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Past Empire(s), Post-Empire(s), and Narratives of Disaster: Joseph Roth's *The Radetzky March* and Ivo Andrić's *The Bridge over the Drina*

Abstract: The breakup of East-Central European empires generated various narratives of disaster. This article confronts two such novels, Joseph Roth's *The Radetzky March*, which is written from the perspective of the Austro-Hungarian Empire's ruling constituency, and Ivo Andrić's *The Bridge over the Drina*, which is written from the perspective of the subjects of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. For Roth, who focuses on the private family, the Empire entered its disintegration when its children renounced their fathers. For Andrić, who departs from the political family, that took place when its authorities abandoned their subjects. An external contingent force distorts the paternal relationship and sets its constituencies apart. The article analyses the two novels' different answers to this trauma.

Keywords: disaster, empire, paternal relationships, post-empire, technologies of self-survival

No event becomes a disaster by itself, but via the qualification of those participants who retroactively perceive themselves as having been its victims. However, not all participants do so, which is why "disaster" is a controversial predicate that requires legitimation. This is the task of narratives of disaster. As a political means, they relate not only to the disaster but simultaneously to the other participants' narratives, which they must disengage in order to legitimate their own versions. Official and oppositional narratives take part in this competition, each group being complex and divided. In this paper, I am going to investigate two oppositional narratives in their unintended but illuminating mutual relationship. Both evince the disaster of empire(s) – of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in *The Radetzky March*, and of the Ottoman Empire as well in *The Bridge over the Drina* – albeit from different perspectives: Roth from the perspective of its ruling constituency, and Andrić from the subjects' perspective. This spawns two interconnected but different disasters, one primarily of the private family and another prevalently of the public family. In the first the individual and in the second the collectives are deprived of belonging. For Roth, who focuses on the private family, the Empire entered its disintegration when its children renounced their fathers.

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For Andrić, who departs from the political family, that took place when its authorities abandoned their subjects. But neither of these novels, contrary to their dominant reception, simply blames one group for the other's disaster; they derive their catastrophe from the unpredicted interference of an agency beyond the reach of both groups' responsibilities.[1] An external contingent force distorts the paternal relationship and sets its constituencies apart. The breakup of European empires induced in many of their citizens, in the first place those that were steeped in multiple coexisting loyalties, the uncanny feeling of no-longer-being-at-home (which is what the Freudian *Unheimliche*, in fact, etymologically amounts to). In the new political environment after the supranational imperial structures had disintegrated along with the institutions that protected them, the collective attempts to rescue the supranational collective identity or the lost paternal care were exposed to numerous risks, which confronted these citizens with the

1 For the dominant reception of Roth's novel in such a restricted ideological frame, see Kożuchowski (2013, 112–121). The historian Kożuchowski himself subscribes to it. For the thesis of the elective affinity between Roth's and Grillparzer's monarchism, see Nürnberger (1981, 88–97); Bronsen (1988). For an overview of Roth's reception, see Kraske (1988). For a more recent reception, see for example Pazi (1993); Rosenfeld (2001). I endorse Claudio Magris's opinion that in his literature, perhaps unconsciously, Roth overcomes the narrowness of the political and ideological views that were expressed in his journalistic work. This particularly holds for *The Radetzky March* because his later works, written under the growing threat of Nazism, become more and more nostalgic. Even if "Roth the man" writes monarchist articles simultaneously with *The Radetzky March*, the writer Roth cannot be interpreted as a "prisoner of ideological boundaries" (Magris 1966, 259; unless indicated otherwise, all translations are my own). It would be wrong, however, to give too much credence to the opinions of "Roth the man" either. They underwent fundamental changes and were heavily dependent on historical, political, and pragmatic circumstances. As Magris (1966, 258) rightly puts it: "He was an eternal youth and never rose to the realm of ideas; they remained for him only occasions and instruments for animation, effects and costumes for his momentary state of mind." He engaged his various circumstantially induced opinions, or ideological roles for that matter, to animate his various figures – sometimes even one and the same figure, as we will come to see. The reception of Andrić's work, in its turn, was subjected to ideological restrictions in the frame of three South Slav national literary historiographies. The Serbian literary historian Jovan Deretić places it in a period that saw a return to traditional narrative forms (1981, 350–351). He interprets Andrić as a historian rather than a novelist, including him in Serbian literature's mainstream that is, allegedly, history-oriented. The Croatian literary historian Krešimir Nemec claims that Andrić synthesized the narrative methods of the classic realist novel (1998, 200), confirming, as he reads it, the principal characteristic of the Croatian novel: a tendency towards the assimilation and integration of heterogeneous traditional sources (83–84, 196). The Bosnian-Herzegovinian literary historian Dejan Đuričković claims that Andrić opposed modernist poetics in order to maintain a claim to totality, supposedly typical of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian novel (1990, 41).

necessity to find out new technologies of self-survival. I take these developments to be both novels' main concern.

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Roth's novel portrays its main characters as firmly encapsulated by solitude. This solitude is represented as a grave condition that governs their communication with other characters. The elderly Emperor who approaches his provincial "sons" absent-mindedly, indifferently, and negligently is the epitome of such figures of inaccessible loneliness. Of course, disinterestedness suits the supreme position in any political hierarchy and is therefore hardly astonishing. The Emperor, however, appears to be absent-minded not only in relation to the provincials but also to his own self. This agency appointed to rule the whole Empire – as omnipresent among its inhabitants as God is in the world (75; *86*) – is not exactly sovereign.[2] On the contrary, the Emperor, who is responsible for the well-being of millions of people, leaves the impression of an extremely distracted person. At the age at which he enters this novel, he has ceased to master even his own self.

Portrayed on innumerable public walls and reproduced on coins and stamps as coffered up in the "crystalline armor" of his "icy and everlasting, silver and dreadful old age,"[3] he casts a tough and freezing glance at his subjects (75; *85–86*). Remote and unapproachable, his face lacks personality and familiarity. Under such conditions, some subjects remove his portrait from their walls (109; *124*) and others consider him to have definitely been abandoned by God (176; *196*). Even to the Emperor himself, God starts to appear as mysterious as he himself regularly appeared to his soldiers (240; *267*). The Emperor felt as if he was drifting away from them, as though they were all shrinking and "the things they said reached his ear from a vast distance and then bounced away meaninglessly" (243; *273*). This increasing distance from his subjects renders him unable to listen to his visitors and interlocutors carefully. During an inspection of his troops in Ukraine, he thus promotes a barber from Olmütz from corporal to sergeant completely against his will and wishes. Although in doing so he has destroyed the barber's life, the narrator presents him as extremely pleased at having accomplished a great deed and made the barber happy (242; *269*).

2 In the following, the first parenthesized number refers to the page in Michael Hofmann's English translation of *The Radetzky March* (Roth, trans. Hoffmann 2002); the second, italicized and separated by a semicolon, to the German original (Roth 1981).

3 Hofmann translates "in seiner eisernen und ewigen, silbernen und schrecklichen Greisenhaftigkeit eingeschlossen" as "coffered up in an icy and everlasting old age," astonishingly dropping "silver and dreadful."

The Emperor's profile as such has a wide impact within the novel. His officers of provincial origin, while unreservedly committed to him, display an analogously radical solitude, resuming the Emperor's humiliating disregard towards the "provincials" in an even stronger form. In the way this novel represents its characters, it guides its reader to the conclusion that the desperate *dislocation* of some imposes an equally devastating *location* on others, and vice versa. Is the proliferation of solitudes an unavoidable corollary of the divided imperial coexistence? Their mutual instigation of solitude resurfaces in all relations between *The Radetzky March*'s main characters, as well as between its main and minor characters. The novel obsessively returns to the complex relationship between imposed mobility and immobility – the solitudes of Austrians and provincials, those of the dominating supranational individuals and of the dominated national collectivities. As these solitudes foster one another, *The Radetzky March* makes a distribution of sympathies between them obsolete, which seriously questions its much-trumpeted nostalgic character.[4]

Following three generations of a typical imperial family, the Trottas, Roth lets their solitudes deepen rather than ameliorate one another. Having been ennobled after saving the Emperor's life at the battle of Solferino in 1859, Baron Joseph von Trotta breaks off his personal relationship with his immobile Slovenian father, concealing him from his Bohemian wife out of provincial shame. After having renounced his family father in favour of a political one, he, in his own role as a father, in a typical gesture of repetition compulsion, quits personal relations with his own son, raising him toughly and coldly. This guides his son to repeat the same gesture towards him, attaching himself to the Emperor instead. Raised by the Baron in such an impersonal way, District Commissioner Franz Trotta, as the father, reproduces the same attitude towards his son Carl, who, for his own part, also chooses to admire his grandfather and the Emperor instead.

It appears that within the frame of the Habsburg Empire, the family could only ensure its external reputation if it consented to its internal discontinuation. The narrator reminds us, as if pointing out the price of the Big Father's love, that a "great chain of hills" separated the Captain from his son (170; *188*) just as they also did for the Baron and his father (8; *11*).[5] The Dual Monarchy's officers of provincial origin had to detach themselves from taking care of their family bonds, since attachment to one's original family was considered provincial behaviour. If

4 For a recent reading of the novel along more ambiguous lines, see Foteva (2014, 173–195). Foteva, however, does not address the problem of the dis/located solitude that figures centrally in my reading.

5 In the latter case, Hofmann translates "schwerer Berg [*lit.* severe mountain] militärischer Grade" as "a great weight of military distinction."

one wanted to overcome it, one was expected to abandon this "primitive" loyalty in favour of binding oneself to the Emperor. Families could only improve their social status in this way, and it required a mobility from their members across various imperial provinces, often located great distances from their families' homes. Once cut off from their geographical, social, cultural, and linguistic roots, the Emperor's supranational officers were compelled to live free-floating, dislocated lives. The development of their careers affiliated them to locations that lacked their emotional attachment and, in their turn, regarded these settlers as foreigners.

The novel carefully investigates how the protagonists' feelings of non-belonging and their distrustful reception by their new surroundings generate their unbearable solitude and concomitant attempts to come to grips with it. There seems to be no exception to this rule. After having fought for his Emperor and become a military invalid, Baron Trotta's father, born in the Slovenian town of Sipolje, became a gardener at the Emperor's Laxenburg castle in Lower Austria, which was, incidentally or not, a surrogate for his native one. Baron Trotta himself, disappointed with the Emperor's mendacious administration, withdrew from the military service in southern Hungary that confronted him with mistrust and gossip (5; *8*) into a silent Bohemian landscape. District Commissioner Trotta, for his part, was sent to Silesia and then Moravia, whereupon, faced with complete isolation, he undertook a trip to Ukraine to re-establish a personal relationship with his endangered son. Lieutenant Trotta was assigned to Moravia and then Ukraine, where, after quitting his embarrassing military service, he tried to integrate into the domestic peasant population.

At the beginning of their appointments to various provinces, however, neither of the Trottas cares to identify his exact new location. They want their provincial surroundings to remain indistinctive in order to project onto them the self-pleasing, therapeutic fantasies of their solitude without facing resistance from the domestic population. Only after this resistance arises and the provincials announce their dissatisfaction with their imposed identity, do the Trottas become frustrated with their dislocation. Yet even then, they prove unwilling to approach the provincials for whom they are responsible in distinctive terms, instead continuing to heal their dislocation through a stubborn detachment. In demonstrating such an obstinate blindness towards the perspective of the provincials they are expected to take care of, they unknowingly redouble the Emperor's utter disinterest in his subjects.

But it is not only the provincials that the Trottas are cut off from. Baron Trotta's unwilling reduplication of the Emperor's traumatic self-enclosure makes the attempted return to his family father fail. The very structure of the Dual Monarchy, circling around its "absent centre," prevented the return of its subjects to their mutual personal relationships. An attachment to the impersonal Common

Father, hammered into the consciousness of imperial subjects through the daily rituals of identity-formation, sentenced any attempt at personal belonging to failure. The novel obstinately reminds us that the Emperor's portrait supervised his subjects from all public walls, coins, and stamps, and that the performance of the *Radetzky March* was notorious on all public occasions. Contact with the omnipresent Emperor's portrait sometimes takes a detour via portraits of his representatives, such as that of Baron Trotta, which supervises his grandson from afar with equal persistence (70, 104; *79, 118*). The Impersonal and Indifferent Father thus spectrally multiplies in all of his subjects.

For example, inheriting his personal father's disrespect for the other's personality, District Commissioner Trotta also indirectly reaffirms the aloofness of the Supreme Father. The Commissioner's disrespect holds not only for his relation to his son but also for all of his other social relations. For instance, he does not deem Bandleader Nechwal's wife or children as worthy of exact memorization (31; *37*). As regards his other provincial subordinate, Sergeant Slama, he silently passes over the affair between his son and the Sergeant's wife and expects Slama to do the same, as if provincial wives are somehow "naturally" convenient for the sexual initiation of the Emperor's youth. Due to the early death of his mother and his predominantly motherless childhood, District Commissioner Trotta does not hold women in high esteem. The same ignorance is apparent in his relation to the imperial provinces' exact location. He refuses his son's wish to continue his military service at the Empire's "southern frontier" in Slovenia (because an Austrian officer has to remain cut off from his place of origin; 138; *151*), instead directing him to its "northern sister" Ukraine (138; *152*). At that time, incidentally, the Empire's southern frontier was Dalmatia, while Ukraine was more accurately its "eastern" rather than "northern sister."[6]

The third Trotta, Lieutenant Carl Joseph, is a double of his grandfather, whom he perceives as his true father since he experiences his actual father as a stranger (66, 185; *75, 206*). This is, after all, the father's fault, because Commissioner Trotta directed his son to continue Baron Trotta's military career in order to make his own castrated wish come true. By being the Baron's remote copy, the Lieutenant resumes the Baron's non-belonging to the milieu of his military appointment (77, 227; *87, 252*), which drives his relation to the Emperor into a similar ambiguity. On the one hand, he manifests unreserved loyalty, deeply admires his Emperor (26,

6 It is unclear who in the last instance allocates Slovenia to the south and Ukraine to the north of the Monarchy, Commissioner Trotta as a focalizer or the narrator. Both are equally ignorant of the exact location of imperial provinces, confusing them unconcernedly with each other. I will return to the narrator's redoubling of his protagonists' detachment from their surroundings in my conclusion.

210–211; *32, 234*), and rescues his portrait from humiliation in Madam Resi's brothel (82; *93*) and the Ukrainian garrison (328; *364–365*). On the other hand, the Emperor strikes him as a complete stranger (76, 185, 328; *86, 206, 364*) who deserves only indifference and pity (246; *275*). Divided like his grandfather, he yearns for a return to the native Sipolje of his forebears, a location that he imagines in equally blurred terms. As a true descendant of his grandfather, the Lieutenant does not really distinguish between the Czech and Slovenian peasants and languages (66; *74–75*), but adds a further touch to his forebear's ignorance. By imagining mosques and praying Moslems as constitutive parts of Sipolje (124; *140*), he confuses Slovenia with the newly occupied Bosnia and Herzegovina. As for the subordinates from the lower social strata, he treats his Ukrainian servant Onufri in an even less personal manner than how his father handled his butler Jacques. Both Onufri and Jacques are certainly destined to fulfil the literal and symbolic wishes of their masters. Yet the Lieutenant cannot memorize Onufri's strange Slavic name and cannot bear to direct his gaze at Onufri's provincial face, meaning that he does not really know what Onufri looks like until he finally learns his name (69; *78*). His teeth, after all, remind him of a horse (68; *77*) and his behaviour of a bear (71; *80*).

In this novel, however, the absent centre of the Dual Monarchy does not push only the Trottas and those who depend upon them into irrevocable solitude. Consider the case of the rich, independent Polish landowner Count Chojnicki, a figure from the group of the so-called frontier men located on the Empire's eastern margins, that is, in Ukraine, near to Russia. He is described as an extremely mobile person, a "migrant bird" familiar with many milieus, a strange fellow with innumerable acquaintances but not a single friend or enemy, a man of oscillating moods deprived of proper belonging; in a word, an "alchemist" who merges all manner of identities (146, 174; *162, 194*). As Roth himself was born on the Empire's eastern frontier, many commentators have pointed out his continuous sympathy with this kind of person.[7] In addition, Chojnicki's anti-democratic and monarchic worldview (148, 184; *164–165, 205*) apparently sides with the opinions expressed by Roth in his journalistic work. Yet neither Count Chojnicki's nor Roth's worldview (as articulated in this novel) is that simple. Chojnicki calls the Kaiser a "senile idiot," the government "a bunch of morons," and the parliament an "assembly of credulous and pathetic nitwits." The Empire is, he states, in such a terrible condition that it must perish (148; *164*). Being dis/located both at its centre and at its frontier (like Roth himself), he unmistakably senses its impending catastrophe. As a frontier man who rejects all values, almost to the point of nihilism, the Count would most probably commit suicide were he not an

7 Roth locates the concluding happenings in his novel at the small Ukrainian town of B. near the Russian border. This would fit with his birthplace of Brody.

extremely curious reader of announcements of catastrophe. Catapulted out of all comfortable identity locations, he has stayed in life out of sheer curiosity for what is going to happen (171; *190*), as one might likewise state for Roth in the exile from which he composes his novel.

Unlike Chojnicki's *geopolitical* frontier, Roth's narrator inhabits a *historical* frontier. He is divided between the yesterday-world of before World War I, *about* which he writes, and the present world after the war, *in* which he writes, and never tires of reminding the reader of this predicament. Such a position is analogous to that of Stefan Zweig (2014), who finished writing *The World of Yesterday* in 1942, ten years after Roth. Drawn into the traumatic solitude of emigration, Zweig also incessantly compares the past and the present worlds, but with an emphasis on the traumatic fate of the Jews, which also, of course, became his own personal destiny. Yet while Zweig testifies personally in his memoirs, Roth's novelistic narrator is impersonal, an old-fashioned mediator of past happenings. He behaves like a typical epic narrator who never addresses his protagonists, since they no longer belong to his world, but exclusively his readers.[8] Taking advantage of his historically later position, he enters into a kind of initiated partnership with readers, behind the back of the protagonists whom he permanently ironizes because of their shortsightedness and naivety. Alongside this surreptitious conspiracy with his readers, at several points Roth's narrator also directly compares the past time about which he writes (1859–1914) with that which he shares with contemporary readers (1932). Yet he does not belong to the latter world either, because he does not really see it as emancipated from the past one. Equipped with the bitter post-war experience – many liberation movements resulting in the reactionary nation-states – Roth's narrator realizes that anchoring identity in the present instead of the past merely re-establishes solitude.

8 For these characteristics of the premodern epic as opposed to the modern novelistic narrator, see Cavarero (2000, 39). Cavarero polemicizes against Arendt's epic understanding of the narrative by opting for the novelistic understanding. By introducing the epic narrator into his novel, Roth bereaves his figures of the possibility of shaping their own life trajectory – characteristic of the novel as genre – by making them sheer toys of predetermined fate. Hofmannsthal applies an analogously anachronous technique by introducing the typically baroque figure of the fortune-teller into his lyric comedy *Arabella* (finished in the same year as *The Radetzky March*). Such fatalism finds its explanation in the atmosphere of the 1930s, after World War I had destroyed the nineteenth century's optimistic conviction that humans are the carriers of their history. This idea, of course, first became problematic in the imperial provinces, in which Roth places the action of his novel and where he was born. Taking recourse to an "antiquated" epic technique – in the same way as Hofmannsthal in his lyric comedy or Brecht in his contemporaneous epic theatre reach for an "anachronous" baroque technique – Roth simultaneously prevents his readers from identifying with the novelistic characters.

From his perspective, being located at a historical frontier means being dislocated from both the epoch before and the epoch after World War I. Like Brecht's interpreter of stage happenings, Roth's narrator belongs neither to the darkness beyond the stage nor under the lights of the stage itself. As for the latter world of today, the narrator of *The Radetzky March* keeps his distance from the petty nation-states into which the outcome of World War I has pushed him. As for the former world of yesterday, the supranational Empire from before the war is definitely over, which gives him the opportunity to reconstruct the trajectory of its catastrophe, as he trusts, *sine ira et studio*. As seen in this supposedly impartial perspective, the trigger for the Empire's breakdown was the dislocation of its centre that, withdrawn into solitude, unavoidably generated further dislocations instead of the desired cohesion. Unexpectedly though, one of the effects of this fateful concatenation of dislocations turns out to be the narrator's own dislocation from the world of his protagonists. If they are forever gone, then his dislocation is enforced, which means that the narrator is affected by the same developments as they are. He is an involved transmitter rather than the distant master of this concatenation. As if suppressing this undesired involvement and taking advantage of his distance, Roth's narrator instead locates his protagonists in their predetermined fate, which supposedly they cannot comprehend. At one point in the novel, for instance, he states that Lieutenant Trotta was unable to express the reason for his depression but that "we" (i.e. he and his reader) can say it on his behalf (122; *138*).

However, precisely by using his temporal dislocation to locate his protagonists in their own time, to rivet them to their fate, he unwittingly redoubles their pattern of keeping the others at a distance. All Trottas mercilessly apply this to their fellow beings and especially to their provincial subordinates, multiplying in such a way their own solitude. In doing so, they blindly follow their Emperor in his unbeatable detachment. Yet if this universal pattern ultimately catches up even with Roth's narrator, then he is its carrier rather than a critical observer, an exemplary representative of the literary world that he is at pains to antiquate from his quasi-outside-life position. This is how the second and hidden narrator's frontier position, next to the highlighted historical one, comes to the fore: between the protagonists' literary space and the author's life space. Despite his consistent striving to exempt himself from his protagonists' destiny to reach his supposedly sovereign author's freedom, the narrator's dislocation turns out to be no less located and his solitude no less enforced than that of the protagonists.

As Roth's narrator compulsively repeats the politics of an empire that he claims to have placed in a museum, the question that must be raised is as follows: who locates whose solitude, the narrator that of the protagonists, as we have hitherto had the impression, or the other way around, as we are now about to realize? The spaces of literature and life thus penetrate into one another, inducing

the mutual dislocation of their identities. In *The Radetzky March*, therefore, against the intention of its author, not merely the disaggregation of the Habsburg Empire takes place but also the disaggregation of literature's empire. Inasmuch as this empire is established by a frontier man as a typical go-between, it loses its traditional sovereignty and self-sufficiency. Although in reintroducing the epic narrative into his novel, Roth did his best to procure a protected location for literature's solitude, this solitude breaks free from its envisaged shelter into an unforeseeable dissemination.

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The composition of Andrić's most famous novel, *The Bridge over the Drina*, displays a striking imbalance. Only eight out of its twenty-four chapters deal with three-and-a-half centuries of Ottoman rule over Bosnia and Herzegovina, while the remaining sixteen chapters are dedicated to just thirty-five years of Austrian administration. As this blatant asymmetry indicates, Andrić's main concern is to unravel the transition from one civilizational pattern to the other, rather than simply present historical happenings around the bridge. The Yugoslav "brotherhood and unity" ideology imposed upon this writer the reputation of being a bridge-builder between the South Slav peoples and cultures that, as if by default, accompanies him until the present day, but his real stake in this novel is exactly the opposite. *The Bridge over the Drina* shows how Austrian civilization gradually ruined Ottoman heritage until, ultimately, it even destroyed the bridge as its most valuable symbol. Following this thread, Ana Foteva summarized the novel as follows: "The story of the bridge on the Drina is one of a failed attempt to heal a personal [Mehmed Pasha's] trauma and to bridge over differences [between the West and the East]" (2014, 130). In other words, the Austrians introduced a new type of imperial administration that replaced the Ottoman model, and the novel recognizes no continuity between them. In his *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1977) explained this transition as a shift from sovereign to disciplinary power.

Although Andrić describes both imperial administrations very meticulously, including their consequences for the population's everyday lives, this seems to have eluded the attention of his critics, with the exception of an important hint in Zoran Milutinović's recent reading (2011, 205–260).[9] This is astonishing because Andrić primarily represents the sovereign Ottoman power through its brutal public spectacles, which perfectly matches Foucault's definition. We find several such manifestations in the novel, but two are foregrounded: the so-called blood tax (the violent abduction

9 Milutinović analyses both *The Bridge over the Drina* and *Bosnian Chronicle*. In describing this transition, however, he uses the categories of the German sociologist Max Weber rather than Foucault's ones, which are, in my opinion, more pertinent.

of small boys in the imperial provinces from their parents in order to raise them as elite Ottoman troops), and the impaling of a rebel against the Empire. The novel's critics have usually attributed this cruelty to despotic Eastern rule, as opposed to the humanity of Western administrations, but this is a further stereotype, apparently nourished by a hatred towards the "Turks" found in the South Slav (especially Serbian) cultural tradition. According to Foucault, public executions accompanied by the torture and mutilation of the rebel's body characterized all empires, including Western ones. Confession was not only extorted from the perpetrator's body through violent means in the Ottoman Empire, as is the case in the novel, but also in Western societies, where the body was exposed to public torture as the sovereign's response to threats against his own body (i.e. the empire). Foucault cautions that the scenario envisaged by this public spectacle of sovereign power can fail if its participants disobey (i.e. deny recognition), and it is exactly this that happens in the novel, turning the demonstration of power into a source of unrest and rebellion. This, in turn, effectuates the containment of the despot's autocracy, which in the novel paves the way for the transition to a new, disciplinary type of penal law.

In his novel, Andrić does not represent the two types of imperial rule over Bosnia and Herzegovina in such a way as to expose the first type to sharp condemnation and the second to approval. His sophisticated narrative technique resists such cheap moral oppositions prevalent in the affective consumption of so-called lovers of literature.[10] The cruel type of Ottoman power undergoes "humanization" in the novel, whereas the disciplinary type of Austrian power is not nearly as human as it presents itself as being. Like the Ottoman type, it is portrayed via its most characteristic manifestations: public announcements, a census, the establishment of the administration and the police, recruitment, the introduction of a water supply, railways, banks, stock exchanges, newspapers, barracks, casinos, and brothels. This systematic "civilizing" of Bosnia and Herzegovina, based on the invisible network of laws, regulations, and provisions that penetrate into established customs and habits, confronts the population's resistance. Although the Ottoman cruelty and robbery is over, the "capillary" surveillance reduces and constrains individual liberties, classifies, reshapes, and disciplines subjects, multiplying their duties and ob-

10 See the following ironic commentary from Andrić's *Signs by the Roadside* that can be taken as the credo of the narrator's behaviour: "Moral outrage because of other peoples' flaws, which completely screens similar shortcomings in us, enables us to take the strict and sublime attitude of a judge and victim at the same time, inducing a state of moral euphoria in us" (1978, 102). As we will come to see, instead of being such a biased judge embittered by his or her former victimhood, Andrić's narrator wants to be a sublime divine agency characterized by absolute understanding.

ligations to the brink of absurdity. Leisure is replaced by a feverish activity that becomes an end unto itself, spawning devastating consequences.

Focusing on the shift from sovereign to disciplinary imperial rule, *The Bridge over the Drina* displays the same scepticism towards historical progress as its modernist novelistic predecessors, for example Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. The novel was written during World War II as the terrible outcome of the "disciplined" post-imperial age in which state sovereignties run amok, which is why its settling of accounts with that age takes its cue from genre predecessors that are located in colonial settings. The civilization of the wilderness of imperial provinces faces embarrassment and failure in both cases, because the greed for knowledge is just a disguised form of greed for power. Both emerge out of the insatiable drive to subject the other to one's objectives. In the wake of such resilience on the part of the modernist novel to the disciplinary society that creates greedy subjects, Andrić bereaves his work of two key attributes of the realist novel as an exemplary instrument of such a society. These are the hero and the plot. The novel is deliberately left without a goal-oriented hero who turns his life into a steady progression towards sovereignty. The figure of the Galician Jew Lotika, admittedly, leaves the impression of such a life design, but she is forced to take command over her destiny by an unhappy coincidence of circumstances; moreover, she is a female in a world which only envisages sovereignty for males. This "perverted" state of affairs indicates that she has not chosen her life trajectory herself. And the point that this novel makes is that nobody does. In the reception of Andrić's work, such fatalism has usually been attributed to his "oriental" mentality, but if we consider that works by prominent Austrian writers such as Hofmannsthal and Roth also display it, the thesis of Andrić's Orientalism amounts to a stereotype similar to the attribution of brutality exclusively to the Ottomans.[11] Hofmannsthal, for instance, repeatedly insists that human life obeys ineffable destiny (Schäfer 1967, 72–73). Structuring the comedy genre almost in the medieval, Dantean sense of the word, he suggests that an invisible divine power masks itself in the figures in order to reveal through them its unalterable conditions (Schäfer 1967, 221, 241). Roth, for his part, develops his "semantics of contingency" by allowing his figures' life projects to be distorted by chance, allocating them a completely different course from that which they had envisaged (Düllo 1994). Even Miloš Crnjanski, the Habsburg Serbian writer, firmly enmeshed in the *Weltschmerz* atmosphere and without any "oriental" life experience, highlights the

11 The "engineer" of this influential thesis was the Serbian writer and critic Isidora Sekulić (1923).

rule of the "comedian Chance" in the shaping of his figures' life trajectories (1959, 74).[12]

In accordance with this post-imperial "melancholy" regarding human destiny, Andrić exposes his characters to the whimsical mechanisms of an anonymous rule over their lives. Not masters any more, they are toys of their destinies whose life paths are charted in the faraway imperial centres. The subdued peripheral atmosphere in *The Bridge over the Drina* is reminiscent of that in another famous "river-based" novel, Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*, although this takes place in a "liberated" African country (probably Zaire under Mobutu), whereas Andrić's work is set in an occupied South-East European one. This is because the non-European post-colonial and the European post-imperial regions overlap not only in terms of the disjunctive temporalities of modernity (Bhabha 1994, 236–237; Appadurai 1998), in the sense that modernity turns out to be the master's meal and the slave's poison, but also coincide in terms of "liberations." In both post-colonial and post-imperial settings, instead of compensating for the subordination to the former masters, the "liberators" prove to be just as merciless towards the population. Andrić's novel, first, depicts the Austrians as a kind of liberator from the Ottomans and, second, comes into existence in 1942, after the South Slav liberator from the Austrians (i.e. the Yugoslav monarchy) experienced its own bitter capitulation.

Andrić is a writer of the uprooted human condition following the Great War, in which nobody really knows where she or he belongs, since that now depends on an elusive, constantly shifting global perspective.[13] The subjects of the former post-imperial provinces, placed as they are at the crossroads of various political and economic interests, turn especially into victims of the consecutive shifts in identity patterns. The permanent state of exception genuine to these transit zones tears them out of their old affiliations and pushes them into new ones. Such a disoriented condition of enduring turbulence activates the biding and reluctant "technologies of the self" (Agamben 1999) placed in the service not so much of authentic life as the ideal of the European political agencies, but rather of hibernation genuine to their

12 For a reading of Crnjanski's entire *oeuvre* in the melancholic key of human life as a pure toy in chance's hands, see Milošević (1966).

13 This unmooring of determinate belonging is a general feeling among post-imperial intellectuals. See for example Hofmannsthal's statement that "the nature [*Wesen*] of our age is ambiguity [*Vieldeutigkeit*] and indeterminacy. It rests only on the slippery [*dem Gleitenden*] [...] A slight chronic dizziness vibrates in it" (1979a, 60). See also Walter Benjamin's famous description of the completely erased pre-war experience of the Great War generation that suddenly found itself standing "in the open air in a landscape in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and in the centre, in a force field of destructive currents and explosions, the tiny frail human body" (1977, 291).

suppliers.[14] They deactivate the executive power of material reality in favour of the postponed utopian world. No past and present option is forever excluded; rather, it is saved for this imagined future. This philosophy of social survival that always keeps an eye on the past, forgotten, and discarded options of progress finds its breeding ground in the long experience of "in-betweenness" accumulated in the imperial transit zones over the course of centuries.[15] Under Ottoman and Habsburg rule, the Bosnian Muslims were attached to Istanbul, the Orthodox to Montenegro and Serbia, and the Catholics to Hungary, Venice, Austria, and Zagreb, thus developing what Du Bois dubbed "double consciousness" in the colonial context (Foteva 2014, 93).[16]

From the second half of the eighteenth century, the Habsburg Monarchy, while granting imperial citizenship (*Staatsbürgerschaft*) to all its inhabitants, required that each citizen have a *Heimat* (i.e. a "homeland") in which his birth was registered in the parish records. Through such a measure, imperial belonging was systematically divided (Judson 2016, 77). It manifested itself as the challenging of *affiliation* (or loyalty) to the *state* through *affinity* (or emotional attachment) to a *homeland*, either internal or external.[17] The citizens of the subordinate imperial constituencies were accordingly torn apart between belonging and longing. In his activist youth during the Habsburg rule of Bosnia, Andrić prematurely seized the opportunity to translate his affinity to South Slav *linguistic and cultural* identity, an attachment that found expression when he joined the revolutionary Young Bosnia movement, into an affiliation with the South Slav *political* entity that loomed large on the horizon. Yet, somehow, the disaggregating Empire still managed to punish his youthful adventure with three years' harsh imprisonment. After this attempt to turn a subversive affinity into an official affiliation sorely

14 Menasse, for example, describes Austrian life experience as a prolonged "state of termination" – the old cannot die and the new cannot be born – which induces typical indecisiveness and hesitation in the relationship between the past and present (1993, 6–23).

15 This category was introduced by Homi K. Bhabha in "Culture's In-Between" (1996) with regard to a (post-)colonial setting, but fits the (post-)imperial one very well too.

16 For further instructive elaboration of this category, see Gilroy's remark: "Double consciousness emerges from the unhappy symbiosis between three modes of thinking, being, and seeing. The first is racially particularistic, the second nationalistic in that it derives from the nation state in which the ex-slaves but not-yet-citizens find themselves, rather than from their aspiration toward a nation state of their own. The third is diasporic or hemispheric, sometimes global and occasionally universalist" (1993, 127).

17 For the latter, very useful category, see the convincing and elaborate argumentation in Brubaker (1996, 1–10). In the earlier imperial context, on the contrary, lower social strata were emotionally attached to the central power that protected them from the tyranny and pressure of local authorities (Judson 2016, 38). Although taking another form, the in-betweenness persisted.

failed, he reactivated the reluctant imperial technique of keeping them apart in order to prevent that pain's return.

This is how Andrić creates his meandering narrative strategy. Let us formulate it as "I am affiliated to the present state of discrimination but affined to the past multinational, multiconfessional, and multicultural empire." Exempting himself from any belonging, his novelistic narrator repeatedly lets his affinity with one character or community deactivate his affiliation to another character or community. Through the consecutive testing and disengagement of various identity designs, a never-ending identity search emerges. The narrator repeatedly lets his affinity with the comprehensive past disengage his affiliation to the compartmentalized present. Already in the first, "synoptic," chapter, which summarizes past developments around the bridge from the present vantage point, his view of the bridge is mediated either by collective myths and legends or a naive infantile perspective. Myths and legends, such as the one about the rebel Radisav from the third chapter or the one about the flood from the fifth chapter, represent the perspective of local communities, which subverts the official imperial narratives imposed from above (Foteva 2014, 124). Nevertheless, the commonality that these myths create is neither all-embracing nor enduring, first because it is directed against the foreign conqueror, and second because it is regularly induced by an exceptional state that ends with the return to the regular state of mistrust and tension between communities. The narrator therefore identifies neither with local myths nor the imperial narrative, but questions one through the other. This scepticism towards any narrative construction of essentially contingent human affairs explains why *The Bridge* is not a historical novel but a chronicle in which great history is parenthesized. Put in Hegelian terms, Andrić's narrator defends arbitrary everyday "historicity" from the "iron necessity" of "world history."[18] His choice of the chronicle leaves the impression of an almost strategic return to the premodern human as a bystander to predesigned earthly occurrences. It presents itself as a retirement into a disinterested contemplation from the time of empires after his interested investment in the state-political solutions was brutally rebuked.

The question that must be posed, however, is whether this contemplation can be disinterested in the post-imperial age if it was already calculating in the imperial one. In the imperial age, it characterized the subordinate constituencies' "double consciousness" that calculated the possibility of redeeming their divided-

18 Ranajit Guha sees literature's mission precisely in this alternative representation of the past, particularly when it comes to the literatures of the "non-historical" peoples which were despised and rejected by the Western colonizers upon their arrival (2002, 75–94). In such a way, these peoples disappropriate their expropriating appropriation not only by the foreigners but also domestic elites that profit from embracing the imported pattern of world history (49).

ness in a unified future. In his effort to save the memory of the victims of such a consciousness, Andrić resumes the same strategy in the post-imperial age. Even now, unity is impossible because it still implies harm and reintroduces divisions. What is needed is a unity that causes no harm to its constituencies. In order to accomplish this, the former unity's most terrible victims must not fall into oblivion. According to Hofmannsthal, such victims have to be rewarded for "redeeming the suffering of the thousands by finding the expression for it" (1979a, 70–71), and Andrić indeed lets his narrator act to take care of them.

Involuntarily, the victims that he selects to take care of – after they had undergone sanctification in the collective national memory – bereave his strategy of its proclaimed disinterestedness. As their self-instituted representative, Andrić's narrator attempts to redeem them by artistically refining and sublimating both their own and their consecrators' elementary (i.e. "gesturing" and mythic) expression. The third and fourth chapters delineate the Serbian rebel Radisav, the sixth the echoes of Serbian uprisings, and the twenty-first the Austrian revenge against the Serbian rebels following the Sarajevo assassination. This does not exhaust the list of Serbian martyrs.[19] At one point, when the narrator speaks about the rebels' fires in Serbia, which could even be seen from the other side of the Drina, he states that "both Turks and Serbs saw the fires clearly and looked at them attentively" (Andrić, trans. Edwards 2007, 83). Subsequently, however, not only does he not hide which of these camps is his, but points out the sacrificial continuity of this camp's rebellious historical existence: "The Serbian women crossed themselves in the darkness and wept from inexplicable emotion, but in their tears they saw reflected those fires of insurrection even as those ghostly flames which had once fallen upon Radisav's grave and which their ancestors almost three centuries before had also seen through their tears from that same Mejdan" (Andrić, trans. Edwards 2007, 83).[20]

19 As Nataša Kovačević remarks, next to the children immured in the bridge, "other executed [Serbian] outsiders include an elderly, 'feeble-minded,' 'vagabond religious pilgrim' Jelisije, a 'holy fool' type of character, as well as a poor Serbian youth Mile, who 'lived quite alone in a water-mill' and who is punished for singing a Serbian revolt song to himself in a forest, because 'he had heard others singing' it" (2017, 181; the quotations are from the Edwards translation). All of them are "random, socially undistinguished martyrs" (182) who happened to be "in the wrong place at the wrong time" (181). Kovačević claims that Andrić's narrator demystifies the mythical appropriation of these outsiders for the Serbian national cause, which is true. However she disregards the fact that he, through an artistic sublimation of their victimhood, ultimately remystifies them for the Serbian supranational (or "paternally cosmopolitan") cause, which is my claim.

20 "The Serbian women" (here and in the quotation below) are in the original "naše žene" [our women], which clearly identifies the "impartial" narrator as a member of the Serbian commu-

Such frequent evocation of sacrificial predecessors indicates that the narrator's *imperial literary perspective* is at pains to redeem the executed victims of the *imperial political strategy*. As the limitless mobility of his mind, which presents itself as the crown of this long tradition, unmasks the tormenting character of the mobility of imperial rulers, his therapy finds its breeding ground in a new feeling of superiority over them. This long-term process of transformation that culminates in the generous benevolence of Andrić's narrator evokes that which Nietzsche describes in *On the Genealogy of Morals* as the contagious seed of "a hatred the like of which has never been on earth," miraculously resulting in "the deepest and most sublime of all kinds of love" (1996, 20).[21] As a representative of a similarly frustrated nation, Hofmannsthal argued that the turbulences of the post-imperial age turned Austrians into the single mobile, progressive, European part of the German spirit that was now responsible for pushing humankind forward (1979b, 457) in the manner that had previously characterized the Germans (1980, 214). In order to compensate for the bitter feeling of dispossession generated by the reiterated execution of imperial authority over them, the victims take up this authority's protecting mission – the Austrians that of the Germans, and the Serbs that of the Austrians. I propose that these peculiar nesting Occidentalisms be read as a process of consecutive reappropriation parallel to the one which Milica Bakić-Hayden (1995) dubbed "nesting Orientalisms," implying the concatenated transfer of stigma to the "Orientals." In contrast to nesting Orientalisms' derogation of others, the stubborn reappropriation of the Western mission aims at its

nity. This paragraph refers to the novel's beginning, where the narrator, in the same "holy" connection with Radisav's martyrdom, addresses the faith of "*our* women" (my emphasis) for the first time: "The Serbian women believe that there is one night of the year when a strong white light can be seen falling on that tumulus direct from heaven" (Andrić, trans. Edwards 2007, 18).

21 In §§354–355 of *The Joyful Wisdom*, Nietzsche (2010) presents his own philosophical technique as a culmination of a long development that began with the "denigrated and humiliated" mob; continued with the actor who has learned to command his instincts with other instincts; then with the "artist" like the buffoon, the fool, and the clown; thereupon, with the proper artist; until the process was finally crowned with the "genius." The delineated process that leads the subject full of *ressentiment* from other-directed negation to self-negation matches the one that Andrić's subject has undergone. In Andrić's case, this self-negation spawned an interminable series of self-disengagements for his narrator. He thereby spontaneously followed Kant, who expected the "genius" to continuously disengage the automatic application of his or her reason's habits (Kant 2007, 134–137). Inasmuch as Wittgenstein adhered to Kant's "ethical transcendentalism" (Janik and Toulmin 1987, 227–319), Andrić also spontaneously followed the commitment of Wittgenstein's philosophy to the systematic deconstruction of all metaphysical statements (Wittgenstein 2016, 6.53). Andrić's resolute siding with self-negation against other-directed negation, which was induced by his personal trauma, clearly differs from his South Slav contemporaries' (i.e. Crnjanski's and Krleža's) continuous alternation between these two kinds of negation.

carriers' remedial self-aggrandizement. Yet inasmuch as nesting Occidentalisms ultimately unmask the Western mission as a discrimination-based myth through their reiterated failures, their carriers inadvertently derogate rather than aggrandize themselves.

As such a spontaneous appropriator of the Western "fatherly" mission, Andrić's narrative technique ultimately acquires the compromised profile of a manipulative mythopoeia. Like his dethroned imperial predecessor, his post-imperial myth of the postponed reunion of divided humankind imposes new divisions in his effort to eliminate old ones. For this subject, the world only makes sense if it fully succumbs to his vision of universal human reconciliation instead of drawing him into the conflict of divergent affiliations. However, as Balibar stated concerning the possibility of an uninterested contemplation of the modern world's fundamental disagreement, "there is no neutral position or discourse here, no way of being 'above the fray'" (2002, 57). Inasmuch as Andrić's narrator endeavours to gain the status of the Subject That Knows in this kind of world that cannot tolerate "sages" any more, his passionate attachment to the horizon of reconciliation presents itself less as a well-reflected strategy and more as a convulsive defensive reaction.

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