosniak literature in the cultural currents of hegemonistic mainstreams. As this goes on, the deeper permeation processes of literary traditions, which are a precious value present in different forms and in all South Slavic literatures, are neglected while the profane, incorrect and untenable thesis that "Muslim literature acquired its national identity slowly and with delay, at the same time dwelling within Serb or Croat literary consciousness"¹³⁹ is emphasized.

Patency of political implications of such efforts to "acculturate" Bosniak literature was observed long ago, in 1900, in the text *Čemu se imamo nadati?* (*What can we hope for?*), published in the *Bošnjak* magazine:

¹³⁸ Vedad Spahić, „Prušac“ i ine književne starine; starija bošnjačka književnost u „Povijesti hrvatske književnosti“ Slobodana Prosperova Novaka. In the book: *Prokrustova večernja škola*, Bosnia Ars, Tuzla, 2008, p. 37 and 38.

¹³⁹ Staniša Tutnjević, *Muslimanska književnost na srpskohrvatskom jeziku u odnosu prema srpskoj i hrvatskoj književnosti*, Open Society Institute, Electronic Publishing Program, 1999. <http://rss.archives.ceu.hu/archive/00001055/01/55pdf>, p. 10.

“We Mohammedans have remained in between and we are that preponderance which could move the poise of the small languages on the balance pan to the side we would choose. Croats and Serbs are aware of that and they flit around us, each imposing their own thoughts and ideas, using education as an excuse. And that is why the ‘Osvit’ magazine has been initiated in Mostar, as well as some Croat choral associations on the one hand, as well as ‘Srpski Vjesnik’ and ‘Bos. vila’, ‘Zora’ etc, on the other.”¹⁴⁰

About a hundred years later, a Belgian Slavist Stijn Vervaet, in text *Svoje i tuđe u bosanskohercegovačkoj književnoj periodici (1878 – 1918)* (*One’s Own and of the Other in Literary Periodicals of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1878 – 1918)*) observed the same unreliability, relativity and fluidity of the Bosnian Muslims’ national identity, which is “Serb according to Vuk, Croat according to Starčević, Bosniak according to Kalaj and Kapetanović”, and emphasized that all these ideologies and political conceptions have one characteristic understanding in common, which is that “Muslim identity can only fit into the identity they preach, which explains their persistent attempts of nationalization of Muslims, but also cooperation of Muslim intellectuals schooled according to the Western system in Croat and Serb magazines”¹⁴¹. In that sense, Vervaet also emphasizes political instrumentalization of the literary periodicals of that time and an accentuated competition in nationalization of Muslim writers only on the basis of their cooperation in the Croat or Serb periodicals:

“However, faced with the imposing usurpation of Muslims in Serb and Croat periodicals, Muslim associates frequently found themselves clinched in the ‘brotherly’ embrace of their national conception and they would run away to the other side, or would find themselves somehow in the governmental conception of Bosniakhood.”¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Anonymous, *Čemu se imamo nadati?*, Bošnjak, 10/1900, 11, 1, March 15.

¹⁴¹ Stijn Vervaet, *Svoje i tuđe u bosanskohercegovačkoj književnoj periodici (1878–1918)*, in: *Svoj i tuđ. Slika drugog u balkanskim i srednjoevropskim književnostima*, Institute for Literature and Art, Belgrade, 2006, p. 211.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, p. 209.

Rasim Muminović commented the absurdity and futility of those attempts which, as we can see, occur today as well, in his 1969 text entitled *Povijesnost i nacionalitet (Historicity and Nationality)* by saying that “a man cannot choose what he is, for he is that, but he can commit himself to what he is not [...] or perhaps because others ask him to do so”¹⁴³. That is why even today, when facing such attempts of appropriation of Bosniak literature and culture in general through pseudo-scientific arguments of national-romanticist literary historiography which, within the spontaneous permeations of literary experiences and values in the South Slavic interliterary community represents a grotesque act of diffusion of the imperial cultural property, we should recall Ilarion Ruvarac, who in 1885 superbly demystified Serb and Croat nationalist interweaving of cultural and literary narratives:

“Well, there is a strange similarity in the name, work and fate between Serb Panto and Croat Anto! Our Panto is Serb Anto and their Anto is a notched Croat Panto; Panto S(rečko)vić is the younger brother of Croat Anto, and Anto S(tarče)vić is the older brother of our Panto, and they are children and emanations of the same spirit, of the same father, and they both do the same job and are looking for the poisonous plants of hatred and are sowing the same seed: the seed of discord among the kindred and closest of brothers, among the Slavic tribes in the south – that respect one another.”¹⁴⁴

All this leads to the conclusion that, even today, in the process of defining the status and model of research of Bosniak literature by exploring its poetics, it is of utmost importance to recognize it in those complex correlations of B&H and South Slavic cultural-historical contexts, which are dynamic processes of amalgamation and permeations of various *literary* characteristics and forms, outside ethno-confessional appropriations and attributions, inclusions and “conversions”, in a comparative procedure which implies (and ultimately demands) the respect of the parallel, neighboring and different literary-historical texts.

¹⁴³ Rasim Muminović, *Povijesnost i nacionalitet*, Život, Sarajevo, 1969, No. 6-7, p. 61-63.

¹⁴⁴ Ilarion Ruvarac, *Prelaz s prikaza na kritiku* [1885]. Quoted in: Olivera Milosavljević, o. c., p. 21.