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**ETHNO-RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM IN
SERBIAN LITERATURE IN THE BREAK OF
THE YUGOSLAV NATIONAL IDEAL**

Ümit HASANUSTA

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ÖZ

YUGOSLAV ULUS İDEALİNİN ÇÖKÜŞÜNDE SİRP EDEBİYATINDAKİ ETNİK-DİNİ MİLLİYETÇİLİK

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Bu tez, Sosyalist Yugoslavya döneminde üç Sırp yazar tarafından üretilmiş olan Ivo Andric'in *The Bridge on the Drina* (1945), Milorad Pavic'in *Dictionary of the Khazars* (1984) ve Vuk Draskovic'in *Knife* (1982) adlı romanlarında Etnik-Dini milliyetçilik konusuna odaklanmaktadır. Çalışma, Yugoslavya'yı oluşturan çoketnili/çokdinli ulusların temsilini ele almakta, özellikle de Sırp karakterlerin betimlenmesine ağırlık vermektedir. Tez, Sırp edebi geleneğinin milliyetçi damarını oluşturan bu örneklerin, Yugoslav kimliğinin çeşitliliğine vurgu yapmaktan ziyade, milliyetçiliğe dayanan, ortak bir Yugoslav kültürünün imkansızlığını ortaya koyarak etnik/milli parçalanma dürtüsünü arttıran döneme ait baskın politik söylemle paralellik gösterdiğini öne sürmekte. Ayrıca, bu söylemin özellikle Yugoslavya'yı oluşturan milletler arasındaki eski anlaşmazlıklar ve tarihi düşmanlıklara yapılan sürekli göndermelerle beslendiği iddia edilmektedir. Çalışma, bu son derece milliyetçi edebi geleneğin temsilcilerinin, ortak bir Güney Slav bayrağı altında barışçıl bir şekilde bir arada yaşama olasılığını ortadan kaldırarak, bütün Güney Slav milletlerinin birlikteliğine dayanan Yugoslav ulus idealinin çöküşünü desteklediğini iddia etmektedir. Çalışmanın ana argümanı üç romanın detaylı analiziyle desteklenmektedir. *The Bridge on the Drina*'nın analizi, eserin geleneksel okumasından saparak romanın merkezini oluşturan köprü imgesine, Visegrad'ın çoketnikli toplumunun üyelerini birleştirmek yerine bunları ayıran bir güç olarak gören yeni bir bakış açısıyla yaklaşmaktadır. Pavic'in *Dictionary of the Khazars* romanının incelenmesi, aynı olayın birbiriyle tutarsız hikayelerini anlatan üç ayrı bölümden oluşan metnin, biçim ve içerik olarak Yugoslav ulus idealinin başarısızlığını gösterdiği sonucuna ulaşmaktadır. Çalışmanın son romanı olan Draskovic'in *Knife* başlıklı eseri ise, 19. Yüzyılda Peter Petrovic Njegos tarafından yazılmış, milliyetçi Sırp edebiyatının temel metinlerinden biri olan *The Mountain*

Wreath adlı eserin yeniden yazımı olarak okunmaktadır. Bu metin, alıřmada Sırp ırkının ihanet sendromununun ideal bir rneęi olarak tanımlanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Milliyetilik, Sırp Milliyetilięi, Sırp Edebiyatı, Yugoslavya, Yugoslav Edebiyatı, Yugoslavya'nın Paralanması.

ABSTRACT

ETHNO-RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM IN SERBIAN LITERATURE IN THE BREAK OF THE YUGOSLAV NATIONAL IDEAL

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This dissertation focuses on the issue of ethno-religious nationalism in three novels written by Serbian writers in the period of Socialist Yugoslavia: *The Bridge on the Drina* (1945) by Ivo Andric, *Dictionary of the Khazars* (1984) by Milorad Pavic and *Knife* (1982) by Vuk Draskovic. The study concentrates on the representation of the multiethnic/multireligious people constituting Yugoslavia dealing more specifically with the portrayal of Serbian characters. It argues that rather than focusing on the diversity of Yugoslav identity, these examples of the nationalistic vein in the Serbian literary tradition show parallelism with the dominant political discourse of the time that had enhanced the urge for ethnic/national disintegration stressing the impossibility of a shared Yugoslav culture. The dissertation claims further that this discourse is nourished primarily by constant references to the ancient conflicts and age-old animosities between the people constituting Yugoslavia. The study proposes that by dispelling the belief in the possibility for a peaceful coexistence under the banner of common South Slavic origin, the representatives of this deeply nationalistic literary tradition promote the failure of the Yugoslav national ideal based on the unity of all South-Slavic peoples. The main argument of the dissertation is supported with a detailed analysis of the three novels. The study of *The Bridge on the Drina* deviates from the conventional reading of the work and approaches the central image of the bridge from a fresh perspective viewing it as a force that *divides* rather than uniting the different members of Visegrad's multiethnic community. The discussion of Pavic's *Dictionary of the Khazars* reaches the conclusion that being composed of three different parts that present incoherent accounts of the same event, the novel presents both in form and content the failure of the Yugoslav national ideal. The last novel, Draskovic's *Knife* is interpreted as a rewriting of *The Mountain Wreath*, the foundational ultra-nationalistic Serbian text written by Peter Petrovic Njegos in the

19th century and defined in the dissertation as an epitome of the Serbian race betrayal syndrome.

Key Words: Nationalism, Serbian Nationalism, Serbian Literature, Yugoslavia, Yugoslav Literature, the Disintegration of Yugoslavia.



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The first ideas about writing a thesis about the Balkans emerged in my mind, I suppose, when I was reading *The Bridge on the Drina* for the first time within the context of a doctoral course titled “Postcolonialism and Transnational Encounters”. The novel was about the life of people in a Bosnian town and the text included many characters that we know from our historical narratives. However, this time all stories and characters were rendered from the perspective of a Serbian writer. So, the narrative was noteworthy regarding the representation of the Bosnian identity and it was a fruitful source for thinking about Balkan identities.

In the long process that I narrowed down the topic and wrote the thesis, I encountered many other texts. I can indicate that throughout this period, I mostly wanted to make decisions myself and endeavor to find the best expression for my ideas. However, assuredly, sometimes it was really hard to see the deficiencies of my text and find the right way and the motivation to pursue. In all these times, my thesis advisor Prof. Hasine Şen Karadeniz clearly pointed out everything that I was not able to notice. I have to express my deepest gratitude to her as she always encouraged and guided me with her knowledge, kindness, and discipline. Her sincerity and insightfulness as a mentor and an intellectual will always be a model for me throughout my life.

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INTRODUCTION

The world witnessed an extremely dramatic civil war in the Balkans at the end of the 20th century. After the break up of Yugoslavia nations that had lived together for centuries experienced the most violent results of nationalism. Serbs were a side who were just at the center of these events and the wars they fought with Bosnian Muslims, Croats, and Kosovar Albanians turned the expression “Serbian nationalism” to a common phrase that could be heard frequently in the evaluation of the region. Like in many other nations, the emergence and development of the idea of Serbian nationalism started in the 19th century. Serbs carried out their first rebellion against the Ottomans under the leadership of Karadjordjevic in 1804. This is also the period when Serbian intellectuals endeavored to create a national consciousness. These attempts, enhanced also by the struggles to form a national language and literature, were influential not only in that period but during the next century as well. In fact, the construction of national mythology and the mythicization of history can be named as key factors in the disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The most significant national narrative forming the basis of Serbian nationalism is linked to the Kosovo Battle, an event that marked Serbian defeat and started the Ottoman dominance that would last for hundreds of years. This battle would continue to haunt Serbian national memory till it turned into the foundational stone of its national narratives that present the Serb as the eternal victim, the Christ like sacrificial figure who is constantly deceived and betrayed by his own brothers, by neighbours of South Slavic origin and Muslim enemies alike.

This study will dwell on the relationship between ethnic-religious nationalism, the discourse creating this nationalism, and the literary works produced by Serbian authors in the period of the disintegration of Federal Yugoslavia. Needless to say, in the fragmentation of the country, discourses created and used by the other members of the Yugoslav nation were also influential but this study focuses on Serbian nationalism and literature taking into account their dominant function in the formation and the disintegration of the Yugoslav national ideal.

The violent events witnessed in the Balkans in the 1990s included Serbs, Bosnian Muslims, Croats, and Albanians, who were people who had lived together for centuries in the same region. In some periods of history these people had established their own states, monarchies, or empires; sometimes they lived under the rules of other states such as the Ottoman Empire and Austria-Hungary, and in later times they established two Yugoslav Constitutions believing they shared a common culture and they could live in a single state.

What caused the conflicts that ended up with the dissolution of Federalist Yugoslavia has been discussed before and after the war. Some scholars have stated that the Balkans have been a place of violence and ancient hatreds since ancient times and nothing can be done to help them live together peacefully, so the events witnessed during the civil war were ordinary for the region. Popular works like *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* by Rebecca West and *The Balkan Ghosts* by Robert Kaplan reveal this idea by representing the region and its inhabitants through images of hatred, violence, and fear. This stereotypical representation of the Balkans has been defined as “Balkanism” by Maria Todorova in *Imagining the Balkans*, a term Todorova discusses referring to Edward Said’s “Orientalism”.

On the other hand, works like *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia* by Michael Anthony Sells and *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* by Norman Naimark suggest that these peoples have lived peacefully together for centuries, but after the emergence of nationalism, nationalistic discourses and the intervention of great world powers they gave up the determination to live together.

Assuredly, many scholars have tried to explain the fragmentation and destruction of Yugoslavia with the “ancient animosities” theory which depicts the entire Balkan region as a place of historical conflicts and violence. Indeed, the peoples in the Balkans carried out acts of violence in other events like the Balkan Wars as well, mainly during the Second Balkan War in 1913. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the nations involved in the civil war that took apart

Yugoslavia in the 1990s had attempted to establish a common state twice believing in the existence of a South Slavic community, that is to say, the Yugoslav nation.

The first Yugoslav Constitution was established after the First World War under the name “Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes”. On 20 July 1917 the Corfu declaration was signed by Serbian President Nikola Pasic and the Croatian President of the Yugoslav Committee Ante Trumbic, which meant the emergence of an independent constitutional monarchy under the Serbian Karadjordjevic dynasty but it was exactly on 1 December 1918 that Prince Aleksandar proclaimed the formation of the state. Besides Serbia, the other components of Yugoslavia were Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Slovenia, and Vojvodina. Assuredly, there were ethnic and religious differences among them but the belief in Yugoslavism made it possible to form the cultural basis for the South-Slavic unity and the building of the Yugoslav national ideal that was also supported by the intelligentsia of the period, especially the members of the group known as the Illyrian movement. Although a great number of the South Slav elites were more willing to create a Yugoslav culture with “a multicultural model that would draw on the traditions of all three of the South Slavic tribes that were fated to be joined in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes” (Wachtel, 1998:66), it was clear that Serbia would be the dominant element of this state. Serbs believed that the state should be based on a unitarist model established on Serbian culture because when the struggle for autonomy started with the first uprising against the Ottoman Empire in 1804 they were the first South Slavic group to get free from external rule and gain independence. They justified this claim also with the fact they had a folk culture praised by other European nations, especially by German romantics. Besides, Serbs were the South Slavic people who had been victorious in the First World War. So, in the foundations of the first Yugoslavia, Serbian cultural practices were taken as the norm and the goal of the nation was to build a unified Yugoslav culture based mainly on Serbian practices.

On the other hand, this caused an ongoing conflict within the state. Ignited still in the period of its establishment, this discord gained power till the state's

disintegration because apart from the romantic idea that the diverse South Slavic people could overcome the differences among themselves for the sake of a pan-Slavic unity, the components of the state other than Serbia started to see Yugoslavism as a Serbian hegemony and they were unwilling to abandon their own cultural traditions. The conflict throughout the period of the First Yugoslav Constitution expressed itself as a problem between Centralism (which may also be read as Great Serbia) and Federalism. The symbolic figures of these opposing sides were Serbian Nikola Pasic and Croatian Stjepan Radic who in fact was aiming Croatian independence. Misha Glenny attempts to clarify this distinction:

The dispute between ‘centralizers’ and ‘federalists’, terms not always but usually synonymous with Serbs and Croats, had its roots in two different perceptions of statehood. When Croat politicians pointed to their state traditions, such as the Sabor, the Croat parliament, and their established legal system, the cry would go up from the Serbs, ‘Ali mi smo ratovali!’ – ‘But we fought the war!’ Convinced that their heroic contribution to the First World War earned them privileges in the new state, the Serbs also believed that the experience of a century of de facto independence should give them automatic seniority. (2013:403)

Needless to say, the *coup d’etat* of King Aleksandar I in 1929 after which he declared royal dictatorship and changed the name of the state to “Yugoslavia” was a result of the power struggles within the country, and this event only worsened the situation because Mussolini found the Croatian problem in Yugoslavia useful for his expansionist ideals and some Croatian political figures took refuge in fascist Italy after the declaration of Aleksandar’s royal dictatorship. Ante Pavelic is probably one of the most significant members of this group of refugees since he was the person who set up the Croatian Fascist Movement *Ustasha*. Backed by Mussolini, the movement was founded with two training camps in Italy and Hungary.

The occupation of Yugoslavia by the Axis powers in 1941 marked the end of First Yugoslavia. The country was split into pieces by Nazi Germany and its allies; the collapse was facilitated by both the superior military force of the Axis powers and the interethnic political disputes within the country (Wachtel, 1998:128). From

this date on, the conflicts related to power struggles in the country turned out to be both a combat with the occupying Axis powers and a civil war among three opposing sides: 1. Royalist and Serbian nationalist Chetniks of Mihailovic; 2. the Fascist Croatian movement Ustasha that declared an Independent State of Croatia with the support of the Axis powers; 3. the Communist guerilla forces called Partisans who were the members of Yugoslav Communist Party and gathered under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito. In *The Balkans: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers*, Misha Gleeney portrays the fragmentation of the people of Yugoslavia during the Second World War indicating that

[t]he Chetniks were rooted to areas where Serbs lived; the Partisans appealed to all Yugoslav nationalities. Croats and Muslims could not join the Chetniks, but they were welcome in the Partisans. When Chetnik bands came into contact with Croats and Muslims, one side usually ended up being massacred. Chetnik leaders who supported the old order of royal Yugoslavia suspected that the KPJ's policy of equality for all Yugoslav nations was a way of subordinating Serbian interests to those of Croats, Slovenes and Muslims. (2012: 490)

The tension stemming from all these forces turned Yugoslavia into a great slaughterhouse during the years of the Second World War but the end of the war brought along the victory of Tito and his followers. This would start the Communist Power in Yugoslavia that aimed to avoid the mistakes of the First Yugoslav Constitution. In *The Balkans since the Second World War*, J. R Crampton claims that in the struggle among the three different forces during the War in Yugoslavia, the advantage of Tito and his Partisans was that they insisted on "Yugoslavism" in their movement. So, the post-war political settlement they promised to establish "grant(ed) equality of status and guarantee(d) the safety of all the ethnic groups of Yugoslavia" (2002:12). When the war ended with Partisan victory, Tito's solution to the antagonisms caused by the war was to create a federal system including six national republics (Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina) and two autonomous provinces within the Serbian republic (Kosovo and Vojvodina). The Communists attempted to create a supranational universal

culture which was compatible with individual national cultures in a multiethnic country (Wachtel, 1998:131).

There were two very significant myths of post-war Yugoslavia, or the Federative Republic of Yugoslavia as the country was officially named. One of these myths is the “brotherhood and unity” of peoples, and the other is “worker self-management” introduced in 1950 after the break with Stalin and the Soviet Union in 1948. In fact, the founders of Communist Yugoslavia aimed to build a Soviet model socialism and they also wanted support from the Soviet Union. However, after 1948, Tito and his colleagues needed to protect the country against a Soviet overthrow and they focused on “Tito’s Way” in governing the country, which meant self-management and non-alignment. According to Tito, this would be a higher form of socialism and a return to Leninism from Stalinist deformations (Crampton, 2002:115).

The 1960s were very significant years in Yugoslav history because of the significant decrease of centralism and the empowerment of the republics. Actually, throughout the 1950s, there was a general trend towards liberalization but this turned into a constant struggle between the liberal and conservative sides in the 1960s. As pointed out by Barbara Jelavich in *History of the Balkans*, the decentralization tendency in the economy, administration, and the party organization created an unexpected result for the state:

The six federal republics were based on the former national and historic divisions. With the loosening of the central bonds, more authority was transferred to the capitals of the republics, the majority of which had been, and still were, strongholds of fervent nationalist sentiments. When disputes arose over economic or political questions, the local leaders tended to dust off all the old flags and symbols and return with enthusiasm to the battles of the past. The national question was to become once again the predominant issue in Yugoslav internal politics and to lead to a series of crises. A basic conflict between the developed areas, Slovenia and Croatia, and to a lesser extent, Serbia, and the backward regions, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Bosnia, had already commenced. However, the really vicious disputes were to involve the old adversaries, the Serbs and the Croats, and, within the Serbian republic, the Serbs and the Albanians. (1995:393)

The tension within the country was increased by a number of incidents that revived the ethnic disputes that had been suppressed under Titoist Supranational Yugoslavism after the Second World War. For example, in 1961 people who believed in Islam were allowed to describe themselves as 'Muslims in the ethnic sense' and a decade later "they were accorded the category of 'Muslim in the sense of nationality' (Crampton, 2002:123). Also, student protests starting in Zagreb and Skopje in 1966 and showing their major outburst in 1968 in Belgrade were informing the upcoming unrest the state was going to encounter in the years to come. The protests of Albanian students in Kosovo whose very first demand was education in their native Albanian language, which was also followed by calls for full republican status for Kosovo were signs displaying that ethnic-religious nationalism would have a significant effect in the destiny of Yugoslavia. Likewise, The Croatian Spring of 1968-71 that showed up with "the feeling that for a thousand years other and usually less advanced nations had deprived the Croats of their independence" (Crampton, 2002:131) brought the cultural debate to the forefront. This debate also included the language issue, which was at the same time implicitly linked to the problem of statehood. As pointed out by Jasna Dragovic-Soso in *Saviours of the Nation*, the language issue was interpreted by Serbian and Croatian intellectuals in completely different ways:

For Croatian intellectuals 'Yugoslavism' and the common language represented a threat to Croatian identity and sovereignty, while for their Serbian counterparts, any assertion of Croatian independence was a threat to Serbian unity, reversing the traditional 19th-century goal of 'liberation and unification' of Serbs into one state. (2002:34)

Thus, as a result of all the developments in Yugoslavia related to the question of identity, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, it was witnessed that the federal government lost its influence and the separate republics steadily gained more power. According to Wachtel, the devolution of power was envisaged as a way to minimize nationalist tensions in the country, but the result was the opposite (1998:174). As the Communist Party encouraged the citizens of Yugoslavia to consider themselves as members of specific nations, the revival of nationalism was seen not only in politics,

but in culture as well, thus causing individual national groups to ask for more autonomy.

The 1980s started in Yugoslavia with two very significant events. First, the founder of the state, Josip Broz Tito died in May 1980. The decade went on with Albanian revolts in Kosovo and in fact, they would turn into a crisis that created one of the major causes for the disintegration of Yugoslavia after a violent civil war. The demonstrations that had started in a canteen in Pristina University on 11 March 1981 demanded a separate Kosovo republic and sometimes even union with Albania. As might be expected, the impact of this Albanian movement was great for Serbs, and rumors about Serbian women being raped in Kosovo and Serbs being victimized started to circulate among Serbian nationalists. Also, the Albanian birth rate in Kosovo and the decrease in Serbian population in the region created feelings of fear and victimization among Serbian people throughout the entire country. As R. J. Crampton indicates, “the realities of the situation scarcely mattered because the vital point was that Kosovo was the raw nerve of Serbian nationalism; anything which touched it produced a reflex howl of anguish” (2002:148).

Thus, the backlash of Serbian nationalism that intensified throughout the 1980s and mobilized people for war is closely related in Serbian mythology with the place of Kosovo. There are two very striking events to be mentioned in Yugoslav history in the late 1980s indicating the significance of Kosovo for Serbs. The first is the publication of the 1986 *Memorandum* written by members of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences mainly claiming that the Serbs of Kosovo are being exterminated by Albanians. The second is the scene where hundreds of Serbs were shouting “Serbia has arisen” before Milosevic when he was talking in Gazimestan, the place where the Kosovo Battle took place, on the 600th anniversary of the event. During his speech, Milosevic admitted that “Six centuries ago, Serbia heroically defended itself in the field of Kosovo, but it also defended Europe”. Reminding that six centuries later Serbs were again being engaged in new battles, he ended his speech with the sentence “Let the memory of Kosovo heroism live forever!” (Milosevic, 1989).

The use of the myths and legends related to the Battle of Kosovo is very significant for this study. Interestingly, politicians are not the only people in Yugoslav history who use the Kosovo myth as a source to keep the memory of a glorious past and a sorrowful defeat alive and to stir a belief in a grand future. There is also a nationalistic literary tradition developed with the works of Serbian authors since the very beginning of the 19th century when prominent linguists such as Vuk Karadzic started to explore and reinterpret oral folk literature. This literary tradition has many parallels with the political discourse which mobilized Serbian people for the civil war. They both use consistently the dominant Serbian national myth of “Heavenly Serbia” and represent Serbs as innocent, suffering victims who made “the choice of moral purity over military victory” in the Kosovo Battle (Anzulovic, 1999:4). Despite great stylistic differences the representatives of this tradition employ the same topics in their works.

Among the themes used by the Serbian authors who have a tendency to represent their historical experience as a people from a nationalistic viewpoint, we must mention “the race betrayal of Slavic Muslims”, “the disunity of the Slavic race”, “the impossibility of living together with these race betrayers”, “the sacrifices of Serbs for the Slavic race and for Yugoslavia”, “Serbian heroism” “the need for revenge and the extermination of the race betrayers”, “the hopes for the resurrection of a Greater Serbia”, “the images of the Evil Turk and the Evil Ottoman”, “Titoist Yugoslavia as a threat to Serbian existence”, “the evil deeds of other South Slavic people against Serbs”, “the Second World War and Ustasha massacres”, “the representation of Serbs as a people destined to repeat the suffering of Christ”, “rewriting the myth of the Kosovo Battle”, and “the denial of the Yugoslav slogan brotherhood and unity”. Set mostly in a historical background, writers use these themes to create a nationalistic discourse similar to the language used also by the politicians of culturally fragmented Yugoslavia.

This study focuses on the relationship between Serbian Ethno-Religious Nationalism and the deeply nationalistic literary works created by Serbian authors primarily during the period of Socialist Yugoslavia. It argues that rather than focusing

on the diversity of Yugoslav identity, these examples of the nationalistic Serbian literary tradition show parallelism with the dominant political discourse of the time that enhances the urge for ethnic/national disintegration stressing the impossibility of a shared Yugoslav culture. The dissertation claims further that this discourse is nourished primarily by constant references to the ancient conflicts and age-old animosities between the people constituting Yugoslavia. The study proposes that by dispelling the belief in the possibility for a peaceful coexistence under the banner of common South Slavic origin, the representatives of this deeply nationalistic literary tradition promote the belief in the failure of the Yugoslav national ideal.

In order to analyze the relationship between Serbian nationalism and literature, the study discusses three literary works focusing on the representation of the people constituting Yugoslavia, dealing more specifically with the portrayal of Serbian characters. These works are *The Bridge on the Drina* by Ivo Andric which was first published in 1945, *Dictionary of the Khazars* written by Milorad Pavic and first published in 1984, and the last one is Vuk Draskovic's novel *Knife* published in 1982. The analysis of these works is preceded by a discussion of Petar Petrovic Njegos' epic drama *The Mountain Wreath*, a foundational document that discloses the construction of Serbian national consciousness by 19th century linguists and authors. The text also reveals how nationalistic themes are used in the very early period of Serbian national literature.

The constitution and fall of the two Yugoslav states are noteworthy examples for the discussion of nationalism. It is really interesting that the people constituting these states attempted to live in a single state believing they had a common shared culture, identity, even a language. Yet both states ended up in national fragmentation that led to violent disintegration. Certainly, each nation in Yugoslavia had diverse historical experiences related to their national consciousness before, during, and after the two Yugoslav states, which also influenced their attitude towards each other while they were parts of the Yugoslav states. As our goal is to focus on Serbian nationalism, the first chapter is devoted to the rise of Serbian national consciousness in the 19th century and the formation of national literature. Certainly, before

discussing the characteristics of Serbian nationalism, the terms “nation” and “nationalism” have to be discussed in a wider context. While trying to get a general understanding about the rise and historical development of nationalism, Anthony D. Smith’s *Nationonalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey*, the articles included in *Mapping the Nation* edited by Gopal Balakrishnan, and *Theories of Nationalism* by Umut Özkırımlı proved to be really enlightening.

According to the historians and theorists who have written about nationalism, the 19th century is remarkable for the phenomenon. Indeed, the century is called “the Age of Nationalism” because it is the time when a great number of national movements are seen in world history. On the other hand, in the background of these national movements, the ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution have a pivotal role. Ideas such as “free-will”, “self-determination”, “general-will” which are vital for the Revolution, dramatically reversed the places of “aristocracy” and “the Third Estate” that gets its power from the People. The influences of thinkers such as Kant, Rousseau, Sieyes, Herder, and Renan who try to answer the question “What is a nation?” are crucial in this respect too. It must also be pointed out that the discussion of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution was widely influenced by key works in the field such as *Nationalism* by Elie Kedourie and *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History* by Hans Kohn. In fact, they can be defined as two of the earliest influential works in the theory of nationalism.

Certainly, there is a great diversity in the answers to the questions “What is a nation?” and “What forms a nation?” Among these answers, some are “a common past or destiny”, “a shared culture”, “a national language”, “determination to live together”, “ethnicity”, “a common territory” etc. In nationalism literature, the necessity of having or living in a nation state is frequently discussed, as well. So, there is not an exact answer about the first nation state in history. For some critics, France is the first nation state, but others argue it is Britain that first displayed the features of a fully-formed nation state. In *Militarist Modernleşme: Almanya, Japonya ve Türkiye* (*Militarist Modernisation: Germany, Japan and Turkey*) Murat Belge puts forward that France, Britain and the United States are the first three nation states, but

they had important structural differences such as the transition from aristocracy to bourgeoisie.

As might be expected, Serbian nationalism also has distinctive characteristics. One of the most significant features of the Serbian people is that their historical experience reveals the in-betweenness of having their own empire that lasted for two hundred years and being ruled by another empire for hundreds of years. Another important feature is that their national identity was developed in a close relationship with Orthodox Christianity, which displays the impact of the Ottoman *millet* system in the historical continuity of not only Serbian, but also of all Balkan national identities. The 19th century began with national rebellions in the Balkans and in 1804, the Serbian Rebellion was seen as the first one in the whole Balkan region but the initial target of this movement is controversial. It started under the leadership of the pig trader Karadjordjevic and it cannot be stated clearly whether it started only against the local *dahis* or against the Empire, whether it was motivated by national consciousness and had an intellectual background or whether it aimed full independence from the Sultan.

Moreover, the transition from monarchies to the model of nation states in Central Europe and the Balkans, including the Serbian independence movement, does not follow the same pattern. The first reason for this is the lack of powerful aristocracy in the Balkans. Also, there is not an enlightenment background in the region such as the one offered by the French Revolution. However, the attempts of the intellectuals to create a national consciousness are very crucial in the Serbs' struggle for independence. In fact, as it will be seen in the entire study, Serbian intellectuals had a significant influence not only in the 19th century, but also in more modern times including the establishment and disintegration of the two Yugoslav states.

In the first chapter of the study, after the discussion of the characteristics of Serbian nationalism, the contribution of two 19th century Serbian intellectuals to the creation of the national consciousness and a national literature is pointed out. The first of these intellectuals, Vuk Karadzic, did not deal only with the classification of

Serbian language and identity, he contributed greatly for the emergence of a national literature by compiling oral folk poetry as well. Indeed, the pivotal place of the mythology related to the Kosovo Battle was a result of his attempts to compile folk literature. In this study, the Kosovo myths and legends are analyzed as examples of the *invented* nature of tradition theorized by Eric Hobsbawm in *The Invention of Tradition*.

The compilation of Serbian oral folk poetry continued with the creation of epic poems, the first examples of the Serbian nationalistic literary tradition. The most popular and most influential of these works is *The Mountain Wreath* by Petar Petrovic Njegos, a text that portrays the betrayal of Slavic Muslims and puts forward the idea that disunity, since the Kosovo Battle, has been the most crucial reason for the destruction of the Slavic race. It proposes an ultra-nationalistic discourse and portrays a society driven by deep religious conflicts. According to the narrative, a peaceful life is not possible for the Slavic race unless the betrayers are not exterminated. So, the work can easily be read as a call for revenge and it must be pointed out that the text makes constant references to mythology and characters related to the Kosovo Battle. Thus, the epic is a prototype of the future works in the nationalistic Serbian literature.

The second chapter of the study views *The Bridge on the Drina* by Ivo Andric from a historical perspective focusing on the representation of the relationship between people of different ethnic/religious background in the Bosnian town Visegrad. In fact, Visegrad can be interpreted as the entire Yugoslav region because it shares the same diversity. As it is clear from the title, the bridge is significant both as a central place in the lives of people in Visegrad and as a symbol, endlessly suggestive of meanings. In tune with the idea of the dissolution of the Yugoslav national idea, the present interpretation of the bridge foregrounds its function to *divide* rather than unite. The narrative time of the novel, as a chronicle, covers hundreds of years reporting the hayday and the decline of Ottoman rule as well as the end of Austrian rule in the town which is signified with the destruction of the bridge. The bridge is generally interpreted as the common local that offers a temporary

meeting ground for people of diverse ethnic and religious background. Our approach foregrounds the *temporary* nature of its function to unite and presents it rather as an edifice symbolizing the construction of a single nation/community, namely the Serbian nation/community. Throughout the novel the reader encounters the traditional themes and symbols of the Serbian nationalistic discourse. To give an example, the violent murder of the Serbian peasant Radisav turns the bridge into another Serbian Golgotha that revives the mythological story of King Lazar in the Kosovo Battle and the myth of Heavenly Serbia representing Serbs as a people destined to sacrifice just like Jesus Christ. Moreover, the representation of people in Visegrad reminds the reader Maria Todorova's Balkanist discourse since the novel emphasizes the deep historical animosities among different ethnic groups and thus implies the impossibility of the unity of these people. The novel is also significant as a prominent illustration of "the Serbian race betrayal syndrome" and the images of "the evil Turk/Ottoman". These images can also be seen in Ivo Andric's doctoral thesis *The Development of Spiritual Life in Bosnia*. Along with Maria Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans*, Tatjana Aleksic's works *Mythistory and Narratives of the Nation* and *Sacrificed Body* have been crucial for the formulation of the theoretical frame of this chapter because the representation of nationality/national identity in a national narrative cannot be split from the theme of victimhood and sacrifice.

The third chapter of the study attempts to read Milorad Pavic's most experimental novel *Dictionary of the Khazars* as a national allegory of the general Serbian historical experience and a picture of a more specific period, the representation of Titoist multiethnic Yugoslavia. Written in the form of a dictionary, the novel is indeed a work of great stylistic experimentation that questions authorship, the role of the reader, and the process of reading. This turns the book into one of the most prominent pioneers of postmodernism in Serbian literature. Relating the political atmosphere in Eastern Europe in the 1980s to the advent of postmodernism in the region, this study claims that each society has a diverse way of experiencing and interpreting the postmodern. So, it is pointed out that Pavic's work is also strongly tied with the problems of nationality and identity which shapes the Yugoslav cultural/political context in the 1980s. The book is about a

mythical/historical event, the conversion of the tribe of the Khazars into one of the three main monotheistic religions. After this event, the Khazars lose the essence of their national identity. However, it is not exactly known which religion they were converted to, because the representatives and sources of each religion claim that it was theirs. In Christian, Islamic, and Hebrew sources about the event the reader encounters characters and stories related to the Khazars and their conversion. In our reading of the novel, the Khazars are interpreted as the forerunners of the Serbs who lose the essence of their national identity and struggle inbetween the narratives of diverse great powers. Also, while presenting the state organisation of the Khazars, the narrative makes constant reference to the organisation of Titoist Yugoslavia and its state policy that poses a threat to Serbian existence. Being composed of three different parts that present incoherent accounts of the same event, the novel presents both in form and content the failure of the Yugoslav national ideal. So, rather than being a pure fantasy about an ancient people named Khazars, the book offers a narrative strongly tied with the Yugoslav and Serbian reality. The theoretical frame of the chapter was shaped by works such as Andrew Wachtel's article "Postmodernism as Nightmare: Milorad Pavić's Literary Demolition of Yugoslavia", David Damrosch's *The Poisoned Book*, and Tatjana Aleksic's *National Definition through Postmodern Fragmentation: Milorad Pavić's Dictionary of the Khazars*. Moreover, while reading the novel as a national allegory, we had to make reference to Fredric Jameson's *Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism*, but the criticism of Jameson's theory was taken into consideration and Aijaz Ahmad's response to Jameson in *Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory'* was significant in this respect.

The third and last chapter of the study attempts to reveal the outburst of historical themes in the literature of the 1980s when Yugoslavia found herself in a violent war. In fact, this is the period when Yugoslav literature turned from the tradition of "the Partisan Novel" (that mostly narrates the struggles and triumphs of Titoist partisans during the Second World War) to novels that report the experiences of ethnic/national groups in Yugoslavia, particularly in times of war. As might be expected, in Serbian nationalistic literature the outburst of national/historical themes

expresses itself in the works of numberless authors of the period most of whom are also famous political figures. Vuk Draskovic's *Knife* provides a really eloquent illustration of this trend in the literary history of the country. Actually, the novel can be read as a rewriting of *The Mountain Wreath*, because similar to Njegos' epic, the novel ends with a call for revenge. There are two narrative times of the novel, the first traces the period of the Second World War and the second reports the year 1963 in Federalist Yugoslavia. The narrative starts with a scene where a Serbian family is massacred by Muslims who are members of the Croatian Fascist Ustasha movement. Throughout the novel Ustasha violence against Serbian people is represented with pornographic details. In fact, the book is about the search of the protagonist Alija Osmanovic for his identity. At the end he discovers that he is a Serb whose family was massacred by the very people who adopted and took care of him. In this way, the image of the suffering victimized Serb is again revived in this novel because the narrator is quite selective in rendering the violence against Serbs. Also, Titoist Federalist Yugoslavia is depicted as a system that protects the Ustasha war criminals while threatening Serbian identity. In this way the narrative asserts that the slogan "brotherhood and unity" has never been achieved in the country. Along with the presentation of the Serbs as victims of evil and endless betrayals of their brothers of the Slavic race, they are also depicted as people who do not forget and who do not forgive. The novel thus implies a future disturbed by interracial combat. The inevitability of the conflict itself is presented as the sole condition that will guarantee the grand future deserved by the endlessly victimized Serb.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORIES OF NATIONALISM, SPECIFICITY OF SERBIAN NATIONALISM AND THE QUEST FOR NATIONAL LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

1.1. THE ROOTS OF NATIONALISM: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

As one of the most influential scholars theorizing about the formation of nations and nationalism, Benedict Anderson puts forward a very influential expression for nations, he calls them “imagined communities”. He argues in the book with the same title *Imagined Communities* that nationalism is not natural or given. It is a very recent phenomenon shaped by modern historical developments some of which are “the weakening of sacred languages”, “the development of print capitalism”, and “the rise of the importance of vernaculars” as a result of the first two factors. For him, nothing more than the desire of capitalism to sell more books affected the development of vernaculars and choosing one standard language among many different dialects. Besides, according to Anderson, newspapers and even the novel as a literary genre, by creating simultaneity, helped the readers “imagine” the *other* people that they did not know in real life (Anderson, 1991: 37-46).

Among many modernist scholars writing about nationalism, Ernest Gellner is also a significant theorist who contributed abundantly to the debate about nationalism. He also places the idea of nationalism in a recent time and states that nationalism is the product of the “industrial age”. For him, in the agrarian period of human history, people were severely divided from each other according to their places and roles in the society. There was no need of educating everybody, and people were only communicating with those living nearby, mostly in the same village. On the other hand, the industrial age needed a system where people could substitute each other. Also, the duties of people in society were not as strict as in the agrarian period. Thus, this system required a high culture, a mandatory education

system and standardized individuals. For Gellner, the underlying reason of nationalism was this change in the structure of society (1983: 8-52).

Apart from Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner who are modernist thinkers indicating that social and cultural changes are more significant for the emergence of nationalism, we can mention other scholars who view nationalism as something that emerged at a definite modern time in history as a result of certain economic or political factors. Tom Nairn and Michael Hechter, for example, stress the influence of economic transformations in the rise of nationalism. As Nairn puts forward, nationalism is not the natural result of industrialization. Instead, it resulted from “an uneven development of history since the eighteenth century” (Özkırımlı, 2000:75). On the other hand, Michael Hechter coins the term “internal colonies” to explain the “revival of ethnic sentiments and nationalist movements in the industrial West” (Smith; 1998: 57). As Hechter indicates, economic inequalities and cultural differences between the center and the periphery generate ethnic solidarity and nationalism. However, “adequate communication among members of the oppressed group” is needed as well to create a nationalist movement (Smith, 1998:60).

In addition to economic transformations, scholars such as John Breuilly, Paul R. Brass, and Eric Hobsbawn stress that the emergence of nationalism was mostly a result of the political transformations in world history. As indicated by John Breuilly, nationalism refers to “political movements seeking or exercising state power and justifying such actions with nationalist arguments” (Smith, 1998:84). He claims that nationalistic movements demand a nation which has a peculiar character. The values and interests of the nation have priority over all other values and interests. Also, the nation must be independent as much as possible since this is the main requirement for political sovereignty (Özkırımlı, 2000:84). Eric Hobsbawn, who is known as one of the most influential theorists of nationalism and who is especially popular with the term “invented traditions”, puts forward that the nature of nations can best be understood by analyzing national traditions (Smith, 1998:117). For Hobsbawn, traditions appearing or claiming to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes they are invented. According to him, the period between 1870 and 1914 is

the time when invented traditions saw an apogee coinciding with the emergence of mass politics (Özkırımlı, 2000:94). For Hobsbawn, the event which made nationalism functional is the emergence of the modern state, because it is an ideology responding to the requirements of that form of government (Kerestecioğlu, 2009: 314).

However, the literature of nationalism does not only include modernists and there are many other thoughts trying to determine when nationalism as a phenomenon came to exist. Primordialism, for example, stays on the very opposite side of the modernist understanding of nationalism. Primordialists indicate that nations have existed for a long time and we can trace back their history. In history, “there were earlier periods when the nation knew greatness; earlier heroes and golden ages which can inspire members of the nation in the present” (Breuilly, 1996:149). It can easily be put forward that nearly all nationalist movements in world history support the primordialist definition of nationalism rather than signifying its constructed nature, because for primordialists, ethnic identity is independent of historical and social conditions and it is not affected by economic and institutional regulations. Primordialists also believe that ethnic identity exists independently from time and space because it is tied to a strong blood relation (Aktürk, 2013:24-25).

There is also another approach which could probably be placed between the ideas of modernists and primordialists. Called ethno-symbolism, its main representatives are Anthony D. Smith and John A. Armstrong. According to Özkırımlı, ethno-symbolism is an approach emphasizing the role of myths, symbols, memories, values, and traditions in the formation and development of ethnicity and nationalism (2000:143). Anthony D. Smith, for instance, in his theory of nationalism, states that ethnic identity is not a recent invention, because its roots existed as *ethnies*, people who shared the same myths, histories, and cultures centuries ago, at least in Europe and in the Middle East. Assuredly, he recognizes that the links between those *ethnies* are not direct and in addition to the characteristics of *ethnies*, modern nations also possess legal, political, and economic unity (Breuilly, 1996:150).

Indeed, all these approaches try to answer a number of questions including the very basic one “What is a nation?” On the very first page of one of the most comprehensive works on the theory of nationalism entitled *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey*, Anthony D. Smith discusses the difference between historians and social scientists in their attempts to date the birth of nationalism:

Historians may differ over the exact moment of nationalism’s birth, but social scientists are clear: nationalism is a modern movement and ideology, which emerged in the latter half of the eighteenth century in Western Europe and America, and which, after its apogee in two world wars, is now beginning to decline and give way to global forces which transcend the boundaries of nation-states. (2003:1)

The paragraph does not only make a claim about the modernity of nationalism and nations. Besides, it suggests that it is an ideology and has a definite birthplace: the period between the world wars was the time when nationalistic movements were most forceful in world history and a time of decline has come for nationalism. However, there has also been a debate in nationalism literature problematizing topics such as the role of the nation in human affairs, what constitutes a nation, the place of language and ethnicity in the existence of nationality, the role of the intelligentsia in nation formation, the difference between nation and state formation, whether a common culture, a territory, a shared past or common goals for the future are more important for a nation.

In intellectual and political history, many scholars have tried to find answers to these questions. 19th century is called “the age of nationalism” because of the abundance of movements that aimed the establishment of nation states. However, it can be asserted that nationalism as an idea was born in the eighteenth century with the works of thinkers and historians such as Kant, Rousseau, Herder, Lord Acton, Marx and Renan. Although they are not considered to be theorists of nationalism their contribution to the field has been widely acknowledged (Özkırmılı, 2000:10). Considered as a field of study, the development of the debate of nationalism can be divided into several periods: 1. The period between 1918-1945 when it became ‘a

subject of academic inquiry’ and the works of Hans Kohn and Carleton Hayes were published; 2. The period between 1945-1989 when the debate gained more theoretical background and it became more intense with the decolonization process and new nation-states in Africa and Asia; 3. The period after 1989 when the cold war ended (Özkırımlı, 2000:10).

Those who write about nationalism indicate that this phenomenon does not have its own great ideologues and theoreticians. Nevertheless, those who have a significant place in the history of world philosophy have produced ideas about the emergence and development of this ideology, and perhaps even influenced the emergence of nationalism as a phenomenon and ideology. Elie Kedourie, who has made quite an influential contribution to the literature of nationalism, reveals that everything begins with Kant and claims that eighteenth century Western philosophy and the ideas produced by enlightenment thinkers form the basis of nationalism as a movement and ideology (1965:32-34). According to Kedourie nationalism is a doctrine invented in Europe in the early 19th century. This doctrine, as he puts forward in his work *Nationalism*, which is considered to be one of the earliest studies in the field, suggests that people are divided naturally into nations and they are recognized with certain identifiable characteristics. Besides, for him the only legitimate government is the “self-government of the nation” (Kedourie, 1965). Assuredly, the roots of this doctrine (which in fact has very strong ties with the tradition of thought including ideas such as “freedom of individual”, “self-determination”, “free will”, “general will” etc.) were also shaped by eighteenth-century philosophy grounded upon the ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution.

Kedourie attaches importance to the contribution of Kant, his followers and the German idealistic tradition in the formulation of nationalistic ideology. But perhaps it would be useful to look at Rousseau and the notion of “general will” before Kant, since this notion was crucial for the French revolution, and after that for the establishment of nation-states. First, Rousseau considers the concept of “general will” as opposed to “private will”. According to him, the greatest danger a person

can face in life is to be under the tyranny of others. To prevent this, one has to give up the private or selfish will and choose general will. This means at the same time to abandon being a “natural man” who lives only for his own interests, and to be a “citizen” who is part of the society upon which he depends and is connected to. However, “seeing a supreme moral good in citizenship” and having “a consciousness of togetherness” are required to the sense of citizenship and general will (Özkırımlı, 2000:12). What Rousseau advises in *The Government of Poland* to the Poles in order to create a national consciousness may be a good example of his ideas related to nationality and citizenship:

Give a different bent to the passions of the Poles; in doing so, you will shape their minds and hearts in a national pattern that will set them apart from other peoples (...) They will obey, not elude the laws, because the laws will suit them, and will enjoy the inward assent of their own wills. They will love their fatherland; they will serve it zealously and with all their hearts. Where love of fatherland prevails, even a bad legislation would produce good citizens. (1995:32)

Kedourie admits Immanuel Kant's contribution to the field naming his ideas about the "freedom of man". First, Kant associates freedom with morality and makes a distinction between the external world and man's own inner world. According to Kant, it is possible for a person to be free only by acting according to his own moral rules. If the human being obeys these rules, then he will have “free will” (Kedourie, 1971:15). According to Özkırımlı, for Kant, “virtue” and “free will” were equal, and it also meant “autonomous will”, which approved the new idea that the individual from then on was the center of the universe and he was sovereign as well. So, self-determination became the “supreme political good” (2000:11).

If the break with the feudal system or a world order dominated by the dynasties is related to a political structure where nations dominate the world, the French Revolution must be absolutely linked to the coming of "the age of nationalism". With the revolution, people saw how they had the capacity to choose how to be governed, and republicanism spread in the world after the revolution and

during the Napoleonic period. Emmanuel Joseph Sieyes, a very important founding father of the idea of revolution, guided the struggle of the bourgeoisie against the monarchy and nobility, with the idea that the nobility was only a burden on the nation. In his manifesto titled "What is the Third Estate" written during the very early months of the revolution, he stated that the absence of the previous two estates, which were the clergy and the nobility, would not cause any deficiency. Thus, the revolution has become a turning point where The Third Estate, which gets its power from the People, has become everything to form a full nation (Sieyes, 1995:36-37). Now, different estates would become a "National Assembly" with the pressure of this Third Estate, representing a whole nation. So, Kedourie, while discussing the results of the French revolution on world politics indicates that

[i]t was not merely a civil disturbance, a *coup d'état*, which replaced one set of rulers by another. This was familiar to Europe, and the French Revolution was indeed widely taken at the outset to be one such commotion, or else an attempt to realize the programme of reforms which Enlightened Absolutism had officially made its own. But as became increasingly apparent the French Revolution introduced new possibilities in the use of political power, and transformed the ends for which rulers might legitimately work. The Revolution meant that if the citizens of a state no longer approved of the political arrangements of their society, they had the right and the power to replace them by others more satisfactory. As the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen had it: 'The principle of sovereignty resides essentially in the Nation; no body of men, no individual, can exercise authority that does not emanate expressly from it.' Here, then, is one prerequisite without which a doctrine such as nationalism is not conceivable. (1965:13)

Hans Kohn who writes about nationalist ideology and who is at the forefront of the historians attempting to explain the formation of this ideology describes the nation in the following way: "Nationalism is a state of mind, in which the supreme loyalty of the individual is felt to be due the nation-state" (1965:9). Obviously, in earlier times, before the nation-states emerged and they gained a firm foothold in world politics, people had loyalties for different political structures. These structures included tribes or clans, city states, feudal governments, dynasties or empires. However, the year 1789, along with the revolution, witnessed the birth of the French nation, by which the absolute sovereignty of the king was being replaced by the

sovereignty of the people (Kohn, 1965:23). On the other hand, according to Kohn, it was the conflicts in 17th century England that “nationalism with its full manifestation” came to exist in history: “For the first time the authoritarian tradition on which the Church and the State had rested was challenged by the seventeenth century English Revolutions in the name of the liberty of man” (1965:16).

Historians and theoreticians who view nationalism from a modernist point of view claim that nationalism emerged as a result of a certain break from previous systems and that a historical starting point can be given for its emergence. Opinions about when nationalism arose first in world history and which states can be considered as first nation states can vary. For instance, Murat Belge points out that the first nation states were Britain, France and the United States.

Nevertheless, again according to the analysis of Belge about the formation of nationalism in these places, there are great differences in every country regarding the underlying conditions and how the ideology of nationalism emerged and evolved.

Belge argues that the bourgeoisie was first seen in Britain where there was a mutual top-down and bottom-up process between aristocracy and bourgeoisie. The small landowners started to rent the lands of aristocrats and the aristocracy in turn started dealing with trade. This created a movement toward capitalism. Also, despite the civil war in Britain in the 17th century, the aristocracy and bourgeoisie were able to come to an agreement in the parliament. What is different in the foundation of the United States as a nation-state is that there was no peasantry or feudality in this country. Here, people did not need to struggle against an aristocracy but with Britain which was called “the native country”. On the other hand, the revolution did not end with “The Declaration of Independence” since, after it, the system of slavery created a kind of aristocracy in the South. Only after the demobilization of the slaver plantation owners and the South were involved in the capitalist system, the revolution ended. Then, in the third nation-state Murat Belge discusses in his work, in France, there was a really rooted aristocracy whose place in society increased the injustice and economic problems and led to the actualization of the French

Revolution by the “third estate”. What was also different in France was the great intellectual background created by the Enlightenment (Belge, 2011).

Serbian nationalism is based upon the idea that Serbs are a people with a rich heritage they managed to preserve during the long years of Ottoman rule. As the discussion above illustrates, each country has a distinct way of experiencing the emergence of nationalism. Serbian nationalism, likewise, has its own characteristics. First of all living under the rule of another empire is a significant feature of Serbian nationalism. Also, if we consider its intellectual background, the French revolution and the ideas of enlightenment assuredly had an influence on the Serbian intelligentsia, but if we have to make a comparison, the German romantic tradition seems to have a greater influence. Also, the shaping of this national movement starting with uprisings led by pig dealers and the questions about how the national consciousness was created give us clues about the features of Serbian nationalism, which will be discussed in the following pages of this study.

1.2. CHARACTERISTICS OF SERBIAN NATIONALISM

It must not be a coincidence that the first uprisings against the ruling empires in the Balkans took place in the beginning of the nineteenth century, the age of nationalism. This mobility initiated by the Serbs and supported by many other nationalist independence movements would result in the collapse of The Ottoman and Austrian Empires that had ruled the region for centuries. The first rebellion against the Ottoman government in the Balkans was carried out in 1804 under the leadership of the Serbian pig trader Karajordjevic. The historical rhetoric of the Serbian nationalist tradition claims that even this very first revolt was the result of deep Serbian national awareness and that its aim was the establishment of an independent nation state. On the other hand, it is debated whether there was, as in Central Europe, an intellectual basis and a bourgeoisie to create a nationalist consciousness in the Balkans.

As pointed out by Tim Judah, large part of the Balkans belonged to the Roman Empire since the first century AD and when the Empire was divided between

Rome and Constantinople in the fourth century, different people living in the area such as Greeks, Thracians, Illyrians, Dardanians, Romans, and Dacians mixed up but it should be noted that there were no Slavs. It was only in the early sixth century when people speaking Slavonic languages started to migrate to the Balkans. First, they came as raiders, but they began to settle in the seventh century. According to some scholars the place where Slavs came from was the land between the Danube and the Carpathian mountains. Others claim that they came from the Caucasus region and that they were ruled by Iranian-derived elites (Judah, 2000:7-8).

The Serbs settled first in Raska, known today as Sandzak, in Montenegro, Hercegovina, and southern Dalmatia. After the arrival of Serbs, they were subjected to missionaries from Orthodox Constantinople and it is believed that the first Serbian clans which converted to Christianity did so in the ninth century. Also, in the eleventh century the first Serbian kingdom was established in an area that is in the boundaries of Montenegro today. 1160 is a significant year in Serbian history since it is the date when Stefan Nemanja founded the Nemanja dynasty that ruled for two hundred years. During this period, Kosovo was also incorporated into the Serbian kingdom. The period when Tsar Dusan ruled the dynasty is known as the zenith of Serbian history, and after his death in 1355 the disintegration of the Nemanjic Empire started. Also, a new power, the Ottoman Turks, was entering the region and after the first defeat of Serbs at the battle on the Maritsa river, Turks would win the Kosovo war against the Serbs in 1389, which would signify the destruction of the Serbian Empire and the beginning of Turkish rule that would last for hundreds of years until the nineteenth century (Judah, 2000:9).

Misha Glenny's *The Balkans: Nationalism, War and Great Powers, 1804-2012* is a book on Balkan history covering a very significant period of time and it is a really important source that provides a comprehensive historical background and traces how boundaries were shaped throughout history in this region. The book opens with the 1800s when the first uprisings against Ottoman rule started and what Glenny puts forward about this uprising is that the rebellion of 1804 was not actually an attempt to devastate the central rule of the Sultan. It was against the local rulers and

janissaries in the Serbian pashalik. Glenny also puts forward that the Ottoman ruler of the period, Selim III distributed weapons to Serbian peasants to help the central rule against the local janissaries (2001:6). Besides, The Karadjordje rebellion was completely suppressed by the Ottoman State in 1813 and he fled to Vienna, after which Milos Obrenovic began the second Serb revolt in 1815 and gained strength by establishing good relations with both the Ottoman Sultan and Russia. Strangely, many Serbian peasant rebellions took place in the period when they had already obtained autonomy within the Ottoman Empire. Glenny stresses the difficulty of defining the nature of Serbian national consciousness in these very first attempts to get rid of the Ottoman rule. In order to exemplify this difficulty, he discusses the relationship between the leader of the second Serbian uprising and the Serbian people:

The great loser in Miloš's dazzling diplomatic game was the Serbian peasantry. Although Obrenovic's rule restored order throughout the province, he was more systematic in his economic exploitation of the Serbs than the Ottomans had ever been. His reign, which lasted until his abdication in 1839, was punctuated by rebellions. At first these were organized by jealous chieftains like Karadjordje, but increasingly they attracted the support of the peasantry. (2001:21)

This period of the Serbian national movement witnessed a number of rebellions, their repressions, the escape of leaders to Europe, an autonomous rule within the Ottoman Empire, the violent acts carried out by national leaders against each other, and the fluctuating support of Russia, yet the Serbian nationalist movement had to wait for The Berlin Treaty in 1878 to gain independence from the Ottoman rule. This fact clearly exhibits the role of the Great Powers in the nation-building processes not only in Serbia, but in the whole Balkan region.

Kemal Karpat, a Turkish historian who is also from the Balkans discusses nationalism and nation-states in the Balkans in *Balkanlar'da Osmanlı Mirası ve Milliyetçilik (Ottoman Heritage and Nationalism in the Balkans)* and emphasizes the effect of Great Powers such as England, Russia, Germany, and Italy in building nation-states and mapping the Balkans (Karpat, 2015: passim). Not only in the

beginning of 1800s, but also in more recent history, those great powers, mostly in treaties one of which is The Berlin Treaty in 1878, shaped the history and geography in the Balkans. According to Karpát, contrary to primordial notions related to the nationality claim, the historical continuity of a fully-formed nation is not possible. Only a religious continuity coming from The Middle Ages may be accepted in terms of Orthodox Serbs and this is the result of the *millet* system introduced by the Ottoman rulers. According to İlber Ortaylı, the word *millet* is used as a synonym of religion and signifies the members of a certain religion since the classical Ottoman Age. Also, it must be pointed out that the millet organization depends on a religious and denominational basis (Ortaylı, 2005: 66). Thus, it was this system that allowed the individual development of religious communities in the Empire, which also had a great effect on the fact that not only for Serbs but for the other societies of the Balkans, nationalism had an undeniable strong tie with religion (Karpát, 2015:28). While discussing national identity, Karpát indicates that the national myths of these people were developed in the 19th and 20th centuries, mostly after their independent states were founded. In the 9th century when the first Medieval Serbian Empire was founded this agrarian society did not have the features of a nation-state. Karpát argues that these medieval states were political properties founded depending on the model of Byzantium state organization. These communities did not have a shared ethnic or political awareness and they did not have anything in common with the nation-states of the nineteenth century (2015:24-25).

On the other hand, Balkan historians interpret the first Serbian uprisings as a movement of national independence. Indeed, as Selim Aslantaş puts forward, there are three common interpretations for these movements in literature. They view the uprisings as a democratic bourgeois movement, as a national struggle for independence, or as a simple peasant uprising deprived of national goals (Aslantaş, 2006:83). Nevertheless, Marxist historians assert that in the 19th century there was not a bourgeois class in Serbia, so the Serbian revolution cannot be seen as a democratic bourgeois movement. According to these historians, the Serbian revolution is a movement of national independence or peasantry. It is also significant that in the very beginning of the movement, a struggle based on class difference

started to emerge and the leaders representing the rural bourgeoisie increased their political power while the traditional democratic institutions represented by the peasantry lost their efficiency. These observations demonstrate that a typical peasant revolution transformed into a bourgeoisie revolution (Aslantaş, 2006: 85). From that moment on the first Serbian uprising became a pivotal point of reference for Serbian intelligentsia and their romantic nationalistic discourse.

The ethnic and religious basis of the Serbian nationalistic thought and movement surely owes a lot to the German romantic tradition of nationalism. Actually, theorists of nationalism make a distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism. What Hans Kohn asserts about this distinction is that after travelling from the West to the East nationalism changed its meaning and gained a culturally exclusive and politically authoritarian nature, although it was “predominantly voluntarist, culturally inclusive and founded on liberal political principles” before (Berger, 2006:43). In this distinction, France is mostly known as the archetypal model of civic nationalism since the French nation-state was “based on a liberal, inclusive, voluntarist social contract of free citizens which arose out of the political thought of the Enlightenment” (Baycroft, 2006: 28). What is also very significant in the French type of nationalism is that individuals did not have to be born French to belong to the nation. Instead, they could be assimilated through the acceptance of the principles of the Republic summarized with the slogan “liberty, equality, fraternity”.

On the other hand, in German nationalism the liberal and tolerant discourse of the Enlightenment did not exist. As stated by Stefan Berger, it was infused with aggressive feelings of xenophobia and cultural superiority “rooted in factors such as blood, common traditions, language, and religion” (2006:43). In *The Birth of German Nationalism*, Liah Greenfeld points out that romanticism had lasting effects on the character of German nationalism. According to the German nationalistic thought, the individual could be a real human being within the collectivity of a nation and in this collectivity the individual could reach the eternity. In order for the nation to live, the individuals had to be ready to sacrifice their lives. The particular character of the nation was seen in the language of that nation, and since it was not

polluted with borrowings from other languages, the German language was able to stay pure. Also, Germans were a perfect nation, because they could precisely represent humanity, so the destiny of the German nation was to have a great role in the world (Greenfeld, 2006). These ideas were put forward in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century by the key apologists of German nationalism such as Johann Gottfried Herder and Johann Gottlieb Fichte.

It is obvious that the arguments of German nationalism were “not rooted in the abstract, universal ideals of the French revolution” (Berger, 2006:43). In order to emphasize the superiority of the German nation, ideologues like Herder and Fichte heavily emphasized culture, language, literature, customs, and religion. Also, continuous references to history, to past times when Germanic tribes were defending their freedom against the Roman invaders, aimed to legitimize the “demands for greater political participation in the imagined national community” (Berger, 2006:44).

The attempts of the Serbian intelligentsia to create a Serbian national consciousness in the 19th century reveals the characteristics of German nationalism rather than the French type of civic nationalism. There was obviously a great emphasis on language and religion as well as common traditions. From the very beginning Serbian nationalism chose to define itself with an overt reference to the great past times of the nation and to give voice to its hopes for a greater Serbian state. Obviously, the most significant event in the past of the nation is the Kosovo War in 1389 and the myths of the nation generated by the intelligentsia after the 19th century are based upon this specific event.

1.2.1. THE KOSOVO BATTLE IN SERBIAN MYTHOLOGY

Norman Naimark, in *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth Century Europe*, discusses examples of war, ethnic cleansing, and genocide in the modern world. One of the chapters in the book deals with the civil war in Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Naimark’s main argument is that peoples in the Balkans had lived together peacefully for hundreds of years, that the discourse of ‘ancient hatreds’,

‘antagonism’, ‘Slavic Muslims as Turkifiers’ is a modern one, that it is generated with nationalistic myths in the process of nation-formation and that they were later used by the intelligentsia and politicians for the realization of their nationalistic goals (Naimark, 2002).

A very eloquent illustration of the usage of the “rhetoric of war” by politicians is Slobodan Milosevic’s famous speech delivered in 1989 to a million of Serbs on the 600th anniversary of the Kosovo War. This war is the foundation myth of Serbs because, according to Serbian historiography, before their defeat by the Ottomans in the Kosovo War the medieval Serbian Empire was a highly prosperous independent state of a European rank. As Milorad Pavic points out, Serbs at those times were “eating with golden forks”. The Kosovo War marked the beginning of a long Ottoman occupation that lasted 400 years until Serbian people gained their independence in 1878.

As mentioned above, the Kosovo war between Serbs and Ottomans on 28 June 1389 marked a turning point in Serbian history and mythology. This date, referred to as the Vidovdan or St. Vitus Day, has been pivotal in the calendar of the Serbian Orthodox Church and in people’s daily life. As Michael Sells indicates, in the 1860s the feast days of Vid and Prince Lazar were combined and in 1892, the day became for the first time an official holiday in the Church calendar as “Prophet Amos and Prince Lazar (Vid’s Day)”. Besides, the name of the 1921 constitution of Yugoslavia was “Vidovdan Constitution”. Also, on this day the school year ended throughout Yugoslavia (Sells, 1998:44). These practices clearly show the dominance of Serbian cultural elements in the first Yugoslav state. Furthermore this date has such a great place in Serbian national consciousness that the anniversaries of this event have always witnessed incidents that deeply affected world history. One of these events of paramount importance for the whole world occurred on Vidovan in 1914. As Sells marks “[i]t was on Vid’s day in 1914 that Gavrilo Princip, who had memorized Njegos’s *Mountain Wreath*, assassinated Archduke Ferdinand and set off World War I” (1998:44).

In Serbian mythology the story about the Kosovo Battle is based upon the deeds of prince Lazar who, very much like Jesus Christ, sacrifices himself and dies in battle. Since the 19th century Serbian nationalists have been using the myth to demonstrate the sacrifices of Serbs for the Balkan peoples and Europeans. According to this nationalist narrative that is reiterated in works of literature and other forms of art as well, this role is not limited only with the Kosovo War. The Serbs sacrificed themselves during the First World War too, and this time they did so for the entire Slavic race. For that reason, when they became victorious at the end of the war, they believed they had to be the dominant power in the South-Slavic state called “The Kingdom of Slovenes, Serbs, and Croats” which then became the “First Yugoslavia” in 1929. They viewed this power as a duly deserved substitute for all the sacrifices they had made and they aimed to establish a Greater Serbian State including the lands immersed with the blood of their ancestors, the most important of which was Kosovo.

This discourse of enmity, sacrifice, and victimization, the claim to be the protector of all Slavic people against “enemies” both without and within and the destiny of being perpetually betrayed have existed in the collective memory of Serbs since the nineteenth century. This discourse has been repeated not only by politicians but by intellectuals as well in order to construct a national mythology and hold the nation together. As Maria Todorova states, manipulation of historical memory does not occur only within Serbian boundaries but in the whole Balkan Peninsula as well:

In the past decade, memory and the manipulation of memory have been posited as one of the central aspects of Balkan conflicts. In a less analytical vein, a popular if unedifying stereotype portrays the Balkans as a region cursed with too much history per square mile, with an excess of historical memory, protracted hatreds, and a proliferation of obstinate and incompatible ethnic and religious identities. (2004:2)

The story that makes up the myth of the Kosovo war presents actually the battle both as a defeat and victory, because the defeat of the Serbian army is depicted as Prince Lazar’s conscious choice. The battle takes place between the army of the

Christian medieval Serbian state and the Muslim Ottoman army. The fighting armies are commanded by Prince Lazar Hrebeljanovic and Sultan Murat. At the end of the war, ironically, both Prince Lazar and the Sultan die. This implies that for the Serbs there is a spiritual victory in the defeat. According to the story, the night before the war, Lazar is asked to make a choice between an earthly and a heavenly kingdom. Lazar, who rejects the worldly kingdom and chooses the heavenly one, loses the war but his defeat guaranteed a spiritual and religious victory for all Serbs (Bieber, n.d.:96).

In one of the famous epic poems Vuk Karadzic transcribes in the 19th century entitled “The Downfall of the Serbian Empire”, the choice Prince Lazar has to make is depicted as follows:

Flying hawk, grey bird,
out of the holy place, out of Jerusalem,
holding a swallow, holding a bird,
that is Elijah, holy one;
holding no swallow, no bird,
but writing from the Mother of God
to the Emperor at Kosovo.
He drops that writing on his knee,
it is speaking to the Emperor:
“Lazar, glorious Emperor,
which is the empire of your choice?
Is it the empire of heaven?
Is it the empire of the earth?
If it is the empire of the earth,
saddle horses and tighten girth-straps,
and, fighting men, buckle on swords,
attack the Turks,
and all the Turkish army shall die.
But if the empire of heaven

weave a church on Kosovo,
build its foundations not with marble stones,
build it with pure silk and with crimson cloth,
take the Sacrament, marshal the men,
they shall die,
and you shall die among them as they die.”
And when the Emperor heard those words,
He considered and thought,
“King God, what shall I do, how shall I do it?
Is it the empire of heaven?
Is it the empire of the earth?
And if I shall chose the empire,
and choose the empire of the earth,
the empire of earth is brief,
heaven is everlasting.”
And the emperor chose the empire of heaven
Above the empire of the earth. (Peddington, Levi, 1984: 17-18)

Along with Lazar, two other characters are mentioned in the Battle of Kosovo and they have a very crucial place in Serbian mythology too. The first one is Milos Obilic, who was believed to have betrayed the Serbian army, but who actually joined the Turkish ranks to kill Sultan Murad, and Vuk Brankovic, who in fact betrayed the Serbian army and caused their defeat. Prince Lazar and Milos Obilic are referred to as sacred martyr figures in many of the narratives upon which Serbian ethnic-religious nationalism has been formed not only in the period for the struggle for an independent Serbian state, but in the period of Yugoslavia as well. Andrew Wachtel explains the significance of Prince Lazar’s choice in the following terms:

Lazar’s choice of a heavenly kingdom not only “explains” the Serbian loss, it provides a paradigm for seeing the Serbs (and the South Slavs in general) as a people of God, who choose honor over mere victory, physical suffering over easy glory, and

martyrdom over conquest. Many later works would address the same themes implicitly or explicitly, sometimes repeating, sometimes reversing them, in a bid to provide a cultural definition for the Yugoslav nation. (1998:35)

The myth of the Kosovo Battle that stands at the heart of the national memory of Serbs has been used throughout history. Alexander Greenawalt, in an article discussing the role of the myth in the transformation of Serbian memory indicates that “ironically, if the Kosovo narrative was a source of inspiration in the founding of the first, monarchist Yugoslavia, it also factored in the destruction of the country in its second, communist rendition” (2001:2).

The Battle of Kosovo is also called “The Serbian Golgotha”. The portrayal of Lazar as a Christ figure, the definition of Milos Obilic in comparison to Achilles as a great hero of the nation, the representation of Slavic Muslims as Christ Killers, Turkifiers, and race traitors are all aspects of Serbian ultra-nationalist mythology shaped significantly with the attempts of Vuk Karadzic to create a Serbian nationalistic literary and linguistic consciousness. As stated by Michael Sells, Karadzic began to emphasize the story of the Kosovo Battle in 1814 by publishing the first version of the curse of Kosovo (1998:38): “Whoever will not fight at Kosovo / may nothing grow that his hand sows, / neither the white wheat in the field / nor the vine of grapes on his mountains” (Pennington, Levi, 1984: 15). Then in 1845, another version of the curse was published by Karadzic:

Whoever is a Serb of Serbian blood
Whoever shares with me this heritage
And he comes not to fight at Kosovo,
May he never have the progeny
His heart desires, neither son nor daughter;
Beneath his hand let nothing decent grow
Neither purple grapes nor wholesome wheat;
Let him rust away like dripping iron
Until his name be extinguished. (Pennington, Levi, 1984: 15)

What is significant about nation-building processes in history is that they were carried on after the construction of a national history and literature incorporating myths about the glorious past and continuous history of the people forming the nation. The Kosovo myth provides a good example for this tendency. Also, it may be meaningful to quote here two statements from Ernest Gellner and Ernest Renan, which have been cited immensely in nationalism literature. Gellner indicates that it is not nations that create nationalism, it is nationalism that creates nations (1983:54). And Renan states that “Forgetting, I would even say historical error, is an essential factor in the creation of a nation” (1882:2). Both statements emphasize the constructed structure and call to mind the Kosovo myth.

As one would expect, the legend was not shaped immediately after the battle. Nevertheless, according to Alexander Greenawalt, the most crucial narrative elements of the myth of Kosovo entered the oral tradition of the Serbs only a generation or so before the nineteenth century when intellectuals like Karadzic were striving to create a national literary consciousness (Greenawalt, n.d: 4). It was only in the eighteenth century, when anti-Ottoman feelings grew within Serbian people, a comprehensive legend of Kosovo battle emphasizing the characters Lazar, Milos Obilic, and Vuk Brankovic was created (Greenawalt, n.d.: 5). As Greenawalt quotes from Milodrag Popovic, although there were some scattered references circulating among the Empire’s Christian population about the Sultan’s death in the fifteenth century no trace of the incident is found in the sixteenth or seventeenth century Serbo-Slovanic religious sources (Popovic, n.d.:34-35). A detailed study of the evolution of the Kosovo myth in the Serbian nation building process would be meaningful to elucidate the constructed nature of this narrative.

1.2.2. THE BATTLE AS AN “INVENTED TRADITION”

It would be helpful here to see the evolution of the myth of the Kosovo battle and Lazar cult in an age around nineteenth century from the viewpoint of Eric Hobsbawn, with his theory of “invented traditions”. Trying to define nationalism from a modernist point of view, he suggests that nation building processes comprise

creating new symbols and devices like the national anthem or the national flag as part of national movements or states; and even a historical continuity and an ancient past are required to be invented, which can be carried out by semi-fiction or forgery (2000:7).

Actually, what Hobsbawm mainly claims in his argument is that “traditions which appear to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented.” He goes on to indicate that the term includes the “traditions actually invented, constructed and formally instituted” and the ones emerging in a way that cannot be traced easily in a datable time period and which establish themselves rapidly (2000:1). He also remarks that between the years 1870-1914 Europe was a place where traditions emerged remarkably (2006:305) and this had a lot to do with movements of nationalism. The very first of these new traditions was the secularization of society through primary education, and in this way teachers took the place of priests. Other innovations are the invention of textbooks, public celebrations, the construction of memorial places and the erection of monuments of national heroes.

Thus, the use of the Kosovo Battle as a notable element in the Serbian national movement is a good illustration of the “invention of tradition”. With this myth, it was possible to create a historical continuity and a sense of antiquity for the Serbian nation. In fact, there has been an ongoing debate between Serbs and Albanians about the first settlers of Kosovo. The Albanians claim that Illirians and Dardanians were the first civilizations in Kosovo and they are the descendants of those first civilizations. On the other hand, what Serbs profess is that conceivably there were Albanians in Kosovo during The Middle Ages, but they constituted the major population there and the place was the center of their medieval kingdom called the Nemanjic Dynasty. In this way, according to Tim Judah, the region became the “cradle of Serbian civilization and their Jerusalem” (2008:18-19). This was one of the main reasons that gave birth to the conflict between Serbs and Albanians that resulted in the dismantling of Yugoslavia. The gap between the primordial claims

related to the natural and historical existence of nations and their definition as constructed structures is proposed by Hobsbawm with regard to the French nation:

Modern nations and all their impedimenta generally claim to be the opposite of novel, namely rooted in the remotest antiquity, and the opposite of constructed, namely, human communities so 'natural' as to require no definition other than self-assertion. Whatever the historic or other continuities embedded in the modern concept of 'France' and 'the French'- and which nobody would seek to deny- these very concepts themselves must include a constructed or 'invented' component. And just because so much of what subjectively makes up the modern 'nation' consists of such constructs and is associated with appropriate and, in general, fairly recent symbols or suitably tailored discourse (such as 'national history') the national phenomenon cannot be adequately investigated without careful attention to the 'invention of tradition'. (2000:14)

Thus, a tradition which emerged from a mythical/historical event fed the Serbian nationalistic politics through constant repetition in various spheres. As it was mentioned before, it was reiterated loudly during the 600th anniversary of the battle as well. This discourse proved strong enough to collect one million Serbs in Gazimestan, the place where the battle took place, where Milosevic talked about Serbian unity and the possibility for new wars in the region with the following words: "six centuries later, now, we are being again engaged in battles and are facing battles. They are not armed battles, although such things cannot be excluded yet" (1989).

1.3. THE QUEST FOR NATIONAL LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

1.3.1 VUK KARADZIC AND HIS ROLE IN CREATING A NATIONAL LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

As Benedict Anderson emphasizes in *Imagined Communities*, the replacement of sacred languages such as Latin and Arabic with vernaculars was an epoch-making step into the world dominated by nationalisms. So, in the times when people were attempting to create a national consciousness, creating a native literary language and

a national orthography was one of the first crucial elements of the nation-building process. When we examine Serbian nationalism and the creation of a shared Yugoslav culture and language, two very influential figures of linguistic and literary reforms should be mentioned: the Serb linguist Vuk Stefanovic Karadzic and the Croatian Ljudevit Gaj. However, it should be noted that Karadzic worked mostly for the construction of a Serbian language and culture whereas Gaj is better known for his efforts for the Illyrian movement that aimed a common Pan-Slavic culture. Nevertheless, as the efforts of both linguists increased the importance of the local dialects and the oral traditions that are common for almost all Slavic cultures, they greatly contributed to the formation of a shared Yugoslav culture.

As Andrew Wachtel points out, linguistic reforms in Serbian language began in the early nineteenth century with the work of Karadzic. Before that, Serbian written language was based on the language of the Serbian Orthodox Church, a language with many archaic features of the Bulgarian dialects and Russian language (Wachtel, 1998:25). Karadzic, a self-educated man born in the region of the first Serbian uprising who worked for Karadjordjevic as a scribe, went to Vienna after the uprising was repressed and wrote a Serbian grammar and dictionary there. Then, he tried to create a literary language based on the dialect spoken in Herzegovina.

Along with his contribution to the linguistic reform, he was the most influential figure for the development of Serbian literature in the nineteenth century and his influence had role in both Serbian and Yugoslav literary canons. In 1814 and 1815 he published two collections of folk poetry. The first one contained mainly lyric songs and the other included heroic songs. Through these collections Karadzic entered German intellectual circles as they admitted the importance of folk poetry in the process of nation building. In this way, Serbia started to appear on the world cultural scene. Besides, the prosody, themes and images of folk poetry effected the literary production not only in the first periods of the Serbian national awakening, but also in the future times of two Yugoslav states (Wachtel, 1998:32). In his analysis of the relationship between nationalism and Slavic literature in the period of modernization, Albert D. Lord points out that, in addition to Karadzic's work,

collections by Milutinovic and Njegos were pivotal for the role of the folk epic in Serbian and Montenegrin nationalist movement:

Vuk Karadzic and the group working around and through him in Vienna, especially the Slovene Kopitar, played the most vital role in connecting the folk poetry with the national awakening. The feeling of nationalism was strong among the Serbs as among the other groups even without the influence of the folk poetry. That is to say, national awakening did not come through the folk poetry. The folk poets did not suddenly break forth of their own accord in songs of national greatness, of Serbdom. But once national feeling and a revival of the sense of the dignity and importance of Serbia in the world came into contact in Vienna with the reverberations of the Ossianic movement, it was inevitable that nationalism and the folk poetry in Serbia should eventually meet. (1963:268-270)

In these collections of folk poetry the majority of songs deal with the deeds of local figures and remarkable ancestors. As the case of the Kosovo battle illustrates, these traditional “raw” materials were taken by Serbian nationalists and transformed into national legends. In the process of modification, even the popular musical instruments that accompanied folk epic, such as the *gusle* in the Serbian folk tradition, became sacred national symbols and popular folk heroes like Milos Obilic and Marko Kraljevic were raised to the position of national heroes.

Besides his work in the field of linguistics, Karadzic was also concerned with the identity of Southern Balkan peoples who influenced the Serbian nationalistic ideology in the following ages. His main argument was that the Slavs divided by religion were in fact one people. “While the Orthodox mostly called themselves Serbs, the problem with the people of the other confessions was that they would not recognize the fact that they too were Serbs” (Judah, 2000:61). So, Karadzic’s ideas about South-Slavic identity created the intellectual backbone of Serbian nationalistic ideology. As stated by Judah, in this way he was also mocking “Illyrianism”, the proto-Yugoslav ideology being developed at the time in Habsburg lands by the Croats, pointing out that the word Illyrian signified nothing because its use was an attempt to revive a dead community (2000:62).

1.3.2. PETER PETROVIC NJEGOS' *THE MOUNTAIN WREATH*: THE EPIC OF THE SERBIAN RACE BETRAYAL SYNDROME

It is clear that the works of Karadzic have been crucial for the creation of Serbian national awareness. With his efforts, the memory of the Serbian people was transferred to the future to generate the prototypical structure of the Serbian literary canon. Greenawalt states that Petar Petrovic Njegos is one of the members in the generation of nationalistic writers who perpetuated the project initiated by Vuk Karadzic. Throughout the period of the Serbian independent state and two Yugoslav states he enjoyed the status of an influential literary figure who tried to create a new, clean nationalist memory (Greenawalt, 2001:60). The feeling of nationalism is so deep in Njegos' work that Albert B. Lord claims that "one must turn to Njegos for patriotic heroic nationalist epics and a more extreme phase of nationalism" (1963: 271).

Petar Petrovic Njegos was a poet, a bishop, and a ruler in Montenegro. The area he lived was a mountainous place that managed to stay independent from Ottoman rule because of the harsh natural conditions, but obviously it could not get rid of the destabilizing effect of Ottoman incursions. So, the fight with the Ottomans shaped his life and his works that reflect "a need to order the universe according to tight systems of combating polarities: light and darkness, good and evil, Serb and Muslim" (Greenawalt, 2001:60). Young Njegos was introduced to European writers such as Dante, Goethe, Milton, and Schiller by his tutor Sima Milutinovic Sarajlija, who was a friend of Karadzic and a key figure of Serb Romanticism. He also encouraged Njegos to compose his own verse.

The Mountain Wreath, Njegos's *magnum opus* written in the form of a poetic drama is among the most celebrated works of South-Slavic literary canon. The work is composed in the style and meter of the Serbian oral epic tradition. The main character of the epic is Bishop Danilo, but the reader also encounters other characters and folk dancers called *the kolo*, who voices the collective thoughts of the Serbian

people. The epic is set in the eighteenth century and is based on an event in history known as the “extermination of the Turkish converts”, so it has always been coupled with the story of the Kosovo Battle and in fact “(it) elevated Kosovo to a whole new level, revealing its most horrific potential” (Greenawalt, 2001:60). It is obviously strange that such a work with explicit references to Serbian nationalism and the extermination of a people that forms a significant portion of the country’s population could be a highly celebrated work in both the first and second Yugoslav states. It is clear that it advocates an ultra-nationalist discourse justifying the need to kill the converted Muslims to maintain order in the country. This approach can be seen as a prototype of the pro-violence discourse adopted by politicians in the breakup of Yugoslavia.

Throughout the text, the reader encounters significant communal events and memorable deeds of ancestors via the speeches of the kolo, a group of people who dance together and express the thoughts of the whole community. The Kosovo Battle, as might be accepted, has a very crucial place in the narrative. The songs of the kolo, as well as the epic as a whole, imply that as a milestone in the development of Serbian national, religious, and cultural identity it has shaped the collective memory of the Serbian and Montenegrin people. After the first scene the reader sees the kolo singing about the Kosovo Battle, it also reports the story of Ivan Beg all of whose possessions were taken and whose family was killed by the Turks. The kolo likewise voices curses to the converts, it reports how Topal Pasha besieges Novi Grad and how people rejoiced after the extermination of the Turks. As an ultra-nationalist text *The Mountain Wreath* is full of details about the violence carried out by Montenegrins and Turks. It provides likewise a comprehensive portrayal of the life of Orthodox Christians and converted Muslims living in Montenegro around the eighteenth century. They are described in a state of continuous warfare, so it is not possible for them to live together peacefully. Exterminating the other is viewed as the sole method to stay alive and avoid extermination by the enemy. All the images the text offers seem like proofs for the “age of antagonism” discourse that spread over the whole Balkan region after the Balkan Wars and World Wars.

What the Montenegrin characters, especially the leaders, look for throughout the narrative is the unity of their people, because they think the failure to achieve that unity is the cause of all the misery experienced by the Serbian people. In fact, the kolo indicates in the very beginning parts of the drama that “God is angry with Serbian people” (1986:8) because they had committed many sins. Instead of being in unity, they fought against each other, they “sowed the seed of disharmony”, and they became traitors of the nation. So, here the hero of the Kosovo Battle who killed Sultan Murad, Milos Obilic is memorialized and he is compared with other leaders:

O that accursed supper of Kosovo!
It would have been better had you poisoned
all our chieftains and wiped out their traces,
and left Milos standing there on the field,
along with both of his true sworn brothers;
then would the Serb have remained a true Serb! (Njegos, 1986)

Disunity is implied as a sin in the text, because it caused the breakup of the nation in Kosovo. According to one of the most significant characters in the text, if harmony is regained, one would feel as if he had Tsar Lazar's crown and Milos Obilic was returned to the Serbs. As a text that deals with the commemoration of national heroes, *The Mountain Wreath* is closely linked to the issue of the construction of collective memory. The text presents it as a fictional construct but a quotation from an anonymous person from the time of the second Balkan War included by Milica Bakic-Hayden in her article “National Memory as Narrative Memory” demonstrates that memory has a factual side too. This means that the fictional and factual coexist and nourish each other, as they do in the construction of history and myth, and it is not possible to mark the boundary that separates them:

Each of us has created for himself a picture of Kosovo while we were still in the cradle. Our mothers lulled us to sleep with the songs of Kosovo, and in our schools our teachers never ceased in their stories of Lazar and Milos...

The single sound of that word- Kosovo- caused an indescribable excitement. This one word pointed to the black past- five centuries. In it exist the whole of our sad past-the tragedy of Pince Lazar and the entire Serbian people. (Bakic-Hayden, 2004)

Bishop Danilo is perhaps the most unconventional character in his attitude towards life. He always seems to be more thoughtful, indecisive, and pessimistic than the others. He cannot launch into action very easily because he wants to evaluate all occasions thoroughly. From that point of view he appears to be an indecisive, Hamlet-like figure. He is the political and religious leader of the people, so the discussion of the problem of unity is pursued by the author through this character. It seems that his notion of the “unity of the people” also includes Slavic Muslims who are referred to as “Turks”. This also marks his difference from the other characters in the narrative. In the very beginning of the play, Danilo is depicted as sad, thoughtful and unable to act while as a communal leader he is expected to start the extermination of the Turks. This is not very easy for Danilo because he thinks those Muslims are their Slavic brothers and killing them would bring about a worse division instead of unity:

Some things I see more clearly than you do. -

That is either for the good or the bad.

I fear them not, this brood of the devil,

may they be as many as forest leaves,

but I do fear the evil at our home.

Some wild kinsmen of ours have turned Turkish.

If we should strike at our domestic Turks,

their Serbian kin would never desert them.

Our land would be divided into tribes,

and tribes would start a bitter, bloody feud.

Satan would come to the demon's wedding,

and thus snuff out the Serb slava's candle. (Njegos, 1986)

What is found as a solution for this dilemma is to call the Turkish chieftains and persuade them to turn the victims back to their ancestors' religion. One of the Turkish chieftains declares that they have come to the meeting to establish peace since they are blood brothers. They suggest to leave their guns and live in peace. For Turks this is acceptable while Montenegrins reject this suggestion. For the Christians there is no way to reconcile with the Muslims unless they convert to their true religion, because race betrayal, according to the Montenegrins, is the cause of their present misery. In their eyes the Muslims are traitors who had not only changed their religion, they are also Turkifiers who had spoiled the purity of the Slavic race after they became Muslim. Thus, since there is no other way than extermination of the other for salvation, their assembly to convert the Turks turns out to be an argument. Voivode Batric's speech offers an eloquent illustration of the dispute:

Turkish brothers - may I be forgiven! -

we have no cause to beat around the bush.

Our land is small and it's pressed on all sides.

Not one of us can live here peacefully,

what with powers that are jawing for it;

for both of us there is simply no room!

Accept the faith of your own forefathers!

Guard the honour of our dear fatherland!

The wolf needs not the cunning of the fox!

Nor has the hawk the need for eyeglasses.

Start tearing down your minarets and mosques (Njegos, 1986:25)

But the speech does not result in the conversion of Muslims, the argument between two religions deepens as the conversation continues, and there remains no chance for reconciliation. This time, the Turkish chieftains start talking about the meaninglessness of the symbols and beliefs of Slavic Christians:

You fight against both God and the people.

You live without hope and die without it.

You serve the Cross, want to be like Milos!

"The Cross" - indeed an empty, lifeless word.

Milos throws you into a strange stupor

or leads you to excessive drunkenness.

Bowing one day to Mecca is better

than four years spent making Christian crosses. (Njegos, 1986:25)

This is not the only time in the text Montenegrins and Turks find themselves in a conflict. In nearly all scenes, the reader encounters a bloody fight between Montenegrins and Turks. For example, when they try to come to the first meeting between the Montegrin chieftains in the play, the Ozrinics arrive late, and when they come, it becomes clear that there was a battle with Turks while waiting for the caravan from Niksic (Njegos, 1986:11). Moreover, one other tribe comes to the same meeting late, and what the others think immediately is they must have met some trouble again with Turks. When they arrive, the reader learns from Tomas Matinovic that they were late since one of their women was captured by Turks. They narrate the event as they were dancing the kolo and suddenly heard a shot and a man shouting. They thought the man was drunk and singing. But the noises of shots and the same man shouting did not stop, which indicated a trouble this time. When they got there, they saw that Mujo Alic, the Turkish chief of guards, ran away with Kasan's wife Ruza. How the story ends is they go to Simunja, where the Turks live, and they kill both of Alic's brothers and also Kasan's wife Ruza because they say that with the

affair they have besmirched their honor and lost their grace with the Almighty God (Njegos, 1986:15).

Because of all these conflicts and bloody encounters, it is not conceivable to trust each other and the characters never do so. It is crucial in the text that Bishop Danilo seems extremely sad because he does not want to kill the Slavic Muslims as he believes they are blood brothers yet even he does not show a sign of trusting the Turk. This is very clear in his letter to the vizier. As he is the political leader of the community, the vizier sends him a letter stating that the Christian *raya* is like other people in the Empire and if they come to him under his tent, there they can live as before. This is a call for peace under the authority of the vizier, but the Bishop's letter shows his rejection and his distrust against Turks:

Do not prepare for guests from the mountain!

I am sure they have no other thoughts now
than to sharpen their teeth for their neighbours
and to guard their flocks against predators.

The entrance to a beehive is narrow (Njegos, 1986:33)

There is only one scene in the whole text where a Montenegrin person trusts the Turks and it follows one of the most dramatic episodes of the narrative. This is the lamentation of Batric's sister, who kills herself after his brother was murdered by the Turks. The whole scene implies the impossibility of the feeling of trust against Turks. If somebody makes this mistake, he/she suffers as deeply as the lamentation of Batric's sister indicates:

Didn't you know the faithless Turks?

May God curse them!

Didn't you know they'd deceive you,

O lovely head?

(...)

Why didn't you guard your handsome head,
humanvila?

Why did you make the foe happy,
brotherly pride?

They cut you down on word of honour,
sneaky heathens!

(...)

If you had died in bitter fight,
O warrior,
where young Serbian lads are vying,
O young lad,
to take their toll of arms and men
our wounds would heal.

But you trusted the faithless foe,
O faithful head!

(...)

Woe to us all!

Our whole land has turned to Islam.

God's curse on it!

May the leaders turn into stones,
and their homes die! (Njegos, 1986:55-57)

In addition to their untrustworthiness, the description of the Turks in the text includes many other negative personality traits too. The portrayal of those converted Muslims is always made by establishing a connection with the creatures that are

traditionally associated with evil. Sometimes they are defined as a snake, sometimes as a liar, or the devil. Those who spoiled the purity of the Slavic race by becoming Muslim are linked to weakness and cowardice as they are thought to have changed their religion because of their faint-heartedness. The nationalistic discourse of later periods would also adopt this view and repeat it as the key theme of Christo-Slavism. So the kolo curses them with one of the most vindictive statements uttered in text: “may their Serb milk make them all sick with plague” (Njegos,1986:9). On the other hand the narrative also describes those who ran away to the mountains to protect their faith and fought against the Turks as brave heroes.

Since the Turks are represented as the worst enemies of the Slavic race, adjectives such as loathsome degenerates, rash, greedy, infidel, turncoat etc. are used to describe them. Moreover, even the smell of the Turks is very bad as the conversation between Knez Janko and Knez Rogan indicates. Knez Janko says a very bad stench was coming from Turks, and as a response the other Knez approves it adding that when he sat near them in the assemble, he always hold his nose with both hands and as a conclusion he declares “You see how far away from them we are”.

Similar words are used also for the description of people who have close contacts with Turks, because they must not need “the company of Turks”. The expressions “table-licking dogs” and “the plate lickens” are among the ones used to qualify people who contact Turks in their daily lives. One of the scenes reports a Turkish wedding attended by both Turkish and Montenegrin guests. The most furious words of enmity are uttered in this scene by Vuk Micunovic:

Shameless, brazen, and stinking-dirty whores!
Those plate-lickers, bringing us dishonour!
They know of no dignity of heroes,
else they wouldn't drag themselves after the Turks.
They're more hateful to me than are the Turks,
though I don't care for either of the two.

In vain do they challenge and spite the Turks,
for they do lick their plates like whelping dogs. (Njegos, 1986:55)

It is unlikely that any reader may escape noticing the way Serbian national identity, like most other national identities, is constructed and defined according to the relationship of enmity with the “other”, namely the Turks. Also, strong alliance with Orthodox Christianity is another key element of Serbian nationalism. As stated previously, the consequential place of religion in the development of nationalism in the Balkan region has been influenced by the Ottoman *millet* system. Kemal Karpat admits that the development of ethnic-national identity was not significant for the Ottomans. In fact, ethnic sentiments did not exist in the Ottoman Empire until the nineteenth century when they lost their lands in the Balkans and nationalism started in Salonica as a reaction to Balkan nationalism. On the other hand, “the growth of religious identity” and “loyalty to belief and its representatives” were encouraged (Karpat, 2015:21). That’s why the notion of continuity depending not on ethnicity but religion was adopted by Balkan communities during the interval spanning from The Middle Ages to nineteenth century nationalistic movements.

This crucial role of religion, the Orthodox Church with its representatives, is also visible in *The Mountain Wreath*. Actually, nearly every line of the text portrays a political identity shaped by religious belief. However, the two scenes where the characters tell about their dreams seem devastating. The dreams of all the characters are related to religion and religious-national figures. To give an example, Sirdar Janko dreams that Bogdan gets married to “a nice Turkish girl”, they baptize her in the church in their own faith and marry the Serbian and Turkish couple (Njegos, 1986:39). (This dream of course may be interpreted with regard to numerous incidents of rape during the wars of the 1990s.) What Obrad sees in his dream is a large crowd of people who carry crosses in a church procession. At the end of the dream they place ladders against the church wall to climb to the church altar and place golden cross upon it. In the second scene when they tell about their dreams, it is Christmas Eve and the Montenegrins get prepared to kill the local Turks. While

going to the church together, they tell about their dreams. What is interesting here is that they all report the same dream:

I had a dream I've never had before
(a good omen it must be for my arms):
Last night in dream I saw Obilic' fly
over the plain Field of Cetinje there,
on a white steed as if on a vila.
Oh my dear God, how resplendent he was! (Njegos, 1986:71)

Abbot Stefan is the blind character representing wisdom in the drama. He has been to most places of the world and he is the spiritual leader of the community who points out that he is there among these people “to rekindle the holy fire upon their altar, on the altar of their church and honor.” In the final scene of the text Abbot Stefan is depicted as very joyful although he has received a letter informing him about the events in Crmnica where six people from his community were killed and buried in a single grave. His happiness seems perplexing but its source is what the text has been referring to from the very beginning: the extermination of the Turks has started. This is learnt by Abbot Stefan and Bishop Danilo on Christmas Day. Voivode Batric reports that on Christmas Eve they had a fight with the Turks in Cetinje. What they tried to do was again their most basic goal, the conversion of Turks to their original faith:

We put under our sharp sabres all those
who did not want to be baptized by us.
But all those who bowed to the Holy Child
and crossed themselves with the sign of Christian cross,
we accepted and hailed as our brothers.

We set on fire all the Turkish houses,
that there might be not a single trace left
of our faithless domestic enemy. (Njegos, 1986:77)

After the extermination starts on Christmas Eve in Cetinje, other chieftains are inspired by the event and the fight continues in other places such as Rijeka and Crmnica on Christmas Day and New Year's Day. The final scenes of the text report the joy experienced by the Serbs at the sight of the extermination. The very last conversation between Bishop Danilo and Vuk Mandusic is significant for an overall evaluation of the Serbian ethno-religious identity. When Vuk Mandusic loses his "beloved" *dzeferdar* (his weapon) he is utterly sad and he mourns for it as he would for his only son or his own arm. This may indicate a lot about the militarization impulse underlying the modernization process of Serbia. Since the first Karadjordje uprising, Serbian people experienced many wars against various powers, so their modernization process created a militaristic society where there has always been a firm connection between the government and the army, which is also apparent from the military coups witnessed in Serbian history. Thus, Vuk Mandusic's love for his weapon becomes emblematic of the militaristic character of Serbian society. Besides, Danilo's transformation is another meaningful element. In the beginning, he is a thoughtful and pessimistic character who is reluctant to approve the killing of Slavic Muslims. As the narrative progresses his skepticism melts away and at the end he feels the same joy as the other characters. Furthermore, he gives Vuk Mandusic a new weapon to soothe his pain. In this way he finally participates in the extermination actively, which has been expected from him throughout the text. As stated by Anzulovic, the final scene is noteworthy as it implies that the task of the massacre has not been completed yet and it must be carried on. This reinforces the impression that it is not the true end and the extermination of the infidels must be continued to the end (1999:54).

The Mountain Wreath as a literary work starts with a dedication "To the Ashes of the Father of Serbia," the leader of the first Serbian uprising,

Karadjordjevic. In fact, Njegos was born in the region where this first uprising started and he worked for Karadjordjevic as well. After the uprising was repressed, Njegos went to Vienna and the book was written there. Considered within the framework of the expansionist politics of nation-states in the Balkans in the 19th century, such an ultra-nationalistic text that promotes intolerance may be defined as the natural product of the ruling ideology. Nonetheless, it becomes more difficult to understand the fact that the text is praised later by writers and political leaders who advocate a state based on the “brotherhood and unity” of various peoples including Slavic Muslims. As stated by Wachtel, “although the Yugoslav state generally stayed out of the cultural sphere, the canonization of Njegos as national artist was carried out with enthusiastic government support” (1998:105). This is clearly justified with the three-day ceremony carried out in 1925 with the attendance of King Aleksander to transfer Njegos remains from Cetinje to Mount Lovcen. There, Njegos was named by the King as “the immortal apostle and herald of the unity” of the Yugoslav people. Besides, in the period of Communist Yugoslavia, the celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the publication of *The Mountain Wreath* turned into one of the most remarkable events of 1947:

The June 7 anniversary was celebrated nationwide (the front page of the Croatian newspaper *Vjesnik* on June 9, 1947, for example, displays a portrait of Njegos with the headline “The celebration of the hundredth anniversary of ‘The Mountain Wreath’ is a holiday for all the nations of Yugoslavia”), and Njegos and *The Mountain Wreath* were transformed into precursors of the most up-to-date Communist thought. New editions of *The Mountain Wreath* were published in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, a new translation appeared in Slovenia, as did the first-ever Macedonian translation (25,000 copies were published in Montenegro alone so that ‘practically every house in Montenegro will have it’). (Wachtel, 1998:143)

According to Wachtel, the use of the same work in such dissimilar contexts became possible with its rereading from different perspectives. For instance, what Titoist Yugoslavia deduced from the text was “a red *Mountain Wreath*” emphasizing the unity of all Yugoslav people. On the other hand, it may also show the Serbian hegemony that existed throughout the first Yugoslav state and also in the second

Yugoslavia, mostly after the 1960s when the decline of centralism led to the development of nationalist sentiments and separatist movements.

Milica Bakic-Hayden states in “National Memory as Narrative Memory: The Case of Kosovo” that Kosovo is not a negligible thing in the self-definition of the cultural, religious, and national identity of Serbian people and emphasizes that it is a narrative continuing to interact with reality in a unique way. She also questions the interaction between reality and metaphor considering the Kosovo myth and the incidents of war in Kosovo at the end of the twentieth century (2004:40). Probably the interrogation of the relation between the real and metaphorical will prove more fruitful if other texts like Njegos’ *Mountain Wreath* are studied from the same perspective.

CHAPTER TWO

THE UNENDING SELF-SACRIFICE AND VICTIMIZATION OF SERBS: *BRIDGE ON THE DRINA* BY IVO ANDRIC

Tatjana Aleksic, in her work *Mythistory and Narratives of the Nation*, discusses the legend of immurement as a traditional literary theme in Balkan literatures stating that it is used also in modern nation-inspired literary works. In the original form of the legend, an edifice or generally a bridge is built, some part of it is destroyed at night by a supernatural power that asks for a sacrifice for its completion. She marks that the Greek ballad *The Bridge of Arta* echoes the same theme since the *vila* asks for the sacrifice of one of the royal brothers' wives. In the Serbian epic poem *The Building of Skadar*, likewise, the sacrifice of baby twins Stojan and Stoja is demanded for the construction of the bridge (2007:2). According to Aleksic, the same theme has been used in modern Balkan literature as a metaphor of constructing a mythical community-nation. In the traditional folk literatures of Balkan communities the legend commonly refers to the usage of female characters as sacrificial bodies. Interestingly, modern writers from various Balkan communities went on to use the myth but during the twentieth century the female body was replaced by male sacrificial characters, and as Aleksic argues, this time the sacrificial motif addresses national sentiments indicating "efforts to construct a recognizable collective identity" (2007:88). The texts she reads within the framework of the immurement motif include *The Bridge on the Drina* by Ivo Andric, *The Three-Arched Bridge* by Ismail Kadere, and *The Dream of Master Builder Nikitas* by Aris Fakinos.

The bridge, highlighted in the title of Ivo Andric's novel, is presented as an important communal space where almost all reported events take place; beside its function as a central setting it stands at the heart of the novel as a multilayered symbol as well. From the beginning of the novel, people's lives in the Bosnian town Visegrad are shaped in relation with the bridge. Some scholars compare the novel to a chronicle since the text narrates the events in the town in detail in a historical manner covering nearly four hundred years. As Aleksic also emphasizes, it is

remarkable about these historical events that the sacrificed bodies create a very significant part of the collective memory of the people. As traditional themes of nationalist Serbian literature delineated in the Kosovo myth and Njegos' *The Mountain Wreath*, the "sacrifice" and "victimization" of a people are the main elements of the narrative where the construction and history of the bridge on the Drina River becomes the symbol of the construction of a community/nation.

The twenty-four chapters forming the text start with the description of the sixteenth century when there was no bridge in the town and the Drina River could only be passed by a small ferry. This first chapter also includes stories and beliefs of the town's residents related to the bridge. In the final chapter, the town is depicted as a battlefield harboring Serbian and Austrian armies in the First World War. Although the novel does not offer a clue about the narrative time in the very first chapter, the following one makes it clear that the time narrated is the beginning of the sixteenth century. In this chapter, it is depicted that the first idea of a bridge on the Drina River is shaped in the mind of a child who is taken from his homeland in order to be brought to the capital of the Ottoman Empire. So, the narrative describes the building of the bridge and its effects on the people living around over three chapters. The cruelty of the Ottoman administrators and the attempt of the peasant Radisav to destroy the building are reported in detail in these chapters. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are described in a single chapter, but the nineteenth century covers ten chapters in the novel because it is the period when changes in world order deeply affect the lives of the people in the town. The most significant events in this century for people in Visegrad are the Serbian uprising led by Karajordjevic and the collapse of Ottoman power. The early twentieth century covering the period between 1900 and the beginning of the First World War in 1914 is described in the last nine chapters. All these historical events are narrated by an omniscient narrator who emphasizes the transience of time and the permanence of the bridge at the end of almost all chapters.

Celia Hawkesworth and many other critics of Ivo Andric indicate that the bridge in the novel is a symbol of the connection between opposing cultures, that is to say, East and West in this context (Hawkesworth, 1984). Also, the novel is read as

a proof illustrating the possibility that people from diverse origins can live together peacefully for centuries despite the fact they encounter many political changes. Nevertheless, the only symbolic meaning that the bridge metaphor offers is not “connection”. As Heidegger points out in “Building, Dwelling, Thinking”, the bridge, more than being a useful construct, is always primarily a symbol. Heidegger also claims about the bridge that it does not in fact connect two opposing points, but as a construct it is a dividing point since “the banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream. The bridge expressly causes them to lie across from each other. One side is set off against each other by the bridge” (Heidegger, 1971: 355). Thus, Heidegger defines the bridge rather differently from the commonly accepted symbol of connection.

In unison with Heidegger’s definition, *Bridge on the Drina* narrates the story of a bridge whose main symbolic meaning is division rather than connection. It can be stated that the novel’s main theme is the construction of an imagined nation or community. Nevertheless, it is difficult to assert that this imagined community is the Yugoslav nation because the novel’s historical narrative stresses the division, historical antagonisms and hatred among people, rather than their shared culture. In that sense, the narrative echoes the discourse of Balkanism, which depicts the Balkan region as a place of unending conflicts. It is very clear that the text has the properties of works within the canon of Serbian ethnic-national literature whose major themes include Serbian suffering and victimization during the process of independence, representation of Serbs as a people destined to repeat the suffering of Christ, images of the evil Turk, and violence against the Serbs by various peoples through history. All these themes are employed in this canon for illustrating the impossibility of living in a multicultural organization like Yugoslavia because for these deeply nationalistic works, it means the sacrifice of national identity.

2.1 VISEGRAD: A PROTOTYPE OF YUGOSLAVIA

The notion of “Yugoslavism” envisioned by unitarists and created within the state called “Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes” after the First World War and by Communists after the Second World War had many structural differences. The

foundation of the first Yugoslavia was based on the idea that these three Yugoslav peoples had a single ethnic origin. Yugoslavism for them meant the creation of a synthesis from three national cultures. On the contrary, the Communists endeavored to establish a multiethnic and multicultural country with a supranational universal culture. However there were such structural differences between the two Yugoslav states, they both claimed that the national identities forming Yugoslavia had the potential to pursue a peaceful life together. So, particularly the second Yugoslav constitution had a strong belief in “brotherhood and unity” of people without the hegemony of any ethnic/religious group. Obviously, the dissolution of the Federalist Yugoslavia had political and economic reasons, but the main reason was that people renounced defining themselves as Yugoslavs. Besides, cultural factors such as the weakening of the belief in a common language or literature had a significant effect in that result (Wachtel; Bennett, 2009:12-47).

In *The Bridge on the Drina*, it is possible to find many descriptions of a peaceful and friendly relationship among people in Visegrad. So, it could be acknowledged that Andric’s depiction of Visegrad demonstrates “connection” of people to some extent. Probably, this is best exemplified in the relationship between the Serbian priest Pop Nikola and Mula Ibrahim from Muslim society. The text depicts them as two people who “understood one another perfectly though they did not exchange a word” (Andric, 1977:129). Besides, these characters are the source of inspiration for the expression “they are as close as the priest and the hodja” according to the narrator. Nevertheless, what the text generally presents is “separation” rather than “connection”. It is always implied that the diverse social groups who reside in the town have a firm consciousness of their different (national) identities and they view the world from totally different perspectives. Although theorists of nationalism claim that in the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries people did not have a national consciousness and did not identify themselves as nations, in *The Bridge on the Drina*, the reader observes that the characters’ notion of identity depends strongly on nationality. Moreover, their stories and world perception can never mingle as depicted still in the first chapter:

The children who fished for tiddlers all day in the summer along these stony banks knew that these were hoofprints of ancient days and long dead warriors. Great heroes lived on earth in those days, when the stone had not yet hardened and was soft as the earth and the horses, like the warriors, were of colossal growth. Only for the Serbian children these were the prints of the hooves of Sarac, the horse of Kraljević Marko, which had remained there from the time when Kraljević Marko himself was in prison up there in the Old Fortress and escaped, flying down the slope and leaping the Drina, for at that time there was no bridge. But the Turkish children knew that it had not been Kraljević Marko, nor could it have been (for whence could a bastard Christian dog have had such strength or such a horse!) any but Djerzelez Alija on his winged charger which, as everyone knew, despised ferries and ferrymen and leapt over rivers as if they were watercourses. They did not even squabble about this, so convinced were both sides in their own belief. And there was never an instance of any one of them being able to convince another, or that anyone had changed his belief. (Andric, 1977: 15-16)

As a matter of fact, the novel draws attention to this division in the part where the town is severely damaged by a flood. It is reported in the text that the water of Drina rose every year but every twenty or thirty years there were some great floods remembered by the town's residents for many years and even the ages of the citizens were calculated according to these calamities. One of the greatest floods occurred in the second half of the eighteenth century. This flood inflicted heavy damage especially to the places close to the Drina. After the natural disaster, Turkish, Christian and Jewish people gathered in the ground-floor room of Hadji Ristic's house. They mingled together. The narrator puts forward that "at least one day", a common misfortune brought these people together and bridged the gulf dividing them. They did not want to speak about the flood but about other issues without any connection to the calamity. What is noteworthy about this part in the text is that the narrator exhibits the time these people come together as something unreal, as a dream, as unique to a disastrous moment. So, as the narrative indicates, even getting together in a house is particular to a time of misfortune, which makes it an obligation and a state of abnormality. So, if Visegrad is viewed as a small Yugoslavia where various peoples attempt to get together, the narrative only emphasizes its unreality and abnormality: "A warm and close circle formed, like a new existence, created out of realities and yet itself unreal, which was not what it had been the day before nor

what it would be the day after, but like a transient island in the flood of time” (Andric, 1977: 80).

When the events related to the first Serbian revolt are narrated in the text, the artificiality of the relationship among people of diverse identities in the town is highlighted. It is indicated that during the day people from different beliefs or nationalities see and talk to each other with a friendly and reliable attitude. Nevertheless, when they go home they are filled with completely different ideas and dreams about each other and the future. Thus, they may sometimes seem very close and friendly to each other in some parts of the narrative. Although this makes the reader believe in the possibility of a multicultural life in the region, the text alerts us immediately that we should not be so naive because what is emphasized at the end is the insincerity of the people towards each other:

The Serbs prayed to God that these saving flames, like those which they had always carried in their hearts and carefully concealed, should spread to these mountains, while the Turks prayed to Allah to halt their progress and extinguish them, to frustrate the seditious designs of the infidel and restore the old order and the peace of the true faith. The nights were filled with prudent and passionate whisperings in which pulsed invisible waves of the most daring dreams and wishes, the most improbable thoughts and plans which triumphed and broke in the blue darkness overhead. Next day at dawn, Turks and Serbs went out to work and met one another with dull and expressionless faces, greeted one another and talked together with those hundred or so commonplace words of provincial courtesy which had from times past circulated in the town and passed from one to another like counterfeit coin which none the less makes communication both possible and easy. (Andric, 1977:86)

The narrative time of the novel starts with the period when the river was passed on a raft and children were taken from their families as “blood tribute” to the Ottoman capital. The narrative proceeds with the depiction of the building of the bridge. The independence movements and revolts of Karadjordjevic and Obrenovic, the Ottoman withdrawal from the region, the new thoughts of liberty reaching the town via young people who study in Europe, the Austrian power, the introduction of capitalism and its effects on economy and social life, and the two Balkan Wars are some of the most significant events reported in the text. In the final chapters, the narrative finishes with the First World War when the explosion of the bridge on the

Drina during the combat between Serbian and Austrian forces is portrayed. What is notable, apart from all chronicled historical events, is that since the construction of the bridge, a clash among contrasting components of the society is highlighted. That is to say, a harmony is never witnessed. A good illustration of this discrepancy is provided in the text when the Balkan Wars and their consequences are presented:

But if the outward appearance of the town remained peaceful and unchanged, these events stirred up in the minds of men whole tempests of the greatest enthusiasm and the deepest depression. As in the case of everything else that had happened in the world in recent years, they were looked on in the town with diametrically opposed feelings by the Serbs and the Moslems; only in their intensity and depth were they perhaps equal. These events surpassed all the hopes of the one; all the fears of the others appeared justified. Those desires which for hundreds of years had flown before the slow pace of history could now no longer keep pace with it but outdistanced it by some fantastic flight along the road to the most daring realization. (Andric, 1977:244)

These constant ideological contrasts are portrayed as the permanent reality of the region although the narrative time proceeds and new stories and characters enter the text. Nevertheless, there are also some peaceful times in the chronology of the narrative. In these times, people live a more comfortable life compared to other periods. For instance, in the last quarter of the 19th century, the new Austrian rule is more endurable for people according to the narrator. In Europe it was a decade of “relative prosperity and apparent peace in the Franz-Josef manner” when people were hoping for the “realization of a centuries-old dream of full and happy development of individuality in freedom and in progress” (Andric, 1977:183). Here, the narrator describes the meaning of this period of prosperity and peace for the town by making two noteworthy remarks about this Balkan society. First, it is stated that only some fragmented pieces of this European comfortable life enjoyed by the Europeans in the nineteenth century were experienced in this place “only to the extent and in the form in which this backward oriental society could receive them and in its own manner understand and accept them” (Andric, 1977, 183). Strikingly, the narrator also indicates that the period of prosperity and peace would not continue because the region is naturally inclined to new clashes:

Everything else was flushed away into that dark background of consciousness where live and ferment the basic feelings and indestructible beliefs of individual races, faiths and castes, which, to all appearances dead and buried, are preparing for later far-off times unsuspected changes and catastrophes without which, it seems, peoples cannot exist and above all the peoples of this land. (Andric, 1977:183)

It can be inferred easily from this portrayal of the region is that the only way people have managed to exist in this place is to overcome a state of constant conflict. In fact, this depiction legitimizes the idea that the Balkans is a region of historical hatreds and this idea provides a justification for future acts of violence.

2.2 BALKANISM

The representation of the Balkans in Andric's novel as a region inclined to violence is the subject Maria Todorova discusses in *Imagining the Balkans*. In her work, she attempts to find out how the phenomenon "Balkanism", which is discussed with reference to Said's Orientalism, was constructed and how the Balkans as a region has been imagined as the "uncivilized other" of Europe throughout centuries. As stated by Todorova, before the 18th century, travelers to the Ottoman Balkan lands only mentioned "Rums" and "Turks", and since the mid-18th century they started to discover or recognize other Christian Balkan peoples (2010:162). Then the image of the Balkans was shaped gradually by travelers, travel writers, historians, journalists, and politicians. For instance, Lamartine was among the first to put forward that Bulgarians and Serbs were mature enough to be independent and they could establish the future states in Europe. According to Todorova, Europeans and Russians supported Philhellenism and the independence movements of South Slavs for a while. However, the transformation of the image of the Balkans to something associated with the uncivilized Orient was fast. She indicates that when the 20th century came, a Balkan image in European literature was already shaped and especially after the Balkan Wars and First World War, this image became stronger (Todorova, 2010:179).

The most striking example in Todorova's work illustrating the Balkanist discourse in literature is probably where she quotes Robert Kaplan attempting to find the roots of Nazism in the Balkans, because Kaplan claims in *Balkan Ghosts* that Hitler learnt to hate in Vienna, which is close to the South Slav world, the birthplace of ethnic unrests (Kaplan, 1993). This sentence strongly asserts that along with the First World War, the Second One was also caused by the age-old tradition of hatred in the Balkans. So, this Balkanist discourse which accuses the region and its inhabitants for many modern conflicts in world history deepens the stereotypical image of the Balkans. In 1903, when King Aleksander of Serbia and his wife Draga were murdered and thrown out of a window in Belgrade, *New York Times* described this event as a "primitive Slavic strain" (Todorova, 2010:240). Also, as quoted by Todorova from John Gunther in *Inside Europe*, it is claimed that all the reasons of the First World War were created in the Balkans:

It is an intolerable affront to human and political nature that these wretched and unhappy little countries in the Balkan peninsular can, and do, have quarrels that cause world wars. Some hundred and fifty thousand young Americans died because of an event in 1914 in a mud-caked primitive village, Sarajevo. Loathsome and almost obscene snarls in Balkan politics, hardly intelligible to a Western reader, are still vital to the peace of Europe, and perhaps the world. (Todorova, 2010:119)

Besides, when the calendars showed 1990s, the Balkanist discourse was ready to legitimize the wars in Yugoslavia by explaining them with the known "old antagonisms" cliché. One of the most noteworthy exemplifications for this representation of the Balkans may be found in György Konrad's article titled "Central Europe Redivivus" published in 1993. In this article, he claims that for an ethnic civil war, you need various ethnic groups, a mountainous area, a long tradition of guerilla warfare, and a culture of armed man. This combination may be found only in the Balkans (Todorova, 2010:312).

Likewise, *The Bridge on the Drina* represents Visegrad as a place of ancient hatreds and antagonisms. Even in the times of welfare and prosperity these feelings

are always latent and they are ready to outbreak suddenly. As stated by Tomislav Z. Longinovic, in the world of the work of Andric people are formed with lives in intolerance and mutual contempt. This is exhibited as being fueled by religious differences. He also puts forward that “religion was the foundation upon which national identity was built, serving as a rationalization and justification for the continuous struggle between the two worlds” (Longinovic, 1995:125). Thus, we can point out that it is not difficult to discover a parallelism between the Balkanist discourse and the town’s representation in *The Bridge on the Drina*. As portrayed by Andric, Visegrad is a place very similar to Milica Bakic-Hayden’s explanation regarding how Balkanism represents the whole region. According to Bakic-Hayden, the Balkanist rhetoric proposes that “violence in the Balkans has been not only a description of a social condition but considered inherent in the nature of its people” (Bakic-Hayden, 1995:918). While reading the novel, it is noticed that the same portrayal is created for the inhabitants of Visegrad. In the text, people’s relations are formed with feelings of hatred or antagonism throughout the historical time period the narrative covers.

In Andric’s work, this type of depiction is not peculiar to *the Bridge on the Drina* and to Visegrad. A much quoted text in Andric criticism from the novel *The Woman from Sarajevo* offers the same representation as well:

Followers of three different faiths-Moslem, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox-they hated one another from the day of their birth to their death, deeply and blindly, transmitting this hatred even to those who were no longer alive, and looking upon it as something glorious and sacred, and at the same time a defeat and a shame for their infidel neighbors. They were born, they grew up and died in this hate, this actual physical revulsion toward a neighbor of another faith, and often they spent their entire lives without finding an opportunity to express the hatred in all its intensity and horror; yet whenever due to some great or calamitous event the established order was shaken and law and reason were suspended for a few hours or for several days, this rabble, or some part of it, burst down upon this city which otherwise is well known for the polite friendliness of its social life and the honeyed words of its conversation. Then all the long suppressed hatreds and secret hankerings for destruction and violence broke to the surface and, like a flame long smoldering and at last finding something to feed upon, dominated the streets, lapping, sputtering, and swallowing everything, until some force more powerful than themselves beat them back, or until they flagged and burned themselves out with their own rage. (Andric, 1965:62-63)

As K.E Fleming puts forward, the Balkanist rhetoric suggests that the Balkan countries are somehow replaceable and they are indistinguishable from each other. “There’s a readily identifiable typology of politics and history common throughout the Balkans, that there’s such a thing as a Balkan ethnic or racial type” (2000:1218). As also pointed out by Fleming about the discourse on the Balkans, it reveals both sameness and difference simultaneously. What makes the region “the Balkans” is that “they can neither be told apart nor put together” (Fleming, 2000:1219). So, she argues that one of the most significant characteristics ascribed to the Balkans is “paranoia of small differences”. However they seem harmonious together at times, the people in the region are eager to demonstrate how they are different from each other. This interpretation actually resembles the representation of the inhabitants of Visegrad in *The Bridge on the Drina*. They can never be totally torn apart or fragmented from each other, but their relationship is also nourished by enmity.

Certainly, in Andric’s novel, it is not only the Christians and Muslims who have a conflictual relationship. The same feelings of distrust, hatred, and enmity exist among other groups of the society, like between Catholic and Orthodox Christians. Nevertheless, the novel does significantly deal with the relationship between Christians and Slavs of Islamic faith. In that sense, it reveals the features of the nationalistic Serbian literary canon represented in *The Mountain Wreath* by Njegos. In fact, reading Ivo Andric’s doctoral thesis *The Development of Spiritual Life in Bosnia under the Influence of Turkish Rule* would be helpful to understand the influence of Njegos on Andric and how he views the Bosnian Muslim identity. According to the thesis, before the Turkish invasion there were three different churches in Bosnia: 1- The Catholic Church, 2- The Orthodox Church, 3- The Bosnian Church. This last Church, also called as *Patarins*, had the greatest influence among the people in Bosnia at that time. As Andric argues, they had great effect on the desperate future of all South Slavic people because they weakened the other churches through wars and conflicts and then helped the Turks to invade the region. As stated in the thesis, among the nobility of the Bosnian church “a sense of belonging to the great community of Western Christendom was poorly developed” (Andric, 1991:14). Besides, it was a sect which did not originate in the church; it

was rooted in dualism and believed that the existence was created by both God and Lucifer (Andric, 1991:9). Because of all their contradictory beliefs and practices of Christianity and their conflicts with other churches, the Patarins erected a wall between Bosnia and the Western World (Andric, 1991:13).

Probably Andric's most remarkable claim is about the conversion of Slavic people into Islam. He states that people in the sect of the Bosnian Church changed their belief and became Muslims. However, their reason was not that they found this new religion better than Christianity. Andric describes their reason to convert to Islam in the following paragraph:

In order to save his real estate he accepted the faith of his conquerors and at once set about nailing down that property with its associated rights and privileges all the more tightly and securely using the precepts and formulas of the new religion, the more the old one was denied. (Andric, 1991:19)

Andric also quotes Njegos' words "[t]he cowardly and the covetous turned into Turks" and supports him indicating that (it is) "the truest expression of the people's mode of thinking and apprehending" (Andric, 1991:20). Besides, to illustrate the untrustworthiness of Turks, Andric points out in his thesis that the converted Bosnian begs carefully preserved their old privileges that had been given to them by Christian kings in case a Christian ruler reigned in Bosnia again. So, it becomes expectable to see the characterization of Muslims in the novel as unreliable people. They can collaborate with the Turkish armed forces to catch and behead innocent Serbs "as if drunk with bitterness, from desire for vengeance and long(ing) to punish and to kill whomsoever they could" (Andric, 1991:19). Moreover, these Muslims can fight within the Austrian military forces *schutzkorps* against Serbs they have lived together for many ages in the same town after the Austrian annexation.

Thus, as also stated by the editors of the English translation of Andric's doctoral thesis, many parallels can be found between this text and his fictional narratives. Among these parallels, it is noteworthy that Bosnia is depicted as a place where various peoples from different origins integrate and in the portrayal of the

region there is always “the deep-seated hatred and conflicts among the Muslims, Turks, Serbs, and Jews on the regional level” (Loud, Juricic, 1991:19-20).

The representation of the “other” in Andric’s doctoral thesis and fictional narratives also makes it necessary to mention the phenomenon of “nesting orientalisms” Milica Bakic-Hayden and Robert M. Hayden introduced to discussions of Balkanism and Yugoslavia. This system of nesting orientalisms reveals a hierarchy within the region which is mostly formed by religion. Thus, the nesting orientalism as a system proposes a tendency to view the other cultures and religions especially the ones in the South and East as more backward and primitive. As a result, “in the East, Islam is generally less favorably viewed than Orthodox Christianity; while in the West, the Protestant tradition is generally seen more positively” (Bakic-Hayden, Hayden, 1992:4). It must be pointed out that Andric is not an author viewing the Balkans from outside, but the representation of Bosnian Muslims as backward primitives of the Slavic race reminds the hierarchy described as “nesting orientalisms” by Milica Bakic-Hayden and Robert M. Hayden.

2.3 THE UNENDING SUFFERING AND THE VICTIMIZATION OF SERBS

The representation of Slavic Muslims and the other characters from diverse nationalities such as Croats or Gypsies as cruel, unreliable people who always advocate the ruling power is represented as the opposite of the Serbian nation, because Serbs are depicted as the permanent victim regardless of the changing social conditions. In this way, the text rewrites the Serbian memory and consciousness locating the nation in a place where the past and destiny of the people are shaped by victimization and suffering. As Dragan Kujundzic states, in collective memory, the Serbian nation is “destined to repeat the passion of Christ” (1995:134). This is always exhibited in Serbian mythology and popular consciousness as a deliberate choice. According to Kujundzic, the representation of the nation’s suffering and victimization is mostly achieved with the image of the Serbian peasant Radisav because for Kujundzic this figure

could also represent the destiny of the entire nation. His martyrdom is the reworking of the Kosovo legacy, where the glorious defeat on the battlefield is transformed into a founding myth of the Serbian nation. The victim of history develops a national identity based on loss and suffering, around a story of victimization that can be invoked as a sort of political alibi during struggles with its internal and external “others”. (Kujundric, 1995:134)

Probably the most evident “other” in the Serbian national memory is constructed with the image of “the evil Turk”, exhibited throughout the novel starting with the first pages where the Ottoman *devşirme* (blood tribute) system was portrayed. In this system the representatives of the Empire came to the villages in the Balkan region to take children who would serve for the Empire as janissaries or in some higher ranks in the future. The evil Ottoman image is clearly seen in the despair of the mother whose child is taken to distant lands of the Empire:

Some would rush forward not looking where they were going, with bare breasts, and dishevelled hair, forgetting everything about them, wailing and lamenting as at a burial, while others almost out of their minds moaned as if their wombs were being torn by birth-pangs, and blinded with tears ran right on to the horsemen's whips and replied to every blow with the fruitless question: 'Where are you taking him?' (Andric, 1977: 23)

The character Abidaga is the most remarkable one illustrating the Turkish rule and its cruelty. He is the man sent to Visegrad by the Grand Vizier to manage the building of the bridge. As might be expected, the building of the bridge does not bring prosperity but despair to the Christian *rayah*. He has a reputation very much related with fear among the Christians. The building of the bridge under his supervision is a great catastrophe for the land. In order to finish the bridge, not only the people from Visegrad, but also the others from various villages are collected for forced labor. If somebody is seen malingering or not working well, he is seized and beaten by the guards and then is sent to work again after water is poured on his bleeding and unconscious body. Abidaga does not stay in the town when the winter comes, but he leaves his fear there. Before leaving, he declares that if any single stick of the bridge is harmed, the whole town would be punished because of that. Even

when the people ask what would happen if the floods cause any harm to the bridge, his answer is that the district and the river is theirs, so they would be blamed in this case as well. The spring comes with Abidaga and other people beside him, years pass but the building of the bridge does not finish. So, “the town (turns) into a hell, a devil's dance of incomprehensible works, of smoke, dust, shouts and tumult” (Andric, 1977:30). However, the most dramatic result of Abidaga's cruelty and the fear he causes is witnessed in the character named “the man from Plevlje”. In fact, he comes from a Balkan village but he is in the service of Abidaga. When Abidaga learns that the bridge is being destroyed by some people at night, he orders the man from Plevlje to find the men who do that harm. If not, the man is told that he would be killed. What is so dramatic about this character is that the end of his fear of Abidaga causes his destruction. He manages to find the criminal Radisav and sees his impalement, yet his fear of death by Abidaga grows so big that the man loses his sanity. So, as the story of the grand vizier Sokolovic also illustrates, a person with Balkan origin who is the service of the cruel Ottoman ends in losing his identity or humanity:

From the previous day, when in the access of unexpected emotion at finding himself still alive and not on the stake he had begun to dance before them all, he had never calmed down. All his muscles twitched, he could no longer keep still, but was constantly tormented by the irresistible urge to prove to himself and show others that he was still healthy, whole and capable of movement. At intervals he would remember Abidaga (that was the black spot in his new joy!) and would fall into a dark reverie. But while he was in this mood, fresh forces would collect within him which drove him irresistibly to wild and spasmodic movements like a madman. He would get up again and begin to dance, spreading out his arms, clicking his fingers and twisting like a dancer, showing by sudden and lively actions that he was not on the stake and gasping to the rhythm of his dance: 'See ... see ... I can do this . . . and that.. and that!...' He refused to eat and would suddenly break off every conversation that he began and start to dance, affirming childishly at every movement: 'See, see, I can do this . . . and this. . .!' (Andric, 1977:60)

Certainly, it is natural for a novel about a colonized land to represent this period with images of cruelty. However, the question of colonialism in the Balkans is not very distinct since colonialism in the modern sense did not exist there like in the

Orient. They were subjected to Ottoman rule who “introduced policies of re-population and religious conversion” (Bjelic, 2002:6). Also, as stated by Dusan I. Bjelic, people in the Balkans perceived each other as both colonial rulers and subjects. Thus, for him the answer to the question whether Balkan nationalism is post-imperial or post- colonial is that it is noticeably liminal. For instance, Serbian nationalism both “celebrates its medieval empire and remembers Ottoman slavery, a dual sensitivity which then gets translated into calling Bosnian Muslims “Turks” even while claiming Kosovo as an important part of the Serbian Empire” (Bjelic, 2002:6).

In order to analyze how the text represents other identities as opposed to Serbian national identity, the first question that should be discussed is the standpoint of the narrator. As stated by Andrew Wachtel, mostly in fiction writing, the narrative perspective is from the inside or the outside. In order to create either of them, authors may use forms of first person or third person narrators. For Wachtel, Andric manages to blur the line between these types of narration and does it by using an “inclusive first-person plural” narrator. His narrator in all his historical writings is a part of the land and the people there (1995:90). *The Bridge on the Drina* is narrated by a third person omniscient narrator. However, although he is placed in Visegrad, the narrator does not identify himself with any group in the society (Wachtel, 1995:91). In Ronelle Alexander’s article on the novel, she defines the narrator as a chronicler and points out that he is “in full control of the narration but stays in the background” (Alexander, 1995: 203). Nevertheless, one of the most noteworthy aspects of the novel is that the standpoint of the narrator among various social groups does not seem as unbiased as Wachtel or Alexander argues. Throughout the whole novel the reader encounters vivid descriptions of the violence against Serbs. As the narrative time and the ruling powers change, the feeling of injustice against Serbs is always foregrounded.

In the sixth chapter of the text, the narrator depicts the first Serbian revolt. It starts in Serbia but also has a tremendous effect in the life in the Bosnian *pashalik* where Visegrad is located. Bosnian Muslims are expected to send people to the army

and Serbs are “suspected, persecuted, and fined” more than usual in those times (Andric, 1977:85). Then, one summer, when the revolt strikes the town, its impact on the Turks is described in the following words: “the insurgents came to within two hours’ march of the town. There, at Veletovo, they destroyed Lufti Beg’s fortified farmhouse by cannon fire and burnt a number of Turkish houses at Crnice” (Andric, 1977:88). How the first Serbian revolt, which had a great effect for both Serbs and the Ottomans at the same time, affected the Turks is only depicted in a simple sentence without a vivid and violent description.

On the other hand, what happens to Serbs after the suppression of the revolt is described in detail. There is now a wooden blockhouse in the center of the bridge for the military force that will stay in the town. But, it is not only the military force that controls the town and tries to find and punish the supporters of the revolt, because the civilian Turks do it as well. So, it is the innocent Serbs who are targeted and punished constantly. One of the most noteworthy of these Serbian characters in the novel is Jelisić from Čajniče, described as “a vagabond religious pilgrim, something between a monk and a beggar, but mild and peaceful, somehow clean and sweet in his poverty, easy and smiling despite his white hair and lined face” (Andric, 1977:88). He is the first victim taken to the soldiers by civilian Turks who are “anxious, filled with rancour and ill-will and looked on everyone bloodthirstily and with suspicion” (Andric, 1977:88). They find the old man’s words and his staff with signs of the days of Serbian freedom suspicious and take him to the wooden blockhouse on the bridge. Another victim, Mile who lives in a water-mill at Osojnica, is a poorly dressed Serbian youth whose “clothing was torn and his face and hands scratched.” He is heard by the Turkish civilians singing songs about the Karadjordjević uprising while cutting wood in the forest. Although he claims that he did not sing anything or struck a Turk, he is a poor man and looks after the water-mill, Turks do not renounce to state that he was singing “insurrectionist” songs. The result is that the two Serbs are killed and their bodies are exhibited on the bridge. The image of their dead bodies is depicted in detail for the reader:

The headsman, who was one of the soldiers, rapidly finished his task and the first comers, who descended the hills because of market day and went across the bridge, could see the two heads placed on fresh stakes on the blockhouse and a bloodstained place, sprinkled with gravel and smoothed down, on the bridge where they had been beheaded. (Andric, 1977:93-94)

In this regard, Tomislav Z. Longinovic's analysis about the representation of different identities in the text is significant. He points out that the Turks or Bosnian Muslims are "ready to be violent any time their passions are frustrated, rejoicing in the fact that the time has come for force to speak" (1995:128). The beheaded bodies of these two Serbian victims are not the only ones in the novel or Turks and Bosnian Muslims are not the only wicked people. One day the beheaded body of Visegrad parish priest Pop Mihailo is exhibited on the bridge and the event is narrated as "in the general fury against the Serbs he had been killed even though innocent and the gipsy children stuck a cigar in his dead mouth" (Andric, 1977:95). Here, there is not only an emphasis on the innocence of another Serb who was killed by the Turks, but also the portrayal of the gypsy identity is remarkable. They are represented as dishonest people who change immediately according to circumstances. They support the mighty, so they torture the dead body of the innocent Serbian priest.

Austrians come to the town in 1878 after the Berlin Congress. From this time on, a new occupation era starts in Visegrad. Nevertheless, this period brings forth many changes in the town. Now, the number of people moving to the town constantly increases, currencies change, the lovely bequest and barracks of the Vizier are destroyed. Serbs and Jews can more frequently come to the *kapia*, the streets are illuminated by the municipality, the women can for the first time go to the *kapia*, the clothes of Christians and Jews become like the newcomers', and the life in town becomes more lively. A new class emerges in the society in this period. Now the merchant comes after the officials. The immigrant Polish Jews deal with trade and they run general stores, canteens, hotels, and jewelers'. A new place for visitors after Zarije's Inn, Lotte's Hotel is opened and it becomes a social center for officials, officers, and rich townspeople. So everywhere in the town, new living styles show up. As the narrator indicates, this twenty years of occupation "constituted the longest

period of peace and material progress that the town ever remembered, the main part of the life of that generation which at the moment of the occupation had just come to years of discretion” (Andric, 1977:212). Of course politics change, too. In the very beginning of the twentieth century, religious and national organizations are established, new papers start to be published, reading rooms are founded, and young people who studied in Vienna and Prague return their hometown with new ideas including strike, socialism, and proletariat (Andric, 1977:229).

After all these changes are reported positively, the twentieth century brings back the conflicts such as “the dynastic changes in Serbia”, “the annexation of Bosnia-Hercegovina by the Austrians”, and “the two Balkan Wars”. As a consequence of all these events, the mostly affected group in the society is Serbs again. After the declaration of the annexation, the pressure of Austrian officers is felt more on the Serbian society. Thus, “the police (arrest) and (fine) youths for imprudent declarations or for singing prohibited Serbian songs” (Andric, 1977:231). In fact, throughout the novel, it is not witnessed that a Serb individual harms somebody from other beliefs of nationalities. If a Muslim for example suffers from something or dies, it is because of the change in historical conditions or because of a deed carried out by people from his or her own national group. The death of the Austrian soldier Gregor Fedun and the suicide of Fata Avdagina from the Muslim society can be considered within this regard. Most probably, the death of Alihodja at the end of the novel is the most symbolic death after Radisav’s. Alihodja Mutevelic is the guardian and administrator of the grand vizier’s foundation in Visegrad, and actually his family has been doing the same job for more than two hundred years. He is a character who opposes any change in the town. Thus, the text depicts him as the symbol of the Ottoman order and legacy. But it is meaningful that he is not harmed or killed by anybody in the novel. The reason of his death is a heart attack in the final chapter. As a matter of fact, before the first Austrian troops enter the town, he is nailed to the bridge from his ear by Osman Effendi Karamanli, because he opposes an armed struggle against Austrians. When the Austrian forces see him, he is saved by them. Also, before his death he is able to survive the bombing in the combat

between Serbs and Austrians. As might be expected, this would not be the case for Serbian characters.

The year 1914 indicates the beginning of the First World War and it is also the last year of the bridge on the Drina. The beginning of the war is signified with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife by a Serb, which also brings about another dreadful period of suffering for the whole Serbian people. The arrest and persecution of Serbs start after a kolo dance scene in Mežan in Vidovdan, the day of the Kosovo Battle. The scene is filled with cheerfulness and the harmonious unity of the people is depicted brightly by the narrator:

The powerful current passed from the warm earth into the dancing feet and spread along the chain of warm hands; on that chain the kolo pulsed like a single living thing, warmed by the same blood and carried away by the same rhythm. The young men danced with heads thrown back, pale and with quivering nostrils, while the young girls danced with reddened cheeks and modestly downcast eyes, lest their glances betray the passion with which the dance had filled them. (Andric, 1977:302)

Nevertheless, the kolo dance scene ends when gendarmes stop it and scatter the crowd. The rest of the summer day, instead of being a festival, “transform(s) into a bewildered, bitter and frightened expectation” for the Serbs. The following days also bring forth the beginning of the war, after which the Serbian youths of Visegrad feel the call of duty for the nation. People learn from the news that the young Serbian intellectuals of the town such as Vlado Maric and Glasicanin who were hoping to go to America for a better life before that time flee to Serbia to fight with another hope to establish a new America in their own country. In the town, the life becomes a kind of trap for the ones who stay there. Then, in the last days of July, the storm starts in the whole world and it naturally affects the fate of Visegrad. As the narrator points out, “only then began the real persecution of the Serbs and all those connected with them” (Andric, 1977:306). Here, the main argument of the novel emerges again and the reader witnesses an all-out attack against Serbian identity by nearly every people living in the town.

First, after the war is declared on Serbia, a *schutzkorps* squad group, which include “gypsies, drunkards and other persons at odds with society and the law” starts to guard the town and they help the authorities in hunting Serbs. For example, “a gipsy without honor or definite occupation”, Huso Kokošar, armed with old rifles and bayonets and with his men, threatens the Serbs over the market place. In addition to this, the attitude of the Croatian prefect Sabljak against the President of the Serbian Church and School Community Pavle Rankovic and some other leading members is worthy of attention with regards to Serbian victimization. When Rankovic visits the Croatian prefect to inform him about the gang working with *schutzkorps*, the prefect talks to them indifferently, and even accuses them of being lawless. The conversation between Rankovic and the prefect is quite important since it provides a clear illustration for the hostility against Serbs:

'Sir, you see what is going on and what is being prepared, and you know that we, Serbs and citizens of Višegrad, have not wanted this.'

'I know nothing, sir,' the Prefect curtly interrupted him in a voice harsh with vexation, 'and I want to know nothing. We have other, more important, things to do now than listen to speeches. That is all I have to say to you!'

'Sir,' Pavle began again calmly as if trying by his own calm to moderate even this irritable and angry man, 'we have come to offer you our services and to assure you....'

'I have no need of your services and there is nothing for you to assure me about. You have shown at Sarajevo what you can do....'

'Sir,' continued Pavle resolutely and with unchanged voice, 'we would have liked within the limits of the law ...'

'So! Now you remember the law! To what laws have you the effrontery to appeal...?'

'The laws of the state. Sir, which apply to all.'

The Prefect suddenly became serious as if he had calmed down a little. Pavle at once took advantage of this moment of calm 'Sir, permit us to ask you whether we may be sure that our lives and property and those of our families will be respected, and if not, what we should do?'

The Prefect spread out his hands, palms upward, shrugged his shoulders, closed his eyes and convulsively shut his thin, pale lips.

Pavle knew only too well this characteristic gesture, pitiless, blind-deaf and dumb, which state officials adopt in important moments and saw at once that it was no use going on talking. The Prefect, after lowering his hands, looked up and said more gently: 'The military authorities will advise everyone what they must do.'

Now it was Pavle's turn to spread out his hands, close his eyes and shrug his shoulders for a moment, and then say in a deep, changed voice: 'Thank you. Sir.' (Andric, 1977:306-307)

Moreover, the hostility of the prefect is not the only example of maltreatment Serbs encounter. In addition to the assistance of gypsies and Croats to the *schutzkorps*, Turks are offered a high position in the same military force and most of them accept it. While Alihodja discusses with the other Muslims about joining the Austrian military forces, the soldiers bring two peasants and a townsman for execution. At that moment, the emergence of Gustav is remarkable. A resident of the town for many years, he once worked as a *zahlkelner* in Lotte's hotel, and now he is a café-owner. What is memorable about him is that he enters the scene shouting in German and indicates that he has been an intelligence agent in the town for fifteen years. Two years before he was promised to hang two Serbs with his hands when the time comes, and now he has earned his right to do it (Andric, 1977:310-311). The scene finishes with the voices of the peasant crying with fear of execution. Also, the cry of one of the peasants claiming to be innocent is meaningful, because if considered with regards to Serbian victimization, the narrative persists in the innocence and collective suffering of a people: “Herr Oberleutnant, Herr Oberleutnant, um Gotteswillen..Ich, unschuldiger Mensch... viele Kinder.. Unschuldig! Luge! Allés Lue!.' (Lieutenant, in God's name. I am innocent. Many children. Innocent! Lies! All lies!)” (Andric, 1977:311).

As Andrew Wachtel states, Andric narrows down the spatial focus and describes only the events that take place on or near the bridge (Wachtel, 1995:88). Nevertheless, considering the focus of the narration in terms of identity and nation formation, a reading of the novel emphasizing the victimization and suffering of Serbian people is quite possible. Whereas the integration between various people in Visegrad is the foundational feature of the town, the text demonstrates that conflicts, hate, and antagonisms are inevitable. So, if Visegrad is viewed as a prototype of Yugoslavia or the whole Balkans, it should be inferred from the text that the history of the region was shaped by age-old clashes. Thus, the main suggestion of the novel

approaches the Balkanist discourse featuring the “conflicting dynamic of the region as a historically traumatized space” (Aleksic, 2013:55).

2.4 THE IMPALEMENT OF RADISAV: REWRITING THE MYTHICAL DEATH OF PRINCE LAZAR

As Tatjana Aleksic points out in *Sacrificed Body: Balkan Community Building and the Fear of Freedom*, mythologies are still seen as “an integral part of the life they inform” in the Balkans. She states that this can be explained “as a consequence of Balkan nations’ not having had the luxury to allow their history of suffering and sacrifice to sink into oblivion and turn into a pragmatic pursuit of political alliances and interests.” This explains the constant use of the same mythological elements in the region. They are used to give meaning to present situations, to create a political language, or as Andric’s text attempts, “to explore the historical problem of national identity” (Aleksic, 2013:13-17).

Nationalism in Serbian literature emerged and developed from the foundations of oral folk poetry and the epic tradition that mostly portrayed the Serbian mythology whose main subject is the struggle of Serbs with the ruling powers. In the works of modern writers like Andric, nationalistic themes of the Serbian mythology are rewritten to define the modern conditions that the nation encounters. If considered within this framework, the sacrifice of Radisav in *The Bridge on the Drina* is the rewriting of the sacrifice of Prince Lazar in the Kosovo Battle. Just like this mythological character killed in the battle by Turks because he chose a heavenly kingdom, Radisav is impaled and murdered by the Turks as a result of his defiance. After his death, he turns into a martyr and a symbol of the Serbian struggle for national independence. So, the portrayal of the character and the scenes of his torture can be defined as the first eloquent illustrations of collective victimization and the struggle monumentalized in the bridge. As also pointed out by Vangelis Calotychos, “in oral transmission it circulates as a model for the locals’ resistance and projected endurance against the written plaque left by the Ottomans on the bridge and Radisav is elevated to the monumental time of the nation” (Calotychos, 2007:202).

Interestingly, the family history of Radiav demonstrates great parallelism with the suggestions put forward in Andric's doctoral thesis about Slavic identity. One thing that can be inferred from both works is that they replicate Njegos' ideas about the conversion of Slavic people into Islam: "The cowardly and the covetous turned into Turks". The history of Radisav's family demonstrates how Njegos' rigid expressions depicting the conversion as a betrayal are repeated in Andric's text. It is clear that "the betrayal syndrome" which has a significant place in Serbian cultural history and memory is revisited recurrently in the Serbian literary canon. Radisav is from Uniste, a small village close to the town, and he has a family known as the Heraci. Their land is good and there are many people in the family house. But the family is lonely and isolated because almost the whole village were converted to Islam in the past forty years. Nevertheless, Radisav and his family are neither cowardly nor opportunistic to betray their Slavic identity. Thus, as he comes from a family resisting conversion, in the very beginning of the construction of the bridge, he is portrayed as a man revolting against the powers building the edifice. He also endeavors to persuade the other villagers to revolt:

'Brother, we have had enough of this. We must defend ourselves. You can see for yourself that this building work will be the death of all of us; it will eat us all up. Even our children will have to do forced labor on the bridge, if there are any of us left. For us this work means extermination and nothing less. A bridge is no good to the poor and to the rayah, but only for the Turks; we can neither raise armies nor carry on trade. For us the ferry is more than enough. So a few of us have agreed among ourselves to go by night, at the darkest hour, and break down and spoil as much as possible of what has been done, and to spread the rumor that it is a vila, a fairy, who is destroying the works at the bridge and who does not want any bridge over the Drina. We shall see if this will be of any help. We have no other way and something must be done.' (Andric, 1977:34)

In the famous Serbian legend *The Building of Skadar*, when an edifice like a bridge is built, a fairy destroys some part of it because she asks for a sacrifice for the maintenance of the construction. Likewise, in *The Bridge on the Drina*, Radisav decides to spoil the bridge with other rebels and spreads the story of the legend as rumor as the cause of the destruction of the bridge. This must have a crucial meaning for the symbolic value of Radisav and his sacrifice in the novel. As a character, he is

the archetype of Stephan Lazar, and he is destined to replicate the sacrifice of this Serbian mythological figure. So, he is drawn by the author as a character strongly tied to Serbian folk tradition. This is not only shown with the connotation Radisav himself does to the Serbian legend *The Building of Skadar* in his deliberate attempt to spoil the bridge built by the Ottomans, but also with the influence of the *guslar* as a locomotive force for him. Mateja Matejic indicates that Radisav and other peasants are moved to resistance by the epic songs of the *guslar* who sings of the past Serbian glory. In this way, the characters are reminded of their human dignity and inspired to rebel (1978:356).

Tatyana Popovic acknowledges the importance of the oral tradition in Andric's work and she points out that Mateja Matejic views Andric as a storyteller undertaking the role of the *guslar* (1995:176). According to Matejic, a *guslar* sings about the past suffering and glory of the Serbian people in order to preserve Serbian nationalism and keep the hope and faith of people in liberation. So, she states that Andric is a modern *guslar* employing the same themes in his novels (1978:356). Accordingly, it must not be incidental that the name of Radisav first appears in the novel after the description of the peasants listening to stories from the Montenegrin *guslar* at night, trying not to be seen or heard by a Turk. While the Montenegrin *guslar* is telling the story of the "Serbian Tsar Stefan", the peasants are portrayed just like in a ceremony, and immediately after listening to the tale of Tsar Stefan Lazar, Radisav attempts to convince other peasants for revolt. The portrayal of the ceremonial togetherness of the peasants reminds the reader the synergy of Serbian people dancing the kolo in later parts of the novel:

The peasants pressed closer and closer around the singer but without making the slightest noise; their very breathing could be heard. They half closed their eyes, carried away with wonder. Thrills ran up and down their spines, their backs straightened up, their breasts expanded, their eyes shone, their fingers opened and shut and their jaw muscles tightened. The Montenegrin developed his melody more and more rapidly, even more beautiful and bolder, while the wet and sleepless workmen, carried away and insensible to all else, followed the tale as if it were their own more beautiful and more glorious destiny. (Andric, 1977:33-34)

After Radisav and other peasants start spoiling the bridge at night, Abidaga naturally gets deeply furious and orders the man from Plevlje to find the people carrying out that harm. Afraid to be killed by Abidaga, the man from Plevlje tries hard to find Radisav and other rebels. When one night the guards catch the peasant destroying the bridge, they see Radisav of Uniste. During the interrogation by Abidaga, Radisav's words of voluntary sacrifice are remarkable: "Well, I am in your hands. Do what you like". Then, the most memorable scene of the novel and most probably one of the most detailed depictions of violence and brutality in literature starts. First, the guards take away the chains, throw them into fire and strip the peasant. After the chains are covered with soot, their hands and the body of Radisav are blackened. Then the two men bring the chains and wrap them around the peasant's chest. After that, his mouth contracts, the veins in his neck swell, his ribs seem to stand out and his stomach muscles contract and relax as he vomits. He groans from the pain (Andric, 1977:44). This description is not easy to read, but it is only the beginning of torture. After a while, when he is interrogated again, his image is depicted as a Christ carrying his stake: "he no longer 'sowed' as he walked but marched strangely with short steps, almost skipping on his mutilated feet with bleeding holes where the nails had been; on his shoulders he carried along white sharpened stake" (Andric, 1977:48). After he is taken to the bridge, he is impaled by the executioner Merdjan. The ferocity of the Turk is clear in the description of the anguish of Radisav's body:

Merdjan now saw that close to the right shoulder muscles the skin was stretched and swollen. He went forward quickly and cut the swollen place with two crossed cuts. Pale blood flowed out, at first slowly then faster and faster. Two or three more blows, light and careful, and the iron-shod point of the stake began to break through at the place where he had cut. He struck a few more times until the point of the stake reached level with the right ear. The man was impaled on the stake as a lamb on the spit only that the tip did not come through the mouth but in the back and had not seriously damaged the intestines, the heart or the lungs. Then Merdjan threw down the mallet and came nearer. He looked at the unmoving body, avoiding the blood which poured out of the places where the stake had entered and had come out again and was gathering in little pools on the planks. The two gypsies turned the stiffened body on its back and began to bind the legs to the foot of the stake. Meanwhile Merdjan looked to see if the man were still alive and carefully examined the face that had suddenly become swollen, wider and larger. The eyes were wide open and restless, but the eyelids were unmoving, the mouth was wide open but the two lips

stiff and contracted and between them the clenched teeth shone white. Since the man could no longer control some of his facial muscles the face looked like a mask. (Andric, 1977:51)

All this torture is carried out by the executioner while people of the town are witnessing. The body is left on the bridge to die gradually. Thus, the bridge in the collective memory becomes another Serbian Golgotha. Abidaga orders to throw the dead body to dogs, but the Serbian peasants make an agreement and give some money to the executioner Merdjan and take the dead body for burying him with a religious ceremony. As Radisav dies, he becomes a martyr and a saint in the Serbian collective memory. Accordingly, the formation of the Serbian collective memory is illustrated through the violence and brutality objectified in the impaled body of the peasant Radisav. Also, the general attitude of the people in such situations is remarkable because people are portrayed collectively and the reaction of every individual in each group shares the same ideas about a certain event. So, individuals are deeply self-conscious of their national identity even in this century, which in fact is a very early time for the emergence of national identities.

It must be stated that, like the other sacrificed people in national or religious tradition, Radisav's death is quickly appropriated by a religious or national cause and becomes part of the communal mythology (Aleksic, 2013:61). So, the sacrificial metaphor in the novel merges with the nationalist rhetoric and the actual victim of the crime turns into a collective body rather than the individual body of Radisav. As the Serbian mythology defines Serbs as the nation destined to repeat the suffering of Jesus Christ, all sufferings of historical or fictional characters in the national struggle for independence become a replication of this archetypal victim and share the same mythical features. Thus, it is very easy for the popular mythology to endow the victimhood of the peasant Radisav with a greater meaning and to elevate his self-sacrifice posthumously to a heroic death (Aleksic, 2013:55).

Clearly, the impalement of Radisav and his transformation into a martyr in the collective memory of Serbian people is a modern rewriting of the mythical death of Prince Lazar in the Kosovo Battle. Since Prince Lazar chooses the heavenly

kingdom and he dies honorably in the battle, according to Serbian mythology his death turns into a glorious victory rather than a defeat. The Serbs' reaction to Radisav's death clearly illustrates the impact of the mythology related to the Kosovo Battle on Serbian memory. As narrated in the novel, after the peasant dies, "those who were Serbs felt a certain easing of the spirit, as at an invisible victory" (Andric, 1977:55) because they believe that in this way Radisav got rid of all the earthly burdens and he became a saint. Thus, his death is not linked to hopelessness. Instead, in the long struggle against Turks, it represents an avid aspiration to win:

Now they looked more boldly up at the scaffolding and the man who had been condemned. They felt as if fate, in their continual wrestling and measuring of forces with the Turks, had now inclined to their side. Death was the greatest trump in the game. Mouths till then contracted in fear now began to open. Muddy, wet, unshaven and pale, rolling great blocks of Banja stone with pinewood levers, they halted for a moment to spit on their palms and say to each other in hushed voices: 'May God pardon him and have mercy upon him!' Ah, the martyr! It is hard for such as we!' 'Don't you see that he has become a saint?' And everyone glanced up at the dead man who stayed there as upright as if he had been marching at the head of a company. (Andric, 1977:55)

Accordingly, Radisav transforms into a Christ-like figure symbolizing Serbian suffering in the end. The torture and death of the peasant by the Turkish master creates a "powerful image for the oppressed Serbs in the construction of their national identity." He is able to articulate the experience of historical victimization of the Serbian community (Longinovic, 1995:131) resuscitating the mythical/historical tale of Prince Lazar.

2.5 THE BRIDGE ON THE DRINA: A TOMBSTONE OF THE SACRIFICED BODIES OF THE SERBIAN NATION RATHER THAN A SYMBOL OF INTERRELATED CULTURES

The sacrifice and transformation of Radisav from a peasant into a Christ-like figure plays a significant role in the novel. Nevertheless, as a symbol of the Balkan region, the bridge is placed at the very center of Andric's narrative. This significance is not only illustrated in the title of the book, but also the narrative focus is narrowed

down to the bridge on the Drina. The stories and characters flowing throughout the novel are somehow related to it. The bridge in this regard is crucial for the novel. Nevertheless, as Heidegger points out, a bridge is first a symbol rather than an edifice. The bridge as a symbol is popular in the entire Balkans because the region is frequently seen as connecting the Eastern and Western worlds. Likewise, it could be claimed that the bridge in the novel is built by the grand vizier Mehmed Pasha Sokolovic in order to annihilate the division between the East and the West. Nevertheless, this is probably the simplest and the least possible meaning that the bridge in the text may suggest because Andric constructs and exhibits the bridge as a symbol very close to Heidegger's definition in "Building, Dwelling, Thinking". In this text, Heidegger indicates that a bridge, rather than being a connection point, enlarges the division between two opposing sides and makes two sides set off against each other (Heidegger, 1971:335). Likewise, the bridge in the novel does not represent the connection of ideas, people or cultures. Instead, it becomes a monument of the pain and the struggles of a single nation.

Dragan Kujundzic draws attention to the dual nature of the the bridge both in the Balkan immurement legend and in the novel. He states that the bridge is not only a "source of nourishment, fertility, a breast of sorts, a giant mother, but also the site of a violent, deadly separation, a sarcophagus for the newly born walled into the bridge to die" (1995:107). The walls of a bridge consume the twins or the master builder's wife alive in the Serbian legend. In a similar way in the rewriting of the story in the modern novel the walls of the bridge are nourished with Radisav's corpse. In this way, his body is added to the materials of the construction and becomes an indelible part of it. So, the bridge is "reinscribed in collective memory as a permanent monument to Radisav's defiance in death" (Calotychos, 2007:202).

Along with Radisav's dead body and the meaning it creates in the narrative, the death of the Grand Vizier Mehmed Pasha Sokolovic can easily be defined as another sacrifice for the bridge. Accordingly, it has a greater meaning for the whole Serbian national memory. Actually, the reason that leads him to build a bridge and his immediate death after the construction of the edifice has implications about the question of national identity. As the Grand Vizier of the Empire who loses his former

Slavic identity with the education the Ottomans give him, his order to construct a bridge can be interpreted as an attempt to unite the East and the West, or to find new easier ways for the Ottomans to conquer Europe. On the other hand, in fact, it does not seem that he loses all of his memory relating his Slavic identity. The river they passed on that day he was taken by the Ottomans becomes a point for him to be “ashamed of his powerlessness” and it forces him to “recognize more clearly his own misery”. The physical discomfort he felt on that November day “never completely left him, though he changed his way of life, his faith, his name and his country” (Andric, 1977: 25). Thus, much more than the practical reasons to build a bridge, a strange feeling of pain associated with the memory of the place he was taken from when he was a ten year old boy leads him to build it:

Mehmed Pasha Sokolli, who waged wars that were for the most part victorious on three continents and extended the frontiers of the Ottoman Empire, making it safe abroad and by good administration, consolidated it from within. For these sixty odd years he served three Sultans, experienced both good and evil as only rare and chosen persons may experience them, and raised himself to heights of power and authority unknown to us, which few men reach and few men keep. This new man that he had become in a foreign world where we could not follow even in our thoughts, must have forgotten all that he had left behind in the country whence they had once brought him. He surely forgot too the crossing of the Drina at Višegrad, the bare banks on which travellers shivered with cold and uncertainty, the slow and worm-eaten ferry, the strange ferryman, and the hungry ravens above the troubled waters. But that feeling of discomfort which had remained in him had never completely disappeared. On the other hand, with years and with age it appeared more and more often; always the same black pain which cut into his breast with that special well-known childhood pang which was clearly distinguishable from all the ills and pains that life later brought to him. With closed eyes, the Vezir would wait until that black knife-like pang passed and the pain diminished. In one of those moments he thought that he might be able to free himself from this discomfort if he could do away with that ferry on the distant Drina, around which so much misery and inconvenience gathered and increased incessantly, and bridge the steep banks and the evil water between them, join the two ends of the road which was broken by the Drina and thus link safely and forever Bosnia and the East, the place of his origin and the places of his life. Thus it was he who first, in a single moment behind closed eyelids, saw the firm graceful silhouette of the great stone bridge which was to be built there. (Andric, 1977:25-26)

The Grand Vizier imagines a bridge on the Drina River because of his feeling described as the “black pain” in the text. Unfortunately, this feeling he brought from

Bosnia does not end after the construction of the bridge is finished. He again feels the “black knife” in his breast. On a Friday, when he goes to mosque with his suite, a dervish comes towards him asking for alms with his left hand. The Vizier orders his man to give the dervish what he wants. But, at that moment, the dervish draws a knife from his sleeve and murders the Vizier. Getting killed by a dervish in a mosque may suggest the fact that he is never approved as an Ottoman and always lives in an in-between situation. So, he is never allowed to get rid of his pain. Also, if building a bridge should be understood as an endeavor to create a monument for the “union of disparate parts of an individual (Serb boy / Vizier ruler) and collective self (Bosnian ruler / polyreligious Empire) (Calotychos, 1995:203), the narrative again suggests that a unification is not probable in this context either. In addition, the text offers a really striking image of the dead Vizier: the body is portrayed as it left behind and freed from everything the Turkish Empire forced him to have. He gains his Serbian identity again and becomes another sacrifice in the process of nation-formation which is objectified, like the corpse of Radisav, in the building of the bridge: “and now with half-bared chest, bareheaded, bleeding, twisted and crumpled, he looked more like an ageing and battered peasant of Sokolović than the dignitary who until a short time before had administered the Turkish Empire” (Andric, 1977:72-73).

Hence, in addition to many symbolic meanings the bridge metaphor may suggest in the text, it can be likened to a tombstone for all sacrificed people who nourish the foundations of the bridge with their bodies. Consequently, the power and endurance of the bridge highlighted throughout the novel in the final sentences of many chapters must have a connection with all these bodies of Serbian victims whose deaths are somehow related to the bridge, and accordingly with Serbian nation-formation. As the stories flow from the beginning to the end in the novel covering hundreds of years, the reader witnesses that everything in the town always changes naturally, politically, or socially. However, the narrative creates a contrast by finishing the chapters with sentences such as “thus the generations renewed themselves beside the bridge and the bridge shook from itself, like dust, all the traces which transient human events had left on it and remained, when all was over,

unchanged and unchangeable” (Andric,1977:97) indicating the firmness and endurance of the edifice.

The narrative insists on the permanence of the bridge in order to invoke deliberately the nationalist rhetoric claiming the uninterrupted continuation and antiquity of a nation. So, the bridge becomes a metaphor for the community-nation which identifies its being with the destiny of the edifice (Aleksic, 2007:98-99). Like the bridge, the nation can suffer from many obstacles. Nonetheless, the immortal essence of the nation does not change. The bridge, as a symbol of colonization, suffering and as a tombstone for the sacrificed bodies, must stay unchanged until the time of suffering for the nation finishes. At the end of the novel, the reader is heralded a new beginning as the Serbs are liberated from both the Ottoman and Austrian rules. This is demonstrated by two simultaneous events: 1- A Serbian mine explodes the bomb left by the Austrians and destroys the bridge, 2- Alihodja, depicted as the guardian of the Ottoman rule throughout the text dies. Thus, the hope for a new beginning for the Serbs is conveyed in the end of the novel with an image of the bridge cut in half together with singing noises: “Down below there, it seemed, they were singing. Down below there, too, was the ruined bridge, horribly, cruelly cut in half” (Andric, 1977:339).

The separation of the bridge into two parts and singing songs constitutes one of the main suggestions of the text: if the novel is read within the framework of nation-formation, it is probable to interpret it as a denial of a multicultural system like Yugoslavia because it only foregrounds the struggles of a single nation. This is always highlighted in the novel by using the traditional themes of the Serbian nationalistic literary canon such as victimization, suffering, and sacrifice for the collective body of the nation. It thus asserts a memory of hostility among various peoples constituting the population of Bosnia or the entire Balkan region. This is also the basis of the Balkanist rhetoric depicting the Balkans as a battlefield and the “other” of Western civilization.

CHAPTER THREE

MILORAD PAVIC'S *DICTIONARY OF THE KHAZARS*: AN ALLEGORICAL REPRESENTATION OF YUGOSLAVIA

In *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, Linda Hutcheon points out that the separation between the historical and literary is challenged in postmodern theory and art, and the critical readings of both history and fiction deal with what they have in common rather than how they differentiate. One of the most significant aspects the two forms share is that both of them are intertextual and “deploy the texts of the past within their complex textuality” (Hutcheon, 2004:105). Historiographic metafiction, a genre depending on the problematizing of historical and literary narratives, has a pivotal space in postmodern literary tradition with its “intense self-consciousness” to “blur the lines between fiction and history” (Hutcheon, 2004:113). Milorad Pavić's lexicon novel *Dictionary of the Khazars* can be read as a “historiographic metafiction” considering its primary attempt to question the line between the historical and literary narratives by referring to different text types and problematizing the “activity of reference”. In order to emphasize the discursive nature of the references, the historical/fictional event “Conversion of the Khazars” is narrated via various references none of which acknowledges the others' representation of history. Also, the self-reflexive character of the text emphasizes the role of the reader while the employment of many fictional authors both break the domination of the authoritative narrator and makes the novel a crucial example of postmodern literature.

On the other hand, this study is close to the idea that the way each society experiences the postmodern varies significantly and this experience must be considered in interpreting a work of literature as well. Thus, in this study, Pavić's novel *Dictionary of the Khazars* will be read as an example of postmodern literature from Eastern Europe, specifically from Yugoslavia. According to our reading of *Dictionary of the Khazars*, the formal aspects of the novel make it a distinguished example of postmodern fiction influenced by post-structuralist theories of language and literature. On the contrary, it is not possible to ignore the reality that the novel is strongly tied with the national question in Yugoslavia and it problematizes the basis

of Yugoslav existence throughout the entire work. So, instead of interpreting the novel as an apolitical and ahistorical postmodern work, this study suggests that the novel can be read as a national allegory since the story of the Khazars has many parallels with the Serbian people and their historical experience. Thus, the playful, fantastic language of the book also veils an ultra-nationalistic rhetoric of Serbian victimization and suppression. Sometimes it springs out abruptly especially in the parts that can be interpreted as satirical parodies of Tito's multiethnic state organization. In addition to this rhetoric, the second way the novel problematizes the Yugoslav context is that it creates potent images that show that assembled structures like Yugoslavia are not natural and are doomed to be demolished. Nevertheless, the main reference to the failure of the Yugoslav metanarrative is the form of the *Dictionary* which overtly denies the combination of diverse narratives and clearly demonstrates that it is impossible to reach a harmonious totality.

3.1 THE FORM AND CONTENT/CONTEXT OF PAVIC'S WORK

3.1.1 THE STRUCTURE AND THE EXPERIMENTAL STYLE OF THE NOVEL

Milorad Pavic's *Dictionary of the Khazars* is written in the form of a dictionary. Actually it is a compilation of three different dictionaries entitled "The Red Book" including the Christian sources of the Khazar question, "The Green Book" which has the Islamic sources, and "The Yellow Book" which includes the Hebrew sources on the same question. The Red Book, The Green Book, and The Yellow Book contain 14, 15, and 16 entries respectively. Because of the dictionary form of the novel, the order of the entries changes when the book is translated into a different language. It must be pointed out that all the entries of the dictionary are related to an ancient tribe called the Khazars. The entries are not only about people who lived in the period of the Khazar Empire. They also include entries about archeologists and scholars studying this ancient tribe. However, it must be pointed out that they are all connected to the event known as the conversion of Khazars into

one of the monotheistic religions. Remarkably, as a result of this event, they lose their identity. The entries are mostly different in each book of the dictionary, but the ones which are common in all three dictionaries are the Khazar Princess “Ateh”, “Kaghan”, “Khazars”, and “The Khazar Polemic”. In addition to the main text constituted by the three dictionaries, there are Preliminary Notes and two Appendix parts. The first appendix is about the character Father Theoctist Nikolsky and the second one includes “Excerpt from the Court Minutes in the Dr. Abu Kabir Muawia Murder Case”. The text does not end even after these two appendixes since we have to read the “Closing Note on the Usefulness of the Dictionary” and “The List of Entries”.

One of the most noteworthy aspects of the novel is that the main text is supplied with a great number of paratexts.¹ First, the subtitle of the novel defines it as a “lexicon novel consisting of 100.000 words”. The first page of the book is much more striking as male readers are instructed to read the male version of the text and female readers are instructed to read the female one. The difference between male and female versions of the text is only one paragraph which, according to Pavic, completely changes its meaning. These introductory words are followed by a photograph of the cover page of *Lexicon Cosri*, calling it a “reconstructed” version of the “original, destroyed edition of *Dictionary of the Khazars* published in 1691. The next page, dedicated to the reader “who will never read this book,” announces that he/she “is forever dead”. The book follows with “Preliminary Notes to the Second Reconstructed Edition” that give information about the history of the dictionary, its structure, and the methods for its usage. These preliminary notes end with “Rescued Excerpts from the Destroyed 1691 Edition”. In fact, all these linguistic aspects are parts of Pavic’s play with the novel genre. First, the conventions of the novel are broken as it is hybridized with the dictionary, a completely distinct genre. A dictionary provides definitions in its entries, whereas in Pavic’s work, three dictionaries narrate stories related to the events and characters that are somehow

¹ For more detailed information about the use of paratexts in literature, see Gerard Genette, **Paratexts: Thresholds of interpretation**, Tr. Jane E. Levin, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997. Also see Ivan Callus, “Cover to Cover: Paratextual Play in Milorad Pavic’s *Dictionary of the Khazars* for a reading of the novel with regards to paratexts.

connected to the mythical/historical Khazars. Also, the novel's claim that it was written as the reconstruction of a lost text is the way Pavic questions his own authority including many fictional authors.

Thus, it is very clear from the very first linguistic elements that Pavic's work will extremely deal with questions of authorship and the role of the reader as well as the conventions of the novel as a genre. There are numerous scenes and characters that problematize these issues. Theoctist Nikolsky is one of the most important characters who is presented as somebody who has great contribution for the creation of the original version of the dictionary. In fact, in Appendix One, he is portrayed as the compiler of the lexicon. Like many other characters, he is one of the authors in the novel with whom Pavic voluntarily shares his authority. His journey of being an author clearly illustrates that the writing process is one of the main themes of the novel. Theoctist Nikolsky is born in 1641 in a village of St. John Monastery with a very strong memory which does not allow him to forget anything. He learns Turkish from Constantinople coins, Hebrew from the merchants of Dubrovnik, and reading from icons. Strangely, one day he suddenly loses his memory. When he is eighteen, his father sends him to St. John Monastery and there he is given the job to transcribe books. In this way, his journey to become an author starts. First he transcribes some books without making any changes or adding anything to them. (Indeed, Pavic never portrays Nikolsky as a reliable scribe or author. Even while he is transcribing these very first books, he first memorizes the manuscripts and then writes them down) Then, he starts to add appendixes to books and invents new saints and miracles. But probably the most notable story in this part of *Dictionary of the Khazars* is that he transcribes "Life of St. Peter of Corishia" upon the request of a young monk and while writing the chapters about the days of the fast, he writes 50 days instead of 5. He then gives the book to the young monk who starts a fifty day fast after reading Nikolsky's copy. On the fifty first day, Nikolsky hears the news about the funeral of the young monk.

The section of the novel about Theoctist Nikolsky is a good illustration of how the novel, like many examples of the postmodern conventions of representation,

thematizes writing and authorship by narcissistically revealing the process of creation² and turns the novel into a carnival where a lot of voices, many unreliable authors, fragments from lost texts, poisoned books killing the reader, translations, transformations and reincarnations of people and texts form a playful narrative. In such a text, the relationship between history and fiction transforms into an endless game. On the other hand, Pavic proposes that, as it is clearly demonstrated with the death of the young monk in Nikolsky's narrative, writing has a power to affect and change life. Accordingly, the dictum *Verbum caro factum est* meaning "The word became flesh", which is repeated many times throughout the text, signifies the close relationship between life and writing.

As stated by David Damrosch, Pavic's *Dictionary of the Khazars* has been widely celebrated as a tour de force of metafictional play (2013:260). While experimenting with the novel genre through writing a novel in the form of a lexicon and playing with genre conventions, the author also creates a kinship for his novel with works such as "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius", "The Library of Babylon", and "Death of the Compass" by Borges. Concerning the mythical/historical people called Khazars and their conversion to one of the monotheistic religions; there are three different lexicons on Christian, Muslim and Hebrew sources on the Khazar question. The event discussed in these three different lexicons takes place in 8th or 9th century and is referred to as the "Khazar polemic". Conveying the stories related to this mythical event, the main elements of Pavic's narrative are constituted as the "denying of chronology, dreaming-like discontinuity of time, and the interchangeability of time and space" (Karesek, 2018:43).

According to the historical information included in the preliminary notes, the Khazars are an autonomous tribe that lived around the 7th and 10th centuries between the Caspian and the Black Sea. They wage war against the Arabs and Byzantium and manage to establish a powerful empire. However, their culture and state vanish from

² Linda Hutcheon in *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* uses the term "narcissistic" to define metafictional texts which self-reflexively expose the writing process. See: Linda Hutcheon, **Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox**, Wilfrid Laurer University Press, Canada, 1980.

history as a result of the event discussed in the *Dictionary* (Pavic, 1989:2). The ruler of the state, Kaghan, gets up one day after a dream in which an angel tells him that God finds his intentions pleasing but not his deeds. So, he demands representatives from different religions to interpret the dream and promises to convert to the religion of the representative who can provide the most convincing interpretation. St. Cyril, Farabi Ibn Kora, and Isaac Sangari are the representatives of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism respectively. Each separate dictionary claims that the Khazars converted to their religion. Thus, these three absolute narratives of three religions never manage to reach an agreement. Also, this conversion is significant for the Khazars since after the event the Khazar state is demolished and very few things remain from their culture. Incredibly, a new interest for the Khazar culture arises in the 17th century and all the materials found about them are collected in a dictionary published under the title “Lexicon Cosri” by the Polish printer Joannes Daubmannus. One of the five hundred copies published is a poisoned copy with a golden lock and there is also another one with a silver lock. After the Inquisition destroys the copies of the dictionary in 1692, only those two copies with golden and silver locks remain. However, they also disappear somehow despite the fact that the 20th century archeologist and Arabist Dr. Isialo Suk claims that he possesses the poisoned copy of the dictionary. As he indicates, he reads only the first nine pages of the book repeatedly in order not to die. Thus, as the author claims, the reader is attempting to read a reconstruction of the 17th century Daubmannus version. Nevertheless, in 1982 the endeavor to combine the fragmented parts of the dictionary in a conference in Istanbul fails after Dr. Isialo Suk and Dr. Abu Kabir Muawia are murdered by incarnated demons disguised as members of a Belgian family. So, this reconstruction is also controversial and not completed.

Milorad Pavic’s interviews and his writing on literature and the novel clarify his purposes in writing a novel in the form of a dictionary. Interestingly, he likens his *Dictionary* to a huge house with many entrances and exits. Also, he is a writer fully aware of the responsibility of the reader and he is deliberately attempting to increase this responsibility while creating his text. He describes his attempt as:

I tried to change the way of the reading increasing the role and responsibility of the reader in the process of creating a novel (let us not forget that in the world there are much more talented readers than talented authors and literary critics). I have left to them, to the readers, the decision about the choice of the plots and the development of the situations in the novel: where the reading will begin, and where it will end, even the decision about the destiny of the main characters. But in order to change the way of reading, I had to change the way of writing. Therefore these lines should not be understood exclusively as a talk about the form of the novel. This is at the same time both a talk of its content. (Pavic, 1998:145)

In *The Beginning and End of Reading-The Beginning and End of the Novel* and *As a Writer I was Born Two Hundred Years Ago*, he points out that arts are reversible or irreversible. Architecture, painting or sculpture are included in the group of the reversible arts since the viewer can approach works produced in these fields from different sides. Literature is an irreversible art because it has a linear character from start to finish (Pavic, 1998:146). He indicates that in order to turn literature into a reversible art, he has tried his best to get rid of the beginning and end of the novel (Lallas, 1998:129). So, the form of *Dictionary of the Khazars*, which gives the reader the opportunity to start and finish the text wherever (s)he wants, clearly illustrates this attempt of the author.

3.1.2. THE CRITICAL RECEPTION OF *DICTIONARY*

Pavic's work managed to gain international success largely because of the highly experimental style of the novel that was not popular at the time in the region. In the summer of 1998, the *Review of Contemporary Fiction* allocates more than one hundred pages to Pavic's novels, chiefly on *Dictionary of the Khazars*. As Damrosch points out, Pavic was a significant figure in Serbian literature but he was not known outside Yugoslavia until the publication of *Dictionary* and the book became a success around the globe (2013:261). In order to demonstrate this, Damrosch indicates that the French rights of the novel were acquired while the book was still in press, and it was published in Paris at the same time with Belgrade in 1984. And by the late 90s, it was translated into almost twenty six languages including Japanese and Catalan. He also states that the international audience "welcomed the book as 'An Arabian Nights Romance', 'a wickedly teasing intellectual game', and an opportunity 'to lose

themselves in a novel of love and death' as the American edition describes it" (2013:261). In the critical articles written on the novel, it is clear that nearly all of them are centered on the formal features of the novel and there are very few of them interpreting the novel within the context it was created, Yugoslavia in 1980s on the threshold to get demised as a result of nationalistic fragmentation.

Among the articles on the novel, Tomislav Longinovic's "Chaos, Knowledge and Desire: Narrative Strategies in Dictionary of the Khazars" can first be cited. Longinovic associates the structure of the novel with chaos theories, and he puts forward that if there is a hidden order of the novel, this is not provided via making any reference to an external reality or to the internal coherence of the text. It is found in the process of reading. This emphasizes the reader's responsibility in interpreting the text: "each reader will put together the book for himself, as in a game of dominoes or cards, and, as with the mirror, he will get out of this dictionary as much as he puts into it" (1998:185-186). Giuliana Perco also stresses the reader's interactive participation Pavic endeavors to create with the structure of his work (1999:52). Radmila Jovanovic Gorup describes Pavic's fiction as "baroque imagination and playful humor". She reminds that Pavic is linked to authors such as Nabokov, Borges, Eco, and Calvino; but according to her, in *Dictionary of the Khazars*, the reader has something entirely new. As Gorup claims, "The 'Khazar Polemic' theme on which the novel is based gives the author the opportunity to introduce his magical world of events and characters" (1998:121). Also, she indicates that postmodern poetics in Pavic's fiction is not found only within the text, it also expands to the physical book (Gorup, 1998:213) by which she means the paratexts surrounding the main text. Rachel Kilbourn Davis reads the book as a nonaristotelian fiction with "a very solid illusion of a novel that has order and meaning" (1998:176). Moreover, what he emphasizes in his article is that the reader is caught in the middle of the historical and the fantastic while reading the novel. For him, the novel starts with a high intensity of historical elements, but as it continues, fantastic elements gain more control and the nonmimetic character of the novel is emphasized (1998:177). Along with these scholars, Jasmina Mihajlovic describes it as an

example of hyperfiction and discusses the novel with regards to “the transition of fiction into a new technology” (1998:215).

3.1.3 THE YUGOSLAV CULTURAL / HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND THE INTERPRETATION OF THE NOVEL

It is clear that none of the articles cited above associates the novel with the local context it was created in. They interpret it considering mostly its formal aspects focusing thus on its metafictional qualities, and its self-reflexivity. Also, they emphasize its tendency to textualize history, to play with genres and hybridize them, and to swerve to the realm of the hypertext. As far as its content is concerned their main implication is that the text is closer to fantastic fiction and it has an infinite number of meanings without any real ethical impact at all (Damrosch, 2013:275). Actually, David Damrosch in *What is World Literature* discusses Pavic’s novel and its journey both in its own country and abroad as a remarkable example for the debate of world literature. For him,

[t]he book’s international success involved the neglect or outright misreading of its political content. As his country began to disintegrate after Tito’s death, Pavic spoke out bitterly on behalf of the cause of Serbian nationalism, his international reputation giving weight to his words at home. The metaphysical magician turned out to have an angry joker up his sleeve. (Damrosch, 2013:261)

Admittedly, Yugoslavia in the 1980s, the time Pavic writes and publishes the novel, is the arena of harsh conflicts about cultural and ethnic identities. These conflicts center on the problem of nationality and include debates related to culture, religion, history, language, and globalization. It is not difficult to view numerous satiric implications about those questions in the novel. Indeed, the Khazars may be interpreted as the “forerunners of modern Serbs as a majority oppressed in their own country” (Damrosch, 2013:275). While the book was at times discussed in terms of the national question and battles on cultural identity by the novelist Danilo Kis or by scholars such as Petar Ramadanovic or Andrew Wachtel in Yugoslavia, the foreign

readers seem to be prone to overlook this kind of local implications and offer mainly apolitical interpretations.

The reason behind this tendency is probably the fact that *Dictionary of the Khazars* has been read within the tradition of understanding the postmodern in the West. The “postmodern condition” is interpreted generally in Western countries as the loss of traditional values and grand narratives. Likewise, truth claims lose their plausibility. As a result, in the postmodern presentation of history, we witness its subversion and “reduction to a textual residue disconnected with memory, all the way to the total destruction of history as the knowledge of the past, and its ultimate identification with the fictional narrative” (Aleksic, 2008:275).

The Western tradition of the postmodern was shaped as a result of a cultural history including Feudalism, Renaissance and Reformation movements, nation states and monarchies, the Enlightenment, and Modernism. On the other hand, people in the Balkans did not experience the same steps until the “postmodern condition”. They arrived in the Balkan region in the 9th century. After battles with small tribes, they established states, but then they were dominated and ruled by Empires such as the Ottomans and Habsburgs for centuries. The existence of a rooted aristocracy was not witnessed in this region, so they did not experience the same struggles between aristocrats and bourgeoisie as Europe. The influence of the Enlightenment thought was certainly felt in the 19th century, but most of the Balkans was attempting to get rid of the hemony of different empires and establish nation states. Also, distinctly from Western Europe, the Balkans underwent civil wars, partisan struggles and established communist states. In its mostly accepted definition postmodern meant questioning, subverting, and deconstructing the structures of all grand narratives. Nevertheless, in the postmodern age, the nations constituting Yugoslavia were rediscovering and reinventing their old traditions, beliefs, and narratives related to the nation’s glorious past covered by the communist ideology and the charismatic leadership of Tito. So, the postmodern in Yugoslav context cannot be discussed only in relation to Lyotard’s definition “disappearance of grand narratives”. Instead, their experience of the postmodern should be considered as the exchange of a grand

narrative with another more ancient and solidified one (Aleksic, 2007:110). Thus, the Western and the Eastern parts of the world did not experience the same historical processes until the postmodern age. This fact reveals two questions: 1-Does postmodernism in literature means the very exact thing for both parts of the world? 2-Whether a work of postmodern fiction from the Balkan region can equally reduce history into textuality separating it from the political.

The Yugoslav novelist Danilo Kis indicates that Yugoslav literature could not free itself from political dictates and national resentments. As Aleksic also points out, one problem related to the postmodern fiction from the region is

[t]he constant reshaping of political ethnoscares of the Balkans which demanded from literature unwavering loyalty to national interests. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why in the rich postmodern fictional production coming from the Balkans there is a profound involvement with the historical and the national. (Aleksic, 2007:110)

Thus, writers never manage to abandon the “sacred duty to the nation”. Actually, however there are writers expected to subvert institutionalized literature, they also participate in its creation. Whereas Western “historiographic metafiction” attempts to question absolutes and their very existence, the same literary form as created in the Southeastern Europe does not have a purely deconstructive outlook and it seems that there still exist strong ties between history, past, memory, and political. Tatjana Aleksic explains this fact indicating that the narratives carry some kind of “remnant of the modernist melancholy for the lost absolute” and “an anxiety about the loss of recognizable and delineated culture-specific identities” (Aleksic, 2007:4). This feeling of melancholy and anxiety is demonstrated in *Dictionary of the Khazars* with the image of the lost body of Adam, which is wished to be reconstructed again by the assembling forces in the narrative. As an example of postmodern and poststructuralist literature from Yugoslavia, Pavic’s novel is a great illustration of stylistic and thematic experimentation, but it also has a very strong tie with the national and political debate in Yugoslavia.

3.2 *DICTIONARY OF THE KHAZARS* AS A “NATIONAL ALLEGORY”

In *Third-World Literature in the Era of Multicultural Capitalism*, Fredric Jameson endeavors to offer a general theory for the literature produced in certain parts of the world he calls third-world. As he points out, the cultures he defines as “third-world” cannot be considered as independent or autonomous. They are locked in an unending struggle with first-world cultural imperialism (Jameson, 1968:68). As he argues, the categories such as subjective, public or political and the relationship between them are totally different in third-world culture compared to the first-world. Accordingly, third-world texts, even the ones that are seemingly private, “necessarily project a political dimension” (Jameson, 1968:69). Jameson indicates that whereas in the capitalist culture there is a clear distinction between the story of the individual and the public, the story of a private self always refers to the story of the entire nation in cultures he defines as third-world. Probably, the most significant argument in the text summarizing his hypothesis is that:

All third-world texts are necessarily, I want to argue, allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call *national allegories*, even when or perhaps I should say, particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel. (Jameson, 1968:69)

Obviously, the theory of *national allegory* corresponds to many literary texts produced in different parts of the world dealing with the national question. Nevertheless, the attempt to create a theory comprising all texts of the so called third-world literature and generalizing all literary works as the repetition of each other seem quite problematic. That’s why the theory has been criticized enormously since it was put forward. One of the most popular of these critiques was introduced by Aijaz Ahmad. In his article, Ahmad questions the concept of “Third World Literature” and puts forward that this concept is epistemologically impossible (Ahmad, 2000:98). The separation of the world into capitalist first world, socialist bloc of the second world, and the third-world countries which suffered from

colonialism and imperialism cannot be coherent. Also, according to Ahmad, the theory creates “an insistence upon difference” and a “relation of Otherness” between the first and the third world. However, most strikingly, Jameson’s argument that the experience of the third world is able to be conveyed via a single narrative form is extremely insulting (Ahmad, 2000:100-105).

Disregarding the reductionist aspects of Jameson’s theory, his ideas may prove very helpful too. In this study *Dictionary of the Khazars* is interpreted as an allegory of the Serbian and Yugoslav national experience. Within the scope of this discussion, Jameson’s theory of *national allegory* is taken into consideration and it is attempted to discern the basic features “all Third World texts” contain, as he claims. I argue that Jameson’s theory is functional in the interpretation of some individual works like Pavic’s *Dictionary* which problematizes the national question, referring constantly to the contemporary or past experience of a people. On the other hand, the problematic essence of Jameson’s generalizations which are exemplified in Aijaz Ahmad’s critique is acknowledged.

The first allegorical connection of Pavic’s text to the Serbian national experience can be observed in the three different time periods the narrative is built on. These historical periods are noteworthy since they all refer to a crucial event in Serbian history. In fact, the narrative can be separated into three distinct time periods when the stories mainly take place: 1-The 8th and 9th centuries, 2- The 17th century, and 3- 1980s. First, the narrative starts with 8th and 9th centuries when the Khazars are seen as an independent tribe. In this time period the Kaghan decides to convert into Christianity, Islam or Judaism depending on the dream interpretation of their representatives. However, after their conversion, the Khazars lose their identity including their language and poems. This is the time period in history when Slavic tribes including Serbs settle in the Balkan lands and the first Serbian state is established.

The 1690s is also a crucial period in the novel when the first edition of the Khazar dictionary is compiled and published by Daubmannus. This is the time when characters such as Avram Brankovic, Samuel Kohen and Yusuf Masudi (forces

trying to join various parts of the dictionary together), the demonic figures Nikon Sevast, Yabir Ibn Akshany, and Ephrosinia Lukarevich (who come from the three hells and try to inhibit this assembly) enter the narrative. Also, it is the time when all sides searching for the lost parts of the dictionary come together and fade away in an Ottoman War with Austria. Interestingly, the 1690s corresponds to the Great Migration when Serbs left Ottoman lands to settle in the Habsburg area.

The third and last period of the novel records events that take place when the Serbian nation is again in a turning historical point. Here, the same characters from previous centuries reincarnate and enter the text in different personalities. In 1982, academics and archeologists working on the Khazars participate in a symposium in Istanbul where they all stay in Kingston Hotel. By giving some clues the author helps the reader to see that the characters in the hotel come from previous centuries in the narrative time of the novel: Avram Brankovic transforms to Dr. Isialo Suk, Ephrosinia is seen as the little child of the Belgian family, Dr. Dorothea Schultz from Poland is the reincarnated self of Samuel Cohen, and Nikon Sevast with one hole in his nose now emerges in the text as the woman in the Belgian family. Also, the waitress of the Kingston Hotel is the Khazar Princess Ateh. Here, whereas Isialo Suk, Dorothea Schultz, and Abu Kabir Al Muawia from Egypt represent the combining forces, they cannot prevent the murder of Suk and Muawia by the Belgian family, which also causes Schultz's imprisonment. This is a time in national history when the Serbs are in cultural wars with the other nations constituting Yugoslavia. Also, this is a period when the destiny of the nation depends on a global network. This confusing image of identity is best conveyed at the end of the novel, in the part entitled "Excerpt from the Court Minutes", when Princess Ateh reveals the Turkish prosecutor her Khazar identity and Jewish passport. This also creates a strong analogy with the Jewish myth of an archetypal oppressed people:

Prosecutor: (...) What are you by nationality, Miss-or is it Mrs.? – Ateh?

Witness: That's hard to explain.

Prosecutor: Try, please.

Witness: I am Khazar.

Prosecutor: What did you say? I've never heard of a nation like that. What passport do you carry? Khazar?

Witness: No, Israeli.

Prosecutor: So, that's it. That's what I wanted to hear. How can you be a Khazar and have an Israeli passport? Do you betray your people?

Witness (laughing): No, one might say just the opposite. The Khazars assimilated with the Jews and, along with everybody else, I accepted Judaism and an Israeli passport. What's the point of being alone in the world? (Pavic, 1989:331)

Indeed, the end of the novel does not provide a clear answer to the question "Which religion did the Khazars convert to?" The sources of each monotheistic religion claim that the Khazars chose their religion. Nevertheless, the dialogue above where the Khazar Princess Ateh is demonstrated in a court in Istanbul indicating that she has an Israeli passport is noteworthy, because in this way Pavic creates a link between the Khazars and Judaism in terms of victimization. In fact, as also indicated by Marko Zivkovic in *Serbian Dreambook*, there has been a tendency among Serbian intellectuals in the 1980s to link the "Serbian narratives of martyrdom and suffering, of exile and return, and of death and resurrection (...) both metonymically and metaphorically, to their Jewish equivalents" (2011:198). Thus, it becomes meaningful in this respect when Pavic gives a Jewish passport to the Khazar Princess since it creates a strong sense of victimization and suffering.

Pavic assuredly problematizes the national question in other ways as well. First, it is quite possible to find parallelism with the popular nationalistic rhetoric which advanced enormously during the cultural wars in Yugoslavia and Pavic's identification of himself as a member of the victimized Serbian nation. This language, extensively used by Pavic in his speeches and interviews, is repeated in *Dictionary of the Khazars* where Titoist Yugoslavia is portrayed through the lenses of satirical allegory. Indeed, there is no overt reference to Serbs or Yugoslavia in the novel, but the depiction of the Khazars as a people squeezed in-between great powers makes it possible to equate the Khazars with Serbs.

Actually, Pavic problematizes nationality not only in his novel but also in his interviews and autobiography. In all these forms he identifies himself as a member of

a victimized people. Popular nationalistic discourse, likewise, portrays the author of *Dictionary of the Khazars* as “in one way or another, a political intellectual” (Jameson, 1968:74).

3.2.1 THE DENIAL OF YUGOSLAV UNITY: AN ULTRA-NATIONALISTIC RHETORIC AND AN IMAGERY NEGATING SUPRANATIONAL ENTITIES

One of the most noteworthy aspects of Serbian nationalism is that they identify themselves with a powerful feeling of victimization. In both cultural history and in literary works this identification is overt. In the rhetoric of Serbian nationalism, Serbs have been defined throughout history as a people who sacrificed themselves for others, who faces the betrayal of the Slavic race, who struggled with great powers and resisted against the occupation of their lands. One of the most remarkable examples of this rhetoric of victimization in Serbian history is Milosevic’s address in Gazimestan on the 600th anniversary of the Kosovo Battle. In this speech he calls the Serbian people for unity so that they can protect themselves from future defeats and failures. The speech describes Serbian people as “oppressed by pain and filled with hope”. The Serbs for Milosevic “have never in the whole of their history conquered and exploited others.” Also, “they liberated themselves and when they could, they also helped others” (Milosevic, 1989). Milosevic claims furthermore that Serbs are also the defenders of European civilization, because the Kosovo War in 1389 was also a battle where Serbs sacrificed themselves for the welfare of Europe:

Six centuries ago, Serbia heroically defended itself in the field of Kosovo, but it also defended Europe. Serbia was at that time the bastion that defended the European culture, religion, and European society in general. Therefore today it appears not only unjust but even unhistorical and completely absurd to talk about Serbia's belonging to Europe. Serbia has been a part of Europe incessantly, now just as much as it was in the past, of course, in its own way, but in a way that in the historical sense never deprived it of dignity. In this spirit we now endeavor to build a society, rich and democratic, and thus to contribute to the prosperity of this beautiful country, this unjustly suffering country, but also to contribute to the efforts of all the

progressive people of our age that they make for a better and happier world.
(Milosevic, 1989)

It is striking that Milorad Pavic's autobiography on his official website "khazars.com" and his interviews define Serbian people in a very similar way. Both Milosevic and Pavic replicate the same language of victimization. Pavic states that when the first time bombs rained down on him he was twelve years old. The second time he was fifteen. In between those times he fell in love and he had to learn German under the German occupation. He also learned English secretly from a gentleman who smoked pipe tobacco. At the same time he forgot French and later he forgot it twice more. Finally, in a kennel where he had sought shelter from the Anglo-American bombing, a Russian imperial officer started teaching him Russian from books. And today he thinks learning languages is "a kind of transformation into bewitching animals" (Pavic, n.d). The experience of an individual about learning languages and forgetting them, as portrayed by Pavic, is in fact the experience of the entire nation suppressed and victimized in-between many great powers and their languages.

The very same experience is exhibited in the novel with the Serbian character Avram Brankovic whose family moves to the Danube region from the South after the Serbian Empire falls to Ottoman rule and ever since this migration, the family counts in Tzintzar, lies in Walachian, is silent in Greek, sings hymns in Russian, is cleverest in Turkish, and speaks its mother tongue Serbian when they have the intention to kill (Pavic, 1989:25). In this way, the language problem that goes along with the question of nationality is demonstrated. Another character with whom language is problematized is the Khazar princess Ateh. She is compelled to forget her Khazar language and all her poems by a demon in exchange for immortality. In this way she even forgets her lover's name. Fortunately, Ateh senses this before and her parrots memorize her poems in the Khazar language. After the Khazar faith is abandoned and their language begins to disappear suddenly, Ateh releases the parrots. Hundreds of years later, the Serbian Avram Brankovich finds a parrot by the shore of the Black

Sea and he starts to learn the Khazar language from it. In this way, the author creates an affinity between the Khazars and Serbs (Pavic, 1989:207).

Certainly, the language problem remains on the agenda throughout the history of Yugoslavia. Before the establishment of the Yugoslav state, each distinct people uses its national language. However, as the Yugoslav metanarrative is constructed by the attempts of politicians and the intelligentsia from various nations, they also accept a common language called Serbo-Croatian. Nevertheless, especially after the death of Tito in the 1980s, the ethnic-religious polarization starts and it also brings along debates about the Serbo-Croatian language. Dividing Yugoslavia politically into national units would also mean to negate the theory that all these people had a common culture and language. Thus, their common language, Serbo-Croatian, used by people in the region for many years, is also split into Serbian and Croatian. As stated by Petar Ramadanovic, Croats, Serbs and Muslims spoke a common language before. Now they speak Croat, Serbian and Bosnian. The vanquished language Serbo-Croat has no people, no folk anymore (2013:268). In this context, Pavic's standpoint is significant. Disclosing his position on the rising nationalism in Yugoslavia, Damrosch points out that when Slobodan Milosevic comes to power, Pavic expresses a forceful support for the new government's goals to restore the greatness of Serbia in articles and interviews for Belgrade newspapers, giving nationalist messages on the ancestral greatness of Serbian people. One of the most popular statements of Pavic indicating his nationalistic attitude is when he states that in the thirteenth century Serbian people were eating with golden forks, but the Western Europeans were eating raw flesh with their fingers. Pavic's declaration about the Serbian language demonstrates his deeply nationalistic stance too. Instead of supporting the common Serbo-Croatian language, his statement centers on the distinction of Serbian:

The Serbs come from the mid-point of the world, from the navel of the Indo-European peoples, and the Serbian language is an ancient language, the ancestor of all the Indo-European languages. And so everyone hates us out of envy; they sense that we are the most ancient of all the peoples between the Himalayas and the Pyrenees. (Damrosch, 2013:268)

This type of declarations are not rare in Pavic's life and they define his position as a Serbian intellectual. For instance, his autobiography includes passages where he defines himself and the Serbian people resorting overtly to the language of victimization. Particularly, it seems crucial when he talks about himself as a Serbian author. According to him, he has not killed anyone but they have killed him long before his death. If their author was a Turk or German, it would be better for his books. Strikingly, he puts forward that as a Serb he was the best known writer of the most hated nation in the world. For him, 21st century began before the date 1999 when Belgrade and Serbia were bombed by NATO air forces, after which the Danube River was not navigable. Finally, he finishes this part of the autobiography stating that God graced him with favor with the joy of writing, but punished him equally at the same time (Pavic, n.d.). Thus, while describing himself as an author and a member of the Serbian nation, he creates a great connection with the nationalist discourse.

3.2.2 TERRIFYING IMAGES OF ASSEMBLED STRUCTURES AND LOST ESSENTIAL PARTS

In *Dictionary of the Khazars*, parallelism with the nationalistic discourse is created mainly in two ways: 1- The author develops an extremely strong imagery and metaphors implying that formations constructed from disparate elements are artificial and have an unpleasant look. In this parts of the narrative, the reference to Yugoslavia as a multinational structure is conspicuous. 2- The text includes stories indicating that losing essential parts of a structure ends up with transformation into a frightful image, which also signifies a nostalgia for a lost national essence.

The double of the Kaghan who transforms into a giant constitutes one of the most memorable images in the novel. This also exemplifies how Pavic creates an anti-Yugoslav imagery in the narrative. In the Kaghan entry of the red book, it is stated that they try to create a copy of the Kaghan. At that time the Khazars face a danger because the Kaghan does not have an heir to the throne. One day Greek merchants visit the country and the kaghan hosts them. Interestingly, all of these Greek merchants are very short and hairy. So, the kaghan sits amid them like a giant.

After the travelers leave, the kaghan looks at the leftovers of their food and views that the Greeks' are like the ones of giants. On the other hand, the leftovers of the kaghan are like the ones of a child. After seeing these leftovers, the kaghan calls people in the palace and wants them to remind him the talks of Greek merchants. However, nobody remembers anything. Then a Jew from the palace retinue appears and he claims that he can resolve the kaghan's problem. He brings a slave and orders him to open his arm because it is absolutely identical to the kaghan's right arm. Upon seeing this resemblance, the kaghan wants the Jew to retain the slave. On the proceeding days, heralds are sent to different parts of the kingdom and they find people whose feet, knees, ears, shoulders are exactly the same as the kaghan's. In order to create a double of the kaghan's body, a group of young Jews, Greeks, Khazars, and Arabs are gathered in the palace and all the parts taken from their bodies are assembled together. However, they come across a problem at the end: they cannot find a head for this new body. So, the kaghan asks the Jew to find a head or he would lose his. What the Jew brings before the kaghan is remarkable since it is the head of a young girl. The head is so identical to the kaghan's that if a person looks at it in a mirror, the image would be confused with the kaghan. Then, the Jew is ordered to create the other body of the kaghan assembling all the collected pieces. When the body is created, he is sent to the bedchamber of Princess Ateh to be tested. The reaction of the princess and the transformation of the assembled body into a terrifying, uncontrollable giant are noteworthy:

'The man sent to my bed last night is circumcised, and you are not. Therefore, either he is someone else and not the kaghan, or the kaghan turned himself over to the Jews and was circumcised, becoming someone else. It is for you to decide what happened.'

The kaghan asked the Jew what this difference ought to signify. The latter inquired:

'Will not the difference vanish as soon as you yourself are circumcised?'

The kaghan was in a quandary and this time asked the Princess Ateh for advice. She led him to the cellar of his place and showed him the kaghan's double. She had placed him in chains and behind bars, but he had already broken all the chains and was shaking the bars with tremendous force. In one night he had grown so large that the real uncircumcised kaghan looked like a child in comparison. (Pavic, 1989:71)

The terrifying image of the assembled body can be interpreted as a metaphor for the assembled structure of the Yugoslav state. Through this metaphor, the assembled structures are illustrated as entities which are actually unnatural, ugly, and horrific. When Princess Ateh asks the kaghan if he wants to let his double loose, the kaghan orders his death. So, Ateh spits at the assembled kaghan body that has turned into a giant and he dies and falls down (Pavic, 1989:72).

In fact, the novel can be interpreted as a text manifesting the impossibility of reaching a complete structure or truth combining fragmented pieces. The novel constantly portrays the struggle between two opposing forces of gathering and fragmenting on three different historical layers. However, the attempts of gathering and assembling always end up destructively. For instance, in the 17th century on the Austrian-Ottoman war battlefield, when the three dream hunters Avram Brankovic, Samuel Kohen and Yusuf Masudi are about to find each other and get together to assemble the three parts of the dictionary, they are murdered. Thus, the possibility of unification is totally destroyed. Likewise, in the very end of the novel three Khazar scholars Dr. Isialo Suk, Dr. Abu Kadir Muawia, and Dr. Dorothea Schultz are on the verge of combining the fragmented resources on the Khazars and the Khazar polemic. Nevertheless, two of them are murdered by the Belgian family and the last one is imprisoned. As Andrew Wachtel also draws attention, the impossibility of unification is clearly emphasized in the text. When they attempt to unify the separate pieces of the Khazar question together, the characters always search for the others via scholarly actions and dreams. On the other hand, what happens consequently is that

[t]he three individual representatives of their religions succeed in coming together, but when they do, instead of discovering the truth they seek, all are destroyed. The desire for synthesis, therefore, is seen as a utopian and foolhardy quest; for when it is achieved, synthesis leads not to perfect knowledge, but rather to immediate death and destruction. (Wachtel, 1997:636)

Along with images illustrating the the impossibility of assembled structures, another imagery the author uses in the text signifies losing essential parts of a

structure and being transformed into a frightful image. This type of imagery in fact stands as the opposite of the Adam figure representing a nostalgic totality. When this opposition is considered within the Yugoslav context it demonstrates the nostalgia for the greater past times of the Serbian nation as opposed to the times of the Yugoslav constitution. The dream of Avram Brankovic where his sister transforms into a double-thumbed demon is a good illustration of the loss of essential form of an entity. According to our interpretation of the text which is strongly tied with the Yugoslav cultural context, this can be interpreted as a renunciation of the Serbian national essence:

Brankovich dreamed of his late sister the most, but each time she would lose some part of her familiar appearance, and would acquire parts of a new, unfamiliar, different body belonging to somebody else. First she exchanged her voice with the unknown person into whom she was being transformed, then the color of her tail and her teeth, until only her arms still embraces Brankovich, with increasing passion-the rest was no longer her. (Pavic, 1989:43)

Another metaphor that can be linked to the supranational structure of the Yugoslav state is achieved with the three diverse hells presented in Nikon Sevast's speech, a representative of the Satan on earth. First, it must be pointed out that there is always "a tension between the unifying forces underlying the text and those trying to dismember the narrative" (Aleksic, 2009:91). The deeds and statements of the representatives of the devil are important in the plot structure of the novel because they are the ones who try to fragment the text and destroy the attempts to reconstruct the dictionary. This is most probably one way to problematize the political grievances in former Yugoslavia. But it must not be neglected that the dream hunters attempt to recreate the body of Adam Cadmon or Adam Ruhani via a dictionary since Adam represents the absolute totality. On the other hand, demons, who are the representatives of Satan, endeavor to inhibit these unifying forces. However, in fact it is Satan himself who creates the Adam Cadmon figure. So, it can be inferred that a recreation of the body of Adam Cadmon or Adam Ruhani through a dictionary is something unreal, like a simulacrum. The original totality is lost and the thing to be reconstructed would only be an unsatisfactory imitation. Thus, the acts and speeches

of the demons in the novel are crucial. However their deeds seem as attempts for destructive dismemberment, they can be interpreted as a nostalgic loyalty to a past absolute totality.

The statement of Nikon Sevast about the three diverse hells is also allegorical in terms of the Yugoslav context. In this part of the narrative, Nikon Sevast and Yusuf Masudi, two representatives of opposing forces, start a violent argument during the Austrian-Ottoman battle. The scene starts with the dialogue between Masudi and Brankovich. Here Masudi indicates that the man Brankovich sees in his dream is Samuel Cohen. Sevast severely objects to this claim and states that Masudi is deceiving them. He then grabs Masudi's bag where he carries the pages of the dictionary and throws it into the fire. Thereafter, Masudi turns to Brankovich and, pointing to Sevast, puts forward that Nikon is a devil; he has one nostril in his nose and has a tail. Nikon accepts the accusation and states that he belongs to the underworld of the Christian universe and sky, to the evil spirits of the Greek lands, and to the Hades of the Eastern Orthodox faith. He also indicates that the sky above is also divided between Jehovah, Allah, and God the Father. Likewise, the underworld is divided between Asmodeus, Iblis, and Satan. He has been caught on the soil of the Turkish Empire but this does not mean that the Moslem representatives like Masudi can judge him. Then, he turns to his master Brankovic and indicates that he knows that Brankovic has been working on a dictionary for a long time and wants to add something to this dictionary. For him, this is something that the others are unaware of. According to him, the three rivers of the ancient world of the dead, named the Acheron, the Phlegethon, and the Cocytus, belong to the underworlds of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity and they divide the Gehenna, Hades, and the icy hell of the Muslims. There, at the junction of these three borders, the three worlds of the dead are confronted. These three underworlds do not interfere with each other because their borders are drawn by an iron plow that allows nobody to cross.

After this description of three separate hells belonging to three religious faiths, he continues his speech with sentences he calls an ultimate warning:

Take this as a powerful and ultimate warning, my lord, as the greatest words of wisdom! Have nothing to do with things that involve the three worlds of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism here on earth, so that we may have nothing to do with their underworlds. For those who hate one another are not the problem in this world. They always resemble one another. Enemies are always the same, or become so with time, for they could not be enemies otherwise. It is those who actually differ among themselves who pose the greatest danger. They long to meet one another, because their differences do not bother them. And they are the worst. We and our enemies will combine forces to fight those who allow us to differ from them and do not let this difference disturb their sleep; we will destroy them in one fell swoop from three sides... (Pavic, 1989:52-53)

Thus, as Aleksic also puts forward, the novel with the devil's advocate proposes that coming together in synthesis is more dangerous than fragmenting ethnic narratives and with an "inviolability of culture, language and territorial sovereignty, the only space where a nation can only feel secure is the boundaries of a fully defined nation-state (Aleksic, 2009:93).

The form of the *Dictionary* is probably one of the most noteworthy aspects regarding the denial of the possibility of synthesis, agreement or mutual understanding among narratives pertaining to diverse sides. So, this feature makes Pavic's novel an anti-Yugoslav narrative. The three parts of the text - "The Red Book", "The Green Book", and "The Yellow Book"- include respectively Christian, Islamic, and Hebrew sources on the Khazar question. What is significant about these three dictionaries is that each of them offers its own story and the belief of its absolute accuracy. This reveals the idea of the impossibility of reaching a consensus on the debated issue. The novel combines three narrative times and the representatives of the seventeenth and the twentieth century endeavour to assemble the diverse parts of the dictionary. They do succeed to come together sometimes (on the Ottoman-Austrian battlefield or in the Kingston Hotel in İstanbul), yet they end up with destruction. This leads to the idea that for Pavic "the desire for synthesis is seen as a utopian and foolhardy quest" (Wachtel, 1998:214). In the process of reading the reader sometimes feels impending possibility for the combination of the diverse parts of the dictionary, yet at the end (s)he is left with a knot of unresolved tensions. This can easily be read as a denial of the basis of Yugoslavia as a

metanarrative and a resistance against the belief that it offers ideal combination of diverse entities.

3.3 DICTIONARY OF THE KHAZARS AS A SATIRE OF TITOIST YUGOSLAVIA

Dictionary of the Khazars creates a powerful imagery proposing that supranational grand narratives are not natural structures and are doomed to destruction. This is one of the main methods Pavic uses to problematize the Yugoslav political context and to create his overt nationalistic rhetoric. At times, an extremely ultra-nationalistic language erupts abruptly within the playful, self-reflexive narrative of the novel, as if coming from the subconscious of the text. This language is defined by Tatjana Aleksic as “slippages into the recognizable vocabulary that has become a trademark of the Serbian nationalist rhetoric of Milosevic’s era” (2009:91).

This kind of language mostly emerges in the text when the state organization of the Khazars is portrayed. The residents of the Khazar country are exhibited as an oppressed majority in their own homeland. So, the organization of the Khazar state can be interpreted as a sharp satire of the Titoist multiethnic and multicultural Yugoslavia and its idealistic notion of “brotherhood and unity”. This satirical and ironic language is “a translation of Serbian national hostility toward Tito’s efforts to create a unified Yugoslavia” (Damrosch, 2013:272). It is really noteworthy that the nationalistic rhetoric in these parts of the novel echoes the the main ideas of the 1986 *Memorandum* written by Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences. The memorandum had great influence in the rise of nationalism in the ethnically polarized atmosphere of former Yugoslavia since it expresses the *Serbian* perspective about the actual Yugoslav political divisions.

The First Yugoslav state was formed after the First World War and its core element was Serbia, the victorious state of the war. The other components were Croatia, Bosnia-Hercegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Slovenia, and Vojvodina, areas with different ethnic and religious differences. Despite these differences the state functioned merely as an extended Serbia (Crampton, 2002:11).

Nevertheless, the communist power of Titoist Yugoslavia established after the partisan struggles in the Second World War was called the Federative Republic of Yugoslavia and it was built on the basis of cooperation between all ethnic groups. The communists “were anxious to encourage all groups to move in to create a new ethnic mosaic which would encourage the development of a Yugoslav national consciousness” (Crampton, 2002:18). In this regard, a centralized rule, self-management, non-alignment, and the brotherhood and unity of the people were some of the most emphasized concepts of the communist state. So, with the authority of Josip Broz Tito, Yugoslavia seemed a remarkable success story and the national problem behind his authority stayed suppressed (Glenny, 2001:574). On the other hand, after the early 1960s when the communist leaders abandoned the strict centralizing policy and supranational goals, the empowerment of separate republics and the polarization of ethnic identities started to become the most significant problem. It went along with unrests related to economy, religion, language etc. These problems grew uncontrollably and emerged with outbreaks of violence (Crampton, 2002:133). As Misha Glenny states, Tito had pushed nationalisms underground and when they woke up from their hibernation in the 1980s, they also had lost their modernizing and liberal features (2001:593). The *1986 Memorandum* is a pivotal document in Yugoslav history because it clearly demonstrates the perspective of Serbian nationalism. The content and impact of the Memorandum is depicted by Glenny in the following terms:

On 24 September 1986, a Belgrade newspaper published a document written by an anonymous team from the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU). The Memorandum, as it became known, was an inflammatory manifesto of Serbian nationalism. Its central claim was that the Serbs of Kosovo faces extermination at the hands of aggressive Albanians. But it also insisted that ‘except during the period of the Independent State of Croatia, Serbs in Croatia have never been as endangered as they are today. The resolution of their national status must be a top priority. The communist authorities condemned the Memorandum in uncompromising terms. Ivan Stambolic, the head of the Serbian Party, called it ‘Yugoslavia’s obituary’, warning the academicians that they were not just provoking other nationalities in Yugoslavia, but acting against the interests of Serbs, ‘for Yugoslavia is the only solution to the Serbian question. Without Yugoslavia, the Serb nation is condemned to dismemberment. (2001:625-626)

The most significant feature of this document is that it shows the pivotal role of the intellectuals in the politics of the country. When the Memorandum was released in 1986, the leaders of the Serbian communist party including Milosevic could distance themselves from the immoderate nationalism of this text. So, this is meaningful for understanding the influence of the intellectuals in the rise of nationalism. The text is crucial for us because the depiction of the Khazar state organization in *Dictionary of the Khazars* has many parallels with the critique of the Yugoslav Federation in *1986 Memorandum*.

The very first paragraphs of the text proposes that the undefined and difficult position of the Serbian nation should not be neglected within the Yugoslav reality of the time. The weaknesses of the system, which in fact had existed since the beginning of the state, became more and visible. For example, all nations in the Yugoslav Federation are not equal. The Serbian nation did not have the right to own its own state. Also, large numbers of Serbian people who live in other republics do not have the right to use their own language and alphabet, to develop their national culture. This is unlike the position of national minorities. There is also an unstoppable persecution for Serbs in Kosovo because the principles of the state protect the autonomy of minorities. According to the Memorandum, the 1974 Constitution was one of the most significant reasons of the current crisis since it divided Serbia into parts and made autonomous provinces equal to the republics giving them the power to interfere in the internal affairs of Serbia. Moreover, in a general process of disintegration, the total destruction of the Serbian people and their national unity is aimed (1986 Memorandum, 1986: passim).

For the readers of *Dictionary of the Khazars*, this language of Serbian victimization and suppression is not unfamiliar. For instance, in the “Khazars” entry of The Green Book where the organization of the Khazar state is portrayed, this fictional land undoubtedly reminds how Serbian nationalism views the state organization of Socialist Yugoslavia. As exhibited in the entry, the subjects of the state are divided into the ones born under the wind, which are the Khazars, and the others born above the wind, which include Greeks, Jews, Saracens, or Russians. The Khazars are the most numerous people and the others only form small groups, yet the

administrative organization of the state does not reflect this. The state is separated into different districts. If one district is populated by Jews, Greeks, or Arabs, it is named according to this population. On the other hand, the larger part of the Khazar state that is inhabited only by the Khazars is separated into different districts and all of these have different names. (The Serbian Republic in Titoist Yugoslavia has two autonomous regions called Kosovo and Vojvodina). This is presented in the text as a deliberate act. In this way, only one district had the name of the Khazars. Also, in the northern part of the country, a completely new nation was invented and it abandoned the Khazar name and language. As a result, because of the unfavorable position of the Khazars in the state, a lot of them neglect their origin, language, faith, customs, and they pretend to be Greeks or Arabs. Besides, whereas the Khazars has five to one more population than the Greeks and the Jews in the country, the balance of power and population is calculated on the basis of districts rather than the overall number of people. Accordingly, the representatives in the court are determined considering the districts, not the overall population. This assuredly creates an injustice for the Khazars (Pavic, 1989:146-147). So, it is very clear that the narrative structure of the novel is heavily filled with a nationalistic rhetoric. With the portrayal of the Khazars as a victimized majority, a metaphor of the Serbs from a fictional/mythical people is created.

In this and similar parts of the novel, it is almost impossible to notice that “the rendition of the organization of the Khazar Empire faithfully replicates the structure of the Yugoslav Federation” (Aleksic, 2007:98). Besides, as in the other texts such as *The Mountain Wreath* or *The Bridge on the Drina*, “the sense of heroism and the duty to sacrifice to the nation” reaches mythological grandeur in this parody of Titoist policies in former Yugoslavia. Just as Serbian nationalism claims for the actual context of Yugoslavia, in the fictional Khazar Empire of the novel, military duties are accomplished by Khazars whereas the other nations only benefit from the ranks. The Khazars are furthermore portrayed as a people who sacrificed themselves in wars, often helping the smaller nations as well. However, they are always repaid incommensurably with their sacrifice:

As the most numerous, the Khazars shoulder most of the military duty, but the commanders come from the other nations, in equal proportion. Soldiers are told that only in combat do men live in balance and harmony, and that the rest is not worthy of attention. Thus, the Khazars are responsible for maintaining the state and its unity; they are duty-bound to protect and fight for the empire, while, of course, the others -- the Jews, Arabs, Greeks, Goths, and Persians living in Khazaria -- pull in their own individual direction, toward their parent nations.

Understandably, when war looms, these relations change. Then the Khazars are given greater freedom, and treated more leniently, and their past victories are glorified, for they are good soldiers. They can thrust a spear or a sword with their feet, slay with two hands at once, and are never just right- or left-handed, because both their hands have been trained for war since childhood. As soon as there is war, all the other peoples immediately join up with their parent countries: the Greeks rampage with Byzantine troops and seek enosis, union with the Christian matrix; the Arabs cross over to the side of the caliph and his fleet; the Persians seek the uncircumcised. After each war all this is quickly forgotten; the Khazars acknowledge the ranks earned by foreign peoples in enemy armies, but the Khazars themselves revert to dyed bread. (Pavic, 1989:149)

The rhetoric of subjugation and the representation of the Khazars as eternal warriors is foregrounded in *The Yellow Book* as well. In the Khazars entry of the *Yellow book*, they are represented as people who are not called by their Khazar name even in their own state. Likewise, when they are outside, they cannot reveal their origin. They hide the fact they speak their mother language both from others and their own citizens. Interestingly, people who are not proficient in the Khazar language are regarded more highly in civil and administrative services. So, even the ones who use the language fluently speak it incorrectly. Moreover, the translators from the Khazar language into other languages are selected from people who make deliberate mistakes in the Khazar language. This nightmarish representation of the state also includes the economy and judiciary. For example, under the law of the Khazar state, a person is sentenced to one or two years labor in the Jewish populated part for a specific crime. In the district of the Arab residents, the sentence for the same crime is half a year. In the Greek-inhabited region there is no punishment for it and in the Khazar district, the central part of the state, the crime becomes beheading (Pavic, 1989:255). Hence, “the Khazar state, in presentation, becomes the ultimate dystopia of a totalitarian multiculturalism” (Damrosch, 2013:273).

Many books and articles have been written regarding the end of the Yugoslav experience. The underlying reasons including political and economic problems have been discussed in detail. On the other hand, far less attention has been given to the cultural factors. This is rather incomprehensible since it was *nationalism* that took apart the country and “nationalism at base is a cultural issue” (Wachtel, 1997:627). As also maintained by Slavoj Žižek, in the Post-Yugoslav experience, there was a very strong connection with the violent demise of the country and the “poets’ dangerous dreams”. Politicians manipulated nationalist passions, but it was poets who provided them the stuff for this manipulation (Žižek, 2014: passim). Also, Žižek indicates that poets and authors in the seventies and eighties began to sow the seeds of aggressive nationalism in Serbia and other republics of Yugoslavia. Throughout these years, the invisible, underground work of “changing the ideological coordinates” continued and it exploded surprisingly in the late eighties. Moreover, as Žižek claims, “(...) other ex-Yugoslav nations (and Serbia itself) had poets and writers recognized as ‘great’ and ‘authentic’ who were also fully engaged in nationalist projects” (2014:563-564).

It is not possible to accuse an author for sentences in a novel and this study does not aim it. Besides, after the theories of poststructuralism, the claim that there is only one accurate interpretation of a literary text is meaningless. On the other hand, Pavić’s powerful textual imagery does not allow the reader distance himself/herself from the actual nationalist-political Yugoslav context. Moreover, the rhetoric of victimization and suppression which is also found in many texts since the 19th century in the Serbian literary tradition opens the way to interpret the text as a national allegory and parody of Titoist Yugoslavia. So, in this context, the Khazars stand as a metaphor for the Serbian people who are always in a struggle and on the threshold to lose their national essence. They search for their lost father signified with the totality of Adam Cadmon or Adam Ruhani figure in the text. It can easily be stated that *Dictionary of the Khazars* is a distinguished example of historiographic metafiction from Eastern Europe which puts the mechanisms of creation at its center and is fully conscious about the responsibilities of the reader. On the other hand, the

narrative persistently refers to the actual Yugoslav context³, which shouldn't be overlooked since, as Damrosch states, "understanding the cultural subtext is important, as otherwise we simply miss the point of much of the book" (2003:276). Thus, it should be noted that the intricate narrative devices and exceptional stylistic features of this profound allegory of Yugoslavia make it an outstanding work of world literature.



³Linda Hutcheon, while discussing parodic historiographic metafiction in *The Politics of Postmodernism*, states that "the politics of representation and the representation of politics frequently go hand in hand" in this genre. In fact, as she argues, the prevailing interpretation of postmodernism "offers a value-free, decorative, de-historicized quotation of the past forms." On the other hand, what she puts forward is that postmodern parody is a "value-problematizing, de naturalizing form of acknowledging the history (and through irony, the politics) of representation. See: Linda Hutcheon, **The Politics of Postmodernism**, Routledge, London and New York, 1989.

CHAPTER FOUR

A SERBIAN BILDUNGSROMAN ABOUT THE DISCOVERY OF A NATIONALIST IDENTITY: *KNIFE* BY VUK DRASKOVIC

One of the main goals of Serbian intellectuals in the 19th century was the formation of national consciousness through national language and literature. Vuk Karadzic was the leading figure of this zealous team. A collection of epic folk poems appeared and along with the “development of a Serbian literary standard based on the dialect of Hercegovina adopted by the principality in 1868” by Karadzic (Judah, 2000:61), it encouraged authors of the time to write works influenced by the form and content of folk literature. One of the most eloquent examples of this type of works was Njegos’ *The Mountain Wreath*. This epic views the extermination of Turks as a historical event and depicting a society formed by the conflicts between Serbs and converted Muslims, the extermination of the race betrayers is presented as a necessity for the unity and welfare of the Slavic race. As indicated by Tim Judah, what Njegos demanded in his epic was “the resurrection of the Kosovo spirit to free the Serbs from alien rule” and it was a narrative “a later generation of nationalist youths could respond to” (Judah, 2000:64). Thus, in many Serbian literary works written not only in the 19th century, but in the following ages as well, Njegos’ work influenced many authors who contributed to the Serbian literary canon with their insistence on nationalistic themes, symbols and myths.

Vuk Draskovic’s 1982 novel *Knife* is among the literary works that is clearly written as a response to Njegos’ epic poem. In fact, according to Andrew Wachtel, Draskovic’s novel is a “*Mountain Wreath* redux” and it “harks back to Njegos’s great work” (Wachtel, 1998:205). The novel starts with the extermination of a Serbian village by Muslim neighbors and its final scene that presents the image of the knife echoes the glorification of the weapon in *The Mountain Wreath*. Thus the novel revives the theme of revenge established by Njegos and views the murder of the race betrayer Muslims as the sole method for the resolution of the conflict. This turns the novel into a potent example of Serbian nationalistic literature. The representation of Serbian people as innocent victims, the violent murder scenes performed by the evil

Turk or converted Muslim, the description of Serbs as “a heavenly people” (on the basis of Lazar’s choice of the Heavenly Kingdom in the Kosovo War and their hopes for the resurrection of a Greater Serbia), numberless scenes of race betrayal and conversion of Slavic people into Islam are among the most repeated themes in this tradition.

Vuk Draskovic’s *Knife* deals with the themes mentioned above and in terms of the representation of Serbs and their experiences in history it echoes the works we have analyzed in this study. It is a prominent example of the nationalistic literary trend that is peculiar to the 1980s formed with the return to national / historical themes. The text includes two narrative lines, the years of the Second World War and the year 1963 in Titoist Yugoslavia. In the representation of both periods violence is depicted in a really selective manner focusing exclusively on what the Ustasha carried out against the Serbs. Furthermore it portrays the inequalities of the Titoist system against Serbs disregarding the other groups. So, this novel can be read as a criticism of Titoist Yugoslavia, the extremely polarized society where the popular slogan “brotherhood and unity” is just a cover veiling injustices against Serbs. In this way, Serbs are again represented as the innocent victims of Yugoslav history. Even so, the representation of Serbs also emphasizes that they are a people who never forgets what has been carried out against them. Accordingly, the novel finishes with a call for revenge and this is presented as the sole way that leads to a more hopeful future for the Serbian race.

Knife is a literary work written in the 1980s, in communist Yugoslavia, in a period when there was a strong emphasis on national identities and the differences among the ethnic groups rather than the official unifying discourse of the Titoist state. This discriminatory language is used in Draskovic’s novel to describe the conflicts during the Second World War when people in communist Yugoslavia were divided into three groups - Ustasha, Chetniks, and Partisans- that carried out violent acts against each other. It must be pointed out that after the occupation of Yugoslavia in 1941 by the Axis Powers Germany and Italy, a civil war started in the country in which the sides cited above fought each other. Ustasha was the Croatian Fascist movement sponsored by the Axis powers and claimed to be supported by Muslims as

well. Their aim was to establish an independent Croatian state. On the other hand, the Chetniks were formed by Serbian nationalist and royalist forces to resist the Axis powers, Ustasha, and their collaborators as well as communist guerillas. The last group is the Partisans led by Josip Broz Tito, a member of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, whose aim was to go beyond the national liberation and create a socialist federation of Yugoslavia. While representing this age, the novel seems extremely selective in portraying the Ustasha massacres in the most violent way possible and illustrating the Muslim society as the one who demolished the unity. On the other hand, whereas the book sometimes approaches the idea that the Serbian side also carried out such acts, it is always represented as a kind of revenge and violent details of Muslim massacres by Serbian Chetniks are never witnessed by the reader. In contrast to the Muslims who are depicted as race betrayers, Serbs are the innocent victims who do not forget and are thus ready for revenge. Also, the novel exhibits a strong satire of Titoist Yugoslavia since it emphasizes repeatedly that the Ustasha war criminals are protected by the state and the Yugoslavia has never achieved to be a place of brotherhood and unity. The novel in fact presents Alija Osmanovic's search for his true identity and the final scene foregrounds the "knife", a weapon mostly symbolizing the Ustasha crimes throughout the novel. Here it is exhibited as a tool for revenge reminding the heroism of Milos Obilic in Serbian mythology as he avenged Lazar's death by killing Sultan Murad with his knife.

Alija Osmanovic, a Serbian boy grown up in a Muslim village called Osmanovici, is the main character of the novel and the text traces his quest for his true origins. His story is narrated in nineteen chapters reporting events that take place mostly in the year 1963 in Titoist Yugoslavia. Besides, the chapters about the character Atif Tanovic, a former Ustasha war criminal, are set in Italy, Trieste where he lives as a refugee. The sections in italics inform the reader that the narrative goes back to a past time via dreams or memories and most of these flashbacks bring the reader to the 1940s, the years of the Second World War. As pointed out by Andrew Wachtel,

The plot itself is exceptionally far-fetched, replete with an outrageous number of coincidences, yet they are necessary to allow Draskovic to explore simultaneously the accidental nature of identity creation, while still acknowledging its paradoxical strength. (1998:206)

The novel starts with a chapter narrating the massacre of the Serbian village Jugovici on Orthodox Christmas Day, January 7, 1942 by the members of neighboring Muslim Osmanovici. After the massacre and the destruction of Fr. Nicifor's household is rendered, the Muslims head towards the church and burn it. Eventually, the whole village is destroyed, except the newborn baby who would be the main character of the novel, Alija Osmanovic. The newborn baby is brought to the village Osmanovici together with another baby found on the way and they both are given to Rabia whose husband Hussein is killed in fact by Alija's mother. This happens while Hussein is raping her. The following day, a Chetnik group attacks the village in order to take revenge and kills the Osmanovici men who know the true story of of Alija Osmanovic. After learning about the Jugovici massacre and how Alija is taken to the Muslim village, the narrative jumps to the 1960s when Alija, known as a war orphan, is a university student in Sarajevo looking for his real family in Titoist Yugoslavia.

The novel, parallel to the story of Alija, narrates the life of Atif Tanovic, a Muslim shopkeeper in Italy, Trieste. Before the war, he has a small store in Sarajevo. In exchange for a bigger store in Sarajevo (owned by the Serbian merchant Djordje Vilenjak), the Ustasha want him to kill Djordge and his brothers. During the war he gets involved in other massacres as an Ustasha militant. These events come to his mind perpetually in his life in Trieste where he is sent as a refugee with the help of Ustasha officers. There, in 1963, a young Muslim named Hamdija appears and starts to work for Atif. After a while it becomes clear that this Muslim boy is indeed a Serb named Milan who is planning to take revenge from Atif Tanovic because his family was killed by him during the War.

The end of the book describes the meeting of these two Serbian characters in quest of revenge. During the quest for his true identity, Alija has to go through various phases and encounters people from different segments of the society.

However, the most significant stage in his development as a Serb is when he encounters the Muslim Sikter Effendi. He teaches Alija both his family history and the stories about the conversion of Slavic Christians into Islam and how they are victimized in this historical process. Although as a character Sikter Effendi greatly influences Alija's development, the novel's end reveals that his development even goes beyond Sikter Effendi's teachings. According to Sikter, Alija shouldn't choose change or revenge in his life because they are all brothers who have the same ethnic origin. Alija stays stuck in this dilemma for a long time, uncertain about how to behave after learning that he is a Serb whose family was murdered by Muslims who adopted him. Nevertheless, at the very end of the novel he becomes much more determined to take revenge.

4.1 THE OUTBURST OF HISTORICAL THEMES AND GOING BACK TO NATIONAL HISTORIES: SERBIAN LITERATURE IN THE 1980s.

Socialist Yugoslavia was founded by Tito and his followers after the Partisans won the Second World War. What they aimed while establishing the state was "a new, supranational culture" in a unified, multicultural Yugoslavia. This would be realized within a federal system where equal rights were given to six national republics (Wachtel, 1998:130-131). In this system, the basic principles were "brotherhood and unity" of Yugoslav people and their "self-management". In the very first years of the state, centralism was one of the most significant features of Titoist Yugoslavia. This central culture in literature mostly ignored the national particularities and took Soviet Socialist Realism as their model. According to Wachtel, the novels written in that period had some common features:

...they focus on a small, isolated band of partisans fighting against great odds; the partisans, as a rule, are of a single nation, but they share a universalist outlook in distinction to their enemies (who can either be foreign-Germans, Italians, or Bulgarians-or domestic-Chetniks, Ustashes); the plot itself tends to converge around a single action in which the partisan fighters must overcome insurmountable difficulties before they triumph; along the way a number of the most appealing partisan characters are killed. (Wachtel, 1998: 152)

As stated by Wachtel, a well-written example of the partisan novel revealing the features cited above is Dobrica Cosic's *Far Away is the Sun*. This book is of interest for scholars of Serbian literature because in the future the same author becomes a representative of Serbian nationalism in both the political and literary arena. His future novels such as *A Book about Mulatin* and *A Time of Death* are based upon Serbian suffering and heroism rather than the partisan struggles. Also, strikingly, he wrote the first draft of *1986 Memorandum* of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences and he was the head of the Academy at that time. Indeed, he was the first person to raise the Kosovo question in a speech in 1968. Especially after this speech, he would be such an important figure in Serbian nationalism that, as Jasna Dragovic-Soso claims in *Saviours of the Nation*, "If one intellectual were to be singled out for his importance in the national revival of the 1980s, it would be certainly Dobrica Cosic. It is his vision of the Serbian national destiny in the 20th century, elaborated in the course of the 1970s, that became predominant in the post-Tito era" (2002:37).

This change in Cosic's work is the reflection of the change in politics and literature of the entire country. One of the most significant changes to be mentioned is that the idea of Yugoslav integration was abandoned in the beginning of 1960s. So, instead of the development of a Yugoslav culture within the limits of centralization, the right of different nationalities to free development was gaining power. As a result, the power of separate republics within the state grew and the federal government gradually lost its impact (Wachtel, 1998:174). In this period, two main critical trends called the "black wave" and the "new left" developed and they both represented a reaction to the Titoist system and its evolution (Dragovic-Soso, 2002: 23). During the 1970s, one of the most important events signifying the cultural and nationalistic fragmentation of the state occurred. This was the 1971 "Croatian Spring" that aimed to create a Croatian state within the Confederate Yugoslavia. Also before this date, with a declaration signed in 1967, Croats resurrected the age-old language dispute between Serbian and Croatian, because it was a call for the separation of two languages. In the same year, members of the Writers' Association

of Serbia wrote a reply to a Croatian declaration titled “Proposal for Consideration”. As Dragovic-Soso indicates, several of the intellectuals who were involved in this language debate created the core of the future nationalist coalition in Belgrade in the 1980s (2002: 35). The polarization of the state was witnessed among other groups as well. For instance, the demand of thousands of Albanian demonstrators for an independent Albanian-language university in 1968 signified a growing Albanian nationalism.

The increase of this political polarization did not stop in the following years. In the 1980s and especially after Tito’s death, it turned into a crisis. The official Yugoslav history was abandoned and accordingly the nationalistic myths of different republics came to the fore. On the Serbian side, the new history of the nation focused on a sense of deep historical injustice. In this regard, the “notions of permanent victimization and a communist ‘stab in the back’ and a portrayal of the common Yugoslav state as the vehicle of the Serbs’ destruction as a nation” became the main features of this national history (Dragovic-Soso, 2002: 65). The unrest in Kosovo in 1981 which demanded to create an Albanian Kosovo Republic was certainly very important for the Serbian politicians and intelligentsia. For them, Kosovo was the most delicate issue. As one of the clearest illustrations of this sensitivity, 1986 *Memorandum* of Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences probably signifies the peak of nationalist feelings that the Serbian intelligentsia reaches:

The drafters of the *Memorandum* and numerous other prominent Serbian artists and intellectuals who have painted an apocalyptic picture of the state of their nation and accepted violence against their neighbors as a solution are also generally normal men who acted abnormally when they combined the fear of their own annihilation with the expectation of a glorious future. They saw themselves as the nation’s saviors who will, after destroying evil enemies, realize the old promise of a prosperous and glorious Second Serbian Empire as the dominant power in the Balkans. (Anzolovic, 1999: 118)

In the context described above, literary works also nourished the idea that Serbs had always been naturally good, kind-hearted, and self sacrificing but they had always been mistreated. By returning to historical times of misfortune and struggle

and narrating the evil deeds of the other national groups against Serbs, they depicted Serbs as the sacrificial victims of Yugoslavism (Wachtel, 1998: 205). As also indicated by Marko Zivkovic, “victimhood in its archetypal, metaphysical, eternal power was the main message” (2011:183) of this literary discourse.

With the intense preoccupation with history, many prominent Serbian novelists used their works to “confirm national myths through concrete characters and scenes, thereby complementing the historians’ efforts to have their studies conform to the same myths” (Anzulovic, 1999: 131). Of course, after this deep affinity to history, it was impossible for Serbian authors not to write about the painful historical memory of the Ustasha genocide in the Second World War. Thus, journalist and novelist Vuk Draskovic, who would later become the leader of The Serbian Renewal Movement, based his novel *Knife* on a true story of massacre of Serbian people by their Muslim neighbors on the Orthodox Christmas Eve in 1942. In this regard, as interpreted by Branko Mikasinovich, the novel is a “graphic, moving, disturbing, and sad reminder of what happened forty years ago in that region of Yugoslavia” (Mikasinovich, 1987: 317) drawing attention to the topic of genocide and questioning the possibility and desire of South Slavic people to live together.

4.2 REPRESENTATION OF USTASHA VIOLENCE IN DRASKOVIC’S *KNIFE*

While discussing the impalement of Radisav in *The Bridge on the Drina*, we have stated that it must be one of the most violent scenes one can witness in a literary work. However, the nearly pornographic violence narrated in an extremely detailed way in Draskovic’s *Knife* makes the reader forget even the impalement scenes of Radisav. If the novel is read considering its approach to nationalism, it sometimes seems to suggest that during the Second World War all sides including Ustasha, Chetniks, and Partisans committed atrocities. On the other hand, it is really noteworthy that the narrative never offers a violent, detailed depiction of an act of massacre carried out by the Serbian Chetniks. As pointed out by Branimir Anzulovic, all the sadistic wielders of the knife are Catholics and Muslims (1999: 134). So, this selective manner of the narrative encourages the reader to question the standpoint of

the text and the author regarding nationalities. The first scene of such a violence is depicted in the opening chapter of the novel. Here, on a Wednesday, January 7, 1942, when elderly Fr. Nicifor, Stanoje Jugovic and the other family members get together for their Christmas dinner, and Fr. Nicifor utters the sentence “Christ is born, brothers and kinsmen Jugovici!”, they hear the voices of gunfire exploding at the front door. Hussein Osmanovic and his men enter the house and this starts the massacre that will destroy the whole village. Before killing their neighbors, the Muslims try to enjoy what they are doing as much as possible and show their hatred to the members of the Jugovici whom they in fact call *kum*, a word meaning “brother”. For instance, one of Husein’s sentences showing their hatred is “I hope that as many Jugovic heads fall as there are sparks. I hope Allah slays as many of their children in their womb. I hope that snakes drink up their eyes” (Draskovic, 2000:32). After many similar phrases are repeated by Muslim characters, the narrative continues with the depiction of how each member of the family is killed. However, the most brutal scene is Ljubica’s rape by Hussein. As Kemal cuts her breast, nose, and eyeballs the violence escalates. Eventually Ljubica takes a knife and kills Husein with it:

Husein now shoved the shirt which Ljubica had given to him in her mouth so that she could not scream or bite him. He undid his pants and dropped them to his knees. His hairy ass flashed into sight, and he insinuated himself between her legs while brandishing the knife before her eyes, threatening to cut her throat. He calmed down and began groaning with pleasure. Ljubica screamed through the shirt gagging her mouth, then gave up and stopped squirming. Husein started twisting and turning his ass up and down as he kept groaning, when pleasure overcame him, and he let the knife fall from his hand. He began to smell her hair and bite her neck and face. Blood was flowing at their feet, more abundantly than it had flowed from Simana’s throat.

-Masalah, sonny, you cut her wide open!- screamed Kemal, berserk- It’s flowing, splashing, spraying, man, like it’s coming out of a cask!

(...)

With a single winding slash, as if he were cutting a leg of mutton, he lopped off her left breast. She shrieked. Blood sprayed across his face and forehead. Then he cut off her nose. He tore her tongue out of her mouth, and then cut it in two. He drove the top of the knife into her eye, turned it around a few times in a circle beneath her bloody eyeball, which wriggled between his fingers. After he finally ripped the eye out of her head, he let it roll on the table right in front of Fr. Nicifor. Then he cut Ljubica’s throat. (Draskovic, 2000:42-43)

All these brutal acts are carried out by Muslims with great pleasure. Actually, even the fact they prefer using knives instead of guns indicates that they desire to enhance the pleasure they get from killing and torturing Serbs. After they kill all the people in the house, the group takes the cradle with Ljubica's baby. Then, they burn the church with the people locked in it listening with pleasure to their screams and cries.

On the other hand, in the next chapter, the Chetniks come to Osmanovici and take revenge for the Jugovici massacre. Here two notable features of the narrative should be marked: First, it is not possible to see the same pleasure of murder and torture while the narrative focuses on Serbian characters. The impression that they only kill because they have to reciprocate what the Ustasha militants do is always present in the narrative. According to Anzulovic's interpretation of the novel, "Serbs kill only when they are pushed to act in reaction to what is done to them" (1999:134). Second, the depiction of the Chetnik attack to Osmanovici lacks the details of brutality the narrative offers while describing the Ustasha massacre. When the Chetniks enter the village and break into houses one by one, Rabia is on the verge of seeing what the Chetniks are doing, the narrative focus does not allow her to see what is happening. Also, what follows is the portrayal of a stylish Chetnik commander before he orders his men to kill people in a house:

The snowstorm let up just before dawn, Rabija remembered, and the Serbs announced themselves with gunfire. The battle for Osmanovic lasted a full three days and nights. Their defenses were breached at several points, and the Serbs broke into ten or so homes and killed everything that moved.

The Chetniks even broke into the house of Rabija's next door neighbor, the cross-eyed Nusret Osmanovic. They caught him and his whole family: mother, wife, and two-year-old son. Rabija, hidden in the large wheat granary on her roof, saw the Chetniks break into Nusret's house, but she could neither see nor hear what took place inside.

The Chetnik major was about thirty years old and dressed in an officer's uniform of the Royal Yugoslav Army; he had a neat, black well-trimmed beard and a nose that was a little squashed; he was wounded and wore a dressing on his upper left arm; he delivered his orders calmly. (Draskovic, 2000:86)

This selective manner in the description of violence is used in other parts of the book as well. For instance, there is a scene that reveals the excavation of a mass grave in 1963. Many people including Alija are watching it while skulls and skeletons are appearing and people recognize their relatives by gold teeth, a chain, a lighter or their shoes. This excavation scene eloquently presents the Ustasha violence many years after the war took place. Alija stands above the excavation pit and while watching, he sees bones and skulls are all mixed together and there are more skeletons than skulls. So, it is true that the Ustasha beheaded some people and threw their heads to the dogs of Gacko (Draskovic, 2000:70). According to the reports of medical experts, people were killed by hatchets, knives, mason's mallets and no one mentions the word "bullets". The bishop in the beginning of his speech calls for the harmony and the unity of people in order that hatred, fresh wounds and evil memories do not affect their hearts, but he goes on his speech telling Serbian names constantly, praying, and asking for committing them to eternal memory:

Arrange all Serbian names that exist-they have all been slaughtered! If they did not die in Herzegovina, they died in Jasevonac, in Lika and Banija, in Bosnia, all along Kordun, in Kragujevac, in Kosovo, in Vojvodina, in Kraljevo... All the Serbian names have been killed! (Draskovic, 2000: 71)

In this part of the novel, the narrative focuses on the excavation of a Serbian mass grave but the text does not even mention mass graves containing the bodies of other ethnic groups. This is notable because some reviews of the novel point out that rather than being close to a nationalist one-sidedness, the novel's proposal is that during the war, all sides were same in carrying out these kinds of atrocities. Also, they claim that the text, rather than making a discrimination on behalf of the Serbs, emphasizes a Yugoslav supranational unity and the impossibility of dividing South Slavic people ethnically. For example, Michele F. Levy proposes that "the objective reader will find Vuk Draskovic's intricately structured, hard-hitting novel a powerful

paradox, a nationalist work that cogently deconstructs nationalism” (Levy, 2000: 887). However, according to our interpretation of the text, even if this type of identity definition is viewed in the personal speeches and attitudes of certain characters like Sikter Effendi, the overall narrative pursues a standpoint which is apt to discriminate between Ustasha and Chetnik acts during the Second World War.

The narrative time of the novel frequently goes back to the war years through the memories of characters who had experienced it. The scenes which depict how Atif Tanovic killed Serbs are also significant as they are good examples for the representation of Ustasha and Muslim violence against Serbs. While living in Trieste in the year 1963, upon seeing a rabbit, Atif recalls a memory from the war when he hurts a rabbit while killing the Serbs with a scythe. In this scene the Ustasha militants murder the Serbian prisoners as if they are harvesting crops. The ruthlessness portrayed here does not fall short of what the Osmanovici did to the villagers of Jugovici:

Many of the Ustashi have to endure the sight of their scythe carrying off toe and feet or getting stuck in shin bones. The victims die only when the cutting edge hammers into their intestines and tears up their insides. Others have hands, ears, and parts of their faces sliced off, eyes knocked out, jaws hacked off, and teeth broken while they are still conscious, but by some misfortune, the heart and brain and lungs remain unharmed. (Draskovic, 2000:169-170)

Interestingly, while the murder of these Serbian prisoners is narrated and Atif Tanovic and other Ustasha members carry out this atrocity in cold blood, the reaction of these people when they injure a rabbit by accident is remarkable since they do not exhibit the inhumanity they show against Serbs. They take the rabbit and try to heal its wound instead of killing it along with Serbian prisoners or just ignoring what has happened to it:

It's a small rabbit. The scythe lopped off half of its paw. Blood is flowing. It is convulsing from shock and pain.

I put the scythe away, stoop down and carefully take the rabbit into the palm of my hand and carry him out of the valley. I show him to Franicevic and I ask him to help.

The Ustasha takes the rabbit. I put some tobacco on his wound to staunch the bleeding. Then I tear a swath from my shirt to bind the rabbit's paw. I take the rabbit from Franicevic and bring it close to my mouth, kissing and petting it. (Draskovic, 2000: 170)

In this way, the representation of the Ustasha violence is limited against Serbs but no other living creatures, which strengthens the feeling of the victimization and the loneliness of Serbs. Marko Zivkovic in *Serbian Dreambook: National Imagery in the Time of Milosevic*, while discussing the relationship between the literary works produced by many Serbian writers in the 1980s and the outburst of nationalism, puts forward that these authors were the prophets of the reawakened nation who turned national "Serbian grievances, imagined and real, into a poetically exaggerated metaphysics of national victimhood" (2011:171). As it would also be remembered from other works analyzed in this study, the definition of Serbs as a victimized, innocent, and lonely people is repeated in nationalism-oriented texts and it is not difficult to discern the same approach in Draskovic's novel, as well.

4.3 ONE RACE, DIFFERENT PEOPLE: SERBIAN AND MUSLIM SOCIETIES IN THE NOVEL

The first chapter of the novel starts with an epigraph depicting the moment a Serb is being tortured in the Jasenovac Ustasha concentration camp. When his ear is cut by the murderer, he responds with a Christ-like patience: "Child, just do your job". Then the Ustasha rips off his other ear, his nose, and gouges out his eyes, but elderly Vukasin gives the same answer: "Child, just do your job" (Draskovic, 2000: 1).

This epigraph is noteworthy because Serbian characters in the novel are, in just the same way, portrayed as people with a Christ-like patience. They are also the ones who always try to protect the unity of Slavic people and the welfare of the Yugoslav state. But despite all these, they often have to pay a price for their maturity. However, they are also the people who never forget evil deeds committed against

them. In stark contrast to these Serbian characters, the Muslims and their society are never trustworthy and they never consider the unity of Yugoslav people. Indeed, the fact behind the hatred of Muslims against Serbs is that they know but deny their Serbian origin. In this way, they hide their betrayal. Also, the depictions of the pleasure Muslims experience while they destroy Jugovici or exploit the ruins of the village provides a notable illustration for the position the narrative takes in the portrayal of Muslim society.

In fact, all these depictions are a kind of rewriting of the Kosovo myth and Serbian mythology in general. As it would be remembered from the previous chapters, Prince Lazar chose a heavenly kingdom instead of an earthly one according to the Kosovo cycle and he honorably died in the battle. Serbian mythology created a Christ figure from Lazar and Serbs started to wait for the day of resurrection. So, this very simple plot structure is repeated many times by modern writers in the Serbian literary tradition that abounds in characters who are modern versions of Prince Lazar, Milos Obilic, or the traitor Vuk Brankovic. For instance, it is possible to liken Fr. Nicifor to Lazar because he accepts death and decides not to flee from his village in spite of the fact that he is urged by the Chetnik commander to leave the village.

Certainly, Fr. Nicifor is one of the main characters of the novel and his resemblance to the mythical Serbian prince is not the only feature that is noteworthy about him, his family and the entire Muslim society. After the collapse of Austria, he “was frequently invited for performing the rites of godfathership and blood-brotherhood for his countrymen of the Muslim and Roman Catholic faiths” (Draskovic, 2000:3). So, this is significant for the idea of Yugoslavism and the Serbian society. The narrative also indicates that when Germany and Italy occupy Yugoslavia and tear it to pieces, no one sees a villager from Jugovici wearing a German or an Italian uniform. Instead, they join the war for Yugoslavia. For example, Nicifor’s three nephews are assigned to the Zetska division and are sent to Albania. Nicifor mounts a horse and follows them to Gacko. These nephews bring with them only a few socks, a change of clothes, some white cheese and white bread and nothing more. This is noteworthy for understanding how differently the novel represents the relationship of Serbian and Muslim societies with the state, and more

generally with the idea of Yugoslavism. Here, it is indicated that Nicifor and his nephews defend the state with generosity and self-devotion. On the contrary, about thirty men from Osmanovici join the war despite the fact that five times as many people from the village have been called upon to serve. They hide in the forests and finally come out boozing and singing when they learn that the war is over and Yugoslavia has collapsed (Draskovic, 2000:5). So, it means that it is only the Serbs who really try to protect Yugoslavia freeheartedly.

Another very important feature of Serbian society emphasized many times in the novel is that they never forget what has been done to them. So, if there is an evil deed against the Serbs, it will definitely be avenged in a future time. This fills Muslims with fear and accordingly, they always indicate that Serbs must be destroyed. To give an example, although a lot of men from Osmanovici perish after they destroy the Jugovici, Rabija fears that the revenge has not yet come to an end because she is in fact aware of the evil they have carried out against the Serbs:

She would soon, glory be to Allah, arrange marriages for Fahrudin and Alija, however, no one was ever going to be born again nor was there ever going to be another wedding in Jugovici. But the Serbs were a race of people who weigh everything, remember everything and put everything in writing. They would not be at peace until they had completely annihilated the Osmanovici, and had destroyed all trace of them! Only then would revenge be complete, and only then would justice, dispensed by the knife, find satisfaction.

Because of that fear, Rabija always repeated to Alija, even after he had become a young man: *Serbs! Serbs! May they be exterminated!* (Draskovic, 2000:89)

Rabija is not the only character who fears the revenge of Serbs. As the reader would remember, Atif is a relentless Ustasha militant during the war years and his hatred against Serbs is so big that he finds slaughtering sheep or cattle a boring routine because it does not excite his passions or inflame his emotions. However, killing a Serb who is an enemy by virtue of faith is different. He even compares it to a sexual feeling and prefers to kill Serbs indicating that “it is a more powerful and agreeable experience than the tingling sensation a young man felt right before kissing a girl for the first time” (Draskovic, 2000:113). So, for this character, killing a Serb

provides a feeling much stronger than a sexual experience. Nevertheless, even he feels the fear that has been mentioned above. Atif Tanovic gives suggestions to Zulfikar when they meet during the war and Zulfikar informs him about the baby they took from the Jugovici as a war trophy. At that moment, the same fear is clearly seen in Atif's reaction. He tells Zulfikar that they have made a big mistake by trying to Islamize the kid because for him, the time for conversion to Islam ended a long time ago. Strikingly, he also claims that if the child survives, "somewhere, somehow, some way, the Jugovici will sprout from him once again!" (Draskovic, 2000: 117). Atif Tanovic turns out to be right at the end of the novel since Alija decides to avenge what has been done to his Serbian family once he finds out his true identity.

The fear Muslim people feel is so strong that they are depicted as being able to burn and destroy their own village because they believe Serbs will come one day and avenge the evil deeds they have done. From the conversation between two Muslim characters, Atif-aga and Zulfikar, it is learnt that they cannot confirm the Chetnik revenge, the burning of the mosque and the murder of innocent people in Osmanovici by Serbs. Instead, the surviving Osmanovici burn down and destroy their own mosque and their houses, then take refuge in the mountains and spread the rumor that Chetniks have done it. In this way the revenge has been completed by themselves and interestingly, even the Chetniks believe the story after a while (Draskovic, 2000:118). Thus, the narrative portrays Serbs as a people who never renounce to secure the justice and keep the hope for a day of justice and resurrection alive.

But here lies a paradox. How, for example, a character like Atif-aga, can feel that kind of fear and at the same time is able to carry out and express with pleasure how he and the other Ustasha members brought the Serbs into the mosque, pulled their gold teeth with horseshoe pliers and then hammered nails in their place? The answer to this question is most probably one of the most significant claims of the narrative about the hatred Muslims feel for Serbs. When Fr. Nicifor asks the Chetnik commander Mitar Zeravica, who tries to convince him to leave the village, about the reason of the hatred of Muslims, the commander answers:

It is precisely because you are of the same blood, the fact they sprouted from your seed, that their hatred is limitless. That's precisely the reason why there is no limit to their madness. That heritage is a stain on their consciousness and reputation... How else could they have established ties with Pavelic? How did they become the "flower of Croatia" and the most insane fighters for the Ustasha state? (...) Their heritage gives them no peace, and it troubles their dreams because it is a wound that will never heal. As long as one single Jugovic remains alive, it will remind them of the past and their betrayal. (Draskovic, 2000: 29)

Consequently, as it is depicted in the speech of Sikter Effendi, plenty of poor devils who were afraid of their own shadows before the war, left their humanity in a single minute. One example he gives is that people in Gacko indicate that Ejub bit off the nose of Veljko Brstojevic and nipples of Mileva Damjunac. Then, he carried her nipple in his teeth and brought it to the hotel, fried it and ate it (Draskovic, 2000: 229).

Here again, both the barbaric violence against the body of another person and the reason of this hatred is notable. That is really dramatic because in fact, Serbs and Muslims had strong ties before the war. As the reader finds out again from the words of Sikter Effendi, all of the Jugovici and Osmanovici saw each other as relatives. They visited each other and helped each other on the farm. They went to picnics and fairs together and respected each other's customs and beliefs. Sikter Effendi also indicates that in the year 1941, envoys from countries such as Rome, İstanbul, Berlin, and Zagreb called for the extermination of Serbs. Sikter Effendi prayed that nobody among the Muslims would accept that but the first to kiss the Ustasha knife was the hodza from the Osmanovici. So, in this way brotherhood and common sense were destroyed (Draskovic, 2000: 330). This story certainly points out the untrustworthiness of Muslims, but at the same time it repeats the claim of Serbian nationalism that all other countries want the extermination of Serbs. The discourse of Serbian victimization created in *Knife* reminds Milorad Pavic's declaration that the Serbian nation is the most hated one in the world.

Apart from the violence used against human bodies and the sexual pleasure Muslims get by torturing Serbs, their wickedness is presented through their vandalism against the ruins of Serbian villages. After learning he is a Serb, Alija remembers with shame that they shitted in the ruins of houses and pissed on the

overturned crosses. Besides, in the ruins of Serbian homes or of the church, “the Osmanovic shepherds, when they felt arousal pulse through their veins, arranged contests to see who among them would be the first to ejaculate” (Draskovic, 2000: 349). This clearly exhibits the relationship between the violence they carry out against Serbs and the sexual pleasure they feel by harming them.

Maybe the last point to be mentioned about Serbian and Muslim people and their relationship is another eloquent story that illustrates Serbian innocence and victimization. The love and death story of Atif Tanovic and Vukosava starts before the war when a Serbian woman named Vukosava visits the store of Atif Tanovic and asks for silk from İstanbul. Atif-aga states that the silk will come a few days later, but at the same time he falls in love with the woman. When the silk arrives, he waits for the woman, but she never comes again. Then, he decides to go to her house in order to see her. However, people in the house do not let him see Vokusava, so this love story gets bitter and bitter every day. He even thinks he can convert to Christianity if he is given the chance to marry that woman. (This, in fact indicates the weakness of the Muslim belief.) After a while, he gets the news that Vukosava has got married a wealthy man, Kristivoj Zirovic, and left Sarajevo. This love becomes so obsessive that he starts to tell lies to his close friends, stating that Vukosava had actually accepted to marry him and convert to Islam but she married Kristijov upon the order of the Serbian king.

This obsessive love continues for years, and after they learn before the war that Vukosava has come back to Sarajevo without her husband, his close friends like Omer suggest to him to get rid of this obsession by killing her. Atif cannot do it but when detentions and murders of Serbs start and they are sent to concentration camps on Black Friday in April 1941, he considers the Ustashi as a blessing from Allah because for him the catastrophe caused by the war will strike her so terribly that she will come to him begging for help. As he thinks, after seeing him in his Ustasha uniform, “She really would have been petrified with fear, and she would have tried to bribe (him), soften (him) up with smiles and her supple body” (Draskovic, 2000: 189). Nonetheless, Atif Tanovic’s imaginations become much less destructive when

compared to what his close friends, Omer and others, finally do to Vukosava and his family:

He had gone with some close friends to visit Vukosava's daughter. He brought flowers for her. He could not behave in a more refined and civilized manner. He presented the roses to her like a real gentleman in the presence of Vukosava's mother and grandfather, as well as her mother. He wanted to kiss her, and feel up her breasts and crotch, but that Serb bitch-bastard threw the flowers away, rejected him, and ran to her grandfather where she clung to his neck. Vukosava's father spat. He said that Omer was a scoundrel and he ordered them all to get out! Omer told me, with indescribable pleasure during which he just stopped short of shitting in his pants from sheer delight, how he and his close friends gouged out the eyes of Vukosava's father and her entire family. He told me how they took turns with Vukosava's daughter, and then finally Vukosava, before cutting out their eyes. He once again indicated the necklace he wore and shrieked:

-Look! Touch it! This is a garland made of their eyes!

He handed me, as a consolation, that sheet of newspaper which had wrapped up in it Vukosava's eyes. (Draskovic, 2000: 190)

Omer informs Atif about all these with pleasure and he indicates that Atif can now get married, make Turk and Ustashi children because Vukosava would not bother him again. Again, this violent story stresses the victimization of Serbian characters. However, additionally, in this way the novel questions the underlying political philosophy of the Ustasha movement and the association of Muslims with them. In this context, the narrative exhibits characters using the war to fulfill their personal obsessions and throughout the novel it is only the Serbs who become victimized in such situations. Furthermore, they are always extremely innocent, just like Vukosava.

Atif's refugee life as Sabahudin Muratovic in Trieste continues with regret and sorrow because of the atrocities he got involved in an Ustasha uniform. Indeed, the sincerity of his regret is also questionable since he never considers leaving the store he opened with the money of his neighbor Dorde Vilenjak after murdering him. It is only when Hamdija (who is actually a Serb named Milan) comes to stay with him when he seems to regret for his actions during the war. Milan is able to see this regret and humanity in Atif-aga, so he does not seem willing to take revenge from

him and feels unhappy after Atif-aga dies. This uncommitted manner is seen also in Alija, which illustrates their innocence and purity. However, at the end of the book their development is completed and the narrative focuses on their strong determination.

4.4 PARTISANS AND TITOIST YUGOSLAVIA AGAINST SERBS: THE DENIAL OF “BROTHERHOOD AND UNITY”

The development of the war novel in Yugoslavia marked a shift from the glorification of Partisan struggle to stories reporting the deeds of national heroes. This was also accompanied with a rise in the number of works that depicted the sufferings and struggles of a single nation against their enemies. In this evolution, Serbian authors had a central role. As also indicated by Anzulovic, “No other nation in the former Yugoslavia produced literary works containing similar grisly accounts and magnifications of old sufferings. This was done exclusively by Serbian literati” (1999:140). This type of works treated predominantly historical themes. Their most remarkable feature was to present the policies of the partisans and the state leader Tito as threats to Serbian existence. These nationalist writers asserted that Communist Yugoslavia, rather than protecting the rights of Serbs, served them out to other nations. This is also one of the very basic claims of the *1986 Memorandum*.

We see the same portrayal of Titoist Yugoslavia in Draskovic’s *Knife* as well. The misdeeds of the Partisans during the war years are perpetuated later in Titoist Yugoslavia and the idea that brotherhood and unity harm the Serbian identity resounds in the whole work. For example, Ustasha war criminals are able to live within Yugoslav society as they are protected by the state and they can even plan new atrocities against Serbs.

First of all the role of the Partisans in the violence carried out against Serbs must be pointed out because the text proposes that rather than protecting Serbs against the Ustasha, the Partisans contributed to the destruction of Jugovici. Fr. Nicifor’s house is raided by Partisans because they think Nicifor has a connection with the Chetnik commander Mitar Zeravica. They search the house and take all the weapons. Then, Nicifor does not have an opportunity to find other weapons. Also,

the Chetnik commander cannot attack Osmanovici for fear of a Chetnik assault whereas he knows the Osmanovici plan to exterminate the Jugovici. The comparison between Chetniks and Partisans made by the commander emphasizes their loneliness, because as he indicates, only Serbs are with them but everyone else is with the Partisans (Draskovic, 2000:28).

In addition to criticizing the Partisans, the novel includes numerous examples that question the “brotherhood and unity” mantra advocated by the Communist state. As the novel points out, this system failed to create a country where each group enjoyed equal rights. Instead, the attempts to protect the system led to the victimization of the Serbs. The novel depicts numerous characters who are filled with hatred against the other many years after the war. This presents the multicultural metanarrative upon which Yugoslavia is based to a failed plan or a utopia.

One scene in the second chapter of the novel is noteworthy in this context. Here, the encounter of children from Serbian and Muslim villages is portrayed and this encounter demonstrates the failure of the Titoist multicultural system in practice. Upon seeing each other, children start singing and swearing like “*When the Saints were tending flocks, St. Peter fucked Mohammed!*” and “*We’re going to plant willows in Brnjac, And hang Serbs from them!*” After all these curses they fire off rocks to hit the others’ heads. They even use knives and harm the younger children who accompany them. Alija is one of these children and after this event and when he goes home Rabia instructs him: “*Sonny, keep away from those Serb rats. God grant that they have fun with their own misfortune*” (Draskovic, 2000: 64). Then, the reader witnesses the yearning for Turkish rule:

-Mother, can I become an aga? Will the Turkish era come once again? The one Dedaga talked about?

-It will, darling. You just get well. Our time will come again. That’s what is written in the hodza’s citaba.

(...)

-How did the Serbs come to be? Why didn’t the Turks kill them all?

-Satan brought them from the cliffs of hell. They came from dzehenem, that's where... You can't do anything for those people. They multiply like rats, and as soon as their eyes open, they start biting. Sleep, darling, forget about those Serbs, may they be destroyed! (Draskovic, 2000: 65-66)

The unrest and disharmony in the society are exhibited in many other scenes as well. After Alija puts an add on the newspaper Nedjeljne Novine to inform people about his story and search for his real family, his text is found provocative by the newspaper administration because it revives in the mind of people wartime memories. However, the letters people send to Alija show that these memories have never been forgotten and people already live in an extremely polarized society. Some of letters include statements like “they killed us and wrapped us in black winding sheets! The foundations of our homes are still burnt black in Foca...”, “Don’t shame the Ustashi and our knives, blessed by Allah...”, “...Looking for a family name, you Turk? Listen up, crybaby, you started it first, and you inflicted ten times as many horrors on us...”

Along with the disharmonious nature of Yugoslavia, the novel proposes another significant message: the Yugoslav state is protecting the Ustasha war criminals. For instance, Raif Pindic, known to have been killed by the Partisans, comes back and wanders in the streets. According to rumors, he threw people into the pit of Koricko and he killed people by stuffing them into a coal mine during the war. Although witnesses were found about these events, Sikter Effendi indicates that “[o]rders came from upstairs in the municipal committee that any further investigation was forbidden and that no one was allowed to discuss it” (Draskovic, 2000:311). Moreover, although Manojlo, whose eye was gouged by the Ustasha Hasan Avdagic, has brought criminal charges against Raif-aga, he has been forced to retract those charges so that “brotherhood and unity” is not offended. On the other hand, Hasan Avdagic’s nephew Safet Avdagic protects Raif-aga. Besides, they organize meetings in Zaima and Suhreta’s house. As Sikter Effendi complains, Raif-aga is not the only person who is left undisturbed by the state. Also, they never caught Ustasha war criminals like Hasan, Esad, or Ibro Custic. The state only caught innocent shepherds and frail children (Draskovic, 2000: 272).

In contrast to these people who were on the side of the Ustasha during the war and who still support it, the novel also portrays a character from the Chetnik side. Malkan, for example, joins the Chetniks during the war and he is in Mitar Zeravica's command. In his speech about the Chetnik commander he states that he has been with Mitar for more than six years and he has never seen the commander yelling at him or looking at him crosswise. These words about the Chetnik commander reveal Malkan's status in Titoist Yugoslavia. The reader learns from Malkan's own words how he paid his debt. He puts forward that he does not owe anything to anybody because he paid more than what he had to. He was hung by his hands and feet and beaten like an ox in a cabbage patch. He was even forced to confess which breast of his mother he took into his mouth (Draskovic, 2000: 341).

Contrary to the privileged status of former Ustasha members in the society, the novel depicts Mitar's life as extremely uncomfortable. Again, as indicated by Sikter Effendi, he is raggedy-assed and run down because everyone kicks him around. Also, he is not invited anywhere and no one even recognizes his existence. If he were on the side of the Ustashi during war, he could have a very different life as Sikter Effendi's speech indicates:

I know a lot of them who were with the Ustashi and went around shouting Allah throughout this town who did not even suffer a sore thumb because of it. No trial, no punishment, and no condemnation. And some of them enjoy pensions today. (Draskovic, 2000: 342)

Thus, the portrayal of the society in Titoist Yugoslavia turns out to be a utopian metanarrative since the privileges offered to some groups are much more discernible than the equality and unity promised by the official discourse. From that point of view the text presents Serbs as an underprivileged group because of state policies, which in fact is the main idea that nourishes Serbian nationalism on both the intellectual and political field.

4.5 SIKTER EFFENDI AND HIS STORIES ABOUT THE CONVERSION TO ISLAM

Vuk Karadzic is known in the Balkans not only for his linguistic works but also for his theories about the nature and identity of Balkan people. The development of the ideology proposing a Greater Serbia was largely influenced by his ideas. The essential point of his argument was that Southern Slavs were not different but rather a single people who were divided by religions: Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and Islam. While Orthodox people called themselves Serbs, the others did not recognize the fact that they were part of the same tribe. He claimed, for example, that Catholics in Bosnia, Hercegovina and Dalmatia were not Croats at all but Serbs, whereas they did not accept this fact. The same fact was also valid for the Muslims of Southern Balkans. Karadzic surmised this by analyzing local dialects (Judah, 2000: 62).

Vuk Draskovic's *Knife* proposes the same argument about the identity of South Slavic people. It is most often voiced in the speeches of the Muslim character Sikter Effendi, Alija's mentor. Sikter differs from the other members of Muslim society as he accepts his Serbian roots and he is at peace with it. So, throughout the novel, mostly in his conversations with Alija about identity, he tells stories about the conversion of Serbs into Islam. What they indicate is that the conversions were mainly related to power. Feudal lords and the gentry, for example, became Muslim to keep their higher status in society. The poor converted to save their lives. So, the text suggests that there was never sincere belief in Islam in these conversions. In fact, the conversion aiming power created a weakness in the converted Muslims. This weakness is illustrated in the hatred they feel against Serbs. Actually, this theory about the conversion to Islam reminds what Ivo Andric points out in *The Development of Spiritual Life in Bosnia under the Influence of Turkish Rule*. Also, one of the most significant characters of Andric's novel *The Bridge on the Drina*, the Grand Vizier Mehmed Pasha Sokolovic, is again encountered in this novel and here again his weaknesses and victimization is noteworthy.

The ideas related to a single race theory are rendered by the author in a conversation between Sikter Effendi and Alija. Here, he wants Alija to count his

ancestors backwards. Alija can count ten names and they finish with Alija. According to Sikter Effendi, this is impossible to understand:

Son!- began the Effendi in a warm tone of voice after he had huffed and taken up his prayer beads again, -how can Alija be the last one, since we have been giving birth, marrying, and dying for fifteen centuries under these skies? I don't know where we came from, but I do know that we stopped and settled down here fifteen hundred years ago. (Draskovic, 2000: 210)

Sikter Effendi is the descendant of Duro Barbaric and views him as his link to the past and future. Nevertheless, contrary to how he sees himself and his past, nearly all others conceal the traces of their heritage with a sick hatred. So, because Sikter puts into words the reality they do not acknowledge, he becomes an outsider in his society. This has been the same in the years of war and in the 1960s when the events reported in the novel take place. One of the prominent scenes exhibiting how Effendi clashes with the society is when he does not follow the hodja and kiss the Ustasha knife. During the war, the hodza Osmanovic says "*After Allah, the greatest object of reverence is the Ustasha knife!*" and gives the knife to Halil Barbaric, namely Sikter Effendi. The narrative focuses on the feelings caused by the contact with the knife. His head starts spinning and the people around are skewed before his eyes. He mechanically takes the knife, examines it, turns pale and trembles as if the knife is a snake or piece of shit. He shudders and throws the knife with disgust screaming at the hodza "-Sikter! Get away from me". Eventually, he is almost killed by Kreso Tonogo yet he cannot escape from this swear: "*I fuck your Serbian communist mother!*" (Draskovic, 2000: 200-201).

The place of Halil Barbaric in society does not of course change in Titoist Yugoslavia. As he indicates, things get worse and the best positions are given to most wicked people. This is seen when charges against him are brought by Hodza Pantovic and he is sent to prison. Also, when he comes back, he sees that the windows of his house are broken and someone had drawn a cross on his door with a red chalk. So, the hatred of Muslims against Sikter Effendi makes him an isolated man, "a rotten apple in the basket". He is not a reticent man, but he is surrounded by

a great deafness and he is about to forget speaking without the company of neighbors like Milosava, Manojlo, and Malkan (Draskovic, 2000: 335). His difficult condition is also described in the scene where the merchant Vehbija refuses to sell flour to Effendi telling to the porter that he is a freak and he does not deserve to eat, so he cannot sell any flour, salt or bran to him. There is only rope and wire for the Effendi in his store to hang himself with or there is a crucifix that he can use to crucify himself or gouge out his eyes (Draskovic, 2000:339). As the narrative progresses his space in life becomes narrower and the text hints a worse future. Alija naturally observes this hate against Sikter Effendi. People cannot stand him. They consider him as a freak, and his name is a subject of ridicule. They get out of his way when they run into him and they stop their conversations when they see him in the street. But Alija also notices that their hate is mixed with a kind of fear. He observes people are afraid of Sikter Effendi and he wants to find out what the Effendi knows about them. This is probably hidden in his stories about the roots of the people of the region and their conversion into Islam as well as the crimes of Ustasha militants he witnessed. When Alija asks him if the Chetniks avenged everything, he responds “-Sikter, fool! (...) I’ll tell you: the Ustashi committed so many acts of evil that we should be ashamed of ourselves for at least a thousand centuries!” (Draskovic, 2000: 231). So, especially considering Sikter Effendi as a character in the novel, Dragovic-Soso puts forward that

Although the novel contains a number of sympathetic Muslim characters, who resist the persecution of the Serbs during the war and deeply regret the crimes that were committed in their name, the borderline between victims and villains is clearly drawn. (Dragovic-Soso, 2002:107)

This clear borderline is also seen in the historical stories of the Effendi. One of the most significant stories Sikter Effendi tells about the conversion of Slavs into Islam is about Duro Barbaric, his great grandfather. Like all other stories of conversion, here there is no trace of choosing Islam sincerely. The hard conditions, the attempts to gain power, and especially the deeds of the evil Turk encourage Duro to be a Muslim. The story begins as the Turkish Rustem-bey sees the beautiful wife

of Duro while she's doing the laundry. Her back is turned to the bey, so when he clears his throat, she does not hear. He gets off his horse and approaches her. Then, "her round hips were almost in his lap. Beneath her long skirt he noticed ankles and calves as white as snow. He drew even closer, and tapped the small of her back with his *chibouk*" (Draskovic, 2000:204). Duro has nothing to do but watch all these and then step before the Turk, kneel before him and kiss the tips of his shoes. That evening, Duro packs and sets off for İstanbul. He takes his wife Anđelija to her family and stays in Istanbul for twelve years reaching higher ranks as a janissary. After twelve years pass and the Sultan sends him to replace Rustem-bey; he, namely Safet-bey Barbaric now, kills Rustem-bey, converts his wife Anđelija into Islam and gives her the name Zineta. Also, he converts his father to Islam and builds a church for his mother who had died when he was in İstanbul. Sikter Effendi also points out that all these were written by Duro, but all the documents were destroyed by the Ustasha (Draskovic, 2000: 207).

Duro Barbaric's story suggests that there are dramatic events and obligations in the conversion to Islam, especially for the poor. It can be inferred from the text that the problem is not the conversion of their ancestors, but the ignorance of the future generations who don't accept their Serbian roots. As might be expected, Duro Barbaric is not the only one who experiences such a dramatic story of power and weakness. As Effendi learns from the writings of his great-grandfather Duro, Ilija is brought to İstanbul after being kidnapped when he is a shepherd and becomes a Muslim there. When he comes back to his hometown with his new name Alija Osmanovic, he builds a church, as well as a mosque.

It is clear that all these stories are somehow stories of Serbian victimization. All the people attempt to get rid of their powerlessness, so they choose conversion as an option. However, this never brings an end to the victimization of innocent Serbs. The result does not change even when they gain power and become Ottoman beys, even grand viziers. If they are not victims of Muslims, they are described as victimized by their Serbian brothers. In this respect, the stories of Ali-Aga and Smail-Aga are really noteworthy because, whereas they have Serbian blood in their veins, they incomprehensibly illustrate what Sikter Effendi depicts as the greatest

misfortune of the Serbian race: “Our misfortune to be... to be... rather, how it is put in your letter... to deny that we are not what we are, and to swear that we are what we are not” (Draskovic, 2000: 217). It is extremely striking that Ali-aga Stolacki, the man who kisses the cross and bears it in the battle of Brnjac against the Bosniac rebels, behaves much more brutally against Serbs after the Sultan gives him power:

When the Sultan elevated him to pasa and vizier of Hercegovina, (he) decorated the ramparts of his castle in Mostar with vined stakes and Serbian skulls! All of Christian Herzegovina had flocked to Mostar to congratulate the vizier and to seek favor with their benefactor and savior. He, on the other hand, ordered four Serbs to be impaled on the same day as a warning to the beggars. They survived for three days and nights on the stakes and they swore so terribly in their suffering at Ali-pasa, and wished the death of all Turks so earnestly that Ibrahim, the *kavass-basa*, who had impaled them himself, had to kill them with a rifle because he could no longer stand listening to the infidels desecrate the faith of Mohammed. (Draskovic, 2000: 217)

Thus, the position of the novel about the relationship of the Slavic race with Islam is that it is based only on power and benefit, and is not a matter of belief. This argument is emphasized with many examples. For example, Smail-aga Cengic puts forward that his ancestors were gentry before the arrival of the Turks and they converted to Islam to stay this way. If the Turkish Empire collapses, he will take up the cross and once again be an aga. Also, the first convert to Islam, Stipan Hercegovic, as Sikter Effendi reports from the resources he read, moves to İstanbul and accepts Islam in 1474. Accordingly he becomes the mighty Ahmet-pasa Hercegovic and this is the way nearly all of feudal lords choose Islam and are able to retain their former privileges. When it comes to the poor, they are converted by force, in order to survive, or to save the honor of their daughters or wives, as does Duro Barbaric. Consequently, this mostly turns into hatred against their roots.

The death of Bajo Sokolovic, namely the Grand Vizier Mehmed-pasa Sokolovic, deserves to be mentioned too. He is one of the most important characters of Andric’s *The Bridge on the Drina* and the novel questions similar themes like the Ottoman child-tribute system. In this novel, the portrayal of the dead body of the

Grand Vizier as a poor Serbian villager stands for the whole victimized Serbian race. Likewise, in Draskovic's *Knife*, he is depicted as a victim. Despite the fact he is able to reach the highest position in the Ottoman Empire, he is forbidden to have sons. He is brutally punished and his family cannot inherit the vizier's estate because "the slave who had raised himself from dust-from nothing-had to be transferred at the end of his service into the dust from which he had sprung" (Draskovic, 2000: 249). Accordingly, the novel does not limit the Serbian victimization with the Ustasha violence but expands it into a wider historical space to rewrite the stories of national grandeur Serbian writers had used before.

4.6 THE DEVELOPMENT AND AWAKENING OF A SERBIAN NATIONALIST: ALIJA'S TRANSFORMATION FROM AN OSMANOVIC TO A JUGOVIC

In his search for his real family and identity Alija Osmanovic goes through many stages and encounters numberless people. However, the most influential person in this journey is Halil Barbaric, namely Sikter Effendi who helps him find out that he is, in fact a Serb from Jugovici, that his family was destroyed by those who adopted him. So, a character who hates Serbs in the beginning of the novel ends up with a great desire for revenge from Muslims, which actually signifies that in his journey to his true origins he exceeds even the creed of his mentor Sikter Effendi.

The first time Alija is mentioned in the narrative is while he is watching the excavation of a burial pit. Significantly, he is described as a "candle" and a "pine tree" in his village. Starting with this very first scene, Alija constantly questions his identity until the very end. After finding out he is the grandson of Fr. Nicifor and a Serb from the destroyed village Jugovici, he matches the church bells with a knife as a tool for revenge.

As one would expect, he grows up with a feeling of hatred against Serbs and the moment he finds out his true identity this hatred evaporates. In fact, the first girl he falls in love with is a Serbs from Slivalje. Interestingly, he has three more girlfriends at high school and during his university years and all of them are Serbs too. Meeting his first girlfriend marks an important step in his search for identity

because she is also the person who tells about the slaughter of Jugovici which remained unpunished (Draskovic, 2000: 67).

Presumably, Alija's decision to send an add to the newspaper is the turning point in his search because that is how he meets Sikter Effendi and starts long conversations with him about his identity. As a response to the newspaper ad Milan sends him a letter because Atif Tanovic had reported Alija's real story to him before. The letter confuses Alija a lot and he takes it to Sikter Effendi for interpretation:

I have read everything and I know the truth. The crescent moon behind Foca can easily fall as a cross in Jugovici. Death dwells where you have to be thankful for life. You don't even suspect that you will hate those whom you love, and that you will love those whom others have led you to hate. You are in debt to your greatest debtors, and your greatest creditors are in debt to you- there is no court or power on earth that can untangle and resolve the problem. Don't look for what has been found. And don't lose what has already been lost. You are certainly not what you are, nevertheless, you are what you are not! (Draskovic, 2000:196)

An abrupt change takes place in Alija's life after receiving this letter because the puzzle about his identity is solved with the help of Sikter Effendi. After he reads Milan's letter, the Effendi suspects that Alija is from the Jugovici destroyed by the Osmanovici because he knows the documents written by Fr. Nicifor. Thus, he tries to find out the truth. The result is that Alija understands he is a Serb whose family was destroyed in the village of Jugovici by the people who adopted him. There is even a document about three round black holes under his left armpit. Thus, his dilemma starts: whether to kill the ones who took care of him and destroy their village to avenge what was done to his Serbian family or to continue his life as always. Sometimes he imagines destroying the mosque in Osmanovici, burn all homes there, rebuild the church and his family home, marry Milica and have children. Another time, he thinks in despair it is impossible to take revenge: *"I can't fire at them. I can't kill any of them. Well, who should I kill? How can I satisfy my vengeance?"* (Draskovic, 2000:361).

In this state of confusion and indecision, Sikter Effendi advises Alija not to change anything in his life. He thinks that Alija should wear the shoes he has been

wearing until then. He shouldn't make a distinction between Ljubica and Rabia because one brought him to the world and the other raised him. When Alija tells him he wants to change his name Effendi responds that changing the past is not possible. He also adds that there is nothing to regret for in Alija's life because his experience turns him to a bridge between people, or between the past and the future (Draskovic, 2000:351).

Nevertheless, Draskovic does not allow the narrative to end with Sikter Effendi's suggestions since Alija's passage has not completed yet. When he learns he is a Serb his confusion and depressive mood find expression in his dreams:

It seemed that it was taking place alongside the Neretva, and that the burning people were Osmanovici. I saw Rabija and Fahrudin in the crowd. Rabija had reached the water, and was kneeling at a whirlpool where she was splashing herself with water. She was unable to extinguish the flames that were consuming her. Flames burst from the whirlpool: her dimije, her colorful jacket and the yashmak on her head were on fire, and her hair was rank.

Bounders sprang out of the ground, and grew until they touched the sky and blocked out the sun, and then in the darkness, I found myself next to the whitewashed church in Jugovic... A kolo, led by Fr. Nicifor, was wheeling around the church. Next to him was the beautiful girl from the photograph. A second kolo, which was being danced by odious creatures who had tails, demons as I had imagined them when I was a child, was wheeling around the boulders and stone cliffs that surrounded the church. (Draskovic, 2000:357)

It seems that the narrative waits for the encounter of Alija and Milan for the resolution of the story. Alija learns from Milan that his real mother Ljubica killed Hussein, the husband of Rabia, while being raped by him. Despite the fact the idea of revenge makes Milan sick and he believes that the retribution in fact is complete; they finally resolve their dilemma with the determination for vengeance. When Milan attempts to dissuade Alija, different voices start emerging and disappearing in Alija's mind and the speeches of many people like Ljubo, Dedaga, Sikter Effendi, and Fr. Nicifor form a frantic, chaotic conversation. Actually, the conversation turns out to be a quarrel between these characters and at the end Nicifor seems to prevail with his arguments about the suffering and the victimization of Serbian people.

The conversation starts with Ljubo who points out that all peoples of Europe had once Serbian names. He also indicates that Serbs are a great people and if one day only two Serbs remain in the entire world, they will still be a great people. After Dedaga from the Osmanovici village calls Serbs “a damned race of rats”, Fr. Nicifor and Sikter Effendi start to talk with each other. As he did before in his conversation with Alija, he advises him to forget the fraternal wounds. For the Effendi, the misfortune is behind the people of the region. With the help of both God and Allah, these events won’t be repeated again. However, this is not convincing for Nicifor as his response indicates that God and Allah are against Serbs because they are surrounded by bad neighbors including Turks, Germans, Hungarians, Albanians, Bulgarians, Catholicism, and Islam... Moreover, Nicifor revives the assertion that the Serbian nationalist discourse has always used. As he puts forward, they have paid more than anyone else for each military victory and all of their sacrifices have been in vain. Their greatest misfortunes arose from their victories. Alija gets up from this dream-like state of mind with the sentence “Is there anyone at all in Jugovic to awaken, Nicifor?” The last sentence of the chaotic conversation in his mind contains a hopeless response to Sikter Effendi. In this way, the text informs the reader that Alija chooses the way Nicifor points, rather than staying in the place Sikter Effendi suggests, which indicates hopefulness for the unity of people. Unlike Sikter Effendi, the response of Nicifor emphasizes remembering instead of forgetting:

-That’s not the Nicifor I know!-sighs Sikter Effendi.-Wipe the gall from your mouth. The war was over a long time ago. The sun has risen. Many have survived. Let’s start forgetting about what happened and let’s hope for what is just coming into existence. We don’t have anything else to hope for. Throw out those fables about damnation and evil fate!

-You say that the sun has risen, my Halil! Everyone interprets that differently: the sun will never rise in Jugovic again. There is no one to awaken. Isn’t that so, kum Dedaga? (Draskovic, 2000:376)

Alija feels closer to the idea of revenge after Nicifor’s words. Nevertheless, there is also another person to persuade: Milan. As another character signifying the mercifulness of Serbs, Milan is also in great dilemma and regrets the death of Atif

Tanovic. When Alija informs him about his decision to change his name, Milan does not think this is a good idea and what he suggests is to forget the notion of revenge. On the other hand, in his text entitled “The Saga of the Knife”, he first starts with a balanced tone and describes the place of the knife in the culture and history of Southern Slavs, but he then loses control of his mind/pen and it turns out to a text reflecting his deep nationalistic feelings. The text first examines the knife as a simple device but when the people of the region hear about it, they feel excited. People in the Balkans, according to the text, changed faiths, masters, lost their kingdoms, moved from one place to another, but they always carried a knife. The text then arrays the words people carry out against others using a knife, such as butchering, slaughtering, murdering, cutting to pieces etc. and the list includes more than thirty words. When Milan’s text mentions the use of knives during the Second World War, it seems to achieve a certain balance through the method of all-inclusiveness: “Ustasha knives, Balist knives, Islamic knives, Catholic knives, brotherly knives, unbrotherly knives, betrayer’s knives, Chetnik knives, class knives, neighbor’s knives, holy knives...” (Draskovic, 2000:386).

As the text continues and comes to an end, it focuses on the Ustasha knives and frantically describes the bloody deeds that had been performed with them. Deeply nationalistic feelings erupt uncontrollably, no matter how the author tries to suppress them:

And water was a KNIFE: The Ustashi boiled children in water. And tar was a KNIFE: they poured tar on open wounds. And the earth was a KNIFE: the earth buried the living. And rats were a KNIFE: having rodents nibble at the entrails of live men was an Ustasha invention. And the friar’s mantle was a KNIFE: blood dripped from it for four long years. And the Qur’an was a KNIFE: it was all done with Allah’s blessing...! (Draskovic, 2000: 388-389)

As Marko Zivkovi points out, Draskovic’s *Knife* could be read as a work primarily about fratricide and the dilemma of revenge. After all the Serbs suffered in the hands of their Muslim brothers, so the question whether to take revenge or not is the main dilemma throughout the text. Zivkovi admits that some critics reach the

conclusion that the book “preaches reconciliation rather than revenge”. But his interpretation of the novel is similar to our approach to the work. He argues that Draskovic justifies revenge and encourages hate. He also indicates that the text constantly foregrounds Christian forgiveness as an inherent trait of Serbian character, which is a prominent feature of Serbian nationalist mythology. This serves to represent Serbs as incurably naive. But the last underlying message of the narrative is that “it is finally time for the Serbs to stop turning the other cheek” (Zivkovi, 2011:184).

The very last page of the novel illustrates the point where Alija and Milan meet in determination. They decide to get rid of all their shame and fear and stop hesitating, keeping their mouths shut, and burying what they in fact have to tell. People state that they have to forget as quickly as possible because the living have nothing to say to the dead. But as explained by Milan, “the dead have a lot to say, and they must send word to the living!” (Draskovic, 2000:390). This can easily be read as a determination to revenge. Remarkably, the final conversation ends with a scene where Alija hears bells that ring in prolonged intervals but imagining them as the word “knife” in Serbian: “*Nooooozz, nooooozz, nooozz...!*”

CONCLUSION

The 19th century is a crucial period in Serbian history since it is the time when the first revolts of Serbs against the Ottoman Empire took place. After the first rebellion in 1804 whose leader was Karadjordjevic, Serbs had to wait for the Berlin Congress in 1878 for their independence. Then, the two Balkan Wars and the First World War became turning points in Serbian history. After the World War that ended with Serbian victory, they established “Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes” in 1918 with other Slavic nations that lived within the boundaries of Austria-Hungary before the War. The newly formed state was renamed as “Yugoslavia” in 1929.

Socialist Federal Yugoslavia was established as a multicultural/multiethnic state after First Yugoslavia was demolished by the Axis Powers in 1941 and the Partisans led by Josip Broz Tito became victorious at the end of the Second World War. Founded upon the principle of “brotherhood and unity”, Federal Yugoslavia guaranteed the synthesis of all ethnic and cultural elements constituting the country. It had a really successful state organisation with a centralist system and the power of Tito’s charismatic leadership in the first fifteen years following its establishment. Nevertheless, the 1960s was a period when the centralist rule weakened. Along with this, individual republics, where ethnic/national elements were dominant, gained more power. Accordingly, the process of cultural and political polarization started in the country. This process became faster in the 1970s and 80s and at the end of the 1990s it led to the fragmentation of Yugoslavia.

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia consisted of six republics including Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia, and the autonomous regions of Kosovo and Vojvoda within the territory of Serbia. In fact, the Slovenians, Croats and Macedonians reported that they left Yugoslavia before the civil war in the 1990s. Also, Bosnia and Herzegovina wanted to do so. The last two nations that stayed within the borders of Yugoslavia were Serbs and Montenegrins. So, Serbs were a nation actively involved both in the formation and dissolution of Yugoslav existence.

Assuredly, the civil war that took place in Yugoslavia at the end of the 1900s and that resulted in the disintegration of the country had many reasons including political and economic problems. Furthermore the process of cultural fragmentation encouraged people to see Federal Yugoslavia as a threat to their national identities rather than define themselves as members of the Yugoslav nation. This clearly demonstrates that apart from economy and politics, cultural factors had a non-negligible effect in this process. While mobilizing the minds of people to a civil war, the nationalistic discourse which emerged in the 60s and reached its summit in the 80s was built upon memories of historical animosities and the belief that similar incidents will happen again in the future. This discourse was strengthened by old national symbols, myths, and legends. In the production and propagation of this discourse, political speeches, televisions, newspapers etc. had great importance. However, apart from these, as the main argument of this study suggests, the relationship between the rise of nationalism and the literary works mostly written in the last period of Yugoslavia must not be overlooked.

The main argument that has been proposed in this study is that in turning points of Serbian history (including the establishment and the demise of Yugoslav constitution), intellectuals played an extremely significant role for the mobilization of people. This can be best illustrated with the *1986 Memorandum* and its influence on society at the time of its publication. This text clearly stimulated Serbian nationalism but even politicians who would be key figures in the future war did not support it at that time pointing out it could harm Yugoslav existence. As this example clearly exemplifies, the role of the intellectuals in creating a nationalistic discourse can never be ignored in the Yugoslav experience.

The study has furthermore attempted to establish a wide theoretical frame with a comprehensive overview of nationalism and its relationship with literature. The literary analysis itself was focused on the representation of the Serbian nation and the contacts of Serbian characters with representatives of other Yugoslav nations. It has reached the conclusion that within this literary tradition, formed in the nineteenth century, this representation has been based upon the same themes,

symbols, and motifs. National myths and legends like the myth of Kosovo battle were perpetually rewritten to create a sense of continuity in the modern age.

The three novels analyzed in this study were written by Serbian authors in the period of Socialist Federal Yugoslavia and it was asserted that they have many common aspects related to the depiction of the Serbian nation and its historical experience. Whereas *The Bridge on the Drina*, *Dictionary of the Khazars*, and *Knife* have great thematic and stylistic differences, they problematize the very basis of the Yugoslav ideal of unity and suggest, in different ways, that multicultural and multiethnic Yugoslavia is only a utopian quest. Thus, all novels were interpreted as anti-Yugoslav narratives that depict Serbs as the only nation that has always sacrificed itself for the unity of the south Slavic tribes but that has always suffered as retribution.

The study has focused on the common features in the representation of Serbs and reached the conclusion that the novels exploit similar narrative voices to render the topics intrinsic to the Serbian literary tradition: “race betrayal”, “Ottoman, Muslim or Croatian violence against Serbs”, “bloodfeud”, “conflicts among diverse religious/national groups in the society”, “the myth of Kosovo battle and its use in modern narratives”, “Christo-Slavism”, “the theory that all Slavs are Serbs converted to other religions”, “Serbs as Christ figures”, “Titoist Yugoslavia as a threat for Serbian existence”, and “the need for revenge to achieve a Greater Serbia”.

“Race betrayal” was defined in the study as one of the central topics shared by the three works. This idea actually originates in Vuk Karadzic’s theory of Slavic identity. According to this theory, all Slavs were originally Serbs, but the ones that define themselves as Croats or Bosnian Muslims are “race betrayers” who converted to other religions not because of sincere belief, but only to take advantage of the power of rulers or to maintain the status they had in the Serbian Empire. This idea is exhibited in all three novels as well as in Njegos’ *The Mountain Wreath*. In this poetic drama Muslims are depicted as the race betrayers who destroyed the unity of the Slavic race. That idea is supported with constant references to the Kosovo Battle.

The narrative suggests that the only method Slavs can use to regain their unity is the extermination of Muslims.

The same theme is treated both in Andric's *The Bridge on the Drina* and his doctoral dissertation *The Development of Spiritual Life in Bosnia under the Influence of Turkish Rule*. In both works, Andric clearly points out that "the cowardly and covetous turned into Islam". As Radislav's story suggests, his family is isolated in their village because all others convert to Islam to benefit from Ottoman power. Only a few people in the village including Radislav's family struggle to protect their identity. The narrative creates a sacrificial victim from Radislav and puts him in the lineage of Christ and Lazar. The "race betrayal" theme is also revisited by Vuk Draskovic in *Knife* written in the 1980s. Draskovic creates another Lazar figure, Fr. Nicifor who becomes a Serbian victim of race betraying Muslims. The central quality of both characters is their readiness for sacrifice. This reminds Prince Lazar's choice of a "Heavenly Kingdom" through which the defeat turns into a victory.

Pavic's *Dictionary of the Khazars* does not openly discuss the problems of identity including "race betrayal". Nevertheless, in fact "The Khazar Question" which is about the conversion of Khazars into one of the monotheistic religions could easily be read as a reference to the same Serbian race betrayal syndrome. Actually, this conversion is a very crucial event also in Khazar history because it is pointed out in the narrative that the Khazars lose the essence of their identity after changing their religion and this can be compared to the nationalistic discourse claiming that race betrayers demolished the unity of the Slavic race.

The texts we have read commonly exhibit Serbs as sacrificial victims of the Slavic race. When Milorad Pavic gives a Jewish passport to the Khazar princess Ateh in *Dictionary of the Khazars* for example, he creates a connection with the Khazars (whom we have interpreted as the forerunners of Serbs) and one of the most famous archetypal stories of victimization. In Serbian nationalistic literary works, this representation of victimization is mostly rendered through numberless incidents of brutality carried out against Serbs by Slavic Muslims and Croats during the Ottoman period or in more recent times like the Second World War. What is also noteworthy

is the selective manner in the representation of violence. The violence against Serbs is always described in almost pornographic detail in the novels we have read while brutal acts carried out by the Serbs themselves are given without detailed descriptions.

While the depiction of the miseries of Serbs is a common theme of the three novels, a feeling of hope for the resurrection of a Greater Serbia is also commonly emphasized. This hope is represented in *The Bridge on the Drina* through the strength of the bridge as a monument signifying the continuity/pain/struggle of the Serbian nation. A feeling of hope is transmitted to the reader with the scene of the destruction of the bridge accompanied by the voices of singing Serbs. The end of Draskovic's *Knife*, which is explicitly the rewriting of the end of *The Mountain Wreath*, also demonstrates a feeling of hope for a greater future with Alija's determination to take revenge for what has been done to his Serbian family. The feeling is also intensified in the final scene when the ringing of the church bells is presented as a synonym for the Serbian word "noz" meaning "knife" in English.

This study has also attempted to find out how the novels represent Titoist Yugoslavia. Denying the Yugoslav ideal, the works were defined as anti-Yugoslav narratives. The work that questions and denies the very basis of Yugoslav existence most explicitly is Vuk Draskovic's *Knife*. As the text depicts Titoist Yugoslavia in 1963, it argues that it is only a burden for Serbs and the slogan "brotherhood and unity" is a total lie because people actually live in an extremely fragmented society. What the narrative also points out is that Titoist Yugoslavia is protecting the Ustasha War criminals to maintain the system. On the other hand, the system offers an extremely hard life for others like Sikter Effendi who do not accept to be with the Ustasha or the ones who had supported the Serbian Chetniks during the War. Andric's novel does not indicate anything about Titoist Yugoslavia because the narrative time of the novel ends in the period of the First World War. Nevertheless, the novel's narrative time covers hundreds of years during the Ottoman rule. What does not change throughout this long period is the fact that people from the very beginning define their identities as separate nations and view historical events from totally different perspectives. The communities other than Serbs are depicted as

untrustworthy and when they have an opportunity, they can easily harm their Serbian neighbors. So, the narrative reminds the Balkanist discourse indicating that it is natural for the people in the Balkans to fight each other because “ancient hatreds” are what shape their relationships. Thus, it can be inferred from Andric’s work as well that the basis of the Yugoslav ideal was problematic from the very beginning. Although Milorad Pavic does not openly question the Titoist system, he does so by pointing out the synthetic nature of assembled structures in various ways. The Kaghans’s body transforms into a giant, the three religious narratives stay totally apart from each other, and the attempts to combine the fragmented parts of the dictionary always end up in a catastrophe. All these images illustrate the impossibility of synthesis and unity, which is in fact the very basis of Yugoslavia. Besides, while describing the state organization of the Khazar Empire, the acts of the state are always to the disadvantage of Khazars and they are the ones who are constantly asked to make sacrifices for the state. In this way the novel creates a strong connection with the representation of Serbs in nationalistic literature.

The same themes were employed in various channels in the context where Yugoslavia was culturally fragmented and mobilized into a civil war with a fear of the revival of past miseries in the late 1990s. Assuredly, it was not only the Serbian intellectuals and their works that had a great influence in the process of nation and state formation and in the destruction of the Yugoslav ideal. So, future studies may focus on how works by authors from other nationalities constituting Yugoslavia represent their experience in the creation and break of the Yugoslav ideal.

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