

# The Constitution of Sanjak-Montenegrin Bosniak's History Within Husein Bašić's Pentalogy "Replacements"

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**Abstract:** The paper analyzes the novels of symbolic titles: *Other Nests*, *A Gate Without a Key*, *Bones and Crows*, *Barren Turkish*, *White Asians*, integrated in the roman-fleuve *Replacements* (2000). The key starting point of this confessional chronicle's chronotope are the decisions in Berlin regarding the withdrawal of Turkish troops and the changes of borders in the Balkans. Being led to tragic consequences, Bosniaks, the Islamic Slavic population, were given the burden of "Turkish guilt". Confronted with stigmatization, Bosniaks experienced persecution, ethnic cleansing, mass and individual murders, and emigration to Turkey. Their name, national and cultural identity, homeland, state, and existence were called into question. Questioning his life as a clerk in the Imperial Archives, Ibrahim Žioc, the narrator, recounts little stories of great significance concerning human life and destiny. He produces panoramic, temporal sections which pose as compensation for the taboo subject of historical discourse regarding the Sanjak- Montenegrin Bosniaks' destiny. Documenting the violence and the exodus of the people forced to face numerous forms of terror, the narration rhythmically accents wondrous stories, extraordinary portraits, and characters, remarkable examples of human kindness, compassion, and humorous remarks. Employing his poetic talent, Husein Bašić introduces a lyrical component to the fictional world. The use of sophisticated narrative methods aestheticizes the evil destiny of one nation. The novels represent a literary testimony about a period of historical processes and epochal changes in the Balkans, deeply entrenched within the layered and complex contexts of Bosniak culture and history. With authentic artistic speech, the representation and interpretation of historical dramas and traumas, Bašić constituted the unwritten history of Sanjak-Montenegrin Bosniaks and awakened the identity crushed by existential crises that the wars of the 20th century had brought.

**Keywords:** Historical River-Novel, History, Cultural Identity, Bosniaks, Sanjak, Montenegro, Husein Basic, Testimony, Mass Atrocities, *Turkish guilt*

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## 1. Introduction

The pentalogy *Replacements*, written by Husein Bašić, represents a unique, novelistic exploit which, owing to the extensiveness of the historical events it encompasses, may be characterized as a roman-fleuve, similar to Miroslav Krleža's *Flags*, or Ivo Andrić's *The Bridge on the Drina*. The first volume in the series of novels, *Other Nests*, was published in 1980, meaning that the arrival of the remaining elements of the pentalogy was postponed for 20 years. Novels *A Gate Without a Key*, *Bones and Crows*, *Barren Turkish*, and *White Asians* were, by means of integration, published in 2000. The common thread of the novels comprises the

protagonist/narrator, the chronotope, and the chronological structure of the narrative, which are, furthermore, unified by *Replacements* – the multilayered title of the pentalogy that is grounded on the identity, the state, and the homeland, among other motifs. The temporality of *Replacements* belongs to the time between 1876 and 1909, simultaneously representing the years of Abdülhamid's reign. [11]

The starting point of the gradual, historical erosion in the novels *Replacements* and *Crnoturci* are the resolutions of the Berlin Conference. The disruption, together with the historical vicissitude, has greatly affected the destiny of the Muslims in Southeastern Europe. By inflicting and imposing the feeling of "Turkish guilt" on the Muslim community,

doubt has been cast on their survival and their national and cultural identity.

## 2. Using Historical Narration for Raising Self-Awareness of Identity

Husein Bašić was a Sanjak-Montenegrin Bosniak writer whose capacious body of literary works successfully bears witness to the phenomenon of multiple literary affiliations. His novels have been highly praised and evaluated, making each of his works, particularly the novel *Replacements*, serve as a prime example of the hundred-year-long development of the Bosniak novel. Interest in history, and the phenomena regarding culture and tradition, traced in the works of Selimović, Sušić, and Kulenović, has been extended to the realm of contemporary literary poetics. Additionally, such interests have been transferred to the following generation of writers that Husein Bašić belongs to.

The first pages of the novel *Replacements* hold words of gratitude regarding the publishing of the book and inform the readers that: "... the novels have been written in a firm belief that each will safely guard our language, self-awareness, and thoughts on our future and our past." Hoping each person would be familiar with their past, Bašić would consciously transubstantiate *life into words (...) and bring hope for tomorrow*, with a clear intention of retelling a historical tale as means for a finer comprehension of identity. A noticeable trait of Bašić, as well as Selimović, as Sanjin Kodrić notes, is that "he was an author whose literary works have been deeply engraved into multilayered and complex contexts of the Bosniak culture and past. Besides the articulation, the representation of Bašić's historical dramas and trauma is one of the most prominent features of his novels in general. [9] Similarly, in Rajko Cerović's opinion, Husein Bašić was "... a true constructor of Bosniak-Muslim's culture and identity subjectification." [4] Taking into consideration the habit of misusing historical facts in literature, Andrej Nikolaidis considers *Replacements* as guardians of the truth of our homeland, describing it as "...one of the major novels in the entirety of Bosniak literature, and, so to say, the literature of each of us, because literature does not succumb to the influence of religion, nation, or borders (...) *Replacements* is a historical novel, a work of art, and an honorable constituent of the history." [10]

In addition to Cerović, Vedad Spahić's words further highlight the constitutive dimension of Bašić's novels. Bašić is characterized as a writer who "... produces panoramic, temporal sections which pose as compensation for the taboo subject of historical discourse regarding the Sanjak-Montenegrin Bosniaks' destiny." [13] The tragic Bosniaks' destiny, and the horrors that the war and genocide brought onto people, are the cause of the pessimism the writer possessed. Still, the tale of the evil times does carry a prospectively-emancipatory message – the persistence of such a topic may prevent history from repeating itself. This aim justifies selecting such a historical topic and verifies

Bašić's reaction to contemporary events embodied in the novel *Kolovrat* (1993) regarding the "anti-bureaucratic revolution", in addition to the anti-war prose *Death of the Soul* (mutually published alongside Milika Pavlović's work *The Basement*, 2002), and nonfiction of "...highly moral engagement and an unmistakable civil valour." [4]

Perceived as a whole, the literary works of Husein Bašić represent a unique epic discussing the historical tragedy of Bosniaks. An old chronicler, Podgorija, using the words *crossing the road to the disappearance on a border separating dream and death*, has painted the picture of such tragedy. These novels are literary documents discussing a period comprised of historical processes and epochal changes that simultaneously form connections between authentic artistic discourse, interpretation, and representation of the past. Personal confession of an intrigued participant belonging to a time where the values of individual experience are articulated, and an objective story of the mutual destiny of one nation, both live within a space where the confessional, event-causal stream of Bašić's novels is generated through the everlasting tension.

Starting the journey of life as a 17-year-old- boy, Ibrahim Žioc, the protagonist and the narrator, was *robbed of his adolescent soul* when he was forced to join the Turkish military *on this path I still walk on, where I have lost myself trying to relieve others*. [1] A disastrous news from Berlin, he had received at Stamboul's archive, serves as the starting point of the novel. The message had awakened revolt which escalated into a conflict with a certain Durmiš regarding the difference between *Us* (Turks), and *You* (that lost each of their former rights). A getaway to the homeland was the following step (*Other Nests*). Treated as a failure upon his arrival, Ibrahim was sent to prison. The people there, being abandoned by Turkey and left in mercy of the Principality of Montenegro, were deeply disappointed and in denial (*A Gate Without a Key*).

Leaving for Cetinje in service of the Sublime Porte allows Žioc to get acquainted with events and historical figures such as those who travelled as the Montenegrin prince Nikola's entourage to visit sultan Abdul Hamid II (*Bones and Crows*). Later, the protagonist travels across Serbia to Belgrade. He is accompanied by the committee writing a report on the condition of Turkish, architectural heritage. Precisely, their role involves the assessment of the ruination that the ethnic cleansing left on the heritage sites and people's lives (*Barren Turkish*). Subsequently, one could encounter Ibrahim while travelling the land of Anatolia, a place where he participates in gathering information on the state of Slavic muhajirs. Young Turks, a political reform movement, arrive on the scene carrying turmoil, rebellion, and government repression (*White Asians*). Characters' fate is governed by the spatial and temporal range of Bosniaks' suffering – the people branded by the culpability of others, whose consequences have been observed for two centuries (beginning with a rebellion in Serbia up until the final war in Bosnia).

Bašić dedicates his time to an obsessive search and documentation of the violence and the exodus of the people

forced to face numerous forms of terror. In this manner, the author leaves evidence of a close relationship between art and destiny. The inner narrator is an immediate witness of history, holding "the complex fragments of *Replacements* together through an insight into his drama and the experience of Muslim-Bosniaks' tragedy." [4]:

"Despite the implausible tale my life has turned into, my destiny may appear believable and real to someone. It is the sole thought keeping me from ending it, despite my joy being as large as a single drop of morning dew, and my sadness spreading like heavy rain. Neither the glee, nor the sorrows that I feel, will bring joy to anyone else, and yet, my desire to put everything into words is stronger than the futility of the task I pursue." [1]

### 3. The Narrative Vortex

Being intertwined with the author's voice, the protagonist's monologue is directed at the readers expected to provide understanding and cooperation. The opportunity to form a subjective view of the history coincides with the objectiveness of the events, having the two overlap and balance each other. The monumentalistic perspective does not serve as a cohesive element within Bašić's pentalogy. It is, rather, connected through *little stories* similar to new historical fiction, and the so-called *history from below*, or *a people's history*. It is a type of historical narrative which attempts to account for historical events from the perspective of common people affected by turbulent historical events or carried on the wings of their own destiny.

The narrative vortex of *Replacements* absorbed and affected numerous characters including historical figures, leaders, commanders, writers, and artists. However, the number of failures, victims, and those beheaded, is greater. The stories about the people bear testimony to violence, moral and mental suffering, trauma, and alienation. Each element contributes to the content complexity of different novelistic plans which Bašić binds into a socio-political panorama. The *Replacement's* composition intricacy accounts for its unique role played in the field of the South Slavic literary community. The linear narrative follows the route of topic presentation from beginning to end, simultaneously having the ending of one novel pose as the starting point of the following one. Such process is applied throughout each of the five novels up to the final moment of returning to the starting point – Ibrahim Žaoc's return from the long, arduous journey.

The painting of a novelistic world follows a circular structure. Each novel portrays the opening and closure of one phase which, concurrently, foreshadows the upcoming one. "My life has reached its closure in the foreign nest. Will I be able to recommence it in this nest of my own?" [1] Enacting the closure of the final novel, the same troubled thought reappears prior to Ibrahim's return: "Yet another aspect of my life has been completed - filled far more with trouble and sorrow, than my own determination to rouse myself and start living the life I have. But, when? And, more importantly,

how?" [1]

Zuvdija Hodžić, a connoisseur of Bašić's literary works, notices: "Despite being enriched by the complexity, and the circular structure entangled within itself, Bašić's novels may easily be comprehended in continuity. Such is the biography of Ibrahim Žioc. In the aspect of literary theory, additional value is reflected in the fact that each novel may be read separately, allowing the places to be switched – so that the last novel may be read first." [8] This occurrence is additionally illustrated via certain characters, such as Pjer Loti and Omer-pasha Bošnjak, who encounter each other multiple times in different novels.

Mehmedalija Đogo, a young Kadi (a judge) from Mostar who had confronted powerful men, liberated the friar Jozo Kulaš. Together, they faced exile. Their meeting is depicted at the beginning of *Other Nests*, during the scene of Ibrahim's rescue on the Makari's ship. His description of the state society was in, is extremely depressing: "It all resembles a slaughterhouse. Those who pull the trigger first are those who are right-thinking. The rest is nothing but a bitter tale the killers dedicate to their victims." [1] His opinion regarding Constantinople is similar: "It is the most difficult to survive in this anthill of God – where a person is smaller and more impotent than a single rat." [1] In the last pages of *White Asians*, following several of their encounters, Ibrahim witnesses the final moments of Đogo's rebellion, as well as the termination of his life. In a certain sense, Mehmedalija Đogo was Ibrahim's twin. Their principles, beliefs, and valour were equal. The stories presented in one novel reach their conclusion in another one – the one where their path and destiny are enclosed. The characters of the *Barren Turkish* are encountered in the final novel, *White Asians*. Those are Nikšić (the guardian of Skender-bey), Jakub Kuč, together with his family, and other muhajirs of Nikšić caravan. The initiated stories and confessions of Bosnian muhajirs are finalized by Ibrahim's revelation during Junuz Kuč's funeral.

The selection of poetic techniques in *Replacements* is typical of high modernism, making the pentalogy resemble the works of Meša Selimović. Ibrahim Žioc is a self-conscious, dramatized narrator. He is a deputy archivist at the Imperial archive, an earlier scribe in Omer-pasha Bošnjak's camp, a defeated warrior, and a defeated intellectual. During the historical upheaval caused by the Berlin Conference, the initial junction of further events, Žioc found himself facing the fact that he lived in a foreigners' nest. The homeland he fought for could not be considered his home, making him lose the social identity he had previously acquired while defending it. In this identity turmoil which transforms into a drama of consciousness, Ibrahim confesses: "... I am bursting into flames... For a moment, I am bedel Ibrahim. In another instance, I am the son of the younger bey, Bašder... Flashes of my life rush through my head, the life whose owner I am not certain of. Whether it is mine, or another's, it awakens familiar items and moments, making this day seem like a distant one, whose forgotten seeds give birth to the sufferings of my afflicted soul." [1] Amid the historical

inanity and the vacuum identity is placed within, Ibrahim resorts to *jazija* – chronic recording, the kind ancient, wise people used to apply while noting their struggles during the evil times. Not even there was he spared of doubts, because “hardly anything provides a path through the desert of the past or serves as air in the expanse of the future. The only hope and justification may lie in a story yet untold. (...) Who even needs it? Perhaps the most delusional ones are those who are preserving a slice of the past times by recording it, hoping one will care to learn of what used to be. Wherefore?” [1]

Despite preserving the identity trauma of the collective, Ibrahim is a distinctive, independent intellectual profile – in a state of extended pondering about life, people and their destiny, ethical and social issues, the relativity of human life, and the opposition of the being and the existence. The monologues professing the endangerment of the soul are expressed in the forms of self-analysis, soliloquy, and inner dialogues. Bašić's hero searches for historical documents and cultural traces of the past stored in people's memory. He is a pilgrim in the vastness of history. Poetically speaking, his story about the past is placed amid a modern, intellectual confession, a traditional form of a chronicle, and postmodern poetics concerning testimony. The process of narration within these novels includes fragmentation, documentation, intertextuality, a genre re-registration, an intricate plot, myths and legends, fantasy, and dreams.

The role of a chronicler offers the freedom of observing which brings diversity to storytelling. It includes numerous events, interesting characters, chance meetings, and conversations. This role provides diversity regarding genre: chronicles, confessions, stories, records, dreams, lyrical passages, descriptions, etc. Likewise, the variety is brought to the narrative techniques: monologue, dialogue, digression, description, and report. Caught in the historical array, the narrator, besides observing and resonating with events, interprets and reacts to the occurrences.

#### 4. A Voyage to a Muhajir's Loneliness

Ibrahim Žioc, “a mirthless traveller”, does the report on the condition Turkish buildings are in, while travelling through Serbia. He fails to find anything he admired, or what has been inscribed in Evlija Čelebija's *Seyahatname* (the book of travels). During his stay in Belgrade, he writes about the terrible condition of the unsuccessful runaways who are, consequently, condemned to a life in basements, or posing as gypsies. Another recorded story is of Zinka the Gypsy, the daughter of the Nikšić captain Mehmed Ibričić. Alongside her brother Abdulah, she lives at the inn of her uncle, Osman Šerifović, who falsely presents himself as the landlord Jovan. Zinka has recovered from a mental illness which she describes as: “I was filled with dread and distrust (...) Today, having to survive the most dreadful things, I feel released from all the fears.”

Her brother Abdulah is a bearer sheltering the old and infirm from the streets and the city landfill. Furthermore, he discovers

the dead and makes preparations for their burial. Discovering the way the refugees, *scattered on the vast Turkish land*, live, Ibrahim has already noted the human suffering of those located on the Bosphorus' docks: “... the displaced millet turning into a ragtag group overnight. They are the beggars, whose memory of what they used to be, prevents them from begging.” [1] A particularly impressive description of a refugee settlement's condition is recorded in Donji Kolašin where people set their shacks on fire. As hodja (preacher) Kalić notes, each night they start imagining: “that we are inside of our burning houses, trying to jump out each night, while they are being engulfed in smoke and flames.” Unable to cope with their individual and collective trauma, the burning of settlements represents the self-destruction of those stuck in the deadlock of life:

“Despite our fierce struggle to discern a single word, the sounds surrounding us were trapped in a howling vortex. Entangled with bursts of bright flame, the throaty cries of people created a unique symphony. We could distinguish disheveled human shadows crashing past us, their round dancing emerging from the flames larger, faster, and more maddening each time. (...) It was yet another fierce ritual of parting with the life they had known, despite not knowing how or where they could resuscitate themselves. (...) What we could hear was, indeed, crying - stretched and remoulded into a wordless tune, filled with painful, horrifying screams, merging with the approaching flames.” [1]

The story of the rich people from Sarajevo who have sold off valuable property and emigrated before the arrival of the Swabians is slightly different. Inhabiting the old settlement *Veselo groblje*, they named it *Bosnia-Saray*, or *Saray-Bosnia*, including the Bakija, Alifakovac, and Bistrik graveyards. The new inn was named Morića han. In Sarajevo, Ibrahim meets four tipplers who like joking at their own expense. For these men, alcohol and gambling would frequently serve as a cure for the feeling of *muhajir's loneliness*. The indication of the gloominess within their souls is contained in the old melody dedicated to Sheher Sarajevo: “An umber fez curiously inquires, / Is Sarajevo where it used to be? (...) With the song quietly playing in my mind, I left Saray-Bosnia besotted with the enchanting tune, knowing I would not forget it; not only for singing it, but for the beauty and the yearning it has awakened within me.” [1]

Various short stories regarding the people Ibrahim meets during his voyage are interpolated in the monologic flux. Some he bears witness to, and the others record what he has heard from other people.: A portion of the stories is realistic and tragic, in contrast to the other, wondrous tales involved in the process of novelistic weaving. Certain characters narrate events from distant, foreign parts. For instance, Tuzla Mufti, Mehmed-Teufik Azapagić, recounts the stories of military occupation, and the entry of the Austro-Hungarian army across the river Sava. Furthermore, he mentions the mass rape the brigands of Đuro Punoglavac committed in Zvornik. Inhumanity of such gruesome stories leads Ibrahim to note: “The words that I have heard dug a bottomless pit of

emptiness within me. I felt as numb and unemotional as those who face an immeasurable evil." [1] The Mufti mentions the hanging of Hadžijamaković, the religious scholar and the defense leader, and the miraculous signs that occurred a moment later. The branch on which he was hung began to wither. The following year, the entire three-hundred-year-old oak faded, as well: "...the witnesses knew it reflected the injustice committed (...) At night, its glow reminded of nur (the light) set ablaze. During the day, its colours varied from snow-white to vivid red. Despite each shade it portrayed, the oak could nevermore be painted green." [1]

Thus, true events reach the realm of surreality as a sign of a higher justice, being kept with remembrance as a legend subsisting history and time.

## 5. Autopoietic Discourse of the Novel

A precedent concerning the modern, new historical fiction is the autopoietic commentary of narrating and transferring stories where Ibrahim articulates the cycle of historical concepts: "...there is something oddly familiar in this habit of going in circles. Everything is well-known to me, yet it appears completely new. The whim of fate continuously repeats itself, while people try to resist, or decide who would benefit from such destiny." On the trail of postmodern relativism is the awareness of the non-reliability of storytelling: "I would recount the stories recorded in my book. However, each time they seemed different from what I had initially heard. It made me think that there is a difference in each tale in the world, allowing a story to be reinvented as many times as we narrate it. Had I the willingness to register my biography, it would surely seem like a story of another Ibrahim and a completely different life."

Obsessive questions concerning the phenomena of relations between stories and storytelling, narrator and narrated, and suppression of sources, each reflect autopoietic topics reflected in the postmodern thoughts regarding the fictional nature of a story *sui generis*: "A tale was stuck in my thoughts... Have I heard it somewhere, or is it a fragment of my imagination? I haven't invented it – I was assuring myself. Yet, neither can I remember the person I have heard it from. God alone knows the nonsense one hears throughout their life, and what in all that is remembered. Certain fragments of one story may stray, attaching themselves to a completely different tale, becoming, in such way, a reinvented narrative, peculiar to the one recounting it." [1]

Each approach to Bašić's literary works should acknowledge the author as the most significant researcher and interpreter of Sanjak-Bosniak's oral heritage. The collected evidence was compiled, systemized, and manually processed. Thus, the connection between Bašić's novels and heritage is extremely important – it is inspiring, initial, and strengthening. It carries the identifying function "preserving the people's self-awareness." It is "the unscripted history, the endangered religion, and the scorned tradition, that urged him to guard it like treasure needing upgrading with new content." [3] The common characteristic of Bašić's poetic

and narrative creation is "the orientation towards the tradition" manifested through the netting of customs, beliefs, mythology, and the stories preserving the distinctiveness of Bosniak people's spirit.

The "Oral Archive" storing epics and anecdotes, among various forms for recollection, is an important source and the only testimony, at times. The author's testimony about the Battle of Novšić is an example of an epic titled *The Battles of Polimlje* (27 November and 27 December 1897). It concerns the singer-eyewitness, Abdulah Kuč, from Gusinje. The epic comprises 700 lines, and its traces are found in numerous lyrical poems and regional stories. [2] Regarding the importance of epics for culture remembrance, Bašić states: "Folk songs, especially those mentioning heroes, destiny, and important events, remain as an immediate tribunal and a confession. Generally, it is the sole reflection of such times and occurrences." [2] However, it fails to prove that Bašić makes attempts at the mythologization of the tradition. Despite the narrator being the witness who has seen and heard everything, Bašić carefully selects the fragments of confessions that will be displayed: "... let the magnificent, yet horrifying images in my mind perish", because he fears the misuse of history: "developing into a story will lead to life itself, becoming a bloody tool for those who yearn for revenge. Let nothing of it meet the dawn, forbid me from spreading these words... for there already exists enough material for bickering, provided by those who haven't witnessed anything." [2] In the same manner, the author wishes to achieve *epic objectivity* by quoting the lines from the Montenegrin and Bosniak oral poetry, such as Njegoš's *The Mountain Wreath*, or Prince Nikola's *Memoirs*.

## 6. The Lyrical Dimension of Narrating

The focal event causing a trauma may easily be triggered by different, yet suppressed, life agonies. Becoming a Turkish soldier as a replacement for a bey's son was Ibrahim's initial trauma leaving a mark on his soul and a permanent disunity of his being. Such is the anguish that the Siege of Plevna, a major battle of the Russo-Turkish War, had brought. Horrors the hopeless soldiers felt, marching into defeat, were recorded in Zulfikar's rebellious lines: "Trying to dispel our hopelessness, he provided warmth believing in our salvation and homecoming. Forcing us to walk in front of him, he took care of the dead left behind. Aforetime, nobody could escape the trenches full of fears and dead men. Our heavy legs were disobedient. A grime trail of blood and meat followed each of our steps on our journey to deliver good news to our sultan." [1]

Zulfikar recalls the old Bosniak poets punished for their pleas and protests. As a punishment for his verses bearing witness to the human sacrifice, and the imperishable trauma, his tongue was pulled out: "A rather small price for mentioning your name, sultan Abdul Hamid, is it not? / Do announce to the four corners of the world that your slaves are deceased! / Those returning no longer belong to you, the Lord, or themselves! / They belong to no one, oh Abdul

Hamid, the prince of blood!" [1]

Terrified repression, arrests, and murders are the tools Abdul Hamid resorts to in response to people's discontent with the sultan's impotent rule. Ali Suavi, whose lectures in Bursa evoked passion in Ibrahim, meets the Young Turks' officers and their sympathizers. Bosniak poet, Hersekli Arif Hikmet, "the friend of justice", represents their revolutionary ideas: "Oh, people, we are perishing! In this justice-oppressing land, we are despised and humiliated! Why do we continue to tolerate this? (...) Let's destroy them, and let us be destroyed along the way... Our words could, at least, serve as our weapons... is the practice of Islam not an act of bravery on this path of the truth!?" [1] In a manner typical of a modern intellectual, Ibrahim refuses to act regarding political involvement, despite knowing that humanity must occasionally be proven in such a way: "I have sinned against this world for not spreading my arms to ask or plead for anything. Whenever the doom of these times catches up to me, you will find me feeling uncollected in the face of adversity!" [1] In resemblance to Ibrahim, the author is a poetic soul and a meditation skeptic, which leads to expressing his mental-emotional resonance in the form of verses. Such feeling of melancholy is permeated through Mehmed-pasha Sokolović's verses that Omer-pasha Bošnjak narrates: "The final years of life seek no desire for glory, / the path to saving is broken, / darkness is looming over the hills." [1] These verses mirror the condition that the characters, having been betrayed by time, feel.

In the final scene, Ibrahim awaits the vessel to leave "the foreign nest" where, despite the importance of his duties, he remained a stranger. After the transport to Durres, the protagonist plans to return to his hometown, Plav, a town in north-eastern Montenegro. Despite the devastating condition Plav is in and the losses Ibrahim suffered, his heart leaps knowing that his little son, Šaćir, awaits him there. Having completed numerous travels, a single light beam from the lantern of a Smederevo mosque follows him. On a historical level, a single cycle has been completed. Regardless of the twenty years that passed since the fatal twist for the Bosniaks, the awaiting sense of peace hasn't arrived. In its place, the looming anxiety tickles the fear of the new woes a troubled region may bring, following the laws of repetitive circular motions of destiny.

Having his education influenced by the Turkish-Oriental culture and the classic mystical-philosophical poetry, the quotes of Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi, alongside other Islamic poets, and Quranic verses, are often encountered. Their presence enhances the lyrical atmosphere and the magic spells that, despite the terrors, balance historical tragedy and the artistic tone of narrating. Lyric setting, rhythm, euphony, metaphor, and symbolism, as well as the descriptive visualization of nature, portraits, atmosphere, and things, serve as evidence of Fatma Huseinbegović's quest for finding that *Other Nests* is "an existential, poetic novel despite its historical milieu." [7] Additionally, the poetic elements in *Other Nests* are analyzed by Dijana Hadžizukić. Due to the use of "the phonetic and semantic stylistic figures, in addition

to the use of the syntactical stylistic devices like parallelism and repetition, Hadžizukić points to the rhythmic patterns commonly associated with lyric discourse." [6] "(...) Unaware of the fragments of the past remaining within me, besides the beauty of water and earth, stones and the sky trapped between them, the things that words could never captivate" [1] notes Bašić. Similarly, Ibrahim's longing is withdrawn to the depths of his subconsciousness:

"... how devastatingly nice must the summers of my dear Plav be. Nowhere is a day filled with the mountain air so fresh, or a night richer in glistening drops of dew - a single drop worthy of washing the rust of life away... The sky above the Accursed Mountains resembles a deep blue blaze extending beneath the Sun. A pair of invisible hands lifts its dome up into the infinite glow of the stars - the place where the thoughts perish into the air like a flicker extinguished by the distant darkness. The eternal and inexhaustible river Lim flows beneath it. Safely tucked into the mountains, the water and its borders are fixed. (...) One end courses deep within me, while the other I have yet to find. It may be hidden beneath the thousand-year-old towers of Bosphorus, scattered like curdled blood, spilling into the black Aegean Sea - the thick tar, the molten resin, dissolved under the blazing Asian Sun. There lies his grave. So does mine." [1]

The geographical area where the Accursed Mountains are situated, the one representing his homeland, is the anchor point of Ibrahim's identity. Its existence enhances the sharp contrast between here and there, our own nest and that of others. The connection between Bosniak writers with their birthplace is "the fundamental urge to belong, feel the safety and the fateful relationship with the homeland." [5] Rhythmic lyrical passages, fascination with the process of experiencing, or a simple reminiscence of the native landscape may calm a troubled mind and evoke harmony. The union formed with said world gives birth to a different state of the human being. However, such a world of organic fulness and exaltation may easily shatter once the awareness of the present time appears in one's thoughts.

## 7. Conclusion: The Narration Has Constituted the Past

The art of narrative presented in Husein Bašić's novels portrays a harmonious rhythmic alternation of the contradictory content regarding violence, terrors, crimes, and life's hardships. Accompanied by the lyrical passages, the author's literary works are composed of wondrous stories, extraordinary portraits, and characters, remarkable examples of human kindness, compassion, and humorous remarks. Overlooking the distinction between the specified opposites, their union forms a coherent narrative flow. The symbolism in the titles of Bašić's novels unlocks tiny compartments where the tragic, historical stunts are captured. The novelistic consciousness records intimate and burdensome testimonies to the cultural and political history. Owing to the perspicacity

and width of the author's intellectual interests, the questions surrounding the destiny of the common people have been raised and elucidated. The description Radoslav Rotković provides defining the novel *Other Nests* as "a socio-political, and historical study more reliable than a number of scientific papers" [12] applies to the pentalogy *Replacements* itself. Considering the gravity of his venture, the representation, and the constitution of the undocumented Bosniak history, Husein Bašić is regarded as one of the most significant Bosniak writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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