

**WRITERS OF TALES: A STUDY ON NATIONAL LITERARY EPIC
POETRY WITH A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE ALBANIAN
AND SOUTH SLAVIC CASES**

FRANCESCO LA ROCCA

A DISSERTATION

IN

HISTORY

**Presented to the Faculties of the Central European University in Partial Fulfilment of
the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

Budapest, Hungary

2016

Supervisor of Dissertation

György Endre Szónyi

COPYRIGHT NOTICE AND STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY

Copyright in the text of this dissertation rests with the Author. Copies by any process, either in full or part, may be made only in accordance with the instructions given by the Author and lodged in the Central European University Library. Details may be obtained from the librarian. This page must form a part of any such copies made. Further copies made in accordance with such instructions may not be made without the written permission of the Author.

I hereby declare that this dissertation contains no materials accepted for any other degrees in any other institutions and no materials previously written and/or published by another person unless otherwise noted.

ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I intend to investigate the history and theory of national literary epic poetry in Europe, paying particular attention to its development among Albanians, Croats, Montenegrins, and Serbs.

The first chapters will be devoted to the elaboration of a proper theoretical background and historical framing to the concept of national epic poetry and its role in the cultivation of national thought in Europe. The second part will flesh out national epos among Albanians and South Slavs by the means of a comparative analysis of some epics belonging to these literary cultures. In order to carry a comparison methodologically as solid as possible, I will investigate how the authors of epos have dealt with three key elements which I regard as crucial in the context of cultural nationalism: The study of these three elements, i.e. kinship, religion, and patriotism, constitute what I would like to call the “Tripod model”.

Whereas the importance of folk traditions in European cultural nationalism has been the focus of many valuable studies, the elaboration and communication of national/nationalistic ideas by the means of literary epics has met with relatively little attention from the scholarly world, despite the relevance some of these epics had (and still have) in many East European countries. By investigating the theory and history of national epic poetry, this project aims at filling this gap by providing an original contribution to the study of cultural nationalism in Europe.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would have not been possible but for the help of those who have been stood by my side over these years.

First and foremost I wholeheartedly thank my supervisor György Szőnyi who took the trouble of supporting and guiding me during the research process. *Non in lingua, sed in corde sapientia.*

Particular credit for providing me with some invaluable insights on cultural nationalism goes to Guy Beiner and Daniel Baric, who have helped me understanding the complexity of nineteenth-century national thought in Europe.

I shall also thank Nathalie Clayer, for her insightful suggestions pushed me to rethink some assumptions I had on the Albanian nation-building process.

Further references and suggestions have been kindly provided by Rusana Beyleri, Erika Kallin, Kendra Willson and Magda Zakowska.

These years spent at Central European University as a PhD student have been crucial in my growth as a scholar and as a person, therefore my deep gratitude goes to all the CEU professors and fellow students whose presence has helped me during my life as a PhD candidate. I should also like to extend my thanks to CEU for the generous economic support I have received for my research and other activities as well.

It gives me pleasure to extend my thanks to the American Research Center in Sofia for accepting me as a pre-doctoral fellow in Autumn 2014. The fellowship allowed me to access the rich sources on Balkan history and literary cultures kept in the Bulgarian libraries.

I am grateful to the directors and staff members of the libraries which I have worked in, and particularly the Philology Library and the Bibliotheca Nordica of the Kliment Ohridski University, the library of the American Research Center in Sofia, the library of the Albanian Studies Institute of La Sapienza University of Rome (my first “home” as an Albanologist, having studied there with Brunilda Dashi and Elio Miracco), and of course the Central European University Library. I am particularly indebted to the librarian of the Institute of Balkan Studies (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) Emilia Petrova, to Tijana Galić of the Serbian Cultural and Documentation Centre in Hungary, to Mónika Segesdi of the Estonian Institute in Hungary, and to Jelena Jovin and Péter Heinermann of the Matica Srpska (Novi Sad/Újvidék, Serbia) for their friendly and enthusiastic support.

It gives me the greatest personal pleasure to express my gratitude to my *kum* Oskar Mulej, who kindly agreed to proofread my Serbo-Croatian texts and translations. Of course, I bear the whole responsibility for any eventual mistake.

I also want to thank all those friends and acquaintances who, albeit being totally alien to my research field or to the academic world, have provided me with so many unforgettable moments which admittedly made my PhD years an experience worthy to be lived.

As always, I am immensely grateful to my family for the moral and financial support they have always provided me with. They gave me the strength to do what I have done so far.

Last but not least, pursuing my PhD at CEU has allowed me to meet a student from the History MA programme, Borbála Klacsmann. Soon acquaintance became friendship and eventually friendship became love. Now we are married. During the time I was writing this thesis, she has been an inspiration, a competent advisor, and a

never-ending source of happiness to me – something admittedly more valuable and important than any degree, scholarship or acknowledgment I will ever receive in my entire life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii
List of Illustrations.....	x
INTRODUCTION: FORGING A NATION IN POETRY	1
Studies on Cultural Nationalism in the Balkans: An Overview.....	3
On South Slavic Cultural Nationalism.....	4
On Albanian Cultural Nationalism.....	7
Histoire croisée	9
Comparative Studies	10
Some Preliminary Remarks	15
Tricky Terms: Croatian, Serbian or Serbo-Croatian?	15
More Tricky Terms: Montenegrin, Serb or Serbo-Montenegrin?.....	19
One Last Tricky Term: South Slavic	19
What about Bosnian Muslims?	20
Notes on the Translations and Spelling.....	21
Chapter 1: from Nationalism to Cultural Nationalism: In Search of a New Approach	23
Nationalism Studies and Their Evolution	23
The First Generation (1940s-1950s)	24
The Second Generation (1960s-1990s).....	25
The Third Generation (1980s-2010s).....	28
The Fourth Generation (2000s-2010s).....	31
Pros, Cons and an Attempt at Positioning.....	33
What is a Nation? An Evasive Answer.....	35
CHAPTER 2: TAXONOMY OF national literary epic poetry	37
Bringing Epic Home	38
National Epos as a Mirror	40
Special Features	42
Author's Intention.....	42
Timeframe.....	44
National Language	45
Reception	48

Chapter 3: The four Historical Foundations of National Epic	49
The Ancient Roots: Roman Epic	49
Reintroducing the Political Dimension into Medieval Literary Epos	52
Camões and Tasso.....	55
The First National Epic	55
History and Allegory.....	57
Ossian, Herder, and the Dawn of Folk Epic.....	64
A New Homer?	64
From Poetry to Philosophy	70
Folk(ish) Literary Epics: The Fenno-Baltic Way.....	73
National Epic as Poetic History	75
Chapter 4: Bringing National Epic to the Balkans.....	78
Renaissance and Baroque Epos in Dalmatia.....	78
Gundulić, the Slavic Tasso.....	80
The Influence of Slavic Folk Culture and Language	81
The Arbëresh Experience.....	84
Laying the Foundations of Albanian National Epos: Girolamo De Rada.....	85
Bala, the Albanian Ossian	87
The Bektashi Antecedent	88
chapter 5: Looking for a Comparative Methodology.....	92
Why Compare?	92
The Tripod Model	94
Kinship.....	95
Religion.....	96
Patriotism	97
Some Honourable Mentions.....	97
chapter 6: comparing Albanian and South Slavic National Epic Poetry.....	100
Dimitrija Demeter	100
Kinship.....	102
Religion.....	103
Patriotism	104
Vladimir Nazor	105
Kinship.....	108
Religion.....	109
Patriotism	110

Petar Petrović II Njegoš	111
Kinship	114
Religion	114
Patriotism	116
Medo Pucić	117
Kinship	119
Religion	121
Patriotism	122
Naim Frashëri	123
Kinship	127
Religion	129
Patriotism	131
Gjergj Fishta	132
Kinship	137
Religion	140
Patriotism	144
Bridging Albanian and South Slavic National Epics	145
Different Approaches to Epic Nation Building: A Non-National Nationalism	146
The “Minority/Majority Factor”	146
National Epic as an Opportunity for Integration	148
Conclusion	151
A Long Story	151
East vs. West...Again?	159
National Epics = Political Epics?	161
A Final Synthesis	166
Ideas for Future Research	169
Appendix I: Why the Smrt Smail-age Čengića is not a National Epic poem	171
Appendix ii: A Note on the Role of Folklorisation of the albanian national epics	174
BIBLIOGRAPHY	176
Literary Epic Poems	176
Other Primary Sources	178
Secondary Literature	181

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Montenegrin Prime Minister Milo Đukanović teaches Njegoš the new Montenegrin language. Art by Dušan “Duca” Gadjanski.....18
2. Portrait of Dimitrija Demeter on the 1891 edition of the Teuta and the Grobničko Polje.....102
3. The 1976 Yugoslav stamp marking the centennial of the birth of Vladimir Nazor.....107
4. The presence of Njegoš in Serbian public space: Ulica Njegoševa [Njegoš Street] in the centre of Novi Sad (Hun.: Újvidék), 2016. Photo by the author.....113
5. A Catholic writer in the Serbian national literary pantheon: Portrait of Medo Pucić in the anthological volume *Znameniti Srbi XIX. Veka* [Renowned Serbs of the XIX Century], Vol.I (Zagreb: 1901) by Andrea Gavrilović.....119
6. Portrait of Naim Frashëri on the two hundred Albanian Lek bill.....128
7. Statue of Fishta in the centre of Lezha: A sign of his rehabilitation in post-communist Albania, 2010. Photo by the author.....137
8. The 1935 stamp series celebrating the centenary of the publication of the *Kalevala*.....155
9. The Kalevipoeg statue in Tartu. Photo by the author.....157
10. Lāčplēsis as symbol of Latvian freedom. In the banner, the Bearslayer is represented as fighting against Soviet occupation. Photo taken at the rally “For a legal state in Latvia” which took place in Riga on 7th October 1988.....158

“It was during this period that the greatest of all Molvanian poets, Ezrog, composed the epic tragi-comedy *Jzlakkensklowcza*, 20,000 verses based on the bawdy exploits of all the characters depicted in Tarot cards.”

Cilauro, Glasner & Sitch, *Molvania: A Land Untouched by Modern Dentistry*

INTRODUCTION: FORGING A NATION IN POETRY

For historians and scholars of nationalism it is quite common knowledge that, fully accepting Herder’s idea that a people’s soul is expressed in its language and folk poetry, many nineteenth-century intellectuals stemming from emerging or small European nations¹ strove to cultivate their peoples’ folk cultures and histories, thus creating a Europe-wide network (from the Balkans as well as from Central and East European countries, Scandinavia and the British Isles) where ideas and inspirations freely travelled from one corner of the continent to the other. In the framework of this process, folk poetry acquired particular importance thanks to the impact the publication of Macpherson’s *Poems of Ossian* had on eighteenth and nineteenth-century European culture – impact solidified by the reflection on the relation between folklore, language and national soul undertaken by Herder.

The use of folklore and folk epics as a nation-building tool has long received proper attention from researchers. Conversely, studies purposefully dealing with

¹ I follow Hroch’s definition of small nation as “those which were in subjection to a ruling nation for such a long period that the relation of subjection took on a structural character for both parties”, including “transitional cases between the two basic types, such as the Polish or Hungarian nations, which experienced their formative period at the dawn of capitalism as large nations, but then fell into situations characteristic of oppressed nations.” Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations*, trans. Ben Fowkes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 9. For an analysis of Hroch’s thought see below, 29-30.

national *literary* epic poetry in the framework of cultural nationalism in Europe are few and far between, literary epics usually being a monopoly of literary studies which, despite their intrinsic value, often lack historical perspective and neglect a comparative approach between national epics from different literary traditions – including neighbouring ones. We might well say that, unlike the singer of tales, the role of the writer of tales² has been in fact quite neglected.

The present dissertation aims at filling this gap by fleshing out the use of epic literature as a tool for the cultivation of the national thought, first tackling the very idea of national epic literature, its features and its history, and then moving on to investigate a concrete case study of construction of national imagery by the means of epic literature, i.e. the Albanian and Serbo-Croatian³ traditions of national epos which flowered from the nineteenth century up to the early decades of the twentieth century, traditions which make up an excellent comparative case study due to their geographical and historical proximity. In order to effectively compare Albanian and South Slavic⁴ epic poems, I will make use of a comparative model of my invention, the “Tripod model”, based on the analysis of three elements which I regard as crucial when it comes to cultural nationalism in literary epos, i.e. kinship, religion, and patriotism. This model, which does not want to be anything more than a working tool for comparatists, is intended to provide a yardstick for a non-biased comparison of epic national narratives.

² My definition of “writer of tales” obviously comes from and pays homage to Milman Parry (1902-1935) and Albert Bates Lord’s (1912-1991) concept of “singer of tales” skilfully expounded by Lord in his volume *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, Mass.: Oxford University Press, 1960).

³ For my use of the term “Serbo-Croatian” in this dissertation see below, 15-18.

⁴ For my use of the term “South Slavic” in this dissertation see below, 19-20.

The outcome of this essay will be a (hopefully) original and challenging contribution to the study of cultural nationalism in Europe in general and among Albanians and South Slavs in particular.

Studies on Cultural Nationalism in the Balkans: An Overview

The history of Serbian, Croatian and Montenegrin cultural nationalism has already been investigated by a substantial number of scholars. The breakup of the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 1990s triggered a new wave of publications devoted to the analysis of the political use of literary and oral epic poems in the symbolic construction among the ex-Yugoslavs – particularly among Serbs.

In comparison, much less attention has been given to the history of Albanian nationalism, be it political or cultural. This may be explained with the almost complete political, economic and cultural isolation Albania experienced during the Cold War, as well as with the precarious political status of Yugoslav Albanians. On the contrary, Yugoslavia was actively involved in the international political arena, and therefore a vivid interest for the country and its cultures lingered on – an interest which was revived under the tragic circumstances of the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s. This dichotomy in attention and scholarship led to a rich production of studies concerning Yugoslavia and her successor states, whereas Albanian topics have been dealt with by a far more restricted (in numbers, by no means in quality) circle of scholars.

Besides, the last two decades have also seen the publication of studies dealing with the entangled history of Eastern Europe and East-European nationalism, as well as with some first attempts at comparative research on Albanian and South Slavic

national epic poems. These works are a welcome contribution to a field of studies which for many years has been straitjacketed to the analysis of national case studies.

On South Slavic Cultural Nationalism

Whereas the classical works on Balkan history had already recognised the role played by nationalism and literary national narratives,⁵ one of the first genuine studies on South Slavic cultural nationalism is to be found in 1998 *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation* by Andrew Wachtel.⁶ Starting from Benedict Anderson's theories,⁷ Wachtel stresses how "the pre-eminence of culture in the formation of national identity would suggest that in studies on nationalism, both theoretical and empirical, the emphasis should be placed squarely on an exploration of the development of national culture."⁸ On the basis of this premises, Wachtel explores the elaboration and the destruction of the idea of Yugoslavia in literature (including epic literature), art and politics, aiming at demonstrating that Yugoslavia did not collapse because of political reasons, but because the very Yugoslav cultural national project faded away.⁹ Regardless of whether one agrees or not with Wachtel's diagnosis about the final breakup of Yugoslavia, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation* remains a groundbreaking book which has paved the way to many other valuable studies.

Zdenko Zlatar has been one of those scholars who took inspiration from Wachtel's work and approach. While *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation* has more of a bird's

⁵ See Georges Castellan, *Histoire des Balkans : XIV^e-XX^e siècle* [Histories of the Balkans: From the XIV to the XX Century] (Paris: Fayard, 1991); Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans: Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Leften Stavros Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1958).

⁶ Andrew Baruch Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

⁷ See below, 28-29.

⁸ Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation*, 4.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 14-18.

eye's view on the cultural construction and destruction of Yugoslavia, Zlatar focuses on one particular aspect of this process, i.e. the use of literary epic poetry as a nation-building tool among Yugoslavs. His massive two-volume study *The Poetics of Slavdom: The Mythopoeic Foundations of Yugoslavia*¹⁰ provides an illuminating account of the symbolic world and the historical background of Njegoš's *The Mountain Wreath* and Mažuranić's *The Death of Smail-aga Čengić*. Admittedly, this PhD thesis has been inspired in more than one way by Zdenko Zlatar's work.

Many other studies touch upon the use (and abuse) of culture in the nation-building processes among the South Slavs. In particular, I shall here recall Ivo Banac's slightly dated but always useful *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History Politics*,¹¹ Pål Kolstø's *Myths and Boundaries in South-Eastern Europe*¹² (where "South-Eastern Europe" is basically a synonym for the Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav space) and George (György) Schöpflin's *Nations, Identity, Power: The New Politics of Europe*.¹³

During and after the Yugoslav and Kosovo wars of the 1990s, scholars have found themselves pondering on the relationship between Serbian culture, and in particular its national myths, and some of the most unfortunate political decisions taken by the Serb leadership over the last decades. This is a particularly sensitive subject, for it would only be too tempting to regard Srebrenica and the war in Kosovo as the ultimate accomplishment of Serbian civilisation, much like what Daniel Goldhagen claimed about German culture and Christianity in his notorious book *Hitler's Willing*

¹⁰ Zdenko Zlatar, *The Poetics of Slavdom: The Mythopoeic Foundations of Yugoslavia*, 2 vols. (New York et al.: Peter Lang, 2007).

¹¹ Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (1984, reprint, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991).

¹² Pål Kolstø (ed.), *Myths and Boundaries in South-Eastern Europe* (London: Hurst & Company, 2005).

¹³ George (György) Schöpflin, *Nations, Identity, Power: The New Politics of Europe* (2000, reprint, London: Hurst & Co., 2002). Despite this book's approach is mostly the one of a political scientist, its theoretical premises on myths and nationalism are definitely worth checking out for cultural historians too.

Executioners.¹⁴ Tim Judah has managed to juxtapose recent Serbian history with the national myths (many of them embedded in epic tradition) of the Serbian people in his 1997 *The Serbs: History, Myth and the Destruction of Yugoslavia*,¹⁵ and he has done it in quite a balanced way. In fact, despite being extremely severe with those Serbs who dragged the country into the 1990s catastrophe, and despite pointing out several times that Serbian traditional culture has been used as a powerful propaganda tool also because many of its motifs actually lend themselves to ultra-nationalistic reinterpretations, Judah refrains from claiming that the tragedy of former Yugoslavia was the product of innate Serbian genocidal tendencies.

The same cannot be said about Branimir Anzulović's *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide*,¹⁶ a book which criticises Serbian culture with all the subtlety of a sledgehammer. *Heavenly Serbia* is basically an attempt to explain all of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Serbian history as the result of the Serbs' (alleged) attempt to restore the medieval Serbian Empire as (allegedly) prescribed in their traditional and epic culture. Anzulović may be well regarded as the Balkan Goldhagen: he sees no distinction between the tropes of traditional Serbian culture and their use for political propaganda and, much in Goldhagen's way, he puts the blame for the tragedies of the 1990s almost entirely on an ever-present idea of Heavenly Serbia supposedly instilled in the heart and soul of every Serb. It goes without saying that such a narrative, despite being founded on some ideas which might be agreed with, creates more problems than it actually solves.

¹⁴ Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Random House, 1997).

¹⁵ Tim Judah, *The Serbs: History, Myth and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (1997. 3rd edition, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009).

¹⁶ Branimir Anzulović, *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1999).

On Albanian Cultural Nationalism

The 1990s experienced a resurgence of Albanian studies in Western academia, after the decades of isolation of the Albanian state as well as political difficulties in Yugoslavia which had relegated them to a sort of hibernation. The fall of the communist regime in Albania (1991-1992) finally reopened the country to foreign scholars. Interest in Albanian topics also skyrocketed due to the tragic events of Kosovo war (1996-1999) and its Macedonian spillover (2000-2001), events which prompted further reflection on the history and culture of the Albanians.

As far as nationalism studies and cultural history are concerned, there has been a production of some valuable studies – a production, once again, numerically dramatically inferior compared to studies on South Slavic issues. One of the pioneering studies in this field is Ger Dujizings' *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo*, first published in 2000.¹⁷ Dujizings' interest in the different identification patterns in Kosovo leads him to investigate how different national and ethnic identities evolved vis-à-vis different religious and cultural belongings, not disregarding the role epic tradition has in it.¹⁸ *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo* remains a useful contribution to Albanian and Balkan studies to date, despite the fact that the evolution Kosovo society has undergone during the last sixteen years makes it slightly outdated.

Another study from the early 2000s which definitively deserves mentioning here is *Albanian Identities: Myth and History*¹⁹ by Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers and Bernd Fischer. Combining their different scholarly approaches (Schwandner-Sievers being

¹⁷ Ger Dujizings, *Religion and Politics of Identity in Kosovo* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2000).

¹⁸ Dujizings, *Religion and Politics of Identity in Kosovo*, 157-202.

¹⁹ Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, Bernd Jünger Fischer (eds.), *Albanian Identities: Myth and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

an anthropologist and Fischer a contemporary historian), the two have managed to put together a valuable study which expands on and challenges the main tropes of Albanian nationalism like the myth of autochthony, of the Albanian religious tolerance, the communist and post-communist conspiracy theories etc.

The necessity to understand the history of Albanian national identity is the reason which moved Nathalie Clayer to write her seminal *Aux origines du nationalisme albanais : La naissance d'une nation majoritairement musulmane en Europe*.²⁰ Clayer's book pins down the complexity of Albanian nationalism, thoughtfully analysing the multi-cultural and multi-religious nature of Albanianism by bringing up the existence of different, and at times competing, interpretations of the very idea of Albanian nation.

Another study on Albanian cultural nationalism worth mentioning here is surely Matteo Mandalà's *Mundus vult decipi: i miti della storiografia arbëreshe* [Mundus vult decipi: The Myths of Arbëresh Historiography].²¹ Following Hobsbawm's teaching on the invention of tradition,²² Mandalà scrutinises and busts many of the myths and ideas which make up the core of the Arbëresh or Italo-Albanian historiography and identity, concepts which have mostly been elaborated during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.²³ Mandalà's work is a welcome contribution towards the identification of those forgeries and myths which for too long have been at the basis of much Italo-Albanian historiography.

²⁰ Nathalie Clayer, *Aux origines du nationalisme albanais : La naissance d'une nation majoritairement musulmane en Europe* [To the Origins of Albanian Nationalism: The Birth of a Nation mostly Muslim in Europe] (Paris: Karthala, 2007).

²¹ Matteo Mandalà, *Mundus vult decipi: i miti della storiografia arbëreshe* [Mundus vult decipi: The Myths of Arbëresh Historiography] (Palermo: Mirror, 2007).

²² See below, 27-28.

²³ On the Arbëresh, their history and their relationship with Balkan Albanians, see below, 85-86.

Histoire croisée

While nation-based studies have certainly provided many useful insights to the understanding of nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe, the need to have a broader point of view has eventually emerged. Thus, some valuable works have been recently produced which adopt a *histoire croisée* approach – the study of entangled, intra-national historical dynamics, in particular cultural transfers²⁴ – to the study of nineteenth- and twentieth-century East-European cultures. A good starting point is undoubtedly Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer's (1933-2015) *History of the Literary Culture in East-Central Europe*.²⁵ This massive work is a well of information on the cross-boundary development of literary and cultural trends in the area from Romanticism down to the end of the twentieth century. *History of the Literary Culture in East-Central Europe* is most definitely an essential reading for those who want to understand East and Central European cultural nationalism from a supranational point of view.

Among the other (actually not so numerous) studies on the entangled history of East-European nationalism are surely worth mentioning Balázs Trencsényi and Michal Kopeček's books on *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe 1770-1945*,²⁶ a series which translates into English and comments on the most important texts on national identity composed in the area between the

²⁴ See Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, "Beyond Comparison: *Histoire croisée* and the Challenge of Reflexivity", in *History and Theory*, 45 (February 2006), 30-50.

²⁵ Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer (eds.), *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctions and Disjunctions in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, 4 vols. (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins, 2007-2011).

²⁶ Balázs Trencsényi, Michal Kopeček et al. (eds.), *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe 1770-1945: Texts and Commentaries*, 5 vols. (Budapest/New York: CEU Press, 2006-2014).

eighteenth and twentieth century, as well as *Entangled Histories of the Balkans*,²⁷ the solid result of a project helmed by Roumen Daskalov aiming at analysing modern and contemporary Balkan history beyond the constraints of national narratives.

Comparative Studies

All the entangled-history studies mentioned so far have mostly taken into account Albanian and South Slav cultural nationalisms in the framework of the broader picture of East European or Balkan nation-building processes: works whose main focus is the comparison of Albanian and South Slav cultural nationalisms, let alone national literary epics, are extremely rare, no doubt also due to the scarcity of scholars having sufficient command of both languages. Granted, folklorists have always been aware of the strong relationship between Albanian and South Slavic folk epics,²⁸ but little has been made by historians on this point. For this reason it is worthy bringing up here the solid comparative study on the use of Albanian and Serbian folk epics in their respective people's nation-building process provided by Rigels Halili, an Albanian scholar who is pursuing his academic career in Poland. His *Naród i jego pieśni: Rzecz o oralności, piśmienności, i epice ludowej wśród Albańczyków i Serbów* [A Nation and its Songs: About Orality, Literacy and Folk Epics among Albanians and Serbs]²⁹,

²⁷ Roumen Daskalov et al. (eds.), *Entangled Histories of the Balkans*, 3 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2013-2014).

²⁸ See for instance Dragutin Mićović, *Albanske junačke pesme* [Albanian Heroic Poems] (Jedinstvo: Priština, 1981); Radoslav Medenica, "Arbanaške krešničke pesme i naša narodna epika" [Albanian Border Songs and Our National Epic], *Rad XIV kongresa Saveza folklorista Jugoslavije (u Prizrenu 1967)* [Proceedings of the Fourteenth Congress of the Union of Yugoslav Folklorists (in Prizren 1967)], (Belgrade, 1974). The title of this last study is particularly interesting, for it spells out "our national epic" as it gives for granted that the addressed audience was only Slavic, and that Albanian culture is something alien to Yugoslavia even though Albanians took of a pretty large chunk of the population in some regions of the country.

²⁹ Rigels Halili, *Naród i jego pieśni: Rzecz o oralności, piśmienności, i epice ludowej wśród Albańczyków i Serbów* [A Nation and its Songs: About Orality, Literacy and Folk Epics among

published in 2012, is a very informative study on the way oral epic poems have been used by Albanian and Serbian cultural and political agents to legitimise their national projects, and it effectively describes the development of these Balkan folklore-based nation-building processes in the framework of the contemporary European and Western debate on oral culture and nationalism. Most interestingly, Halili shows how these processes, far from only being a nineteenth-century phenomenon, have also been a crucial part of the nationalist agenda of authorities and intellectuals in Albania and Serbia/Yugoslavia well until the end of the Cold War.³⁰ However, Halili's work does not take into account literary epic poems, as it focuses exclusively on oral epic cultures and their political use. To find a genuine comparative study between Albanian and South Slavic national narratives in literary epic poetry we have to go back to the pioneering work of Stavro Skendi (1905-1989), an Albanian scholar who spent most of his life in the United States.

Skendi's vast academic interests embraced Albanian political and cultural history, as well as linguistics and religions of the Balkans. Most of his studies have been collected in the 1980 volume *Balkan Cultural Studies*.³¹ Three articles in this book, "The South-Slavic Decasyllable in Albanian Oral Epic Poetry",³² "Cultural Patterns in the Mujo-Halil Cycle",³³ and "The Songs of the Klephts and the Hayduks – History or Oral Literature?",³⁴ compare themes and features of the oral epics of Albanians, Greeks and Balkan Slavs. In particular, "The South Slavic Decasyllable in Albanian Oral Epic Poetry" investigates how the decasyllable line, the Slavic *deseterac*, made

Albanians and Serbs] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2012). I am grateful to Magda Zakowska for this reference.

³⁰ Ibid., 16-17.

³¹ Stavro Skendi, *Balkan Cultural Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

³² Ibid., 59-71.

³³ Ibid., 72-100.

³⁴ Ibid., 121-129.

its way in the epic cycles of the Northern Albanians, whereas “Cultural Patterns in the Mujo-Halil Cycle” expands on the Slavic roots of the Mujo and Halil cycle so preeminent in the Albanian highlands. In both articles Skendi concludes that the reason of this similarity in metrics and themes has to be found in the cultural proximity between Albanian-speaking Muslims and Serbo-Croatian speaking Muslims of the neighbouring Sandžak and Bosnia. But it is the article “Kačić’s Razgovor and Fishta’s Lahuta e Malcís”³⁵ which is of particular importance to this dissertation, as to my knowledge this is the first real comparative study specifically focusing on national narratives in Albanian and South Slavic literary epic poems. Here, Skendi fleshes out and compares Kačić and Fishta’s poems by investigating their literary and oral sources as well as their personal cultural backgrounds, while at the same time expanding on the metrics and the linguistic nuances which characterise the work of the two poets. Skendi’s conclusion is that Kačić and Fishta, both Catholics and both Franciscans, had the same goal in mind when they were composing their masterpieces, which is “to give the history of their people, remote or close, by glorifying their heroes and their battles.”³⁶ While this remark is fundamentally correct, I believe it only hints at a broader phenomenon which I intend to tackle in the following pages. Nonetheless, Skendi’s work remains of vital importance for anyone dealing with the relationships between Albanian and South Slav cultural histories.

After “Kačić’s Razgovor and Fishta’s Lahuta e Malcís”, a couple of decades have passed without any remarkable attempt at a comparative analysis of Balkan literary epic poems. Finally, the year 2007 saw the publication of Matthew Curtis’ study *Petar*

³⁵ Ibid., 101-120.

³⁶ Skendi, *Balkan Cultural Studies*, 118.

II Petrović Njegoš and Gjergj Fishta: Composers of National Epics.³⁷ Curtis's short essay has the merit to provide an effective comparative reconstruction of Njegoš and Fishta's biographies and poetical worlds. Unfortunately, this study's conclusion loses almost all its analytical potential as Curtis desperately tries to conciliate the two author's worldviews by stressing

“their affinity with principles of humanity common to all nations. They understand that other cultures have different traditions and values. That is not to say that they accept a culture outright, yet they see the commonality of their positions and their desires. Instead of encouraging violence toward others, the epics require greater honor of the customs that respect others and teach humaneness”.³⁸

This interpretation dramatically underplays the complexity and the elements of conflict embedded in the epic poems in favour of an alleged humanistic-based communality of ideas. While one may humanly appreciate Curtis' attempt at conciliating between Albanian and Montenegrin national narratives, this whitewashed interpretation of the epics' most controversial message does eventually undermine the overall value of this study, as Curtis totally gives up his critical eye while attempting at saving Fishta and especially Njegoš's work from being branded, in Anzulović's words, as a “call to genocide”.³⁹

If Curtis' interpretation might appear to some as way too appealing, a much more controversial tone may be found in the work of the Montenegrin writer and scholar Kaplan Burović (also known by his Albanianised name of Kapllan Resuli). Burović has been known as the “Balkan Nelson Mandela” due to the decades-long prison terms he served both in Yugoslavia and in Albania, where he got stuck during his

³⁷ Matthew C. Curtis, “Petar II Petrović Njegoš and Gjergj Fishta: Composers of National Epics”, *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European History* (2007).

³⁸ Curtis, “Petar II Petrović Njegoš and Gjergj Fishta”, 30.

³⁹ Anzulović, *Heavenly Serbia*, 67.

failed attempt to flee to Soviet Union, between the 1950s and the end of the 1980s. A linguist by training, Burović's academic work is almost totally focused on Albanian-Southern Slav cultural relationships, and more specifically on the Albanian anti-Slavic historical and literary myths which, in his opinion, have negatively influenced Albanians' attitude towards their neighbours.⁴⁰ He also touched upon Fishta and Njegoš, most notably in his 2002 book *Njegoš i Albanci* [Njegoš and the Albanians].⁴¹ Burović showcases a solid knowledge of Albanian language, and his investigation of the connections between Fishta and his Montenegrin predecessor is at times quite compelling.⁴² However, Burović's stinging attack on Albanian nationalism results in an outburst of Montenegrin nationalism, which drastically undermines the reliability of his work. In particular, Fishta is always (and wrongly, I add) depicted as a hater of everything Slavic,⁴³ with his *Lahuta* becoming nothing more than a pastiche of ahistorical narratives⁴⁴ – ahistorical narratives which apparently are nowhere to be found in Njegoš's work, as Burović never brings them up. He correctly stresses how Njegoš's work served as an inspiration to Fishta, but at the same time he totally neglects all the other Slavic authors of epic (most notably Grgo Martić) whom Fishta was exposed to,⁴⁵ thus transfiguring Fishta into a cheap knock-off of Njegoš. This, together with some very non-scholarly statements about the Albanian people which constellate the book,⁴⁶ makes Burović's contribution extremely hard to agree with.

⁴⁰ Kaplan Burović, interview by Vitomir Dolinski, <http://www.forumishqiptar.com/threads/14822-Interviste-me-Dr-Kaplan-Resuli-Burovich> (accessed on 23rd March 2016).

⁴¹ Kaplan Burović, *Njegoš i Albanci: studije* [Njegoš and the Albanians: Studies], (Geneva & Podgorica: OMPA 2002).

⁴² *Ibid.*, 14-18, 29-39.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 29-39.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 40-55.

⁴⁵ See below, 133-134.

⁴⁶ Just see the not-so-subtle chapter *Albanski narod nikada se nije složio sa svojim šovinistima* [The Albanian People Has Never Come to Terms with Their Own Chauvinists). Burović: *Njegoš i Albanci*, 69-71.

Some Preliminary Remarks

There are still some issues which need to be addressed before moving on to the core of the dissertation.

Tricky Terms: Croatian, Serbian or Serbo-Croatian?

Which name shall be used to identify the language of Njegoš and Demeter: Serbian, Croatian or Serbo-Croatian? The recent history of the language spoken by the Slavs of the Western Balkans is one of the most striking consequences of Yugoslavia's dismemberment, as we have witnessed the (re)birth of the separate Bosnian (*Bosanski*), Croatian (*Hrvatski*) and Serbian (*Srpski*) from the ashes of the old Serbo-Croatian (*Srpskohrvatski*),⁴⁷ the official language of the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia.⁴⁸ Moreover, following the 2006 referendum which sanctioned the end of the Union of Serbia and Montenegro and the (re)birth of an independent Montenegrin state, the Montenegrin variant of Serbo-Croatian was given official status as Montenegrin language (*Crnogorski*). This dissolution into fission of Serbo-Croatian threw into confusion, among others, the poor foreign learners of the language (including the author of this dissertation). While Yugoslavia still existed, grammars and handbooks simply dealt with "Serbo-Croatian."⁴⁹ From the 1990s on, distinct Croatian or Serbian language handbooks have been offered to the foreign audience.

⁴⁷ Serbo-Croatian was a double-headed language, as it officially acknowledged the use of two alphabets (Latin and Cyrillic) as well as different standards (Croatian, Serbian, and the varieties spoken in Bosnia and Montenegro).

⁴⁸ Slovenian and Macedonian enjoyed official status too but only within the Republics of Slovenia and Macedonia respectively.

⁴⁹ As in the case of Arturo Cronia's *Grammatica della lingua serbo-croata* [Grammar of Serbo-Croatian Language], a book studied by generations of Italian Slavists, including some of my former professors. Arturo Cronia, *Grammatica della lingua serbo-croata* [Grammar of Serbo-Croatian Language] (Milan, Trevesini 1922).

Some of them do inform their readers, in a more or less biased way, on the history and current status of the relationship between the language there explained and its relatives,⁵⁰ whereas others just omit the issue in the first place.⁵¹

An interesting attempt to conciliate didactic purposes with the post-Yugoslav linguistic scenario has been made by Ronelle Alexander with her *Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian: A Grammar with Sociolinguistic Commentary*.⁵² The book starts off with Alexander stating that “What is clear to everyone [...] is that all these languages [Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian] share a common core, a fact which enables all their speakers to communicate freely with one another.”⁵³ Consequently, she introduces the languages to the reader by synoptically explaining their three “different” grammars. The outcome is a mixed bag, for on the one hand the book does provide an informative outlook on the Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian grammars and syntaxes, as well as on their historical and sociological backgrounds – on the other hand it only makes painfully obvious (in case this was not clear yet) that it is all about the same language. Ironically, in this book Alexander regarded the possibility to have an

⁵⁰ Definitely one-sided and at times plainly wrong is, for instance, the following passage from the introduction to the otherwise valuable Serbian grammar by Lila Hammond: “By the nineteenth century, realising that their languages had a lot in common, the Croats and Serbs unified their languages under the name of Serbo-Croatian. However, wanting secession from Yugoslavia, during the twentieth century, Croatian linguists began to emphasise the differences between the languages, proclaiming Croatian as a separate language. New words were coined to prove that differences existed. With the break-up of Yugoslavia at the end of the twentieth century came the fragmentation of the unified language, Serbo-Croatian. The Croatian language quickly developed as a separate language in relation to Serbian, with new words speedily introduced to mark its differences. Serbian, on the other hand, remained unchanged.” Lila Hammond, *Serbian: An Essential Grammar* (London & New York: Routledge, 2005), 8.

⁵¹ See for instance Marica Čilaš-Mikulić, Milvia Gulešić Machata, Dinka Pasini, Sanda Lucija Udier, *Hrvatski za početnike: Udžbenik i rječnik 1* [Croatian for Beginners: Handbook and Dictionary 1] (Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, 2006).

⁵² Ronelle Alexander, *Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian: A Grammar with Sociolinguistic Commentary* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, xvii.

official Montenegrin language as unlikely,⁵⁴ due to the stability of the Serbo-Montenegrin unit:⁵⁵ in the same year as the book's publication (2006) both Montenegro obtained independence, and Montenegrin was established as an autonomous language. Alexander has eventually acknowledged this further nail in the coffin of Serbo-Croatian⁵⁶ – without necessarily giving up the idea of a fundamental unity of the language.⁵⁷

Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian well shows how tricky it is to deal with post-Yugoslav linguistic nationalism, for some deeply political, ethnic and even personal sensitivities are here involved. On the other hand, this dissertation does need to have a consistent linguistic terminology. Therefore, for purely methodological purposes I will address the language issue assuming that: A) Bosnians, Croats, Montenegrins and Serbs speak one and the same language, a language differentiated by local variants (Kajkavski, Čakavski, and Štokavski, the latter being divided into Jekavski, Ikavski and Ekavski) which by no means follow the borders of the former Yugoslav states. This language is nowadays defined as Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Serbian by Bosnians (both Christian and Muslim), Croats, Montenegrins and Serbs respectively. B) Consequently, I will use the terms “Bosnian”, “Croatian”, “Montenegrin” or “Serbian” when the exposition will explicitly expand on the literary cultures of Bosnians, Croats, Montenegrins, or Serbs. Whenever the discussion will touch upon

⁵⁴ “...a movement to establish a separate Montenegrin language would have seemed impossible until recently (indeed, such an idea still strikes many Montenegrins, and nearly all Serbs, as highly unrealistic.” Ibid., 422.

⁵⁵ “At the present writing, Serbia and Montenegro still are joined in a single political unit. Although there have been signs of impending Montenegrin separation for several years, the joint political unit currently enjoys a certain semblance of stability.” Ibid., 423.

⁵⁶ Ronelle Alexander and Ellen Elias-Bursač, *Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian: A Textbook with Exercises and Basic Grammar* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), 87, 29.

⁵⁷ Ronelle Alexander, “Language and Identity: The Fate of Serbo-Croatian”, in Roumen Daskalov and Tchavdar Marinov (eds.), *Entangled Histories of the Balkans. Volume one: National Ideologies and Language Policies* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2013), 341-417. Here more than elsewhere Alexander shows her nostalgic attitude for the lost linguistic unity.

some broader, pan-Slavic topics, I reserve the right to use either “former Serbo-Croatian”⁵⁸ or even the old-fashioned but still useful “Serbo-Croatian”: The only alternative would be to opt for some über-politically correct expressions like Local Language or BCMS (an acronym standing for Bosnian-Croatian-Montenegrin-Serbian) which I personally regard as sad, bureaucratic labels which only humiliate a language which boasts centuries-old literary traditions as well as its speakers.



1. Montenegrin Prime Minister Milo Đukanović teaches Njegoš the new Montenegrin language. Art by Dušan “Duca” Gadjanski, published on <http://www.in4s.net/sta-bi-rekao-njegossrbiu-crnoj-gori-u-zoni-aparthejda/> (accessed on 2nd August 2016).

⁵⁸ I follow Friedman here, see his “The Balkan Languages and Balkan Linguistics”, in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 40. 2011. 275-291.

More Tricky Terms: Montenegrin, Serb or Serbo-Montenegrin?

The establishment of independent Montenegro in 2006 has triggered new polemics concerning the relationship between Montenegrin national identity vis-à-vis the Serbian one: shall Montenegrins be regarded as a separate people with a separate language, or are they just a particular Serbian group?

It is not up to this research (or up to me either) to find a final word to this issue, issue made more complicated by the events of the nineteenth and twentieth century.⁵⁹ Therefore, in the framework of this dissertation I will use the terms “Montenegrin”, “Serb” and “Serbo-Montenegrin” as practically synonyms, for the nineteenth-century cultural and linguistic scenario of Serbia and Montenegro was such that it would be totally anachronistic to impose a clear-cut division between them.

One Last Tricky Term: South Slavic

The term “South Slavic” originally belongs to the linguistic realm, as it designates all the Slavic Languages mainly spoken in the Balkan peninsula (Bulgarian/Macedonian, Serbo-Croatian, Slovenian).⁶⁰ However, following the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s “South Slavic” has practically become an alternative term to “Serbo-Croatian”, for “Serbo-Croatian” has become too inaccurate and way too politically charged a word when it comes to describe the literary and oral cultures

⁵⁹ See Srdja Pavlović, *Balkan Anschluss: The Annexation of Montenegro and the Creation of the Common South Slavic State* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008).

⁶⁰ Heinz Schuster-Šewc, “Der Zerfall der slavischen Spracheinheit (des Urslavischen) und die genetische Gliederung der slavischen Sprachen/The Decay of the Slavic Language Unit (of Proto-Slavic) and the Genetic Structure of the Slavic Languages”, in Karl Gutschmidt, Sebastian Kempgen, Tilman Berger, Peter Kosta, *Die slavischen Sprachen/The Slavic Languages: Ein internationales Handbuch zu ihrer Struktur, ihrer Geschichte und ihrer Erforschung/An International Handbook on their Structure, their History and their Investigation. Band 2/Volume 2* (Berlin/Munich/Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2014), 1153-1165.

of Bosnians, Croats, Montenegrins and Serbs as a whole, as well as other regional or historical cultures like the Herzegovinian, the Dalmatian or the Vlach. Even terms like “Yugoslav” and “post-Yugoslav” are of little help here, as they also cover areas and countries which did belong to former Yugoslavia, but they are inhabited by populations who do not have Serbo-Croatian as first (or official) language. Hence, “South Slavic” has remained the only English definition functional enough to be used as an overall label for the culture(s) of those peoples speaking Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Serbian. Granted, this use is extremely incorrect and confusing, as it cuts off those other peoples who speak another actual South Slavic language, i.e. Bulgarians, Macedonians, and Slovenes. However, the academic world has already adopted this terminology and, due to the lack of better alternatives, this thesis too will resort to this (momentarily unavoidable) misuse of the term “South Slavic” in describing the cultural milieu made up by all the speakers of Serbo-Croatian.⁶¹

What about Bosnian Muslims?

One might wonder why this research does not cover any epic poetry composed by Bosnian Muslim authors, as they too belong to the Serbo-Croatian linguistic family. The reason is as simple as it gets: The elaboration of the Bosnian Muslim (*bošnjak*) national identity⁶² did not involve national epic poetry. Granted, Bosnian Muslims may boast an extremely rich oral epic tradition – a tradition which became the core of

⁶¹ Ironically, Serbo-Croatian language has found an easier solution than English to this issue, as the term *jugoslavenski* has been replaced by its almost identical, but politically neuter synonym *južnoslavenski*.

⁶² For a solid contribution to the study of national thought among Bosnian Muslims see Mark Pinson (ed.), *The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina: Their Historic Development from the Middle Ages to the dissolution of Yugoslavia* (1993. Second edition, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1996). See also Smail Balić, *Kultura Bošnjaka: Muslimanska komponenta* [Bosniak Culture: The Muslim Component] (Tuzla: PP "R&R", 1994).

Milman Parry and Albert Lord's groundbreaking studies on oral heroic songs.⁶³ Nonetheless, to my knowledge a full-fledged Bosnian Muslim literary national epic poem is nowhere to be found.

Notes on the Translations and Spelling

Unfortunately, many treasures of Central and East-European literatures, including several pieces of national epic poetry, are still awaiting a proper English translation. Admittedly, the situation has significantly improved since the Cold War, when cultural exchanges were constantly undermined by the shaky political relationships between the two blocks.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, so many literary works coming from Eastern, Central and Southeastern Europe remain available only to those who master the original languages.

Of all the Albanian and South Slavic national epic poems taken into account in this dissertation's comparative study, only two have been entirely translated into English: Fishta's *Lahuta e Malcis*,⁶⁵ and Njegoš's *Gorski Vijenac* [The Mountain Wreath].⁶⁶ As

⁶³ See Adam Parry (ed.), *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) and Lord, *The Singer of Tales*.

⁶⁴ See Cecil Maurice Bowra's rant against the difficulty of accessing East European sources during the Cold War in his *Heroic Poetry* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1952), v-vii.

⁶⁵ Gjergj Fishta, *Lahuta e Malcis* [The Mountain Lute], trans. Robert Elsie & Janice Mathie-Heck (London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2005).

⁶⁶ Petar II Petrović Njegoš, *Gorski Vijenac* [The Mountain Wreath], trans. Vasa D. Mihajlović (Belgrade: Serbian Europe Publishing, 1997). Mihajlović's (1926-2015) translation has been contested by Srdja Pavlović, who has labelled it as "simply another attempt to colonize Njegoš' work for the sake of aiding modern political and ideological struggle in the Balkans." Srdja Pavlović, "The Mountain Wreath: Poetry or a Blueprint for the Final Solution?" in *Spaces of Identity*, Vol. 1, iss. 4 (2001), http://spacesofidentity/Vol_4/_html/pavlovic.html (accessed on 22nd February 2016). More specifically, Pavlović brings up Mihajlović's English rendition of the Serbian term *pleme* as "nation" instead of the usual translation as "tribe" in verse 652. Mihajlović's reading of the word *pleme* is actually problematic, even though it did not stop Pavlović from using Mihajlović's translation of the poem in the rest of the article. It is also worth noticing that the first English translator of *Gorski Vijenac*, James Wiles, had already translated *pleme* as "nation" back in 1930, see James W. Wiles (trans.), *Gorski Vijenac* [The Mountain Wreath] by Petar Petrović Njegoš (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1930). Wiles, however, was famously sympathetic of Serbia, and his translation might have also be

far as the other poems are concerned, the excerpts presented here have been translated by myself, and in this case I shall include the original texts in the footnotes. This also applies to all the other sources, documents or excerpts which do not have a previous English translation.

Finally, personal as well as place names have been reported according to their original spelling (or spellings, if a person or a place goes under more than one name) with the exception of those already enjoying a long-established English rendition (e.g.: Scanderbeg, Belgrade, Yugoslavia, Kosovo).

CHAPTER 1: FROM NATIONALISM TO CULTURAL NATIONALISM: IN SEARCH OF A NEW APPROACH

Until a couple of decades ago, a research on national narratives in epic poetry could have been safely labelled as a study on the history of nationalism. However, the need to tell the study of “nationalism” from the one of “cultural nationalism” or “national thought” has recently emerged, as contemporary scholarship (as well as non-specialised audience) increasingly tends to identify nationalism studies with the sole analysis of right-winged movements and ideologies, or ethnic struggles.¹ While the fact that a work on national identity has to struggle in order to find its own academic identity may sound incredibly ironic (and it does), this is nonetheless a relevant issue which must be addressed, and doing so will allow us to review the most important works in this field.²

Nationalism Studies and Their Evolution

For the sake of typological clarity, I will divide the history of nationalism studies into four “generations” of scholars. This subdivision is of course arbitrary, but it retains a certain degree of truth as each of these “generations” is characterised by a peculiar historical and intellectual background as well as by a fundamentally homogeneous approach towards the study of nationalism which tells it from the others.

¹ A telling example of this straightforwardly political approach is the mission of this very university’s Nationalism Studies Program, which specifically aims at “engaging students in an empirical and theoretical study of issues of nationalism, self-determination, problems of state-formation, ethnic conflict, minority protection and the related theme of globalization.” Central European University Nationalism Studies Program, <http://nationalism.ceu.hu/about-us> (accessed on 1st October 2014).

² For a recap of the history of nationalism studies as well as of the most important studies and theories see Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (New York, Routledge 1998) and Joep Leerssen, “The Cultivation of Culture: Towards a Definition of Romantic Nationalism in Europe”, *Working Papers European Studies Amsterdam*, 2 (2005).

The First Generation (1940s-1950s)

The first generation of scholars engaged in nationalism studies emerged during World War II: the tragic outcome of the conflict, which saw nations so violently confronting each other, triggered the intellectual reflection on the nature of these apparently irreducible groups called nations.

Edward Hallett Carr (1892-1982) and Hans Kohn (1891-1971) have been the first to start this reflection on an academic level, and they may therefore be rightfully regarded as the fathers of nationalism studies. Both of them regarded nationalism as the offspring of European cultural trends (mostly Enlightenment and Romanticism) and as a prerequisite to the formation of modern nation states, but whereas Carr's *Nationalism and After*³ entirely ignored the contribution of literature to the construction of national identities, Kohn did not fail to take it into account in his *The Idea of Nationalism*.⁴ While Carr's work is unfortunately becoming more and more outdated as time goes by, Kohn's contribution still holds up as it traces the *longue durée* roots of nationalism from the Biblical times down to Romanticism – an approach which admittedly paved the way to Anthony Smith's idea of ethno-symbolism.⁵ He nailed down concepts which still make up the bedrock of contemporary nationalism studies, albeit at times contested or revised, such as the existence of a Western/civic-based way to national identity different from the Eastern/culture-based one, as well as the importance of the literates' role in shaping the different national projects. On the other hand, much of Kohn's theoretical approach is clearly outdated: his almost black-and-white contraposition between the

³ Edward Hallett Carr, *Nationalism and After* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1945).

⁴ Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1944).

⁵ See below, 30-31.

Enlightenment, supposed source of all good, and the “bad” political cultures of whatever country but England and France does not hold up anymore. Kohn also failed to distinguish between the history of facts and the history of ideas: he completely overlooked the difference between the political theories elaborated in a given country and the history of the country itself: as a result, France and England are depicted like paradise on Earth, with the rest of the world desperately trying to catch up with them.

The Second Generation (1960s-1990s)

Scholarship produced by younger researchers increasingly moved away from the interpretation of nationalism as a constitutive element of state-building process, typical of the first years of the discipline, instead focussing on the ideological aspect of nationalism, and especially on its connection with the industrialisation process which took place from the early nineteenth century on. This next generation of scholars which emerged after World War II analysed and denounced the role of nationalism as an ideology shaped by political agendas, a train of thought originally established by Elie Kedourie (1926-1992).

Kedourie may be regarded as one of the initiators of modernist school of nationalism studies, a school which regards nationalism as a product of modern society, which in its turn engendered the very idea of nation, otherwise previously unknown. In his 1960 book *Nationalism*,⁶ Kedourie traces the origins of nationalism to the reflection of German Romantic intellectuals, and particularly Kant and his followers.⁷ For the British scholar, nationalism is nothing but a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century, a doctrine which established the

⁶ Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (1960. 4th edition, Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

⁷ Kedourie, *Nationalism*, 12-23.

idea that humanity is naturally divided into nations,⁸ whereas the truth is that nations are actually moulded by nationalism, and not the other way round. This fundamental idea of his would be expanded on, although with some major modifications on some of its basic tenets, by Ernest Gellner (1925-1995) and Eric Hobsbawm (1917-2012).

Four years after Kedourie's *Nationalism* came out, Gellner started elaborating his own view on nationalism with his book *Thought and Change*.⁹ Nationalism was actually not the study's main focus, but rather the relationship between the idea of modernity and human society.¹⁰ In particular, the advent of modernity seems to have dramatically changed the way ideas were conceived and articulated, as the new social scenario caused by industrialisation required a new set of idea to be understood and dealt with: nationalism was one of them. With *Thought and Change*, Gellner pinned down the fundamental concept of his theory on nationalism: for him, the nationalist idea is a product of modernity, the offspring of the industrial and post-industrial society (unlike Kedourie, who "blamed" German Romanticism for the creation of nationalism) which has no equivalent in pre-industrial societies.¹¹ This modernist understanding of nationalism has been cultivated and developed by Gellner over his entire career, particularly in the 1983 *Nations and Nationalism*,¹² and it paved the way to the caustic study on national historical representation undertaken by Eric Hobsbawm.

Hobsbawm started addressing nationalism relatively late in his career, after having mostly researched in the field of economic history. His breakthrough concept of the invention of tradition came into being in 1983, when Hobsbawm penned the

⁸ Ibid., 1.

⁹ Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1964).

¹⁰ Gellner, *Thought and Change*, 1-3.

¹¹ Ibid., 147-178.

¹² See his *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: 1983).

introduction to the collection of essays *The Invention of Tradition*,¹³ which he edited together with the African historian Terence Ranger (1929-2015). In Hobsbawm's view, traditions are "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual and symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past."¹⁴ Far from being an immutable heritage from unmemorable times, tradition is actually "the product of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries [...] often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented."¹⁵

The idea of the invention of tradition was the necessary premise to Hobsbawm's major study in the field of nationalism studies, i.e. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*.¹⁶ By stressing "the element of artefact, invention and social engineering which enters into the making of nations,"¹⁷ Hobsbawm followed Gellner's rejection of any ethnic- or tradition-based interpretation of national identity:¹⁸ Culture is an instrument in the hands of nationalist policymakers, and the modern concept of nation came into being only in the nineteenth century.¹⁹ Hobsbawm's theories remain to date a powerful analytic tool as well as an instrument to debunk those nationalist ideologies which use and abuse history and culture in order to legitimate their adherents' political ambitions. With almost biblical verve, the British historian reminded us that culture, far from being an immutable, timeless entity, is in fact created and reinvented day by day, and national identities with it.

¹³ Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (1983; reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹⁴ Hobsbawm, foreword to *The Invention of Tradition*, 1.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (1990; reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹⁷ Ibid., 10.

¹⁸ Ibid., 9.

¹⁹ Ibid., 14-45.

The Third Generation (1980s-2010s)

The 1980s saw the emergence of a next generation of students of nationalism who, despite massively drawing inspiration from Gellner and Hobsbawm's reflection, brought up a new approach to the study of the role culture played in the realm of nationalism. In fact, they started expanding on the *longue durée* roots of the national idea, while at the same time partially retrieving culture from the secondary role their predecessors had relegated it to. This new trend saw Benedict Anderson (1936-2015) among its initiators.

Anderson started his work on the premises of Gellner and Hobsbawm's ideas on culture as a political tool. On the basis of a broad comparative analysis of nation-building processes in Southeast Asia and in Europe, his seminal *Imagined Communities*²⁰ expanded on the ways literary cultures can bond human beings to groups which are "imagined" (i.e. regarded as real by people who do not actually know each other), "limited" and "sovereign":²¹ These groups are what we nowadays refer to as nations. At first glance, one may see this theory the logical development of Gellner and Hobsbawm's teaching on the forged nature of the nation. However, Anderson openly distanced himself from his predecessors' approach based on the falsity/genuineness dichotomy of national identities:

...Gellner is so anxious to show that nationalism masquerades under false pretences that he assimilates "invention" to "fabrication" and "falsity", rather than to "imagining" and "creation". In this way he implies that "true" communities exist which can be advantageously juxtaposed to

²⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (1983. Reprint, London/New York: Verso, 2006).

First published in 1983, *Imagined Communities* underwent a deep revision by the author when the second edition came out in 1991, as Anderson managed to have access to new sources which made him rethink some of the statements put forward in the first edition. The book's basic ideas have remained nonetheless unchanged.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

nations. In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined.²²

Anderson put forward the idea that communities, and especially national communities, are not forged but rather “imagined”, i.e. intellectually conceived. *Imagined Communities* set a new trend in the nationalism studies of the 1980s, as Anderson abandoned the ideology-bashing lead of the previous generation of scholars in order to undertake a less politically-driven study of “the cultural roots of nationalism”.²³ Unfortunately, as Keith Brown has rightly pointed out, the very idea of imagined community has been often distorted by following scholarship, as “Benedict Anderson’s nuance and sophistication has largely been lost in the scholarly stampede to highlight the constructedness of all national certainties, and in the readiness of nationalists to interrogate their neighbours’ imaginations but deny their own.”²⁴

Despite bringing an innovative point of view to the discipline, in the end Anderson remained faithful to the established train of thought which considered literary culture as functional and consequential to political issues. The scholar who turned this point of view upside-down has been Miroslav Hroch. With his groundbreaking study *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations*, the Czech scholar pointed out that, in some cases and in some precise historical conditions, the cultural elaboration of national culture predated the political movement aiming at establishing it in the political realm. Hroch’s three-phase model (phase A identifying the national-oriented intellectual circles, phase B the politicisation of the national idea,

²² Ibid., 6.

²³ Ibid., 7.

²⁴ Keith Brown, “Villains and Symbolic Pollution in the Narratives of Nations”, in Maria Todorova, ed., *Balkan Identities: Nation and Memory* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 233-252.

and phase C the eventual popular reception of the national idea)²⁵ is still today an efficient tool to map the spreading of nationalism among the emerging nations of the nineteenth century.²⁶

Anthony D. Smith (1939-2016) has been even more radical than Hroch in challenging the old trend of nationalism studies. A former doctoral student of Gellner, Smith became dissatisfied with his teacher's theories, instead choosing to research the pre-modern, *longue durée* roots of the nations – a concept best fleshed out in his 1991 book *National Identity*.²⁷ The idea is that nationalism, which per se is a modern phenomenon, has its deep roots in pre-modern cultural elements such as language, religion, and a perceived common history: Only afterwards have these elements been reinterpreted (and sometimes reinvented) by the national cultural élites, be them nationalist intellectuals or members of a broader intelligentsia (aristocracy, bureaucracy, clergy etc.). For Smith, national identities are grounded on pre-modern *ethnies*, i.e. human aggregations chiefly characterised by a common proper name, shared historical memories and an association with a specific homeland²⁸ (the idea of ethnicity as a product of biological, pseudo-racial differences is strongly rejected).²⁹ Smith's ethno-symbolist school remains one of the most important ones in the field of nationalism studies, even though his approach is clearly at odds with the modernist interpretation of the nature of the nation.

²⁵ Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe*, 22-25.

²⁶ Hroch himself has made it clear that his model is supposed to describe only those nineteenth-century European national movements which stemmed from cultural activism, warning about its use in other contexts. Miroslav Hroch, "Is there a South-East European Type of Nationalism?", in Dimitris Stamatopoulos (ed.), *Balkan Nationalism(s) and the Ottoman Empire*, Vol. 1 (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2015), 13-27. See also Alexander Maxwell, "Twenty-five Years of A-B-C: Miroslav Hroch's Impact on Nationalism Studies," *Nationality Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, Vol. 38, No. 60 (2010).

²⁷ Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (1991. Reprint, Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 19-42.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

Very close to Smith's thought is his fellow professor (and former doctoral student) at London School of Economics John Hutchinson, who first approached nationalism studies with his *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State*.³⁰ Hutchinson is credited with the elaboration of the key concept "cultural nationalism",³¹ a concept which encompasses those movements aiming at the "moral regeneration of the national community rather than the achievement of an autonomous state [...] for the cultural nationalist seeks not to 'regress' into an arcadia but rather to inspire his community to even higher stages of development."³²

Hutchinson has been adamant in telling political nationalism from cultural one, as the latter's aim is the formation of a "moral community",³³ not immediately reducible to actual political goals. By putting cultural nationalism on the map, he has admittedly paved the way to much of the following research on nationalism – including the present one.

The Fourth Generation (2000s-2010s)

Following Hroch, Anderson, Smith and Hutchinson's reflection, over the last two decades a new generation of nationalism scholars has emerged whose research is purposefully focused on the history of cultural nationalism. Even though many of

³⁰ John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987).

³¹ Hutchinson himself has pointed out that he did not coin the term "cultural nationalism" himself, as it was already present in the works of Kohn and Kedourie, but he expanded on it, transforming it in the concept scholarship is now familiar with. John Hutchinson, interview by Eric Kaufmann, 11th December 2011, www.networks.h-net.org/node/3911/pages/5923/h-nationalism-interview-john-hutchinson (accessed on 16th October 2014).

³² Hutchinson, *Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*, 9.

³³ *Ibid.*, 2.

them do retain a severe opinion on its role and legacy,³⁴ its legitimacy as a distinct and full-fledged academic research field seems to be assured.

Among the scholars who emerged during and after the 1990s, Joep Leerssen has further pushed the boundaries of the very idea of cultural nationalism with his article “The Cultivation of Culture: Towards a Definition of Romantic Nationalism in Europe”³⁵ and even more with his book *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History*.³⁶ Unsatisfied with those studies dealing only with the “sociological and politological”³⁷ aspect of cultural nationalism, the Dutch scholar has instead focused his research on the actual contents of the “Romantic cultivation of culture”,³⁸ i.e. the agenda of the nineteenth century Europe-wide network of cultural nationalists – an international and cross-national network which necessarily requires a “cross-national comparative approach”.³⁹ Political nationalism is not anymore the centre of the attention for Leerssen, but rather the “national thought”, i.e. “a way of seeing human society primarily as consisting of discrete, different nations, each with an obvious right to exist and to command loyalty, each characterized and set apart unambiguously by its own separate identity and culture.”⁴⁰

By expanding on the concept of national thought, Leerssen has arguably contributed to widen the drift between the study of nationalism-as-ideology and cultural nationalism.

³⁴ Stefan Berger, “On the Role of Myths and History in the Construction of National Identity in Modern Europe,” *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 3, 490-502. I am indebted to Guy Beiner for this reference.

³⁵ Joep Leerssen, “The Cultivation of Culture: Towards a Definition of Romantic Nationalism in Europe”, *Working Papers European Studies Amsterdam*, 2 (2005).

³⁶ Joep Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (2006, third edition Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010).

³⁷ Leerssen, “The Cultivation of Culture”, 6.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 11, 18-23.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 11, 15-18.

⁴⁰ Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe*, 15.

Pros, Cons and an Attempt at Positioning

Nationalism studies are a field of research which may already boast seven decades of history. Started off as a reflection on nationalism as a political and historical phenomenon, over time they have evolved from this original theoretical framework to a new, culture-based approach to national identity, eventually regarding the national thought as a separate concept from (although not unrelated to) “traditional” nationalism as a political ideology. As a junior scholar of the twenty-first century, I am in the fortunate position to be able to benefit from the reflection of some brilliant minds, not unlike Dante Alighieri who felt he could receive some of the bread of wisdom from the great philosophers of the past by gathering “at the feet of them who seat at meat, of that which falls from them.”⁴¹

One may safely claim that Kedourie, Hobsbawm, Gellner and Anderson’s view of nationalism as a strictly modern phenomenon is still dominant in this field of study. However, I find Gellner’s approach quite problematic, as by his own admission he is not interested in the specific content of various nationalistic theories,⁴² nor in how nationalism has emerged in time and space. Instead, he based his own theory on nationalism on the idea of human history as a passage from a pre-agrarian to an agrarian and then to an industrial society – a theory admittedly problematic to anyone having a tidy bit of historical sensitivity. The only occasion when he brings up an actual, detailed example of the emergence of nationalism is when he describes his famous made-up country of Ruritania,⁴³ a pastiche of several Central and East European nations which “surprisingly” perfectly fits his theory. Methodological

⁴¹ Dante Alighieri, *The Banquet*, translated by Philip H. Wicksteed (London: J. M. Dent and Co., 1903), 3.

⁴² Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 123.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 58-62.

doubts aside,⁴⁴ I actually find Kedourie’s criticism to Gellner particularly appropriate, as he observes that Gellner’s theory fails to explain how nationalism made its way in lands previously untouched by industrialisation,⁴⁵ claiming that such generalisations are the consequences of Gellner giving in to “sociological temptations”.⁴⁶

On the other hand, the major problem with Hobsbawm’s theory is that, much like Gellner’s, it basically leaves no room for any other interpretations of the national thought but Hobsbawm’s own: Tradition is by definition *always* invented (read “forged”), national identities are *always* dictated by someone’s political agenda, culture is *always* a sheer consequence of political agendas. Such an approach inevitably fails when the invention of tradition becomes, in Karl Popper’s words, an “unconditional scientific prophecy”,⁴⁷ i.e. an *a priori* statement allegedly valid anytime and anywhere.

Smith and Hroch have the great merit to see the elaboration of culture as an actual agent of history instead of a mere by-product of political agendas. Nonetheless, their theories are not flawless either: Smith’s concept of *ethnie* remains problematic as it implies an idea of community based on common bloodline,⁴⁸ whereas Hroch’s model may be misleading in that it might identify as phase-A national movements, i.e. “the beginning of every national revival [...] marked by a passionate concern on the part of a group of individuals, usually intellectuals, for the study of the language, the culture,

⁴⁴ I am totally convinced that presenting made-up case studies as the major example for one’s treatise is a luxury only an established professor may afford – I am not sure how happy my doctoral commission would be if I compared Klingon and Vulcanian nationalisms as the main case study of this dissertation.

⁴⁵ Kedourie, *Nationalism*, 142-143. Incidentally, Kedourie concludes his critique to Gellner stating with incredible naivety (or rather national pride, which would be very paradoxical) that “the areas, however, where industrialism first appeared and made the greatest progress, i.e. Great Britain and the United States of America, are precisely those areas where nationalism is unknown.” Ibid., 143.

⁴⁶ Ibid. Kedourie has never had too much sympathy for social sciences.

⁴⁷ Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (London: Routledge 1963).

⁴⁸ Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe*, 16-17.

the history of the oppressed nationality”,⁴⁹ some cultural milieus whose title of “national” is questionable at best.⁵⁰

The tenets of cultural nationalism, while necessarily disproving neither the modernist nor the ethno-symbolist school, extend the discussion to a different context. Here, attention is paid both to the socio-political context in which a national narrative has been elaborated and to the actual content of the narrative itself. This approach is particularly suitable to investigate a widespread and variegated reality such as the one of nineteenth-century European national activism. Culture is not anymore regarded as a mere pre-requisite to political nationalism, but it becomes a field of study in its own right, with its peculiarity, its vocabulary and its methodology: this is the approach I feel to endorse. Consequently, with this research I shall investigate the history of national epic poetry following in particular Hutchinson and Leerssen’s lead while adopting some of Hroch’s methodology – without dismissing an always healthy Hobsbawm-inspired critical eye on the history of cultural nationalism.

What is a Nation? An Evasive Answer

The attentive reader will have already noticed the absence, so far, of any attempt of mine to define the idea of the nation. This is not a mistake due to oversight, but rather a precise choice, as I do not intend to provide any insight on the nature of nations here: I am interested in analysing the attitude towards national thought of the protagonists of the past, *not* in putting forward a definition of nation myself – one may well call it a pragmatic and hermeneutical approach.

⁴⁹ Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe*, 22.

⁵⁰ Leerssen, “The Cultivation of Culture”, 12-15.

“Nation” is one of the most protean terms in modern and contemporary Western, and possibly global, culture. If the history of nationalism has taught us anything, it is that the very nature of the concept of nation has never been (and never will be, in my opinion) pinned down once and for all: One may write pages after pages trying to finally formulate the ultimate definition of the word “ nation”, only to be outsmarted by a brand new study published shortly after. In the end I cannot but totally agree with Hugh Seton-Watson’s assertion that “no ‘scientific definition’ of nation can be devised; yet the phenomenon has existed and exists.”⁵¹ Therefore, as far as this thesis is concerned, I will be content with the basic assumption that nations are groups which exist or are believed to exist and which are object and subject of historical development. This belief is promoted by groups of individuals who, by claiming so, demarcate their nation (be it cultural and/or political) from othering outsiders.⁵²

⁵¹ Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism* (New York: Westview, 1977), 5.

⁵² As Michael Billig wrote: “ ‘We’ will be reassured to have confirmed ‘ourselves’ as the ‘Other’ of our ‘Other’.” Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: Sage, 1995), 12. I am grateful to my supervisor for having helped me elaborating this Swiss-army-knife definition to my approach to the concept of nation.

CHAPTER 2: TAXONOMY OF NATIONAL LITERARY EPIC POETRY

Hobsbawm's book *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* opens with an alien landing on Earth centuries after mankind had already long disappeared.¹ Hobsbawm argues that it would be extremely difficult for this alien to catch up with the very human idea of nation: By the same token, I may safely add that our alien would also have a hard time catching up with the idea of national epic.

The concept of “national epic poetry” is extremely volatile, and to the best of my knowledge it has rarely been satisfactorily pinned down. Folklorists usually understand national epic poetry as the oral corpus of poems, where “national”² is usually (by far not always) regarded as a synonym of “folk”, but this concept does not automatically apply to literary epics too. To further complicate the matters, many scholars have quite freely labelled as “national” some poems whose composition largely predates the emergence of nations as we know them today, as in the case of the *Gilgamesh* story “added to and unified as a national epic by the Semitic Babylonians”,³ or the *Aeneid* transfigured as the national epic of Rome or even of “present-day Italy.”⁴ These quite head-scratching statements⁵ are symptomatic of two

¹ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, 1.

² *Kombetar* in Albanian, *narodni* in former Serbo-Croatian. “Folk” is also translated as *popullor* in Albanian, a term widely used in the Albanian literature to label folk culture, and particularly oral literature. On the use of *kombetar* and *popullor* in Albanian folklore studies one may compare, among the many instances, the journal *Visaret e Kombit* [Treasures of the Nation], published in Tirana between 1937 and 1944, with Qemal Haxhihasani (ed.), *Këngë popullore legjendare* [Legendary Folk Songs] (Tirana: 1955), both of them dealing exclusively with Albanian folk culture. As usual, the border between “national”, “ethnic” and “folk” is extremely permeable and highly debatable. The situation was not any better in Yugoslavia, where the nationalistic overtones in folklore studies and their terminology did not fail to impress an acute observer like Felix Oinas, who in 1966 published an illuminating report of his recent staying in the Balkan country. See Felix Johannes Oinas, “The Study of Folklore in Yugoslavia”, in *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, Vol. 3, No. 3, [Special Issue: The Yugoslav-American Folklore Seminar] (Dec., 1966), 398-418.

³ Herbert Mason, *Gilgamesh: A Verse Narrative* (New York: New American Library, 1972), 98.

⁴ Karl Galinsky, *Aeneas, Sicily and Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 38. Teivas Oskala too wrote that the *Aeneid* is the epic poem of “Unified Italy” in his contribution “Virgil's *Aeneid* as Homeric, National and Universal Epic”, in Lauri Honko (ed.), *Religion, Myth and Folklore in the World's Epics: The Kalevala and Its Predecessors* (Berlin & New York: Mouton De Gruyter,

facts: a) Too often scholars with just a background in classical and/or other literary studies are not in touch with the academic debate on nationalism, its development and its terminology; b) there is no actual consensus at all on the very nature of national epic. What shall we mean by national epic poetry? And what has made epos such an effective nation-building tool in European culture?⁶

Bringing Epic Home

“Epic” is an overused word. The *Oxford Dictionary of English* defines epic as “a long poem, typically one derived from ancient oral tradition, narrating the deeds and adventures of heroic or legendary figures of the past history of a nation”⁷ and, by the same token, the entire “genre of epics”.⁸ However, nowadays this term is not anymore a prerogative of poetry, as it may also refer to “a long film, book, or other work portraying heroic deeds or adventures or covering an extended period of time”.⁹ Given the larger-than-life idea that it bears, the term has ended up signifying in current English something “heroic or grand in scale or character”,¹⁰ usually in contexts very

1990), 49-72. I cannot but raise an eyebrow to such a statement, as I (and everybody having some experience with contemporary Italian cultural life) can personally guarantee that the *Aeneid* is by no means regarded by the Italians as their national epic. On the attempts to provide Italy with an actual national epic see below, 160-161.

⁵ Statements which may be well appreciated by those who support the idea of the *longue-durée* roots of national identities.

⁶ European history and culture(s) are the main focus of this work, consequently all future statements on culture and literature, far from claiming any universal validity, ought to be understood within the “limits” of the European cultural space.

⁷ *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 3rd ed., s.v. “epic”.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.* Curiously, the same dictionary does not have an entry for the closely-related term “epos”, which is to be found on the *Oxford English Dictionary* instead as the “collective term for early unwritten narrative poems celebrating incidents of heroic tradition; the rudimentary form of epic poetry”: *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. “epos”. I am grateful to Kendra Willson for this reference.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

far from the original meaning of the word – including contemporary Internet-based expressions like “epic fail” or “epic win”.¹¹

However, general audience are not alone when it comes to take liberties with the term “epic”. Academics too have at times regarded as epic some works whose epic credentials are otherwise rather questionable: Philip Bohlman and Nada Petković, for instance, enthusiastically place “the Judeo-Christian Bible” alongside the Homeric poems and the *Rāmāyaṇa* as the foremost representatives of ancient epos.¹² Leaving aside the quite many remarks one may bring up against the definition of the Bible as an epic cycle, point is that “epic” is nowadays a term used to describe realms of human culture usually extremely distant from what this word originally referred to. My understanding of literary epic poetry is much narrower than the previous example, and it is based on three basic assumptions.

First and foremost, epos is *narrative poetry*: there is a plot involved, an actual story takes place. Aristotle first identified the element of narration as the genre’s fundamental feature,¹³ and more than two millennia later this concept still holds water, having been adopted by scholars like Honko,¹⁴ Lord,¹⁵ and Oinas.¹⁶

Second, having just established the nature of epos as narrative poetry, one ought automatically infer that we are dealing with actual *poems*, i.e. the text is made of verses based on a specific metric pattern (although the metre itself may vary). This cuts off all those novels usually associated with epic due to their vast scope of their

¹¹ <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=epic> (accessed on 3rd November 2014).

¹² Philip Vilas Bohlman and Nada Petković, Introduction to Philip Vilas Bohlman and Nada Petković (eds.), *Balkan Epic: Song, History, Modernity* (Lanham, Toronto, Plymouth, UK: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 2.

¹³ Aristotle, *Ars Poetica*, ed. R. Kassel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), section 1449β.

¹⁴ Lauri Honko, Introduction to Honko (ed.), *Religion, Myth and Folklore in the World’s Epics*, 1-27.

¹⁵ Albert Lord, “Homer as Oral Poet”, in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Vol. 72 (1968), 1-46.

¹⁶ Felix Johannes Oinas, “Folk Epic”, in Robert M. Dorson (ed.), *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 99-115. While in this paper Oinas specifically deals with oral epics only, his definition may be well applied to the entirety of the epic genre.

plots and characters like J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* or James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* – or Miloš Crnjanski's *Seobe* [Migrations], if we want to pick an example from the Balkans.

Last but not least, this poetic narrative shall retain an authentically heroic, larger-than-life atmosphere, a feature regarded as mandatory by Cecil Bowra.¹⁷ One can indeed write a poem in impeccable Homeric style about the daring exploits of history doctoral students, but the author of such a poem would rather trespass another genre, a genre which, from Homer's *Batrachomyomachia* to Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1712) and Giuseppe Parini's *Il giorno* [The Day] (1763-1765), has always existed alongside epic proper and to which it represents the healthy yet sympathetic counterbalance, i.e. mock-epic.

Having tackled the overall features of epos, we shall now observe what becomes of this genre once it enters the maze of cultural nationalism.

National Epos as a Mirror

As Kendra Willson pointed out, national epic poems are compositions expected “to reflect the supposedly unique national character of the nation which they represent...”¹⁸ Willson's reflection, in my opinion, does pin down the *raison d'être* of national epos, and it may be used to elaborate a first definition of this phenomenon: *national epic is poetry written in heroic style whose ultimate goal is to reflect the soul of the nation*. I refrain from calling national epos a subgenre distinct from ordinary epic, as from a strictly literary point of view it is virtually impossible to tell a

¹⁷ Hence his definition of epos as “heroic poetry”. See Bowra, *Heroic Poetry*, 1-47. He too, however, stresses the importance of the element of narration embedded in this kind of poetry.

¹⁸ Kendra Willson, “Literary Diplomacy and the International Genre of National Epic”, in Merrill Kaplan and Timothy R. Tangherlini (eds.), *News from Other Worlds: Studies in Nordic Folklore, Mythology and Culture* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: North Pinehurst Press, 2012) 154-172.

“national” literary epic from a “non-national” one: The difference does not lie in the composition style, the metrics or the language, but on the ideas behind the composition (and the reception) of a national epic. It is therefore impossible, I maintain, to explain what makes epic poetry a suitable tool for cultural nation building¹⁹ only on the basis of literary studies, but one shall venture into the history of ideas and culture.

On this point, a crucial contribution comes from literary structuralism, and particularly from the work of Asbjørn Aarseth (1935-2009). Aarseth was a Norwegian literary historian, a representative of the structuralist school in his country.²⁰ In his brilliant 1979 volume *Episke strukturer* [Epic Structures],²¹ Aarseth argued that in epic literature the actual narrator [*faktisk forfatter*] and the actual reader [*faktisk leser*] are distinct from the immanent narrator [*immanent forfatter*] and the immanent reader [*immanent leser*], i.e. the poem’s narrating voice and the addressed audience:²² It is not Homer’s or Virgil’s voice the one which is heard in the *Iliad* and in the *Aeneid*, nor we happen to know about their opinions, feelings, personalities – unlike other genres like lyric poetry or novel.²³ The audience too is depersonalised: there might be a dedication to this or that personality, but the poem does not address anyone in particular.

¹⁹ Of course, epic is by no means the only literary genre or cultural product which has been used and reinvented for nationalistic purposes. Music, painting, folklore, architecture: the national thought has found its way through many other realms of human culture, epic literature being only one of them. On this point see Billig, *Banal Nationalism*.

²⁰ Sven Storelev, “Semiotics in Norway”, in Thomas A. Sebeok and Jean Umiker-Sebeok, *The Semiotic Sphere* (New York & London: Plenum Press, 1986), 369-386.

²¹ Asbjørn Aarseth, *Episke strukturer: Innføring i anvendt fortellingsteori* [Epic Structures: Introduction to Applied Narrative Theory], 2nd edition (1979. Reprint, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1991).

²² *Ibid.*, 26-31. Aarseth developed this theory on the basis of the distinction between author and narrator, first elaborated by Wayne Booth in 1961, theory which is a staple of structuralist literary analysis. See Wayne Clayton Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

²³ Aarseth mentions Petronius, Augustine and Dante as primary examples of personal, authorial narration. *Episke strukturer*, 21.

This immanentisation and depersonalisation of narrator and audience is, in my opinion, what makes epic such a terrific nation-building tool: on the one hand, the immanent narrator is everybody, is the collective voice which expresses itself in the heroic verse, is the nation itself. On the other hand, the actual reader becomes part of a collective, immanent audience: It is the entirety of the nation which becomes the beneficiary of the poem's message. From immanent to immanent, from collective to collective, from the nation to the nation: the role of epic as a mirror is now fulfilled.

Special Features

After having expanded on the nature of national epic, we shall now ask ourselves which are the credentials an epic poem should showcase to be regarded as an actual piece of national epic poetry. Keeping a structuralist eye on national epos, I argue that there are four elements, four special features which may be used as an effective rule of thumb.

Author's Intention

First and foremost, there is the *author's intention*. If the poet more or less overtly declares the intention to pen an epos supposedly having a national inspiration or somewhat connected to national culture and history (dedications, introductions and prologues being the place where it is more likely to find such a statement spelled out), we might reasonably regard this poem as a national epic. A quite telling example of an in-poem statement by the author on the national character of an epic is to be found in Njegoš's famous dedication of his *Gorski Vijenac* "to the ashes of the father of

Serbia” Đorđe Petrović Karadžorđe (1768-1817),²⁴ the leader of the 1804 Serbian uprising:

Let this century of ours be the pride of all the centuries,
 It shall be a fateful era striking awe for generations.
 In this century eight children were born as if from the same womb;
 from the cradle of Bellona they made their appearance on earth:
 Napoleon; Charles; Blucher; the Duke of Wellington, and Suvorov;
 Karageorge, the scourge of tyrants; Schwarzenberg and Kutuzov, too.
 Ares, the horror of the earth, made them drunk with martial glory
 and gave them the earth's arena in which to fight one another.
 It is not hard for a lion to come forth from a spacious bush.
 The nest of genius is built only among greater nations.
 There, above all, he finds the stuff needed for his deeds of glory
 and a proud garland of triumph to adorn the hero's bold head.
 But the hero of Topola, the great, immortal Karageorge,
 saw many hurdles in his way, yet he reached his grandiose goal.
 He roused people, christened the land, and broke the barbarous fetters,
 summoned the Serbs back from the dead, and breathed life into their souls.
 He is the Immortal's secret: he gave the Serbs the chests of steel
 and awakened the lion's heart in those who had lost their courage.
 The bands of the Eastern Pharaoh turn to ice in fear before George.
 Through George the Serbian hearts and arms were instilled with high
 bravery!
 Stamboul, the bloodthirsty father of the plague, trembles before him,
 even the Turks swear by his sabre - no other oath have they indeed.
 [...]
 Yes, a hero's life is always haunted by a tragic ending.
 It was destiny that your head had to pay the price for its wreath!
 [...]
 Later generations judge deeds and give to all what they deserve.
 Everybody's curse falls on people like Boris and Vukašin.
 The disgusting name of Piso must not blemish the calendar.
 Orestes' justice comes like the bolt from heaven to Aegisthus.
 [...]
 Mean envy vomits forth darkness upon your illustrious grave,
 but who can put out the powerful, celestial light of your soul?
 Miserable, ugly darkness - can it dim the glow of such light?
 Darkness hides from the light, and yet it only makes the light more bright.
 The life-giving flame of your torch will shine for the Serb forever,
 and it will grow more luminous and miraculous for ages.
 Serbian women used to give birth to Dušan and nurse Obilić,
 and now Serbian women give birth to such heroes as Požarski,
 all wonderful and noble men! Serbdom breathes nobility now.

²⁴ Often anglicised as Karageorge.

Away from the Serbs, you vile curse - the Serbs have now fulfilled their
vow!²⁵

Here Njegoš provides a wonderful example of how to give an epic poem a national spin. The liberation of Serbia from the Turkish yoke is depicted as a passage from darkness to light, from slavery to liberation. This image is solidified by the allegorical depiction²⁶ of the Sultan as the “Eastern Pharaoh”, thus associating Karageorge to Moses and the liberation of the Serbs from the Ottoman Empire to the one of the biblical Israelites, God’s chosen people, from their Egyptian captivity. While Karageorge is the hero of this dedication (a triumph of classical, modern and biblical references), its actual protagonist is *Srpstvo* [Serbdom], i.e. the Serbian nation as a whole.²⁷ Such a dedication undeniably showcases the author’s intention to compose a national epic.

Timeframe

In order to provide an epos with a national overtone, the poet must necessarily already have some sort of national mindset. This leads us to the second characteristic of a national epic poem: the *timeframe*, i.e. the poem’s actual composition date. In fact, if we accept the basic tenets of cultural nationalism, we are somewhat forced to acknowledge that it is not possible to have genuine national epic until the late Middle Ages, when national thought as we know it started being developed.²⁸

²⁵ Njegoš, *Gorski Vijenac*, Dedication.

²⁶ On the use of allegory in national epic poetry see below, 57-64.

²⁷ See Skendi, *The Poetics of Slavdom*, vol. II, 591-593. Incidentally, some contemporary Montenegrin authors argue that the celebration of *Srpstvo* and Serbian heroes in the Gorski Vijenac shall by no means be regarded as a sign of Njegoš giving up of his Montenegrin identity. See Ilija Despotović, “Jedan pogled na Njegoševo srpstvo” [A Look at Njegoš’s Serbdom], in *MATICA – časopis za društvena pitanja, nauku i kulturu*, jesen/zima 2012, 197-204.

²⁸ Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe*, 25-51.

National Language

The third characteristic of a full-fledged national epic poem is that it has to be composed in the *national language*. Some late-medieval authors had already acknowledged vernacular languages as potentially able to convey elaborated ideas and poetry,²⁹ and some of these vernacular languages were systematised and/or officialised during the Renaissance.³⁰ The invention of printing helped spreading what were to become “national” languages,³¹ and eventually Romanticism further cemented the role of language in a nation’s development thanks to the philosophy by Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1802). The role of the language and its relationship with human nature was one of the most important themes in Herder’s reflection, a theme which he fleshed out throughout his entire life, particularly in his *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache* [Essay on the Origin of Language]³² and the much later *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* [Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Humanity].³³ For Herder, language is the chief instrument by which humans acquire knowledge of the surrounding world. However, there is no specific language which shall be regarded as superior in terms of effectiveness, insightfulness, or by virtue of some sort of divine attribution: All languages, therefore, enjoy equal dignity, as they stem directly “from the human soul”.³⁴ This idea had of course a dramatic impact on the elaboration of the idea of the nation, and also of the idea of

²⁹ Most notably Dante Alighieri in his *De vulgari eloquentia*, edited by Enrico Fenzi et al. (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2012).

³⁰ Just to bring up some examples, in the sixteenth century French became the official language of the Kingdom of France with the Ordinance of Villiers-Cotterêts (1539), Martin Luther’s translation of the Bible (1522-1534) is regarded as the founding moment of modern German language, and Italian literates agreed on the dialect of Florence as the basis of Italian.

³¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 37-46.

³² Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache* [Essay on the Origin of Language] (Berlin: 1772).

³³ Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* [Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Humanity], 4 vol., (Riga und Leipzig: Hartknoch, 1784-1791).

³⁴ “...aus der menschlichen Seele”. Herder, *Abhandlung*, 139.

national epics: If the language is the spirit of the nation, an authentic national poem may only be written in the national language.

Granted, nationalistic themes and agenda were often elaborated in languages other than the “national” one: German language played a crucial role in the cultivation of Croatian culture in the first half of the nineteenth-century,³⁵ while Albanian cultural activists in the Ottoman Empire and abroad made wide use of Greek, Italian, and Turkish to pen nationalistic literature and essays.³⁶ However, this does not apply so easily to national epics: as a piece of art supposedly mirroring the soul of the nation, the use of the national language inevitably becomes a major requirement. This is one of the reasons why Adam Mickiewicz’s (Lit.: Adomas Mickevičius, 1798-1855) epic *Pan Tadeusz* [Sir Thaddeus] (1834) is not regarded as a Lithuanian national poem, despite the work’s very first lines are a striking declaration of the author’s love for the country:

Lithuania, my country, thou art like health; how much thou shouldst
be prized only he can learn who has lost thee. To-day thy beauty in all
its splendour I see and describe, for I yearn for thee.³⁷

Despite this display of patriotic love,³⁸ in the end the use of Polish language cuts *Pan Tadeusz* off from the Lithuanian literary national pantheon, to the extent that Romantic Lithuanian culture does not have any actual national epic poem, unlike its

³⁵ Daniel Baric, *Langue allemande, identité croate* [German Language, Croatian Identity] (Paris: Armand Colin, 2013).

³⁶ George W. Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle: Ottoman Rule, Islam and the Albanians, 1874-1913* (London & New York: I. B. Tauris), 2006; Giuseppe Schirò jr., *Storia della letteratura albanese* [History of the Albanian Literature] (Milano: Nuova Accademia Editrice, 1959).

³⁷ Adam Mickiewicz, *Pan Tadeusz, czyli ostatni zajazd na Litwie. Historia szlachecka z roku 1811 i 1812 we dwunastu księgach wierszem* [Sir Thaddeus, or the Last Lithuanian Foray: A Story of Life among Polish Gentlefolk in the Years 1811 and 1812], trans. George Rapall Noyes (London & Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1917), lines 1-3.

³⁸ One may well argue, however, that the country Mickiewicz wrote about was not “Lithuanian Lithuania”, but rather the heavily Polonised one of the times of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569-1795).

other Baltic relatives.³⁹ Another example, this time from the Balkans, is the unlucky fate of the Bulgarian writer Grigor Stavrev Pärličev's (Gr.: Grigorios Stavridis, Mac.: Grigor Stavrev Prličev, 1829-1893) poem *O Armatolos* [The Armatolos, i.e. a member of an irregular militia in the Ottoman Balkans], written in 1860.⁴⁰ This epic recounts the skirmishes between Bulgarians, led by Cosmas or Kuzman Kapidan (an actual historical figure), and Albanians in mid-nineteenth century Macedonia. While the topic almost naturally lends itself to a nationalistic interpretation, the fact that *O Armatolos* was composed in Greek⁴¹ mercilessly prevented it from becoming canon epic poetry in Macedonia⁴² (where it is known as *Serdarot*) or Bulgaria (there translated as *Serdarijat*). The controversy over the relationship between Macedonian and Bulgarian national identities only further complicates the status of the *Armatolos* in the literary histories of these countries.⁴³

³⁹ As Scholz bluntly stated, "In Litauen hat es keine Versuche gegeben, ein Nationalepos auf der Grundlage von Folkloretexten in litauischer Sprache zu schaffen." [In Lithuania there has been no attempt at creating a national epos on the basis of folk texts in Lithuanian language.] Friedrich Scholz, *Die Literaturen des Baltikums: Ihre Entstehung und Entwicklung* [The Literatures of the Baltic: Their Emergence and Development] (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990), 284.

⁴⁰ Grigorios Stavridis, *O Armatolos* [The Armatolos] (Athens, 1860).

⁴¹ Pärličev wrote it with the specific purpose to partake in a Greek poetry contest, which he won.

⁴² Gane Todorovski, "Il Poema epico come forma letteraria caratteristica della tradizione mediterranea con particolare riferimento all'analogia Mažuranić – Njegoš – Prličev" [The Epic Poem as the Characteristic Literary Form of Mediterranean Tradition with Particular Reference to the Mažuranić – Njegoš – Prličev Analogy], in Ante Stamać et al. (eds.), *Les littératures européennes contemporaines et la tradition méditerranéenne* [Contemporary European Literatures and the Mediterranean Tradition] (Le pont/The Bridge: Zagreb, 1974), 231-236.

⁴³ Pärličev himself attempted a Bulgarian translation of this epic poem, translation which was poorly received due to its author's unfamiliarity with Bulgarian language. This caused him to eventually part ways with the Bulgarian national cause. For an overlook on Pärličev's life and contested legacy see Raymond Detrez, "Canonization through Competition: The Case of Grigor Pärličev", in *Slavica Gandensia*, 33-1, 2006, 37-89; also Detrez, "The Temptation of National Identity: The Case of Grigor Pärličev", in *Studies in Slavic Literature & Poetics*, 2010, Vol. 55, 53-63; Ioannis N. Grigoriadis, *Instilling Religion in Greek and Turkish Nationalism: A "Sacred Synthesis"* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 22-23. See also below, 149-150.

Reception

While author's intention, timeframe, and language are supposed to provide a sort of "objective" yardstick by which a national epic poem shall be identified, there is still a last element to consider, an element always capable to one-up all the other factors: the poem's *reception*.⁴⁴ Here we find ourselves again in Hobsbawmian territory, for the invented nature of national traditions – and national epos perfectly fits the mould – allows every policy maker, cultural agency or single intellectual to frame a certain epic poem as "national", no matter how old or detached from nationalism the poem actually is. This is the reason why a poem like the *Mahābhārata*, a Sanskrit epic collectively composed between the fourth century BC and the fifth century AD, has enjoyed a considerable nationalist revival in twentieth-century India.⁴⁵ Virtually every epic poem may become "national", as long as there is a substantial reception which legitimises it as such. Again, the *Gorski Vijenac* provides a powerful example, as the dramatically polarised reception the poem experienced over the last centuries has drastically changed its perception as a national epic over time.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ I have to give credit to Kendra Willson for having first pointed out the role of the reception in the identification as national epic poetry of medieval works such as the *Poetic Edda* and the sagas of the Icelanders. See Willson, "Literary Diplomacy and the International Genre of National Epic", 154.

⁴⁵ Pamela Lothspeich, "The Mahābhārata as National History and Allegory in Modern Tales of Abhimanyu", in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, Vol. 71, No. 2, Scripture and Modernity: A Tribute to Professor John Wansbrough (2008), 279-296.

⁴⁶ As brilliantly documented by Wachtel in his *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation*.

CHAPTER 3: THE FOUR HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS OF NATIONAL EPIC

Having pinned down the coordinates by which we can identify national epos, we may now move on to investigate its origins and development. There are four historical contingencies which created national literary epos: The evolution epic had in ancient Rome, its resurgence in the late Middle Ages, the influential works of Camões and Tasso during the Renaissance, and the reception James Macpherson's *Poems of Ossian* enjoyed in Romantic Europe, reception which was consolidated by Herder's reflection.

The Ancient Roots: Roman Epic

Epos represents the beginning of world literature: The five poems concerning the deeds of the ancient Sumerian ruler Gilgamesh were in fact written in Mesopotamia around 2100 BC and then combined into a single, consistent piece of literature by Babylonian writers between 1700 and 1200 BC.¹ Epic poetry also marked the beginning of Western literatures, with the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as the founding works of Greek literary culture. However, the direct antecedent to national epic poetry is not to be found in the Homeric corpus or in the following Greek epos, but rather in the epic literature of republican and imperial Rome.

One of the most striking differences between Latin epos and its Greek counterpart was in fact its heavily politicised tone, in that the majority of Roman composers of epics took inspiration from recent and ancient Roman history and elaborated it in their

¹ Katherine Callen King, *Ancient Epic* (Chichester/Malden: Wiley-Blackwell 2012), 14-15.

poems,² a trend which traces back to the *Annales* by Quintus Ennius (239-269 BC).³ Most of the times Roman writers penned their epics with the intent to celebrate Rome and her victories over the internal and external enemies,⁴ much more rarely they did so in the attempt to oppose the political power.⁵ Virgil's (70-19 BC) *Aeneid* (composed between 29 and 19 BC) is admittedly the most influential, politically-aware epic poem ever provided by Latin literature. The famous lines uttered by Anchises in book VI of the *Aeneid* are the bedrock upon which the underlying poetic legitimization of Virgil's patron, the *princeps* Caesar Augustus, was built, as the latter emerged as the winner of the wars which ravaged the Roman Republic in the wake of Julius Caesar's assassination in 44 BC:⁶

Remember, oh Roman, to rule the peoples
(for these will be your arts), and to establish peace by law,
to spare the defeated and crush the arrogant.⁷

² Although some did eventually write about mythological themes, see Gaius Valerius Flaccus' (died c. AD 90) *Argonautica*, which expands on the well-known story of Jason, Medea and the quest for the Golden Fleece.

³ Ennius, *Annales* [The Annals], ed. by Otto Skutsch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

⁴ Like the Carthaginians in the *Bellum Poenicum* (219-202 BC) by Gnaeus Naevius (270-201 BC) and in the much later *Punica* (101 AD) by Silius Italicus (28-103 AD).

⁵ As Lucanus (39-65 AD) did with his *Bellum Civile* (61-65 AD), also known as *Pharsalia*, a retelling of the battle of Pharsalus (48 BC) which saw the definitive victory of Julius Caesar over the senatorial army led by Pompey. Here, Lucanus represents Caesar as the one who put an end to the Roman Republic, thus marking the beginning of an age of autocracy. The composition of the *Bellum Civile* was part of Lucanus' activities against Nero, who eventually sentenced the poet to death. See Lucanus, *Pharsalia*, ed. by Carolus Hermannus Weise (Leipzig: Bassus, 1835).

⁶ See Karl Galinsky, *Augustus: Introduction to the Life of an Emperor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁷ "Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento - (hae tibi erunt artes), pacique imponere morem, - parcere subiectis et debellare superbos." Virgil, *Aeneid*, ed. by Rosa Calzecchi Onesti (Turin: Einaudi, 1962), book VI, lines 851-853. I am familiar with several English translations of the *Aeneid*. However, despite most of them being excellent renditions of the original, in my opinion they fail at effectively conveying the political and cultural content of these specific lines, as well as the powerful simplicity of Virgil's original Latin text. Moreover, some old works (e.g. Fairclough's and Williams's) translate "regere imperio populos" with "to rule the nations", the term "nation" being incredibly misleading when it comes to ancient Roman culture. For these reasons I decided to translate these lines myself. See Henry Rushton Fairclough (trans.), *Aeneid* by Virgil, (1916-1918, reprint Cambridge, Mass., and London: Loeb, 1969), and Theodore C. Williams (trans.), *Aeneid* by Virgil (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1910).

Far from just lavishly celebrating Augustus and his family (which clearly does), here Virgil provides the *Julii* and Rome with an actual political ideology, an ideology which contemplates the establishment of justice among peoples by the hands of the Romans. Unlike the *Iliad*, the epic of a war and the destiny of those who fought it, and unlike the *Odyssey*, the poetic recount of Ulysses' long journey home, the *Aeneid* is the poetical legitimisation to Augustus' power and to the rise of the Roman Empire.⁸

This connection of Latin epos with (more or less) current political affairs has prompted some classical scholars to actually identify a “national” theme in it – most notably in the *Aeneid*. This was particularly the case (not surprisingly) in the nineteenth century, when influential writers like Giacomo Leopardi (1798-1837) and Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829) regarded the *Aeneid* as the full-fledged Roman national epic, and Virgil as the foremost Roman national writer⁹ – an idea which lingered on well into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.¹⁰ We are again facing the problem of the nature of the nation and how back we are allowed push current political and social terminology and categorisations. However, this issue only further proves the power of the element of reception when it comes to identifying an epic poem as a national one.¹¹

Whether it is possible or not to talk about Roman nationalism is a fascinating topic which deserves a research on its own. What is important here is that Roman epic, and especially Virgil's *Aeneid*, provided a blueprint for those literary epics which, from

⁸ Incidentally, Francis Conte has also regarded these lines as the onset of what became the myth of Moscow and Russia as the Third Rome. See Conte, *Gli Slavi: Le civiltà dell'Europa centrale e orientale* [The Slavs: The Civilisations of Central and Eastern Europe], trans. Ernesto Garino and Dario Formentin (Torino: Einaudi, 1991), 514-518.

⁹ Giacomo Leopardi, *Zibaldone di pensieri* [The Notebooks], 4th July 1823; Friedrich von Schlegel, *Geschichte der alten und neueren Literatur: Vorlesungen, gehalten zu Wien im Jahre 1812* [History of the Old and New Literature: Lectures given in Vienna in the Year 1812] (Berlin: 1841), 90-92.

¹⁰ For a twenty-first-century instance of a scholar identifying the *Aeneid* as Rome's national epic see Alessandra Minisci, *Eneide: Guida alla lettura* [Aeneid: A Reader's Guide] (Milano: Alpha Test, 2006), 25.

¹¹ See above, 48.

the late Middle Ages on, showcased a more and more marked political and then national tone.

Reintroducing the Political Dimension into Medieval Literary Epos

The composition of literary epics did not stop with the transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages. Leaving aside subgenres of epic like the religious and the scientific-didactic ones,¹² traditional Latin epics were composed until the end of the sixth century AD, only to resurface in the seventh and eighth centuries in a totally different political, social, and cultural world: Medieval Latin epics did not deal anymore with the history of a state/nation as a whole, but rather focused on the life of some exceptional personalities like Charlemagne or Louis the Pious,¹³ thus losing the pre-national touch which characterised their Roman predecessors.

This is the conclusion Ernst Kantorowicz (1895-1963) drew from his analysis of medieval political thought, an analysis corroborated also by the study of epic poetry. In his 1951 article *Pro Patria Mori*,¹⁴ Kantorowicz argued that the triumph of Christianity in late-ancient and medieval Western Europe had changed the way allegiance was pledged to the political power. Classical patriotism, Kantorowicz maintains, bonded the citizens to their city, be it the Greek *polis* or Rome, regardless of the territorial expansion these entities might have obtained. It was Christianity which dramatically changed this way of thinking, as Christians were supposed to

¹² See Dieter Schaller, “Das mittelalterliche Epos im Gattungssystem” [Medieval Epos in Genre Theory], in Willi Erzgräber (ed.), *Kontinuität und Transformation der Antike im Mittelalter: Veröffentlichung der Kongreßakten zum Freiburger Symposium des Mediävistenverbandes* [Continuity and Transformation of the Antiquity in the Middle Ages: Proceedings of the Freiburg Symposium of the Medievalists’ Society] (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke 1989), 355-371.

¹³ As in the case, respectively, in the anonymous epos *Karolus et Leo* (composed after 800), and in the *Vita Hludowici imperatoris* (826-828) by Edmoldus Nigellus.

¹⁴ Ernst H. Kantorowicz, “Pro Patria Mori in Medieval Political Thought”, in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (Apr., 1951), 472-492.

pledge their allegiance to the eternal Kingdom of Heaven, not to earthly powers which are bound to eventually decay and die.¹⁵ The fall of the Roman Empire in the West only helped cementing this worldview: The new rulers of Europe could expect loyalty from the people, but it was loyalty to the person, not to the state.

The situation started changing with the Crusades, the establishment of a more regular taxation system and new developments in juridical thought (eleventh century AD). According to Kantorowicz, these factors contributed to the transformation of the political system and the way people related to it: Previously confused political entities started crystallising into actual states which required loyalty independently from their rulers. More importantly, the defence of the earthly kingdoms started being equated to the defence of the Holy Land from the infidels, therefore sacralising the state as well as its protectors. Kantorowicz finds traces of this evolution in literary epic poems:

...around 1170, the poet of the Chanson de Roland muses about the Frankish-French warriors of Charlemagne: "*Se vos murez, esterez seinz martirs*"—"And if you die, you shall be holy martyrs." It is true, of course, that the warriors of Charlemagne supposedly were fighting the Saracens in Spain and therefore equaled crusaders. However, to the French people of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries those Frankish soldiers had become French soldiers while Charles himself figured as "emperor of France." Death against the Saracens therefore was at the same time death for the French emperor and French brothers and compatriots, a fact which gave the "martyrdom" of the slain also a national flavor.¹⁶

The comeback of patriotism in medieval thought and epos pinned down by Kantorowicz is of paramount importance in the history of the idea of national literary epic:¹⁷ The assessment of the importance of states and abstract entities other than

¹⁵ As established in the fifth century AD by Augustine of Hippo in *De civitate Dei* [The City of God], online edition <http://www.augustinus.it/latino/cdd/index2.htm> (accessed on 18th June 2016), book VIII.

¹⁶ Kantorowicz, "Pro Patria Mori in Medieval Political Thought", 482 (footnotes omitted).

¹⁷ Comeback which may also be observed in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, a poem usually closely associated to the genre of epos.

religious ones restored the ability of literary epos to glorify and legitimise earthly political powers larger and more persistent than a single ruler or dynasty.

The reintroduction of the political dimension in Western medieval literary epic may be better appreciated if one juxtaposes it with the masterpiece (as well as standalone representative) of Byzantine literary epic, the *Digenis Akritas* (XII century).¹⁸ As I have mentioned before, the collapse of the Roman Empire in the West accelerated the separation between the religious and the political spheres, a separation propelled by the emergence of an independent Papacy. On the contrary, the survival of the Roman state in the East and the complete subjugation of the Church to the Emperor created a completely different worldview: Christianity, Greek language and *romanitas* completely overlapped here, thus creating a world where ethnical or linguistic boundaries became relatively insignificant. The *Digenis Akritas* perfectly reflects this worldview: Born to the daughter of a Roman general and an Arab emir, the hero Digenis patrols the border (hence his title of *arkitas*, i.e. border guard) between the Eastern Roman Empire and the Islamic world,¹⁹ keeping at bay both the external and the internal troublemakers.²⁰ Being Roman here means being subject to the Emperor and being a Christian, a status which one may embrace at will, as Digenis' father did upon his wedding with a Roman girl, his "racial" background being of no significance whatsoever in this context.

¹⁸ *Digenis Akritas*, edited with Italian translation and commentary by Paolo Odorico (Florence: Giunti, 1995).

¹⁹ A function similar to the one performed by the Persian hero Rustam, one of the heroes of Ferdowsi's epic *Shahnameh*, who defended the Iranian abode against the forces of the Central-Asian nomadic world (Turan). Rustam too was born to mixed family, his father being a Zoroastrian Iranian and his mother a pagan from Central Asia. Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh* [The Book of Kings] (1010 AD), <http://classics.mit.edu/Ferdowsi/kings.html> (accessed on 13th August 2016). See also Richard Payne's essays "The Reinvention of Iran: The Sasanian Empire and the Huns", in Michael Mass (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Attila* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 282-300; and "The Making of Turan: The Fall and Transformation of the Iranian East in Late Antiquity", in *Journal of Late Antiquity*, Vol. 9, Nr. 1, Spring 2016, 4-41.

²⁰ Respectively, the Muslims and a group of Anatolian bandits called *apelatai*. *Digenis Akritas*, book IV.

The comparison between the *Chanson de Roland* and the *Digenis Akritas*²¹ well shows the cultural and political drift between the Latin West and the Byzantine East in the Middle Ages: Whereas Digenis fights in a world where faith equals political belonging, Charlemagne's paladins fight in the name of the faith *and* of a country which is not representative of the entire Christendom, but which is a political entity in its own right – thus marking the second foundation of national literary epic.

Camões and Tasso

By the end of the Middle Ages, epic as a genre was somewhat sidelined by its most successful medieval offspring, i.e. chivalric romance, which became the most popular medium for heroic tales. Epic had to wait until the late sixteenth century to have a major comeback in the European literary scene, and it is in the framework of this resurgence that we may pin down the third foundation of national epic poetry – more specifically in the work of Camões and Tasso, for the first provided the prototype of actual national epic poetry, whereas the second elaborated a seminal theoretical contribution to its evolution.

The First National Epic

The 1572 epic *Os Lusíadas* [The Lusiads²²] by Luís Vaz de Camões (1524-1580), “the Portuguese Virgil” as Voltaire called him,²³ is a glorification of the overseas

²¹ Interestingly, a comparison between the *Chanson* and the *Digenis* has been already made by Albert Lord, as he dedicated the last chapter of his *Singer of Tales* to the search for the remnants of an original formulaic composition method in some medieval literary epics. Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, 198-221.

²² The Lusiads or Lusitanians were the ancients inhabitant of Portugal, who were subdued by the Romans after the Lusitanian war (155-139).

explorations and conquests undertook by Portuguese adventurers – most notably Vasco da Gama (1448-1524), who serves as the protagonist of this work. *Os Lusíadas* shall be regarded as one of the first (if not the very first) national epic poems, as it perfectly showcases the features of the national epic poem: the use of the national language (in this case, Portuguese²⁴), the timeframe, a positive reception,²⁵ and the author's intention – intention spelled out in the following lines:

Cease now those mighty voyages to proclaim,
The Trojan and the learned Greek sustained ;
No more of victories and all their fame,
Which Trajan and great Alexander gained ;
I sing a daring Lusitanian name,
O'er Neptune and o'er Mars to rue ordained ;
Cease all the Ancient Muse to sing was wont,
For other valour rears a bolder front.²⁶

An even bigger clue of Camões' intention to deal with a vaster community that its characters is to be found in the poem's title. This epic is actually called *Os Lusíadas*, “the Portuguese”, not *Vascodagamiad*: For the first time, an literary epic poem is not named after its hero or its location, but after the people its protagonists belong to.

²³ “Le Virgile portugais”. Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet), “Essai sur la poésie épique” [Essay on Epic Poetry], in *Œuvres de M. de Voltaire* [M. de Voltaire's Works], vol. I (Amsterdam: Desbordes, 1732), 209-299.

²⁴ Portuguese became the official language of the Kingdom of Portugal in 1279. See Milton M. Azevedo, *Portuguese: A Linguistic Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 12.

²⁵ To this date *Os Lusíadas* remains the quintessential Portuguese epic poem. RTP, Rádio e Televisão de Portugal, *Grandes livros: "Os Lusíadas", de Luís de Camões* [Great Books: “The Lusiads”, by Luís de Camões], <http://ensina.rtp.pt/artigo/a-ilha-dos-amores/>, 2009 (accessed on 12th April 2016).

²⁶ Luís Vaz de Camões, *Os Lusíadas* [The Lusiads], trans. John James Aubertine (1572. Reprint, London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1868), canto I, stanza 3. Aubertine's translation, despite dating back to the nineteenth century, is still worth praising for its faithfulness to the original text and its pristine English rendition, which makes it a reliable translation to this date. This is also a bilingual edition – a feature which adds more value to Aubertine's work.

History and Allegory

However, despite his epos representing the “prototype” of modern national epos, *Os Lusíadas* did not become a major model for the following generations of national epic writers outside of Portugal,²⁷ nor did Camões elaborated any influential reflection on the topic. This task was actually fulfilled by the other founding figure of national literary epic poetry, i.e. Torquato Tasso (1544-1595), for not only his epic *Gerusalemme Liberata* [Jerusalem Delivered] (1581) is a widely acknowledged masterpiece (although not a national epic) which inspired a host of imitators, but his theoretical reflection on epos helped refounding the entire genre, making it particularly effective as a nation-building tool.²⁸

Tasso’s (actually quite unwilling) theoretical contribution to the development of national epic is to be found in three seminal essays entitled *Discorsi dell'arte poetica ed in particolare sopra il poema eroico* [Treatise on the Art of Poetry, and Especially on the Heroic Poem], written between 1561 and 1562, and eventually published in 1594. Influenced by Aristotelian philosophy, Tasso refused the fable-driven, fantastic tales of the chivalric traditions which found its best incarnation in Matteo Maria Boiardo’s (1434-1494) *Orlando Innamorato* (1495) and Ludovico Ariosto’s (1474-1533) *Orlando Furioso* (1516), instead emphasising the importance of actual historical narration:

²⁷ But it surely became a model for literary epic at large. On Camões’ influence on world literature see George Monteiro, *The Presence of Camões: Influences on the Literature of England, America, and Southern Africa* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1996). See also Nelleke Moser, “Camões as a Romantic Hero: ‘Os Lusíadas’ as an Example of Patriotism in the Netherlands between 1766 and 1880”, in *Portuguese Studies*, Vol. 12 (1996), 55-67, for an interesting case of Romantic reception of Camões outside of Portugal.

²⁸ Significantly, Tasso was an admirer of Camões, whom he honoured with a sonnet penned in 1580. Monteiro, *The Presence of Camões*, 7-16.

The topic – which might also well be called argument – is either made up [...] or is taken from history. I maintain that it is much better to take inspiration from history, for epos has always to pursue verisimilitude (I regard this as common knowledge), and it is just not possible that illustrious deeds, such as the ones of an epic poem, have not been written down and passed on to the future generations without the help of any historical record. Great successes cannot just be unknown, and men regard them as false wherever they are not attested by documents; being hence false, they do not easily feel anger, or terror, or pity, or relief, or sadness, or suspense, or rapture. In the end, they do not follow with quite the same degree of expectation and pleasure the unfolding of the events, as they would if they regarded those events as real or partially real.²⁹

This statement draws a line between Tasso and the old composers of chivalric epics like Boiardo and Ariosto: By choosing history as the epic's most suitable topic, Tasso intends to add weight and importance to the entire genre, as epics would recount the great events of a community's past.

After systematising the role of history (which according to him it also encompasses religious history, i.e. the events narrated in the Bible) in literary epos, Tasso introduces a second, crucial element for the establishment of national epic poetry: *Allegory*, i.e. the way of representing an idea by the means of apparently unrelated imagery. In Tasso's elaboration, allegory becomes somewhat complementary to history, as it breaks the boundaries of mere factual recounting by giving the events of an epic poem a much deeper meaning.³⁰ Tasso introduced this idea in his 1576 essay

²⁹ “La materia, che argomento può ancora comodamente chiamarsi, o si finge [...]; o si toglie dall'Istorie; ma molto meglio è a mio giudizio, che dall'Istoria si prenda, perché dovendo l'Epico cercare in ogni parte il verisimile (presuppongo questi, come principio notissimo) non è verisimile, ch'una azione illustre, quali sono quelle del Poema Eroico, non sia stata scritta, e passata alla memoria dei posterì con l'aiuto d'alcuna Istoria. I successi grandi non possono esser incogniti, e ove non siano ricevuti in iscrittura, da questo solo argomentano gli uomini la loro falsità, e falsi stimandoli, non consentono così facilmente d'essere or mossi ad ira, or a terrore, or a pietà: d'essere or allegrati, or contrastati, or sospesi, or rapiti, e in somma non attendono con quella aspettazione, e con quel diletto i successi delle cose, come farebbono, se que' medesimi successi, o in tutto, o in parte veri stimassero.” Torquato Tasso, *Discorsi dell'arte poetica* [Discourses on the Art of Poetry], I (1587), online edition http://www.bibliotecaitaliana.it/indice/visualizza_scheda/bibit000577 (accessed on 31st May 2016).

³⁰ There is a vast and rich literature on Tasso's allegory. Mindele Anne Treip's *Allegorical Poetic & the Epic: The Renaissance Tradition to Paradise Lost* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1994) is a mandatory reading to understand the impact Tasso had on English literature. Rosanna Morace provides a thoughtful introduction to Tasso's allegory in her *L'allegoria biblica tra 'Gerusalemme Conquistata'*

Allegoria della Gerusalemme Liberata [Allegory of the Jerusalem Delivered], the outcome of a long period of religious and personal turmoil. Here Tasso explains his own epic poem by the means of allegorical interpretation:

...imitation concerns human deeds, which are subjected to human senses, and it strives to get around them by representing them with some effective and expressive words which are meant to show the bodily eyes the represented deeds. It does not concern itself with costumes, affections, or the soul's thoughts – except when they finally come out as the words and deeds which accompany the action. Conversely, allegory contemplates the passions and opinions and costumes not only when they are manifest, but mostly as they remain beneath the surface, and it obscurely explains them with (so we may say) some obscure hints, which can only be understood by the experts of the nature of things.³¹

Tasso suggests that, while the heroic deeds are the product of history and therefore constrained in a specific moment in time, their poetic renditions may in fact symbolise much vaster and deeper religious and political concepts, concepts appealing to a broader community than just the ruling class: One's battle may become everybody's battle ("The army made up by various princes and other Christian soldiers signifies the virile man..."),³² one's victory may become everybody's victory, one's enemy may

e 'Mondo Creato' [Biblical Allegory between the 'Jerusalem Conquered' and 'The Creation of the World'], in Tiziana Piras (ed.), *Gli scrittori italiani e la Bibbia. Atti del convegno di Portogruaro, 21-22 ottobre 2009* [The Italian Writers and the Bible: Proceedings of the Portogruaro Conference, 21-22 October 2009], (Trieste: Edizioni Università di Trieste, 2011), 41-53.

³¹ "...l'imitazione riguarda l'azioni dell'uomo, che sono a i sensi esteriori sottoposte; ed intorno ad esse principalmente affaticandosi, cerca di rappresentarle con parole efficaci ed espressive, ed atte a por chiaramente dinanzi a gli occhi corporali le cose rappresentate: nè considera i costumi, o gli affetti, o i discorsi dell'animo in quanto essi sono intrinseci; ma solamente in quanto fuori se n'escono, e nel parlare e negli atti e nell'opere manifestandosi accompagnano l'azione. L'allegoria, all'incontra, rimira le passioni e le opinioni ed i costumi, non solo in quanto essi appaiono, ma principalmente nel lor essere intrinseco; e più oscuramente le significa con note (per così dire) misteriose, e che solo da i conoscitori della natura delle cose possono essere a pieno comprese." Torquato Tasso, *Allegoria della Gerusalemme Liberata* [Allegory of the Jerusalem Delivered] (1576), online edition http://www.bibliotecaitaliana.it/indice/visualizza_testo_html/bibit001538 (accessed on 31st May 2016).

³² "L'esercito composto di vari principi e d'altri soldati cristiani, significa l'uomo virile...". Tasso, *Allegoria della Gerusalemme Liberata*.

become everybody's enemy ("The African and Asian armies, and the unfortunate battle, are nothing but the enemies, the disasters and the adversities.")³³

It is hard to overemphasize Tasso's impact on contemporary and successive literary epics, many of which may be counted as pieces of national epic poetry. This is particularly true in the case of the Croatian, Polish and Hungarian³⁴ literary cultures, which became very receptive of Tasso's work because of two factors: First, the success Counterreformation enjoyed in those environments paved the way to the positive welcome of such a staunch Catholic writer; second, the wars Croats, Hungarians and Poles had to sustain against the Ottomans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries admittedly favoured the reception of an epic like the *Jerusalem Delivered*.³⁵ These are the reasons behind the success of the 1618 Polish translation of the *Jerusalem* by Piotr Kochanowski (1566-1620), as well as the composition of the *Osman* by Đivo Gundulić³⁶ and of the *Szigeti veszedelem* [The Siege of Szigetvár] by Miklós Zrínyi (Cr.: Nikola Zrinski, 1620-1664) – the latter showcasing all the features of a full-fledged national epic poem.³⁷

³³ "Gli eserciti e d'Africa e d'Asia, e le pugne avverse, altro non sono che i nemici e le sciagure e gli accidenti di contraria fortuna." Ibid.

³⁴ For a reflection on the role Tasso's poetry had in Hungary see László Tusnády, "Tasso Magyarországon" [Tasso in Hungary], in *Irodalomismeret*, XVII. évfolyam, 2007, 1-3. szám, 238-246.

³⁵ As pointed out, among the others, by Czesław Miłosz in his *The History of Polish Literature*, 2nd edition (Berkeley: University of California Press), 117; and by Joanna Pietrzak-Thébault in her "Fortune and Misfortune of Italian Chivalric Literature in the Early Modern Poland", in *Zalążnik Kulturoznawczy*, 1/2014, 430-448. On the reception of Tasso in the literary cultures of Eastern Europe see Henry R. Cooper Jr., "Tasso in Eastern Europe", in *Italica*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (Winter, 1974), 423-434.

³⁶ See below, 78-79.

³⁷ Miklós Zrínyi, *Szigeti veszedelem* [The Siege of Szigetvár] (1651), online edition <http://mek.oszk.hu/01100/01136/01136.htm> (accessed on 18th June 2016). The poem recounts the siege of the Hungarian fortress of Szigetvár by the Ottoman army in 1566. The Hungarian forces were led by another Miklós Zrínyi (1508-1566), the actual great-grandfather of the epic's author. Again, the very nebulous nature of nations and nationalism may always call into question the national credentials of the *Szigeti veszedelem*: On the one hand, the poem opens up with a quite explicit dedication "to the Hungarian nobility" [magyar nemességnek]; on the other hand, we see how so many of the warriors fighting on the Hungarian side actually sport some very Croatian-sounding names, although Magyarised, such as Iván Novákovics, Farkas (Cr.: Vuk) Papratovics, Andrián Radován and so on. The Zrínyi family too was a bilingual, Croatian-Hungarian stock, to the point that in 1660 the poet Miklós's brother Péter (Cr.: Petar, 1621-1671) wrote a Croatian prose translation of the *Adriai tengernek*

Confessional barriers, however, did not prevent Tasso's work from enjoying considerable fortune in some non-Catholic environments too: Orthodox Ruthenian (i.e. Belarusians and Ukrainians) and Russian writers, for instance, were able to read Tasso thanks to Polish mediation,³⁸ and the exposure to his production prompted some Ruthenian and Russian authors to actually develop their own literary epics.³⁹ Protestant Europe too made good use of Tasso's work, as Edmund Spenser (1552-1599) did in *The Faerie Queene* (1590). Even though this allegorical poem⁴⁰ is based on Arthurian legends and English folklore rather than actual history as Tasso advocated, Spenser manages to merge Protestant with patriotic, "national" values, thus creating a brilliant epic glorification of Elizabethan England through the recounting of the adventures of six knights in service of the Queen of Fairies. While these knights serve as religious-morale allegory, they also represent Protestant England in its fight against her external enemies, most notably Spain and Scotland.⁴¹ Of particular interest is the figure of Britomart, the protagonist of the third book: She is a female knight, a heroine in her own right. As a virgin knight, she serves as an allegory for the virtue of virginity, which also makes her another Queen Elizabeth stand-in after the Queen of Fairies herself. Moreover, beyond being an allegory for virtue and for Elizabeth – and

syrenaia (Cr.: Sirena Jadranskoga mora, Eng.: The Siren of the Adriatic Sea), another poem by Miklós originally written in Hungarian in 1651.

³⁸ Crucial, on this point, was the role of the Mohyla Academy in Kiev, see Ryszard Łużny, "The Kiev Mohyla Academy in Relation to Polish Culture", in *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1/2, The Kiev Mohyla Academy: Commemorating the 350th Anniversary of its Founding (1632) (June 1984), 123-135.

³⁹ The first example of Russian literary epic inspired by Tasso (and first actual Russian literary epic ever) is the *Rossiada* (1779) by Mikhail Kheraskov (1733-1807). See Charles A. Moser (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 81-82. On the reception of Tasso among the Eastern Slavs see Cooper Jr., "Tasso in Eastern Europe", 427-429.

⁴⁰ "Allegorical" according to Spenser himself, who fully receives Tasso's ideas on allegory in epos (but not his strictly historicist standpoint), and pays tribute to him in the poem's introduction, see Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* (1596), Letter of the Authors. Also, one cannot but love Spenser's definition of allegory as "darke conceit". Ibid. On Tasso's influence on Spenser see Treip, *Allegorical Poetic & the Epic*, 95-105.

⁴¹ Andrew Hadfeld, *Literature, Politics, and National Identity: Reformation to Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 170-201.

partially also because of this – Britomart enjoys a third, “national” layer of interpretation: She represents Britain, in particular the military spirit of Britain, an analogy strengthened by the intriguing similarity of the name Britomart with “British Mars”.⁴² Arguably, *The Faerie Queene* provided an excellent mirror for the new Protestant, soon-to-become imperial England of the early modern period.

Tassonian allegory is also very well present in nineteenth century national literary epics from the Balkans. Njegoš’s poems are imbued with it, thanks to the mediation of Gundulić:⁴³ We have already seen the *Gorski Vijenac* representing the Serbs as the biblical Hebrews and Karageorge as Moses in order to provide the Serbian struggle against the Ottomans with a sort of divine legitimation.⁴⁴ On top of that, Zlatar argues that the entire fabric of the *Gorski Vijenac* retains an allegorical undertone, for Njegoš represents Montenegro, Serbia, and indeed the whole of Europe, as under attack from Islam, a religion depicted as a corrupting disease, as actual plague (Serb.: *kuga*):⁴⁵

Plague of mankind, may God's wrath be on you!
Is half a world you've already poisoned
with your mean deeds not large enough for you,
that you had to spew out all the venom
of your black soul on this hard rock as well?
Is Serbia from the Danube River
to the blue sea too small an offering?
You rule the throne you've unjustly taken
and are prideful of your bloody scepter;
you insult God from the holy altar,
a mosque rises where the broken Cross lies.⁴⁶

⁴² Alastair Fowler, *Literary Names: Personal Names in British Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 65.

⁴³ See below, 80-81.

⁴⁴ See above, 43-44. Zrínyi too used Mosaic references and Biblical symbolism to represent his Hungarians as people of God, see *Szigeti veszedelem, pars prima*, stanzas 13-15. Self-representations as “God’s own people” are a staple in many cultural nationalisms in the West and beyond, see Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁴⁵ Zlatar, *The Poetics of Slavdom*, vol. II, 593-600.

⁴⁶ Njegoš, *Gorski Vijenac*, lines 49-65.

As plague dismembers the human body, so Islam dismembers Christian Montenegro by the means of the converts, the *poturice* (sing.: *poturica*), i.e. “those who became Turks”:⁴⁷

Behold the work of that wicked monarch,
whom the devil teaches all kinds of things:
"Montenegro I cannot win or tame,
nor call it mine in any real sense;
this is how one should deal with its people."
And so began the devil's Messiah
to offer them sweetmeats of his false faith.
May God strike you, loathsome degenerates,
why do we need the Turk's faith among us?
What will you do with your ancestors' curse?⁴⁸

Among the Albanians, Fishta elaborated a powerful allegory by reinterpreting two figures of Albanian folklore: The *kulshedra*, an evil monster, and the *drangue* (sing.: *drangua*), human-dragon heroes who are bound to fight and defeat the *kulshedra*.⁴⁹ They do not fail to do so in the *Lahuta*, as they banish the monster into a deep cave after a long battle:

With her jaws ripped by pincers,
So she stormed into the cavern,
Down into the depths behind her,
But alas, made no encounter,
For an abyss was her cavern.⁵⁰

The fight, which occupies the entirety of the sixteenth canto of the *Lahuta e Malcis*, is Fishta's allegorical representation of Albania's fight against the invading

⁴⁷ Zlatar, *The Poetics of Slavdom*, vol. II, 589. The word *poturica* has lingered on to this day as a vulgar term for a Muslim South Slav, particularly a Bosnian.

⁴⁸ Njegoš, *Gorski Vijenac*, verses 66-75. The “wicked monarch” is obviously the Sultan. The curse is the one Prince Lazar casted upon all those who did not help him in the fateful battle of Kosovo. Zlatar, *The Poetics of Slavdom*, vol. II, 673-674.

⁴⁹ Robert Elsie, *A Dictionary of Albanian Religion, Mythology, and Folk Culture* (London: Hurst & Co., 2001), “drangua”; “kulshedra” .

⁵⁰ Fishta, *Lahuta*, canto XVI, lines 356-361.

Montenegro, an allegory made more evident by the fact that actual historical Albanian leaders are transformed into *drangue*, thus leaving little doubt as to whom these figures of folklore are supposed to represent.⁵¹

Ossian, Herder, and the Dawn of Folk Epic

The development of national literary epos up until mid-eighteenth century may still be somewhat ascribed solely to the history of ideas or intellectual history, as it mostly happened within the circle of writers and their relatively small, although widespread and influential, audience. Conversely, since the mid-eighteenth century we fully find ourselves in the realm of cultural history, for literary epic was revolutionised by the emergence of folk culture and languages as the untouched chest of national lore. As a consequence of this turn in European culture, writers of national epic poetry started finding inspiration in the folk culture (themes, motifs, metrics...) of their peoples, and on their turn some of these folk-based epics enjoyed a massive popular reception, both at home and abroad, to the point of becoming true symbols of national identity: This was the fourth historical foundation of national epic poetry, and the beginning of what may well be called the Golden Age of national epics is to be found in the publication of the poems of Ossian.

A New Homer?

James Macpherson (1736-1796) was a Scottish literate from the Highland town of Ruthven. Famously, in 1760 he gave to the prints the *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*,

⁵¹ Fishta, *Lahuta*, canto XVI, lines 35-119.

Collected in the Highlands of Scotland,⁵² a collection of Gaelic legends and stories originally composed by the bard Ossian which Macpherson claimed to have collected among the Gaels of the Highlands. Ossian is an Irish bard, the descendant of a line of warriors, the Fenians, who were led by Ossian's father Fingal.⁵³ In the *Fragments*, Ossian recalls the victorious wars waged in the early Middle Ages by the Gaels of Ireland and Scotland against the invading Danes.

Strong of the support provided by prominent Scottish intellectuals like the dramatist John Home (1722-1808)⁵⁴ and the Presbyterian minister and university professor Hugh Blair (1718-1800),⁵⁵ Macpherson soon announced the discovery of an ancient manuscript containing a Gaelic epic poem also attributed to Ossian: This “new” poem was published in 1762 with the title of *Fingal*.⁵⁶ The following year, Macpherson's work came to the fore again, for he brought up another “newly-discovered” Gaelic epos, *Temora*,⁵⁷ which deals with the deeds of Fingal in Ireland following the events of the Danish invasion (interestingly, the last pages of *Temora* contain a brief excerpt of the “original” Gaelic poems Macpherson translated into English – more likely a creation of James' kinsmen Lachlan Macpherson, who

⁵² James Macpherson, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, Collected in the Highlands of Scotland and Translated from the Galic or Erse Language* (Edinburgh: Hamilton & Balfour, 1760). The original editions of the Ossian poems, as well as most of the early translations and documents concerning their authenticity debate are available on the website of the National Library of Scotland, Early Gaelic Book Collection, Ossian Collection: <http://digital.nls.uk/early-gaelic-book-collections> (accessed on 9th March 2015).

⁵³ Over the course of the nineteenth-century, the term “Fenians” was repeatedly used by Irish patriotic organisations both in Ireland and abroad, see Matthew J. Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal and Irish Nationalism, 1882-1916* (Woolbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2006).

⁵⁴ R. George Thomas, “Lord Bute, John Home and Ossian: Two Letters”, in *The Modern Language Review* 51, no. 1 (1956), 73-75.

⁵⁵ Liam McIlvanney, “Hugh Blair, Robert Burns, and the Invention of Scottish Literature”, in *Eighteenth-Century Life*, Volume 29, Number 2, Spring 2005, 25-46.

⁵⁶ James Macpherson, *Fingal, an Ancient Epic Poem in Six Books: Together with Several Other Poems, Composed by Ossian the Son of Fingal. Translated from the Galic Language by James Macpherson* (London: Becket & De Hondt, 1762).

⁵⁷ James Macpherson, *Temora, an Ancient Epic Poem in Eight Books: Together with Several Other Poems, Composed by Ossian, the Son of Fingal. Translated from the Galic Language by James Macpherson* (London: Becket & De Hondt, 1763).

accompanied him during his expeditions to the Highlands).⁵⁸ The three books were eventually combined in one single publication, the 1765 *Works of Ossian*.⁵⁹

It is hard to overestimate the success and influence the Ossian songs had in late eighteenth-century Europe. The magniloquent language, the powerful description of the breathtaking landscapes of Ireland and Scotland, the enthralling battle scenes: All these factors contributed to the birth of “Ossianism”, i.e. the cult of Ossianic poetry, characters and themes which took the European audiences by the storm.⁶⁰ However, not everybody was pleased with the poems of the Gaelic bard: Voltaire (1694-1778), being the staunch classicist that he was, quite bluntly dismissed Ossian’s convoluted style⁶¹ in his reflection on the relationship between the new poetry from the North and its classical counterpart.⁶² Even harsher comments came from Edward Burke (1729-

⁵⁸ Thomas M. Curley, *Samuel Johnson, the Ossian Fraud, and the Celtic Revival in Great Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 260-261.

⁵⁹ James Macpherson, *The Works of Ossian, the Son of Fingal. In Two Volumes. Translated From the Galic Language by James Macpherson* (London: Becket & De Hondt, 1765).

⁶⁰ On the impact the Ossianic poems had in the European literary cultures see Howard Gaskill (ed.), *The Reception of Ossian in Europe* (Bristol: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004).

⁶¹ Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet), “Anciens et modernes: d’un passage d’Homère” [Ancients and Moderns: On a Passage by Homer], in *Œuvres de Voltaire: Questions sur l’Encyclopédie* [Voltaire’s Works: Questions on the *Encyclopédie*] (Paris: Stoupe, 1792), 328-335. Voltaire’s position concerning *The Poems of Ossian* may be better understood if one takes into account the *philosophe*’s history with epos. In fact, Voltaire had already approached this genre earlier in his career both as a composer, having penned the epic *Henriade* in 1723, and also as a critic with his 1727 *Essai sur la poésie épique* [Essay on Epic Poetry]. Set on the background of the religious conflict between Catholics and Protestants which took place in France in the late sixteenth century, the *Henriade* is a recount of the siege of Paris carried by the French King Henry III and King Henry III of Navarre, who would go on to become King of France with the name of Henry IV upon the assassination of the French ruler (1589). The poem is very Aristotelian in its structure, thus testifying to Voltaire’s predilection for classical literary forms. See Voltaire, “Henriade”, in *Œuvres de M. de Voltaire* [M. de Voltaire’s Works], vol. I (Amsterdam: Desbordes, 1732), 1-207. His classicist position is further unfolded in the *Essai sur la poésie épique*, which is a comparative study of Europe’s major literary epics, ranging from Homer to Milton. Despite the obsolescence of much of Voltaire’s cognitions, the *Essai* still provides some valuable reflections on the genre of epos in general and on some of the authors in particular.

⁶² Incidentally, Voltaire completely failed to understand the meaning of the term “Galic” [sic] featured in the titles of Macpherson’s books: Instead of the language of the Highlands, Voltaire presumed that *Fingal* had been “composed...in the language of Wales [Fr. *Galles*, hence the mistake], which is also partially Low Bretons’ own” [composé...dans la langue du pays de Galles, laquelle est encore en partie celle des Bas-Bretons.], thus showing his inability to tell Gaelic from Welsh. Voltaire, “Anciens et modernes”, 328. Others would make the same mistake: Italian cult comic character Dylan Dog had once an adventure set on the fictional Welsh village of Llangwntffrwd, where the local language is again Gaelic and not Welsh. The fact that the plot is actually based on linguistics an translation, as well as that one of the protagonists is a stand-in for the semiologist Umberto Eco (1932-2016), only

1797), who in 1784 vented all his contempt in a letter to the painter James Berry (1741-1806):

It is with great concern that I have observed of late years this taste for false sublime gaining ground in England, particularly among artists. I attribute it in great measure to certain compositions, which have been extolled by interested prejudices, and admired by credulous, for no other reason than they were not understood. [...] This, I think, is the true way to account for the applause and the admiration that have been given to the miserable rhapsodies published by Macpherson, under the name of Ossian.⁶³

On the other hand, many other intellectuals and personalities gave Macpherson a much more positive reception: Madame de Staël (1766-1817) did appreciate the poems of Ossian while still valuing Homer as a superior poet;⁶⁴ Goethe (1749-1832), who was introduced to Ossianic poetry by Herder, for a while was extremely interested in the production of the Gaelic bard, to the point of attempting a German translation of the *Temora*'s Gaelic lines,⁶⁵ as well as to make Ossian a favourite reading of his tragic hero Werther.⁶⁶ The *empereur* Napoleon (1769-1821) was a huge

confuses the reader who happens to have some basic notions of Welsh and Scottish cultures and history. See Tiziano Scavi, "Lassù qualcuno ci chiama" [Someone Up There is Calling Us], *Dylan Dog*, No.136 (Milan: Sergio Bonelli Editore, 1998).

⁶³ Edward Burke to James Berry, August 1784, in James Prior, *Memoir of the Life and Character of Right Hon. Edward Burke; with Specimens of His Poetry and Letters, and an Estimate of His Genius and Talents, Compared with Those of His Great Contemporaries*, 2nd ed., vol. I (London: Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, 1826), 430. Burke's straightforward rejection of the Ossianic poems is particularly striking if one takes into account that it was actually Burke's seminal reflection on sublime in poetry (including epic) which admittedly paved the way to much of Ossian's success. See Edward Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757).

⁶⁴ Madame de Staël (Anne Louise Germaine de Staël-Holstein), *De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales* [On Literature Considered in its Relationship with Social Institutions] (1800, reprint Paris & London: Colburn, 1812), 252-256.

⁶⁵ Caitríona Ó Dochartaig, "Goethe's Translation from the Gaelic *Ossian*", in Gaskill (ed.), *The Reception of Ossian in Europe*, 156-175; John Henning, "Goethe's Translation of Ossian's 'The Song of Selma'", in *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (Jan., 1946), p. 77-87; Howard Gaskill, "Herder, Ossian and the Celtic", in Terence Brown (ed.), *Celticism* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), 257-271.

⁶⁶ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers/The Sorrows of Young Werther*, dual-language edition by Stanley Applebaum (1787. Reprint, Mineola & New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2004). See also Francis J. Lampion, "Goethe, Ossian and *Werther*", in Stafford, Gaskill (eds.), *From Gaelic to Romantic*, 97-106.

Ossian “fan”,⁶⁷ so dedicated as to carry along a copy of the poems (which he was reading in the Italian translation by Melchiorre Cesarotti)⁶⁸ during his Egyptian and Russian campaign.⁶⁹ The preeminent Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711-1776) too was an initial estimator of Macpherson’s work, although his enthusiasm strongly diminished when suspicions started to be cast upon the authenticity of the poems.⁷⁰

In fact, soon British scholars started doubting the authenticity of the songs of Ossian. Macpherson was repeatedly asked to circulate the original manuscript, but to no avail: Until his death Macpherson always refused to make public his “original” Celtic sources. After the passing of Macpherson, the poems of Ossian were soon recognised to be an original composition of his, and that the Gaelic manuscript had actually never existed.⁷¹ This polemic eventually tampered Macpherson’s posthumous credibility as a scholar as well as the popularity of his work, even among those people whose work was actually a direct consequence of Macpherson’s activities: Edward Williams (1747-1826), better known as Iolo Morganwg, claimed that “Fingal as a poem is as allowable as any other poetical fiction, but as an historical

⁶⁷ I would actually go as far as claiming that Ossianism was a legitimate antecedent to contemporary pop culture and fandom.

⁶⁸ Melchiorre Cesarotti (1730-1808) provided a first Italian translation of the Ossianic *corpus* in 1763, but the publication of *Temora* forced him to provide a new and definitive edition in 1772. See Melchiorre Cesarotti, *Poesie di Ossian, figlio di Fingal, antico poeta celtico, trasportate dalla Prosa Inglese in verso Italiano dall’ab. Melchior Cesarotti edizione II ricorretta e accresciuta del restante dei componimenti dello stesso Autore* [Poems of Ossian, Son of Fingal, Ancient Celtic Poet, Brought from the English Prose to the Italian Verse by Abbot Melchiorre Cesarotti, 2nd Edition Corrected and Expanded with the Remaining Compositions by the Same Author] (Padua: Comino, 1772).

⁶⁹ See also Frank George Healey, *The Literary Culture of Napoleon* (Paris: Librairie Droz, 1959).

⁷⁰ Claudia Maria Schmidt, *David Hume: Reason in History* (University Park: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 320-321, 381-392.

⁷¹ On the history of the debunking of Ossian, see James Porter, ““Bring Me the Head of James Macpherson”: The Execution of Ossian and the Wellsprings of Folkloristic Discourse”, in *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 114, No. 454, James Macpherson and the Ossian Epic Debate (Autumn, 2001), 396-435. Some contemporary researchers tend to be less drastic in labelling Macpherson as a downright forger, for he did take inspiration from actual Gaelic and Irish folklore and history for his poems. See Fiona J. Stafford, Howard Gaskill (eds.), *From Gaelic to Romantic: Ossianic Translations* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998); others, on the other hand, continue to retain a negative opinion on Macpherson’s work and legacy, see Curley, *Samuel Johnson, the Ossian Fraud, and the Celtic Revival in Great Britain and Ireland*.

evidence its Author should have been pilloried for a perjurer of intentional deceit”,⁷² despite his role in Welsh culture being very similar to Macpherson’s.⁷³ Even Théodore de La Villemarqué (1815-1895),⁷⁴ who was basically Macpherson’s counterpart in Brittany, was sceptical of the authenticity of the *Poems of Ossian*, as we may infer from his need, in one of his works, to specify the existence of “l’Ossian authentique” [the authentic Ossian], thus implicitly admitting the existence of a fake Ossian.⁷⁵ Despite this credibility backlash, it shall also be noticed that the artistic value of the Ossianic poems has stood the test of time, as even now they are part of English literary canon, thus testifying to Macpherson’s literary skills.

⁷² Iolo Morganwg, draft, National Library of Wales 13091E, 300, in Mary-Ann Constantine, “Ossian in Wales and Brittany”, in Gaskill (ed.), *The Reception of Ossian in Europe*, 67-90.

⁷³ Iolo Morganwg was the man who almost single-handedly revolutionised Welsh culture in the eighteenth century. One of his many credits is the establishment of the *Eisteddfod*, the literary competition in Welsh language (1792). Much like Macpherson, he published many poems which he presented as original pieces of medieval Welsh literature, and much like in Macpherson’s case his claims have been eventually disproved. For an overview on Iolo’s controversial heritage and influence on modern Welsh culture see Mary-Ann Constantine, “Songs and Stones: Iolo Morganwg (1747-1826), Mason and Bard”, in *The Eighteenth Century*, Vol. 47, No. 2/3, Ballads and Songs in the Eighteenth Century (SUMMER/FALL 2006), 233-251.

⁷⁴ Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué was a French nobleman who became interested in the history and folklore of his native Brittany thanks to his exposure to the work of Macpherson, Iolo, and the Grimm Brothers. He is mostly known for his *Barzaz-Breiz*, a collection of Breton folksongs, legends and epic songs first published in 1839. Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué, *Barzaz-Breiz – Chants populaires de la Bretagne recueillis et publiés avec une Traduction française, des Arguments, des Notes et les Mélodies originales, par Th. Hersart de La Villemarqué* [Barzaz-Breiz – Folk Songs of Brittany Collected and Published with French Translation of the Arguments, Notes and Original Melodies by Th. Hersart de La Villemarqué], 4th edition (Paris: Franck, 1846). As in the case of Macpherson, the authenticity of the material presented in the *Barzaz-Breiz* is questionable at best, most of the poems being actually a free rendition of folk motives made by La Villemarqué himself. However, unlike in Macpherson’s case his reputation as a writer remained more or less intact, both due to the fact that part of the *Barzaz-Breiz* was based on some genuine Breton tradition, and because he also published many other valuable studies on Breton folk culture. The *Barzaz-Breiz* became eventually enormously influential in the Breton-speaking circles, and many local writers found in this book the legitimation for writing in their native tongue. See Hervé Abalain, *Histoire de la langue bretonne* [History of Breton Language], 10th edition (Paris: Jean-Paul Gisserot, 2000), 107. For the influence of Macpherson, Iolo, and the Grimm Brothers on La Villemarqué see Mary-Ann Constantine’s studies “Ossian in Wales and Brittany”, and *The Truth Against the World: Iolo Morganwg and Romantic Forgery* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), as well as Bernhard Lauer, Bärbel Plötner, & Donatien Laurent, “Jacob Grimm und Th. Hersart de La Villemarqué: Ein Briefwechsel aus der Frühzeit der modernen Keltologie” [Jacob Grimm and Th. Hersart de La Villemarqué: A Correspondence at the Dawn of Modern Celtic Studies], in *Jahrbuch der Brüder Grimm-Gesellschaft* 1, 1991, 17-83.

⁷⁵ Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué, *Myrdhinn ou l’enchanteur Merlin. Son histoire ses œuvres son influence* [Myrdhinn or Merlin the Enchanter. His History, His Works and His Influence] (Paris: Didier et Cie, 1862), 49.

From Poetry to Philosophy

The publication of the Ossian poems could not have been more timely, for the exploration and colonisation of American, African, and Asian lands conducted by the European maritime powers since the fifteenth century had revolutionised the perception Europeans had of the world. Intellectuals found themselves compelled to elaborate the contact with non-European populations, languages and culture: this favoured the emergence of new disciplines like anthropology⁷⁶ and comparative linguistics,⁷⁷ as well as the introduction of new and alternative representations of mankind in European thought and art.⁷⁸ This is the origin of the idea of the “noble savage”, i.e. the description of “foreign peoples...living a happier and more virtuous life beyond the bounds of civilization”,⁷⁹ and Ossian provided a prime example of a “European noble savage” still surviving in the far-off Scottish Highlands.⁸⁰

However, with Macpherson’s credibility dwindling, Ossianism as a cultural phenomenon was withering by the end of the eighteenth century. It was then that Herder’s role came into play, as he provided a solid intellectual framework to the role of folklore and folk epics in cultural nationalism. Herder’s first contact with

⁷⁶ Anna Paltrinieri Casella, *Lineamenti essenziali di storia dell’antropologia culturale* [Introduction to the History of Cultural Anthropology] (Milan: I.S.U. Università Cattolica, 2000).

⁷⁷ Robert Henry Robins, *A Short History of Linguistics*, 4th ed. (1997, reprint London & New York: Routledge, 2013).

⁷⁸ Ildikó Sz. Kristóf, “Domesticating Nature, Appropriating Hierarchy: The Representation of European and Non-European Peoples in an Early-Nineteenth-Century Schoolbook of Natural History”, in Dagnosław Demski, Ildikó Sz. Kristóf and Kamila Baraniecka-Olszewska (eds.), *Competing Eyes: Visual Encounters with Alterity in Central and Eastern Europe* (Budapest: L’Harmattan, 2013). The character of Caliban in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* (1611) is probably one of the earliest and most famous artistic allegorical representation of non-European colonised populations (in this case, Caribbean) in European literature. See Margaret Paul Joseph, *Caliban in Exile: The Outsider in Caribbean Fiction* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1992).

⁷⁹ Stephen Horigan, *Nature and Culture in Western Discourses* (London & New York: Routledge, 1988), 51.

⁸⁰ Margaret Mary Rubel, *Savage and Barbarian: Historical Attitudes in the Criticism of Homer and Ossian in Britain, 1760-1800* (Amsterdam, Oxford, New York: North Holland Publishing Company, 1978).

Macpherson's work happened during his stay in Riga (1764-1769).⁸¹ Both he and his fiancée Maria Caroline Flachsland (1750-1809) became huge admirers of the Ossianic poetry, which they frequently discussed in the letter exchange they had during Herder's trip to France in 1769: Herder would eventually collect and edit these letters, which in 1773 he published under the title of *Auszug aus einem Briefwechsel über Ossian und die Lieder alter Völker* [Extract from a Correspondence on Ossian and the Songs of Ancient Peoples].⁸²

The reflection on Ossianic poetry became part and parcel of Herder's broader theorisation on folk poetry⁸³ as one of the constitutive element of the national soul along with other elements like customs and language – an idea which Herder brought up while analysing the relationship between English and German poetry (where he regretted the absence of a German Ossian),⁸⁴ as well as in his essay on Hebrew poetry (i.e.: the Old Testament):⁸⁵ Ossian's verses, Herder maintained, are easy to the ear, closer to the state of nature all humans originally came from (and here we may see

⁸¹ One of the best introductions to Herder's life and work is *A Companion to the Work of Johann Gottfried Herder* (Rochester & New York: Camden House, 2009) by Hans Adler and Wulf Koepke (eds.). The influence Ossianism had on Herder has been thoroughly investigated by Alexander Gillies in his classic *Herder und Ossian* [Herder and Ossian] (Berlin: Junker und Dünhaupt Verlag, 1933) and, more recently, by Howard Gaskill in his *The Reception of Ossian in Europe*, and by Wolf Gerhard Schmidt in his "*Homer des Nordens*" und "*Mutter der Romantik*". *James Macphersons Ossian und seine Rezeption in der deutschsprachigen Literatur* ["Homer of the North" and "Mother of Romanticism": James Macpherson's Ossian and its Reception in the German-Speaking Literature], 4 Bde. (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2003/04).

⁸² Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Auszug aus einem Briefwechsel über Ossian und die Lieder alter Völker* [Extract from a Correspondence on Ossian and the Songs of Ancient Peoples], edited by Josef Rohfleisch (1773. Reprint, Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 1946).

⁸³ One must always remember that Herder's idea of "folk poetry" was actually quite different from our own, for it was not restrained to oral literature, but encompassed written poetry too. This is the reason why we find Shakespeare's and Sappho's poems included in Herder's *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern* [Voices of the Peoples in Songs] Hrsg. von Christel Käschel, (1807. Reprint, Leipzig: Reclam, 1968).

⁸⁴ Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Von Ähnlichkeit der mittlern englischen und deutschen Dichtkunst* [On the Similarity between Middle English and German Poetry] (1777), https://www.uni-due.de/lyriktheorie/texte/1777_herder.html (accessed on 10th July 2016).

⁸⁵ Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie. Eine Anleitung für die Liebhaber derselben, und der ältesten Geschichte des menschlichen Geistes* [The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry: An Introduction for Lovers of the Same and of the Most Ancient History of the Human Spirit], Band I, (Dessau, 1782).

Rousseau's deep influence on the German thinker):⁸⁶ Consequently, a bard like Ossian is able to condensate in his production the essence of a people's soul – an idea soon received and assimilated by national activists of all Romantic Europe.⁸⁷

Herder's legitimisation of folk poetry and epos as a nation-building tool⁸⁸ was a huge wake-up call for all the small nations of the Old Continent, as they too had the chance to stand up and claim a place for themselves in the family of the European nations.⁸⁹ From this point on, the production of literary epos happened almost entirely within the realm of nationalism, to the extent that in 1833 Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) asserted that "an epic poem must either be national or mundane."⁹⁰

The emphasis on folklore comported that both false and real⁹¹ folk poetry, the collection of which Herder also pioneered with his *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern*, provided the writers of national epics with plenty of new material to take inspiration from, for these writers felt the need to compose their works in the style and spirit of their folk traditions. The folk lead did not replace the *exempla* of Virgil and Tasso: On the contrary, it added a new, powerful asset the writer of epic could use in order to depict their own nations alongside the old ones.

⁸⁶ Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*, 351-354.

⁸⁷ See Hans Graubner, "Epos, Volksepos, Menschheitsepos – zum Epos-Konzept bei Herder" [Epos, National Epos, Human Epos – on Herder's Concept of Epos], in Heinrich Detering, Torsten Hoffmann, Silke Pasewalch, Eve Pormeister (eds.), *Nationalepen zwischen Fakten und Fiktionen* [National Epics between Facts and Fiction] (Tartu: Tartu University Press, 2011), 73-92.

⁸⁸ A recent, solid study on the use of folklore in European nation-building processes during Romanticism comes is *Folklore and Nationalism in Europe during the Long Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2012) by Timothy Baycroft and David Hopkin (eds.). Unfortunately, no essay in this book deals specifically with folklore and nationalism in the Balkans.

⁸⁹ See Gaudi Kristmannsson, "The Epic Nature of the Nation: the Need for an Epic in European National Literatures", in Gerald Bär and Howard Gaskill (eds.), *Ossian and National Epic* (New York, Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, Frankfurt am Main, Oxford, Wien: Peter Lang, 2012).

⁹⁰ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Table Talk", in *Complete Works* (Hastings: Delphi, 2013).

⁹¹ Forgery of ancient artefacts and literary works became quite a widespread trend in the folk-based cultural nationalisms of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries all around Europe, with admittedly Macpherson as its main trendsetter. For an overview on this phenomenon see János M. Bak, Patrick J. Geary, and Gábor Klaniczay (eds.), *Manufacturing a Past for the Present: Forgery and Authenticity in Medievalist Texts and Objects in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2015); and of course Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*.

One of the first authors to commit to the composition of a folk-inspired epic poem was actually (again!) Herder: In 1777, he became interested in the Spanish folk tales concerning the medieval warlord famously known as El Cid Campeador (1043-1099), and he set out to translate them into German. The task turned out to be quite problematic, for the Cid romances were too scattered for Herder's taste, lacking the unity and continuity he expected from a national epic. For this reason, he worked on a unified Cid poem, blending the scattered material he had at his disposal. This process, which would admittedly horrify any contemporary folklorist, resulted in the posthumous *Der Cid: nach spanischen Romanzen besungen* [The Cid: As Sung in Spanish Romances], which enjoyed great success at home and abroad.⁹²

Folk(ish) Literary Epics: The Fenno-Baltic Way

In order to better appreciate the magnitude and pervasiveness of Herder's ideas on folk and epic, it is worth contemplating the domino effect these ideas had on the literary cultures of the Scandinavian peninsula and the Baltic region. In Finland, German Romantic philosophy, and particularly Herder, made a huge impression on the physician-turned-writer Elias Lönnrot (1802-1884), who ended up composing his masterpiece the *Kalevala* (1835), the Finnish national epic, by partially following the same methodology Herder had used with his *Cid*, i.e. freely elaborating folk themes and motifs he collected during his trips in Finland, Karelia, and Estonia.⁹³ The

⁹² Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Der Cid: nach spanischen Romanzen besungen* [The Cid: As Sung in Spanish Romances] (Tübingen: 1805). For the composition history and reception of *Der Cid* see Philip Vilas Bohlman, "Historiographic Heterophony: Epic and the Narration of the Timeless Present", in Bohlman & Petković, *Balkan Epic*, 81-98; Robert Thomas Clark, *Herder: His Life and Thought* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 430-432.

⁹³ For an analysis of the composition of the *Kalevala* and its relationship with Finnish folklore see David E. Gay, "The Creation of the 'Kalevala', 1833-1849", in *Jahrbuch für Volksliedforschung*, 42. Jahrg. (1997), 63-77. A Swedish translation of Herder's *Cid* appeared in 1859, prepared by King Oscar

Kalevala became very popular in Europe in general and among the neighbouring and linguistically-akin Estonians in particular, and it was an Estonian, Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald (1803-1882), who brought national epic to the other shore of the Baltic Sea, taking inspiration from *Lönnrot* in order to create what is today the Estonian national epic, the *Kalevipoeg* [The Son of Kalev] (1857-1861).⁹⁴ Latvians too were no stranger to this phenomenon, as roughly one generation later the poet (and Tsarist army officer) Andrejs Pumpurs (1841-1902) penned Latvia's own national epos, the *Lāčplēsis* [The Bearslayer] (1888).

As we may see, in terms of lineage the Finnish-Baltic folk-inspired national epics are the direct offspring of Herder's thought and work, which in its turn had its deep roots, as far as epos is concerned, in Macpherson's *Ossian*. They all had one major feature in common: they were pioneering works, created by cultural activists who were striving to make their nations emerge from the cultural and linguistic supremacy

II of Sweden (1829-1907) under his pen-name of Oscar Fredrik: *Cid, efter spanska romanser af J.G. von Herder* [The Cid, from the Spanish Romances of J.G. von Herder] (Stockholm, 1859). King Oscar's name itself was a consequence of the *Poems of Ossian*'s success, for he was named after his father Oscar I (1799-1859), who in his turn was christened "Oscar" by suggestion of Napoleon (full circle!). The original Oscar was, in Macpherson's work as well as in Irish and Scottish legends, Ossian's own son. The *Empereur* proposed this name to his father Jean Bernadotte (1763-1844, one of Napoleon's marshals until his appointment as heir of the Swedish throne in 1810), thus helping popularising this name in Sweden and all around Europe. Napoleon himself revealed this detail to his biographer Emmanuel de Las Cases (1766-1842), see the latter's famous *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène. Journal de la vie privée de l'Empereur Napoléon* [The Memorial of Saint Elena: Journal of the Private Life and Conversations of the Emperor Napoleon], vol. III (London: 1823), 155-156; see also the *Norsk biografisk lexicon* [Norwegian Biographic Lexicon], https://nbl.snl.no/Oscar_1 (accessed on 19th July 2016). But the "Oscar connection" is not over yet, for Oscar II happened to be attended by the renewed Irish ophthalmologist William Wilde (1815-1876). The latter then honoured the Swedish sovereign by christening his son Oscar, that is the well-known writer Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), his name appealing both to the Swedish patron and to the baby's mother, the Irish cultural activist Jane Francesca "Speranza" Elgee (1821-1896). See Norman Page, *An Oscar Wilde Chronology* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 1.

⁹⁴ For an overview on the history behind the composition of the *Kalevipoeg*, with special focus on the impact the *Kalevala* had in Estonia, see Eduard Laugaste, "The Kalevala and Kalevipoeg", in Honko, *Religion, Myth, and Folklore in the World's Epics*, 265-286. Given the common Finno-Ugric cultural and linguistic background, the *Kalevipoeg* has been studied and translated with great interest here in Hungary, see Árpás Károly, "A Kalevipoeg fordításának kérdései és lehetőségei" [The Issues and Possibilities of the Kalevipoeg Translation], in *Folia Estonica*, Vol. IX, Szombathely, 2003, 105-133.

of their powerful neighbours and masters (the Swedes in the Finnish case, the Baltic Germans in the Estonian and Latvian one).⁹⁵

National Epic as Poetic History

The Baltic case is only one of many instances of the success of Ossian/Herder-inspired national epos in Romantic Europe.⁹⁶ What is remarkable here is that the composers of national literary epic, be they from the Baltic, from the Balkans, from Central Europe, or from the Celtic fringe, were striving to create a piece of art in which their nations might mirror themselves or, in other words, to write their nations' *poetic history*. Poetic history is what La Villemarqué was specifically looking for while collecting and “embellishing” Breton folk poetry:

If this collection were completed, its title would have been justified, and it would really provide a BARZAZ-BREIZ, a *poetic history of Brittany*: Religion, mythology, costumes, beliefs and feelings, individual, family, nation, this history embraced them all; unfortunately, we only possess some precious relics.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Interestingly, by the time of the composition of these epics Finland, Estonia, and Latvia were all under Russian domination. However, Swedish culture was still dominating in Finland, whereas the Baltic-German élite had a firm hold on the political and cultural life of the Northern Baltic area as a constitutive element of the Russian imperial power. It was therefore the dominant Swedish and German cultures, and not the Russian one, which Finnish and Baltic intellectuals strove to emancipate themselves from. See on this point Andrejs Plakans, “Peasants, Intellectuals, and Nationalism in the Russian Baltic Provinces, 1820-90”, in *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (Sep., 1974), 445-475.

⁹⁶ For an effective analysis and “mapping” of nineteenth-century literary epics and their indebtedness to German Romantic thought (mostly, but not exclusively, Herder) see Thomas Taterka, “Die Nation erzählt sich selbst. Zum europäischen Nationalepos des 19. Jahrhunderts” [The Nation Narrates Itself: On nineteenth-Century European National Epos], in Detering et al., *Nationalepen zwischen Fakten und Fiktionen*, 20-72.

⁹⁷ “Si ce recueil était complet, il justifierait le titre qu’il porte, et offrirait véritablement un BARZAZ-BREIZ, une *histoire poétique de la Bretagne* : religion, mythologie, mœurs, croyances et sentiments, individu, famille, nation, cette histoire a tout embrassé ; malheureusement, nous n’en possédons que quelques précieux débris.” La Villemarqué, *Barzaz-Breiz*, 6 (footnotes omitted).

Poetic history was also what Macpherson wanted his audience to find in the songs of Ossian:

The story of this poem is so little interlarded with fable, that one cannot help thinking it the genuine history of Fingal's expedition, embellished by poetry. In that case, the compositions of Ossian are not less valuable for the light they throw on the ancient state of Scotland and Ireland than they are for their poetical merit.⁹⁸

Stavro Skendi was so close to pin down this concept when he claimed that Kačić and Fishta's poems "are not history: *they are history and legend*. Because they are such – appealing more to emotions than to intellect – they have contributed significantly to the national awakening of their respective people",⁹⁹ and Zlatar was not far from it either when he identified the works of Mažuranić and Njegoš as the mythopoeic foundations of Yugoslavia.¹⁰⁰ What I have tried to do so far in this chapter is pointing out that there is a *fil rouge* connecting all the other composers of national epic from the very onset, and it is that they all, in a way or another, strove to reconstruct the events of their nations' past¹⁰¹ by the means of epic. This phenomenon, which I call *epic nation building*, shall be defined as *the quest for a national poetic history which animated the composers of literary national epics in nineteenth and twentieth-century Europe*.

⁹⁸ Macpherson, *Fingal*, x.

⁹⁹ Skendi, *Balkan Cultural Studies*, 118. Italics is mine.

¹⁰⁰ Zlatar, *The Mythopoeic Foundations of Yugoslavia*, vol. 1, xx-xxi.

¹⁰¹ The "régí dicsőségünk" [old glory of ours], as effectively put by Mihály Vörösmarty (1800-1855) in his Hungarian national epic *Zalán futása* [The Flight of Zalán] (1825), online edition <http://mek.oszk.hu/01100/01122/html/zalan01.htm> (accessed on 30th August 2016), line 1. See also Lóránt Czigány, *A History of Hungarian Literature: From the Earliest Times to the mid-1970's* (1984), online edition <http://mek.oszk.hu/02000/02042/html/index.html> (accessed on 30th August 2016), chapter VIII.

Having elaborated the historical and theoretical framework to national epos, we are now ready to explore the details of one of the most vibrant developments this phenomenon has ever had, i.e. the national epics of the Albanians and South Slavs.

CHAPTER 4: BRINGING NATIONAL EPIC TO THE BALKANS

Widely different cultural and historical dynamics contributed to the emergence of national epos among Albanians and South Slavs: The Slavs, and particularly the Croats, benefitted from their early exposure to Italian Renaissance and Baroque culture thanks to the mediation of the Dalmatian urban centres, whereas Albanians drew on the literary cultures of the Muslim East – especially the Persian one. In the nineteenth century, it was Romanticism which exercised a powerful influence on these linguistic milieus, as it introduced the concept of folklore and languages as sources of national identity.

Renaissance and Baroque Epos in Dalmatia

The Adriatic is a quite narrow sea: When the weather is particularly good, a viewer standing on the easternmost shores of Puglia would be able to see the coasts of Albania. Therefore, it comes as no surprise the fact that, over the centuries, ideas, trade, and warfare between the Balkans and the Italian peninsula have been favoured by the presence of the sea rather than the contrary, the diffusion of literary epic being no exception.

By the end of the sixteenth century, Venice was the dominant power of the Balkan side of the Adriatic, its territories stretching from the Gulf of Venice to Dalmatia. It was not, however, the only player in the area: The conquest of most of the Balkans peninsula by the Ottomans put the Adriatic regions under direct threat from the Turks. The Republic of Dubrovnik (It.: Ragusa) managed to preserve its independence through the diplomatic cunning of its government, whereas Kotor (It.: Cattaro) opted to submit to Venice, becoming part of the Venetian region called *Albania veneta*

(1420), for it also included the region of Scutari until its fall to the Ottomans (1474-1479).

From a linguistic and cultural point of view, Dalmatia finds itself at the convergence of the Latin and the Slavic worlds: The Slavs became the dominant ethnic and linguistic group after they settled in the Balkan peninsula during the seventh and eighth centuries AD. This process happened at the expenses of the Latin and Latinised element which was predominant during the Roman Empire: In the Balkan mainland, the Latin speakers either got assimilated to the Slavs or retreated to the mountains, over the centuries becoming the people known as Vlachs, whereas in Dalmatia a neo-Latin language developed during the Middle Ages, but it then retreated under the pressure of Croatian and Italian, eventually disappearing at the end of the nineteenth century.¹ Therefore, from the early modern age until basically the end of World War II, there were three dominant languages in Dalmatia: Croatian (until mid-nineteenth century also known as Illyrian),² which was spoken by the vast majority of the population; Italian,³ the language of the ruling classes and of the Italian-speaking population of Dalmatia (two groups which did not necessarily overlap); and Latin, the language of the Catholic Church and high culture.

This situation paved the way to the fruitful reception in Dalmatia of the cultural trends coming from the Italian peninsula.⁴ Renaissance, Counterreformation, Baroque: They all had an influence of the literary cultures of Dalmatia – including the birth and

¹ The last speaker of Dalmatian, Antonio “Tuone” Udaina from the island of Krk (It. Veglia), died in 1898.

² See Danijel Džino, “Constructing Illyrians: Prehistoric Inhabitants of the Balkan Peninsula in Early Modern and Modern Perceptions”, in *Balkanistica*, 27 (2014), 1-39.

³ Including its various dialects like Pugliese and Venetian, whose “colonial” offspring, the *veneziano de là da mar* [overseas Venetian], worked as an international language in many regions of Eastern Mediterranean. See Daniele Baglioni, “L’Italiano fuori d’Italia: dal Medioevo all’Unità” [The Italian Language outside of Italy: From the Middle Ages to the Unification], in Sergio Lubello, *Manuale di linguistica italiana* [Handbook of Italian Linguistic] (Berlin & Boston: de Gruyter, 2016), 125-145.

⁴ See Zvane Črnja, *Kulturna historija Hrvatske: ideje – ličnosti – dijela* [Cultural History of Croatia: Ideas – Characters – Works] (Zagreb: Epoha, 1965).

development of local literary epos, which emerged in the sixteenth century with the publication, in 1521, of the *Judita* by Marko Marulić (It.: Marco Marulo, 1450-1524). The poem is the epic recounting of the *Book of Judith*, one of the books of the Catholic and Orthodox Bible which is not included in the Jewish and Protestant canon. The plot revolves around the figure of Judith, a young Jewish widow living in the city of Bethulia (to this date not yet properly identified), city which in the book is being besieged by a Babylonian army sent by King Nebuchadnezzar II (634-562 BC) led by general Holophernes. Famously, Judith saved her city by approaching Holophernes under the pretence of her intentionally offering herself to the man, and then decapitating him with a knife in his drunkenness.⁵ The *Judita* was admittedly as a piece of anti-Ottoman propaganda, with the Babylonian army being the literary stand-in of the invading Turks,⁶ - a theme which would become a staple of South Slavic national epic.

Gundulić, the Slavic Tasso

The struggle against the Ottomans and, more broadly, against Islam, is a theme which constitutes the central argument in the epic *Osman* by Ragusan statesman and writer Đivo Gundulić (It.: Giovanni Gondola, 1589-1638). *Osman* is the story of the fall of Ottoman Sultan Osman II (1604-1622), whose army was defeated at the battle of Khotyn (in today's Ukraine) by the forces of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1621, and then deposed and killed by the Janissaries, whom he blamed for the

⁵ The story of the *Book of Judith*, and especially the fateful moment of the slaying of Holophernes, has attracted the attention of many artists over the centuries, Caravaggio (1571-1610) and Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-1653) being just some of them.

⁶ See Sineva Bene-Katunarić, "Images ottomanes dans la littérature croate : Marulic (1450-1524), Gundulic (1589-1638), Mazuranic (1814-1891)" [Ottoman Images in Croatian Literature: Marulić (1460-1524), Gundulić (1589-1638), Mažuranić (1814-1891)], in *Cahiers balkaniques* [En ligne], 36-37 | 2008.

defeat. Gundulić reinterpreted these events in the light of the medieval conception of the “Wheel of Fortune”, according to which the Ottomans’ successes, which peaked in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, were inevitably destined to crush. Conversely, the Slavic race, of which Gundulić’s Dubrovnik represents a bright example of freedom, was destined to get rid of the Ottoman shackles and unite under the sceptre of Polish King Władysław IV Vasa (1595-1648), who for a while seemed really to be on the verge of seizing the Russian throne while also driving the Ottomans away from Europe.⁷

The allegorical undertone of the *Osman* is fruit of Gundulić’s exposition to the works of Tasso, whom he actively tried to emulate. One may well say that it was Gundulić who brought Tasso to the Balkans, thus marking an important step towards the creation of national epic literature in Croatian and South Slavic literatures: Njegoš, in particular, would draw massive inspiration from Gundulić’s epic, particularly from his allegorical interpretation of the conflict against the Turks and the Islamised Slavs.

The Influence of Slavic Folk Culture and Language

Whereas Tassonian epic model made it to the Balkans via the Adriatic connection to the Italian peninsula, Romanticism arrived from the north. Following the Treaties of Karlowitz (1699, today Sremski Karlovci, Serbia) and Passarowitz (1718, today Požarevac, Serbia), the Habsburgs gained control of many territories in Eastern and Southeastern Europe previously under Ottoman control – including Slavonia and Vojvodina, lands inhabited by Serbs and Croats. These events paved the way to the influence of German culture among Southern Slavs, which on its turn became fertile

⁷ For a thoughtful analysis of the *Osman*, including the use of the Wheel of Fortune allegory, see Zdenko Zlatar, *The Slavic Epic: Gundulić’s Osman* (New York et al.: Peter Lang, 1995).

soil for their reception of Romanticism in the late-eighteenth and nineteenth century.⁸ Much like in the Baltic region, Romanticism contributed to the birth of national epos by bringing attention to the role of folk culture and language as pivotal elements of cultural identity.

The use of themes and metrics of the popular oral culture was not anything new for Dalmatian writers: Already in the sixteenth century, Petar Hektorović (It.: Pietro Ettoreo, 1487-1572) included some *bugarštice*, i.e. epic folk songs of the Dalmatian tradition characterised by a fifteen or sixteen-syllable verse,⁹ into his 1568 masterpiece *Riban'je i ribarsko prigovaran'je* [Fishing and Dialogues on Fishing]. But the best example of pre-Romantic use of folk culture in Croatian literature is undoubtedly provided by Franciscan friar Andrija Kačić Miošić (1704-1760), the author of the seminal *Razgovor ugodni naroda slovinskoga* [A Pleasant Dialogue on the Slavic People], whose definitive edition appeared in 1759. The *Razgovor* is a collection of various poems and biographies concerning the history of the Slavs from Alexander the Great, here represented as a Slavic king,¹⁰ down to Kačić Miošić's times, characterised by the Turkish domination in the Balkans. Kačić Miošić composed his verses in the *deseterac*, the ten-syllable verse of South Slavic folk poetry,¹¹ which allowed his work to be appreciated by people of poor literary background. The use of popular language was the key of the *Razgovor*'s immense success, as many songs of the poem became part of South Slavic oral heritage,¹² and even Herder included some of its passages into his *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern*.¹³

⁸ See Baric, *Langue allemande, identité croate; Črnja, Kulturna historija Hrvatske*, 354-379.

⁹ See Maja Bošković-Stulli, "Bugarštice", in *Narodna umjetnost*, 41/2, 2004, 9-51.

¹⁰ But Frashëri would present him as a full-fledged Albanian in his *Istori e Skënderbeut*, see below, 128-129.

¹¹ See Skendi, *Balkan Cultural Studies*, 103.

¹² See Jakša Primorac & Joško Čaleta, "Croatian Gusle Players at the Turn of The Millennium", in Bohlman & Petković, *Balkan Epic*, 145-200; Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, 136. On the role of

However, if the use of the current Slavic language, of folk themes and motifs was a consolidated practice among Croatian writes, the same cannot be said about the Serbs, for their language of culture was prevalently Church Slavonic, quite distant from the everyday speech of lay Serbs. This situation changed thanks to the tireless efforts of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (1787-1864). In 1813, Karadžić, whose family was of Herzegovinian origins, decided to take shelter in Austria following the failure of Karageorge's revolt. While in Vienna, he met with and befriended the Slovene scholar Jernej Kopitar (1780-1844), who at the time served as censor of the Slavic publications of the Austrian Empire. Kopitar, who was one of the leading authorities in the recently-emerged field of Slavonic studies, was fairly impressed by Karadžić's knowledge of South Slavic folklore. He therefore decided to support Vuk, support which introduced him to Kopitar's vast network of acquaintances in the scholarly world – including the Grimm Brothers.¹⁴

Thanks to Kopitar's help and teaching, Karadžić set out to elaborate a literary standard for the Serbian language, and to collect and publish the folk songs of his people. The results of his unceasing work – most notably the grammar of Serbian language (1814), the first volumes of the *Srpske narodne pjesme* [Serbian Folk Songs] (from 1823), and the Serbian dictionary (1818) – laid the basis of modern Serbian literature, as well as provided the prospective Serbian writers of national epic with an example of style (metrics, vocabulary), and potentially patriotic themes (the Kosovo battle, the resistance against the Turks etc.). Despite being opposed by many exponents of the Orthodox Church, who saw this attack to Church Slavonic as

folklorisation in the dissemination of patriotic and nationalistic literature among illiterate populations in the Balkan see below, Appendix II.

¹³ Herder, *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern*.

¹⁴ See Monika Kropiej's informative essay "The Cooperation of the Grimm Brothers, Jernej Kopitar and Vuk Karadžić", in *Studia mythologica slavica*, XVI, 2013, 215-231.

borderline heresy (as well as a departure from the language of the patron of the Balkan Orthodox, i.e. Russian, which Church Slavonic resembles more closely than Serbian),¹⁵ the Serbian literary standard proposed by Vuk was eventually accepted, a success largely based on the positive reception it enjoyed among emerging Serbian writers. Some of these writers, like Sima Sarajlija Milutinović (1791-1847), Branko Radičević (1824-1853), and of course Njegoš, eventually set out to compose national literary epics on the basis of Vuk's literary standard.¹⁶

The Arbëresh Experience

Compared to the quantity and antiquity of the production of literary epic among the neighbouring Slavic populations, Albanian literature has provided a much smaller corpus, whose production spanned over less than a century. However, these few specimens are of capital importance for the development of nineteenth and early twentieth-century Albanian culture and, most important for us, two of them are prominent pieces of national epos: Naim Frashëri's *Istori e Skënderbeut* and Gjergj Fishta's *Lahuta e Malcis*.

¹⁵ For an effective recap of the polemics surrounding Vuk's work at the time see Meša Selimović, *Za i protiv Vuka* [For and against Vuk], (1967. Reprint, Belgrade: BIGZ, 1987).

¹⁶ Even more than Kačić Miošić, Karadžić's work had a huge impact on European culture, an impact which went as far as the Nordic countries. The great Danish linguist Rasmus Rask (1787-1832) happened to meet him during a staying in San Petersburg, and he kept himself updated with his production thanks to Jacob Grimm's (1785-1863), mediation documented in a letter Jacob wrote to Rask in 1823. Jacob Grimm to Rasmus Rask, 24 November 1823, in Elias von Steinmeyer, "Ein brief Jacob Grimms an Rask" [A Letter from Jacob Grimm to Rask], in *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur*, 42. Bd., 2. H. (1898), 221-223. And no less attention did Karadžić receive in Sweden and Finland, thanks to the 1827 German translation of the *Srpske narodne pjesme* made by Peter Otto von Goetze (1817-1880), which was on its turn translated into Swedish by Johan Ludvig Runeberg (1804-1877) in 1830. This Swedish rendition ended up influencing, among the others, the composer August Söderman (1832-1876), who wrote three pieces for voice and piano inspired by Serbian folk motifs. A thoughtful analysis of Runeberg's role in mediating between Vuk Karadžić and Swedish culture is provided by Sonja Bjelobaba, see her *Översättning i nationens tjänst. J. L. Runeberg och de centralsydslaviska folksångerna* [Translation in the Service of the Nation. J. L. Runeberg and the Central South Slavic Oral Songs] (PhD thesis, University of Gothenburg, 2014). See also Göran Hägg, *Den svenska litteraturhistoria* [Swedish Literary History] (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1996), 266-272.

Laying the Foundations of Albanian National Epos: Girolamo De Rada

The cultivation of national epic among Albanians was primarily a product of the *Rilindja* [Renaissance], i.e. the Albanian national movement which flowered in the nineteenth and early-twentieth century.¹⁷ However, the *Rilindja* did not actually originate as a Balkan phenomenon, but its first developments are to be found among the Arbëresh (also known as Italo-Albanians), the Albanian-speaking population of Italy made up by the descendants of those Christian Albanians who, between the fifteenth and the seventeenth century, fled from the Balkans to Italy in order to escape the hardships of the Ottoman domination.¹⁸ It is in fact through the Arbëresh that Romanticism made its way to Albanian culture, and it is among the Arbëresh that we may find the first attempt at an Albanian national epic, i.e. the 1847 *Odisse* by Girolamo (Alb. Jeronim) De Rada.

De Rada (1814-1903) may be well regarded as the initiator of the *Rilindja*, as he was among the first, if not the very first, of those who devoted their work to the cultivation of the Albanian nationhood.¹⁹ His best-known poem, the *Milosao* (1836),

¹⁷ The Albanian *Rilindja* may be well compared to Italian *Risorgimento*, for it encompasses both the cultural, literary, and political movement aimed at the liberation of the fatherland. Chronologically, it is usually regarded to begin with the activity of Girolamo De Rada and to end with the proclamation of the Albanian independence (28th November 1912), even though much of post-World War I Albanian literature developed within the Romantic standard of the *Rilindja*, as in the case of Fishta. See Aleksander Vezenkov and Tchavdar Marinov, “The Concept of National Revival in Balkan Historiographies”, in Roumen Daskalov et al. (eds.), *Entangled Histories of the Balkans*, (Leiden: Brill, 2013-2014), Vol. 3, 406-463.

¹⁸ There are currently circa fifty towns in Italy where Arbëresh language is still spoken. Over the centuries, this language has grown considerably different from Balkan Albanian, to the point that mutual understanding is almost impossible today. Nonetheless, the Arbëresh have been playing a crucial role in mediating between Italian and Albanian culture. The overwhelming majority of the Italian specialists in Albanian literature is of Arbëresh background – including Elio Miracco, my professor of Albanian studies at La Sapienza University of Rome. On the history of the Italo-Albanians see Francesco Altimari, Mario Bolognari, Paolo Carrozza, *L'esilio della parola. La minoranza linguistica albanese in Italia: profili storico-letterari, antropologici e giuridico-istituzionali* [The Exile of the Word. The Albanian Linguistic Minority in Italy: Historical, Literary, Anthropological, Juridical and Institutional Outlines] (Pisa: ETS 1986); Claudio Rotelli (ed.), *Gli Albanesi in Calabria: secoli XV-XVIII* [The Albanians in Calabria: XV-XVIII Centuries] (Cosenza: Edizioni Orizzonti Meridionali, 1990).

¹⁹ Ernest Koliqi (1903-1975) considered De Rada, together with Naim Frashëri and Gjergj Fishta, one of the founders of contemporary Albania. Ernesto (Ernest) Koliqi, *Saggi di letteratura albanese* [Essays on Albanian Literature] (Florence: Olschki, 1972), 53-66.

which recounts a tragic love story set in Medieval Albania, is widely acknowledged as the founding monument of Albanian Romantic literature. De Rada's wholehearted dedication to the Albanian cause pushed to try his hand at different fields of research (grammar, philology, history, philosophy) and different literary genres (lyric, epic, novel, tragedy) both in Albanian and Italian – a variety of interests which more often than not did not pay off in terms of artistic quality, the *Milosao* being by far his best and most influential work. And surely was not influential at all the *Odisse*,²⁰ his attempt at an Albanian national epic published in 1847. The poem follows the story of Odisse, a fifteenth-century Albanian warrior, much like his namesake Odysseus, sets on a journey after the Turks conquer Kruja (It.: Croia), his hometown, in the aftermath of Scanderbeg's death. His flight leads him to the Kingdom of Naples, where he joins other Albanian refugees, thus becoming one of the forefathers of the Arbëresh people. Despite the interesting premise (an inedited combination of Homeric elements and late-medieval Balkan history), the *Odisse* never managed to get the status of full-fledged Albanian national epos for two reasons. First of all, De Rada composed the poem in Italian, a move which, in retrospective, undermined its appeal to the Albanian audience – thus confirming once more the importance of the “national” language in the composition of a national epic.²¹ Second, as an epic poem the *Odisse* is far from being a milestone in its genre, which also explains why it never made it to the Italian literary canon either – a fate shared by the entirety of De Rada's literary production in Italian. However, despite its lack of success, the *Odisse* is the first sign of epic nation building process in an Albanian context, a process whose full potential was eventually recognised and used by Albanian cultural activists in the Balkan peninsula.

²⁰ Girolamo De Rada, *L'Odisse* (Naples: Tipografia del giornale *Il Salvador Rosa*, 1847). De Rada published the epos under the pseudonym of “Francesco Saverio De' Marchesi Prato”.

²¹ See above, 45-47.

Bala, the Albanian Ossian

The analysis of Albanian national epic would not be complete without considering the *Kënka*²² *e sprasme e Balës* [The Last Song of Bala] by Arbëresh author Gabriello (Alb.: Gavril) Dara Jr (1826-1885), which may be well regarded as the Albanian equivalent of Macpherson's *Works of Ossian*. It is in fact a collection of songs allegedly composed in the fifteenth century by Bala, an old Albanian warrior who, much like Odise, fought in Scanderbeg's army and ended up taking refuge in Italy along with his people. In a way which is reminiscent of Ossian, Bala is an old, grizzled man who finds sings glorious deeds of his youth, when he was fighting alongside the great Scanderbeg. The tone and some of the settings resemble a striking similarity to Ossian's own:

Leave the elder, leave Bala
 To the darkness of the oaks, to the sound of the river
 Which, flowing from the wild mountain,
 Falls in the gulches,
 Much like my poor mind,
 Which oppresses and haunts me
 With old memories.²³

The *Kënka* too has been regarded as authentic for several decades, and well-established scholars saw its author as the glorious initiator of the entire Albanian literature, to the point that Arbëresh literary historian Giuseppe Schirò Jr (1905-1984) claimed that “Bala is the brightest emanation of an heroic poem: Scanderbeg's epos greatest singer ever, the last of the Albanian poets before the diaspora, the first of the

²² Modern Alb. *kënga*.

²³ “Leja plakut, leja Balës – lisat errëta, shtrushin lumit, - çë, pataskur malit egër, - punon himën me përrënjet, - si kufia ime e shkret – me punon e përvëlton – me të moçëmet kujtimit.” Gabriello Dara Jr, *Kënka e sprasme e Balës* [The Last Song of Bala] (Catanzaro: 1906), lines 30-35. This translation is also based on Dara's own Italian rendition which is to be found in the *Kënka*.

Albanian colonies in Italy and of the Albanian literature itself.”²⁴ Eventually, Bala and his songs have been proved to be nothing but the fruit of Dara’s imagination²⁵ – a fact which did not prevent the *Kënka* from becoming one of the most popular pieces of Arbëresh literature among Albanian audiences to date.²⁶

The Bektashi Antecedent

Among Balkan Albanians, literary epos has been first cultivated by members of the Bektashi Sufi order. By the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, this order had a consolidated and influential presence in what are today Southern Albania and North-Eastern Greece (Epirus), and its activities paved the way to the birth and grow of Albanian nationalism in the area. The reason is to be found in the religious and political divide between them and the local semi-independent pashas on the one side, and the Ottoman sultans on the other. Their Shia persuasion was not of course well seen by the Sunni power of Constantinople, but it was not persecuted due to the relative religious freedom granted by the Ottomans, freedom which allowed Bektashism to prosper in that region.²⁷ However, at the end of the eighteenth century

²⁴ “Bala è la più luminosa emanazione di una poesia eroica: il cantore più grande che l’epopea di Skanderbeg abbia avuto; l’ultimo dei poeti albanesi anteriori alla diaspora, il primo delle colonie albanesi d’Italia e della stessa letteratura albanese.” Schirò, *Storia della letteratura albanese*, 63.

²⁵ See Mandalà, *Mundus vult decipi*.

²⁶ Robert Elsie, *Albanian Literature: A Short History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 57.

²⁷ Nathalie Clayer has devoted most of her studies to the study of the Islamic element in Albanian nationalism, with much attention devoted to the role played by Bektashi, see the above-mentioned *Aux origines du nationalisme albanais* as well as *L’Albanie, pays des derviches: les ordres mystiques musulmans en Albanie à l’époque post-ottomane (1912-1967)* [Albania, Country of Dervishes: The Mystique Muslim Orders in Post-Ottoman Albania (1912-1967)] (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1990), and “Islam et identité nationale dans l’espace albanais (Albanie, Macédoine, Kosovo) 1989-1998” [Islam and National Identity in the Albanian Space (Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo) 1989-1988], *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 115, juillet-septembre 2001. Frederick William Hasluck’s (1878-1920) *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, 2 Vols., (London et al.: Oxford University Press, 1929) remains an invaluable source to investigate the role Bektashi they played in Albanian society, even though many of his assertions have been criticised by more recent scholarship. On the relationship between Bektashi and Shia in the framework of nationalist dynamics see Lloyd Ridgeon (ed.), *Shi’i*

the regions where the Bektashis dwelled saw rise and fall of the almost legendary Ali Pasha Tepeleni (also written “Tepelena”, Turk.: Tepedelenli Ali Paşa, circa 1740-1822), a man who started off as bandit and ended up becoming Pasha of Janina (Gr.: Ioannina, It.: Giannina), and who was eventually overthrown and killed by the forces of Sultan Mahmud II (1789-1839) after he tried to establish his own dynastic rule in the region. Albanian historiography has usually depicted Ali as a precursor of the nineteenth-century Albanian national movement,²⁸ as well as being involved with the Bektashi order, to the point of believing that Ali himself was a Bektashi, a statement which some scholars now reject.²⁹ However, Ali’s eventual demise and the subsequent repression perpetrated by the Ottoman authorities, repression culminated with the official banning of the brotherhood decreed by Mahmud II in 1826, only widened the drift between Constantinople and the Bektashis, to the point that many of their adepts

Islam and Identity: Religion, Politics and Change in the Global Muslim Community (London & New York: I.B.Tauris, 2012). See also Duijzings, *Religion and Politics of Identity in Kosovo*.

²⁸ “Although the *pashallek* of Ali Pasha Tepelena ceased to exist, it left its traces in Albania as well as in the international arena. Not only did it sweep away the vestiges of the military feudalism in south Albania, but Ali Pasha’s aspiration to create an independent Albanian principality and furthermore his resolute was against Istanbul influenced later events.” Kristo Frashëri, *The History of Albania: A Brief Survey*, (Tirana 1964), 115.

²⁹ The relationship between Ali Pasha and the Bertashi brotherhood is one of the many debated issues in Albanian historiography. On the one hand we have scholars like Clayer who put this idea back into perspective, as she dismisses the idea of Ali as a member of the brotherhood and also shows how Ali’s favour went to many Sufi orders, not just the Bektashis. See Nathalie Clayer, “The Myth of Ali Pasha and the Bektashis: The Construction of an ‘Albanian Bektashi National Identity’ ”, in Schwander-Sievers & Fischer (eds.), *Albanian Identities*, 127-133. On the other hand, some scholars still defend the idea of a “Bektashi Ali Pasha”. This is the case of Albert Doja, who has criticised Clayer’s approach claiming that “what is lacking here is a further analytical imagination to see that such myths and the ideology they convey do not contradict by any means the historical evidence of real politics. On the contrary, as it happened at the time of Ali Pasha, real politics and ideological myths seem both to be transformations of the same instrumental pattern of religious politics.” Albert Doja, “A Political History of Bektashism in Albania”, in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Taylor & Francis, 2006, 7 (1), 83-107. I tend to follow Clayer on this point, for she does bring up several evidences to back up her thesis, whereas Doja’s dismissal of her ideas is not based on any historical inquiry from his side (as one would expect from a study entitled “Political History of Bektashism”), but rather on Clayer’s alleged lack of “analytical imagination”, whatever this might mean. To use Kedourie’s words (see above, 34), we are dealing again with “sociological temptations” in historical research – which should not come as a surprise, being Doja first and foremost a sociologist.

started harbouring strong anti-Ottoman feelings, which in the course of the years acquired a more markedly Albanian nationalist character.³⁰

It is in this environment that literary epic was first cultivated in Albania, more precisely by the brothers Dalip and Shanin from the village of Frashëri, today in what is today's Përmet district.³¹ Taking inspiration from the work of the sixteenth-century Azeri poet Fuzûlî (1494 - 1556) and his *Hadikat üs-Süedâ* (Garden of the Martyrs), in 1842 Dalip composed the *Hajdikaja*, the first³² (and longest) literary epic ever written in Albanian language.³³ It is the poetic recount of the crucial Battle of Kerbela (680 AD/61 AH), the event which saw the defeat of Husain ibn Ali, grandson of Mohammed, at the hands of the Umayyad Caliph Yazid I, thus marking the division between Sunni and Shia within the Muslim community. More than twenty years later, Dalip's brother Shanin also penned an epic in Albanian language called the *Mytharnameja*, also known as *Mukhtarnameh* (Pers.: The Book of Mukhtar, 1868). This epic too deals with the origins of Shia Islam, more specifically with the failed attempt of the Shia faithful to overthrow the Umayyad caliphs led by Mukhtar al-Thaqafi (687 AD/67 AH). As one may imagine, both epics are imbued of deep anti-Sunni feeling – feeling that easily translated into anti-Ottomanism: This, combined with the fact that these poems were written in Albanian, made these poems the

³⁰ Clayer, *Aux origines du nationalisme albanais*.

³¹ See Alfred and Neki Frashëri, *Frashëri në historinë e Shqipërisë* [Frashëri in Albanian History] (Tirana: 2014) for an overview on the history and legacy of this village.

³² A literary epic in Greek language was actually written in 1810 by Hadji-Sekretis, a member of Ali Pasha's entourage probably of Albanian origins, in honour of his master, hence the not so subtle title of *Alipashiada*. The poem has been partially published by Konstantinos Sathas (1842-1914) in his books *Tourkokratoumeni Ellas* [Greece Under Turkish Occupation] (Athens, 1869), 595-604, and *Istorike diatrive* [Historical Studies] (Athens 1870), 123-336. On the *Alipashiada* see also Peter Marckridge, "Aspects of Language and Identity in the Greek Peninsula since the Eighteenth Century", in *The Newsletter of The Society Farsarotul*, Vol. XXI & XXII, Issues 1 & 2, Fall 2007/Spring 2008; also Roderick Beaton, *Folk Poetry of Modern Greece* (1980. Reprint, Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

³³ Schirò did not really appreciate Dalip's work, having dismissed it as "opera d'imitazione persiana di indigeribile prolissità" [indigestible and prolix imitation of Persian literature] in his *Storia della letteratura Albanese*, 96.

promoters of Bekthasi-inspired Albanian nationalism, hence paving the way to Naim Frasheri's contribution to national epos.

CHAPTER 5: LOOKING FOR A COMPARATIVE METHODOLOGY

In a seminal scene from the 1989 film *Dead Poets Society*, the character of Professor John Keating, famously played by Robin Williams, asks one of his students to read a paragraph entitled “Understanding Poetry” off a (fictitious) handbook of literature. The student diligently abides and so the class discovers that, according to the book’s author, the value of a poem may be scientifically pinned down by the means of a graph measuring its poetic rendition and the importance of its topic. Once the reading is over, Keating orders all the students, much to their astonishment, to tear up the page containing this theory from their books.

This scene serves well as powerful reminder to the scholarly world of the risks of dramatically missing the point when too strict theories are applied to the study of humanities. On the other hand, a total lack of methodology inevitably leads to some very arbitrary and self-explanatory conclusions, as we have already seen in the case of Curtis’ ill-fated attempt at forcefully conciliating Njegoš’s and Fishta’s worldviews, as he indulges way too much into his own ideological agenda.¹ And a solid yet flexible methodology is what we will look for in the next pages in order to compare Albanian and South Slavic national epic poems.

Why Compare?

The comparative approach has a long and respected lineage in historical studies, tracing back to the pioneering work of Marc Bloch (1886-1944).² Despite the

¹ See above, 12-13.

² For his elaboration of the comparative method see Marc Bloch, “Pour une histoire comparée des sociétés européennes” [For a Comparative History of European Societies], in *Revue de synthèse historique*, LXVI (1928), 15-20. See also William H. Sewell Jr., “Marc Bloch and the Logic of Comparative History”, in *History and Theory*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1967), 208-218.

emergence of new methodologies aiming at overcoming its limits,³ comparative research remains a powerful tool in the hands of historians. Such a tool may give great results when it comes to the Albanian and South Slavic epic nation building processes: Two very close linguistic and cultural environments which received and elaborated in their own specific way the cultural and political trends coming from Western Europe, and in which cultural activists used epos as a vehicle for their cultural and political views almost naturally lend themselves to a comparative study. Much certainly, the dissemination of the national idea, including in its epic form, is a phenomenon which may only be tracked down by the means of an entangled, *croisée* approach to European history – approach which has been vastly used in the analysis of the birth and development of national epos in the first half of this dissertation. However, what may and shall go through an actual comparative analysis is the aftermath of this process, i.e. the cultivation of the national idea once embedded in different national contexts.

The reason why Albanian and South Slavic national epics make for such a terrific comparative case-study is that they perfectly match what Heinz-Gerhard Haupt identifies as the heuristic, the contrastive, the analytical, and the distancing functions of historical comparison:⁴ Heuristic, as comparison will bring up new data and explanations concerning the use of national epos in Albanian and Serbo-Croatian speaking environments; contrastive, as it will help pinning down the distinctive features of each different epic national narratives; analytical, as it will prompt to

³ Most notably its nation-state oriented approach, which admittedly becomes a hindrance rather than an asset when it comes to study intra-national, entangled phenomena and dynamics. See Philipp Ther, “Beyond the Nation: The Relational Basis of a Comparative History of Germany and Europe”, in *Central European History*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (2003), 5-73.

⁴ Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, “Comparative History”, in Neil J. Smelser et Paul B. Baltes (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioral Sciences* (Amsterdam et al.: Brill, 2001), vol. 4, 2397–2403.

investigate the causes of the specific Albanian and South Slavic situations; distancing, as it will provide an inedited point of view on two realities which very rarely have been studied together before.

Before moving on, I want to make clear that it is not in the interest of this study to provide an aesthetic evaluation of the epics. This is not to say that forms are not important, far from it: As we have already seen before,⁵ the choice to use epic literature to convey a nationalist message was directly connected, among the other factors, to the aesthetic features of epos. However, even though forms are not taken completely out of the picture, we shall not venture into any kind of the aesthetic judgement.

The Tripod Model

The way I intend to compare the national epics of Albanians and South Slavs is by the means of a model, which I would like to call “the Tripod Model”, based on three elements, three “benchmarks” of cultural nationalism whose treatment in these poems I intend to track, unfold, and compare: Kinship, religion, and patriotism.

The idea of analysing common features of different national epics is based on Anthony Smith’s search for “the fundamental features of national identity”⁶ combined with Miroslav Hroch’s A-B-C model for classifying cultural nationalist movements among emerging nations.⁷ While Smith’s selection of a nation’s fundamental features might be objected,⁸ the idea of pinning down those elements which, in the course of

⁵ See above, 70.

⁶ Smith, *National Identity*, 14.

⁷ See above, 29-30.

⁸ More specifically, Smith’s features are: An historical territory, or homeland; common myths and historical memories; a common, mass public culture; common legal rights and duties for all members; a common economy with territorial mobility for members. *National Identity*, 14.

history, have acted as catalyst of national identities works well in the framework of cultural nationalism – and particularly well in a study on national epics. I have therefore decided to merge Smith's somewhat taxonomic approach with Hroch's structuralist and comparativist one, for this will allow the research to range over different epic representations of the nation within the framework of a solid, methodologically-grounded theory.

Granted, the Tripod Model is not without its disadvantages either, the biggest one possibly being the risk of overlooking potentially relevant information which do not fall under the scrutiny of the model, therefore providing a somewhat distorted picture of the situation. This, on the other hand, is admittedly the downside of every structuralist approach.

Kinship

The element of kinship intends to investigate whether or not a writer of national epic regards common ancestry, cultural heritage, and blood communality as a founding element of national identity. This does not of course mean that we are going to blindly accept ahistorical statements on mythical lineages or national foundations as real, nor that this research supports ethnic/racial nationalistic agenda by any stretch of the imagination, but that we are going to explore if and to which extent this element plays a role in a specific epic national representation.

Religion

In his *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson maintained that nationalism emerged at the expenses of what were previously the two dominant cultural systems which shaped human society, i.e. dynastic realms and religious communities.⁹ Without necessarily disproving this assumption, one may easily see how history has eventually experienced many instances of nationalisms which have been propelled, among the many factors, by religion too. Christianity in the Balkans is a perfect example thereof: While on the one hand Paul explicitly stated, while writing to the Galatians, that “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus”,¹⁰ Balkan Christians have experienced national divisions reinforced by confessional differences (as in the case of Croats and Serbs) or by political conflicts within the same confession (as in the case of the emergence of Bulgarian, Greek and Serbian national Orthodox Churches independent from and at times in contraposition with the Patriarchs of Constantinople in the nineteenth century). Therefore, it will be profitable to analyse how the Balkan composers of national epics have dealt with religion in relation to their national projects.

⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 9-36.

¹⁰ *Gal* 3, 28.

Patriotism

Patriotism is what Anderson brilliantly defined as “political love”, the “*attachment* that peoples feel for the inventions of their imaginations”.¹¹ This is a phenomenon which European cultures have knowledge of since antiquity: The attachment to a homeland, to a *patria*, to a *Heimat* regardless of one’s ethnic, linguistic, or religious background.¹² Patriotism is part and parcel of political nationalism, but does it perform a similarly pivotal role in the epic nation building of Albanian and South Slavic cultural activists? The Tripod Model shall help us finding an answer to this question too.

Some Honourable Mentions

Before moving on to the comparative analysis, it is worth briefly scrutinising some of those parameters which have been taken into account as elements of the Tripod model but, for reasons I will get into, have been eventually dismissed.

“Territory” was for a long time a valuable candidate for this comparative study. Territorial belonging is, after all, a chief characteristic of nationalist narratives, be them cultural or not. But this is exactly the reason why territory has been eventually written out: nationalism without territory, in my opinion, is not real nationalism – not in the nineteenth and early-twentieth century anyway, and most certainly not in the case of Albanian, Croatian and Serbian national movements. The presence of a cultural and/or political motherland is ubiquitous among nationalistic movements,

¹¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 143 and 141. One shall never forget that “inventions” and “imaginings” are not derogatory terms for Anderson, but they simply reflect the constructed nature of identities and communities.

¹² Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*.

therefore making “territory” an element of little use for a comparative study aiming at bringing up differences and similarities alike. If nationalism were an equation, “territory” would be its given variable.

“Culture” too was another potential entry in the model. Unfortunately, culture is too vague of a term to properly serve as a term of comparison for such a research, for it is extremely hard to find a consensus on the actual meaning of this word: Some would actually claim that history, kinship, language, and religion are already cultural constructs, whereas others would regard culture as a more literary and/or sociological and/or anthropological phenomenon.¹³ Far from wanting to debunk these interpretations – each of them correct in their own way – I just maintain that “culture” would have not worked as yardstick for comparison between national narratives.

“History” has been for a long time a constitutive element of the model before having been eventually dismissed. Its demise has been caused by the realisation that, much like “territory”, the presence of the past is already a given when it comes to epic national narratives. All national epic poems deal with the past, be it recent or remote, and this or that nation is regarded as the final product of this past. The very idea of epic nation building as an attempt at national poetic history testifies the preeminent role naturally history has in every national epic poem – a fact which has eventually worked against its inclusion in the model.

Last but not least, “memory” was also a suitable candidate as a comparative benchmark. Competing *lieux de mémoire*¹⁴ are part and parcel of national narratives, be them eventful locations (e.g. Kosovo, in the Serbian case), lost cities or territories

¹³ For general reference see Chris Jenks (ed.), *Culture: Critical Concepts in Sociology*, 4 Vols. (London: Routledge, 2003).

¹⁴ See Pierre Nora (ed.), *Les Lieux de mémoire* [Realms of Memory], 3 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1984-1986).

(e.g. Constantinople and Asia Minor for the Greeks,¹⁵ or the Balkan peninsula for many Turkish literates¹⁶) and so on.¹⁷ However, much like the aborted “history” category, I have also decided not to have a separate “memory” category in my model on the basis of the fact that all epic national narratives already rely on the concept of memory due to their nature of attempts at a collective, national poetic history.

¹⁵ See Peter Mackridge, “The Myth of Asia Minor in Greek Fiction”, in Renée Hirschon (ed.), *Crossing the Aegean: An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey* (New York & Oxford: Berghahn, 2003), 235-45.

¹⁶ See Aytül Tamer Torun, “The Balkan Imagination of Balkan-Origin Intellectuals: From Ottomanism to Nationalism”, in Dimitris Stamatopoulos (ed.), *Balkan Nationalism(s) and the Ottoman Empire*, Vol. 1 (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2015), 251-266.

¹⁷ Granted, competing literary memories of cities and territories may develop beyond clear-cut national narratives, see on this point Tanya Zaharchenko, *Where Currents Meet: Frontiers in Post-Soviet Fiction of Kharkiv, Ukraine* (Budapest & New York: Central European University Press, 2015).

CHAPTER 6: COMPARING ALBANIAN AND SOUTH SLAVIC NATIONAL EPIC POETRY

Now that a comparative methodology has been pinned down, the following chapter will be dedicated to the comparative analysis of Albanian and South Slavic national epic poems. In order to have a balanced “sample”, I have decided to pick two epics by two authors belonging to the national literatures here taken into account, that is Dimitrija Demeter’s *Grobničko polje* and Vladimir Nazor’s *Hrvatski kraljevi* for the Croats, Petar Petrović II Njegoš’s *Gorski vjenac* and Medo Pucić’s *Karađurđevka* for the Serbo-Montenegrins, Naim Frashëri’s *Istori e Skënderbeut* and *Qerbelaja*,¹ and Gjergj Fishta’s *Lahuta e Malcis* for the Albanians.

Dimitrija Demeter

Born in Zagreb in 1811, Dimitrija (sometimes also spelled Dimitrije) Demeter came from a Greek merchant family who had moved to Croatia from the Ottoman Empire. The Demeters were Orthodox, and so did Dimitrija remain during his entire life. Under the influence of his father, he was initially devoted to the Greek national cause,² but eventually embraced Illyrianism³ and the Croatian national movement under the influence of Ljudevit Gaj,⁴ whom he befriended during his studies in Graz.

¹ I am considering two national epic poems by Frashëri, for it is not possible to reconstruct his national project in epic literature without taking both works into account.

² Demeter actually wrote his first literary works in Greek language, see Sime Jurić, “Grčke lirske pjesme Dimitrije Demetra” [Dimitrija Demeter’s Greek Lyrics], in *Grada*, V, 20 VI 1957, 463-533.

³ Illyrianism was the name given to the Romantic national movement which developed in early-nineteenth century Croatia. It was named after the Illyrians, for at that time they were regarded as the forefather of the South Slavs. Despite being primarily a Croatian phenomenon, the Illyrianists sought the collaboration of all the other South Slavic nations, particularly the Serbs. See Danijel Džino, “Constructing Illyrians”. The defeat of the national revolts in the Austrian Empire in 1848 led to the ban of the Illyrian movement and of the very terms “Illyrian” and “Illyrianism”, thus unwillingly paving the way to the emergence of the term “Yugoslav”.

⁴ Ljudevit Gaj (1809-1872) was the main ideologue of the Illyrian movement. He promoted the use of the Czech alphabet in Croatian, thus paving the way to the standardisation of Croatian orthography –

Despite graduating in medicine in Italy, his interest in theatre and literature prompted him to work as a journalist, which led him to become an important element of the Croatian Romantic milieu. Taking inspiration from the Serbian theatre in Novi Sad, Demeter advocated the use of Croatian for the plays produced in the local theatre scene⁵ (until then monopolised by German-language production),⁶ thus paving the way to the birth of Croatian theatre. His most relevant work is the *Teuta* (published in 1844, but first staged in 1864), a play which recounts the romanticised story of the ancient queen of the Illyrians (fourth century BC) who stood her ground against the Roman aggression. His success as a play writer and his Illyrian credentials led to Demeter's appointment as director of the Croatian National Theatre in 1854. After having spent almost two decades splitting duty both as a writer and as the “top manager” of Croatian theatre, Demeter died in Zagreb in 1872.

Demeter's contribution to Croatian national epic is *Grobničko polje*, the story of the battle fought in 1242 between the Tatar hordes of Batu Khan (1205-1255) and the Croats in the Dalmatian locality called Grobničko polje, the “field of tombs”. The Croats emerged victorious, thus allegedly stopping the Tatar advance in Europe. I say “allegedly”, as historians are today sceptical that such a battle actually took place. Nonetheless, it still retains an important role in the Croatian historical self-consciousness, thus making for a perfect topic for a Croatian national epic.⁷ And it is

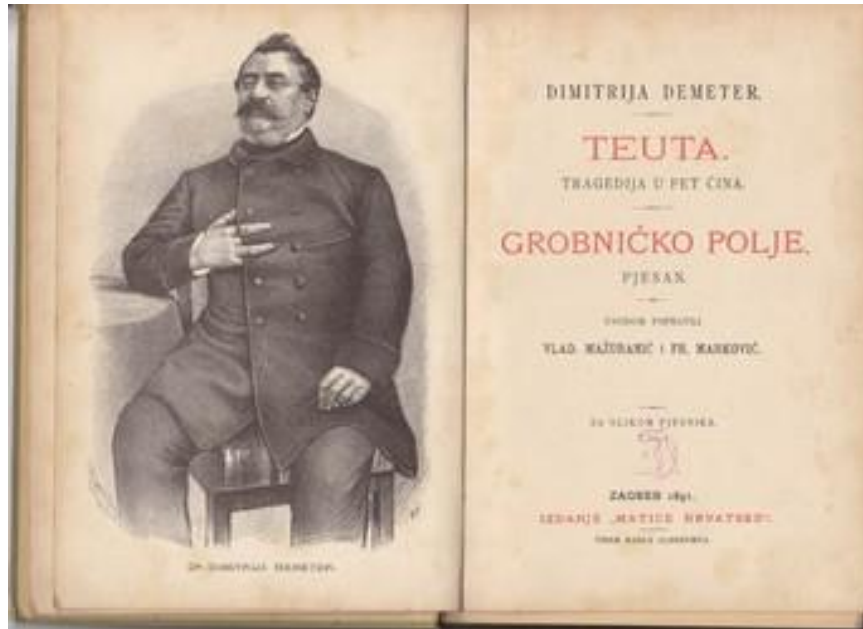
orthography which ended up being adopted by Serbs too, together with Vuk's version of Cyrillic alphabet.

⁵ Dimitrija Demeter, Introduction to “Teuta”, in *Dramatika Pokušenja* [Attempts at Drama] (Vienna: 1844), Vol. 2, v-viii. Interestingly, Demeter had the *Dramatika Pokušenja* printed at the typography of the Armenian Mechitarist monastery in Vienna, which also published the first edition of Njegoš's *Gorski vjenac*.

⁶ See Baric, *Langue allemande, identité croate*, 309-311.

⁷ In 1992, on the occasion of the seven-hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the battle, Croatian President Franjo Tuđman (1922-1999) gave a speech in Grobničko polje – the Yugoslav war was still raging – proudly boasting about the Croats' military prowess, as they were able to defeat the Yugoslav army. On the relevance of the Grobničko polje battle in Croatian nationalism see Ivana Žužul, “Pamćenje, sjećanje i zaborav: figure oblikovanja nacionalne kulture/ Memory, Remembrance and Forgetting:

with such a mindset that Demeter wrote the poem in 1842, the year which marked the six-hundred anniversary of that fateful battle.



2. Portrait of Dimitrija Demeter in the 1891 edition of the *Teuta* and the *Grobničko Polje*. <http://www.bibliofil.hr/proizvod.aspx?p=927&c=19> (accessed on 12th August 2016).

Kinship

The topic of kinship is accurately omitted by Demeter in his *Grobničko polje*: Nowhere in the poem is blood commonality hinted at, not even in an indirect way. Here, blood is basically just a synonym for life, that life which every Croatian warrior is eager to give for the sake of the fatherland:

“Just put weapons in our hands,

Tropes Constructing National Culture”, in *Dani Hvarškoga kazališta : Građa i rasprave o hrvatskoj književnosti i kazalištu*, Vol. 37 No. 1, 37-65.

Our blood will be gladly given for freedom!”⁸

This really sets *Grobničko polje* aside from most of the Balkan national epic poems. Even Njegoš, who clearly found it problematic to regard kinship as a constitutive element of national identity, did not completely write it out from his *Gorski vjenac*.⁹

The reason is likely to be found in Dimitrija Demeter’s biography: Stemming from a non-Croatian family, he could not really praise blood communality as benchmark of national identity without automatically undermining his own belonging to the Croatian nation. Therefore, he had no choice but carefully removing it from the *Grobničko polje*: The epic founding of the Croatian nation for Demeter has to be found somewhere else.

Religion

Problems for Demeter continued, as he dealt with the religious element of national identity: In fact, even more than kinship, religion was a taboo topic for the Greek-Croatian poet.

The reason is again to be found in Demeter’s personal history: He was an Orthodox Christian, and despite all his attachment to his adoptive Catholic fatherland, he never gave up the faith he grew up in. While not being per se a problem, this nonetheless became a burden in the moment when he set out to pen a national poem for a traditionally Catholic people. Admittedly, he could have opted to praise Christianity as founding element of national identity without stressing the confessional belonging

⁸ “Podajte nam oružie u ruke, - Našu krv bi rado za slobodu dali!” Dimitrija Demeter, *Grobničko polje* [The Field of Tombs], edited by Milorad Živančević (1842. Reprint, Zagreb: Liber, 1973), lines 375-376.

⁹ See below, 114.

– much like how Fishta did in his *Lahuta e Malcis*, who also had problems while dealing with fellow countrymen of a different Christian confession in his epos.¹⁰ However, Demeter decided to omit all of Christian symbolism,¹¹ thus sparing himself the embarrassment of praising a Church which he did not belong to – apparently feeling more comfortable borrowing religious symbolism from Islam, as he referred to the Field of Tombs as “This is the holy Mecca of our kin”.¹²

Patriotism

With kinship and religion out of the game, patriotism becomes Demeter’s saving grace. In fact, Croatia and the Croatian people are the absolute protagonist of the *Grobničko polje*, to the point that, beside a general named Dragoš (who is only brought up once), no Croat is referred to by name:¹³ It is the entire people who fight, as enunciated by the *Pjesma Hrvata* [The Croat’s Song], a poem within the *Grobničko polje* where a nameless Croat warrior whose refrain spells out all his desire to go fight for his land and its freedom:

To death, to death, dear people,
Empty is life without freedom!¹⁴

¹⁰ See below, 142-144.

¹¹ He does actually mention the “hram Svetoga kralja” [church of the holy king] going down in flames during the sack of Zagreb perpetrated by the Tatars, but it is a fact which is never referred to again in the rest of the poem, and which is not used in the depiction of the Croatian nation. Demeter, *Grobničko polje*, line 103.

¹² “Našeg roda to je sveta Meka”. Ibid., line 46.

¹³ The narration actually hints at the *kralj* [king] a few times, but since at the time of the events the King of Croatia the Hungarian Béla IV (1206-1270), Demeter preferred to leave him unnamed, possibly because of the nineteenth century political troubles between Croats and Hungarians. The king is here more of a symbol than an actual character.

¹⁴ “U smrt, u smrt, mili rode – Trh je život bez slobode!” Demeter, *Grobničko polje*, lines 421-422.

Even while describing the battle, Demeter does not single out any specific character, thus maximizing the identification between the Croatian audience and their warring forefathers:

Such is our army, like clear sky,
No sight in the world may equal its beauty
Nor there is such an enthusiastic troop...¹⁵

Demeter also managed to include women into the quite militaristic depiction of the nation which characterises his *Grobničko polje*. However, all that is left for them is to patiently wait for their men who might or might not come home from the battle:

Many wives wait in vain
For their men to return from war...¹⁶

In the end, Dimitrija Demeter, a Croat by choice, made patriotism the pivotal element of his epic depiction of the nation as a way to compensate his lack of credentials in the religious and ethnic “departments”.

Vladimir Nazor

The defeat of the revolt led in 1848 by Josip Jelačić (1801-1859) and the subsequent repression promoted by the central Austrian government helmed by Alexander von Bach (1813-1893) represented a serious blow to Romantic nationalism in Croatian culture. However, literary epic did not die in 1848, but it was cultivated even by writers of the late-nineteenth, early-twentieth century. This was the case of

¹⁵ “Tako naša vojska; kao nebo vedro. – Ljepšeg nema pogleda na svijetu; - nego takvu ushićenu četu...”. Ibid., lines 441-441.

¹⁶ “Mnoga žena zaman čeka – da joj muž se vrati iz rata...” Ibid., lines 517-518.

Vladimir Nazor (1878-1949), one of the most important representatives of Croatian Modernism. The successful transition of epic from Romanticism to Modernism should come as no surprise, as the symbolist language of the Modernists well matched the allegorical and patriotic themes of South Slavic literary epos.

Born in the isle of Brač (It.: Brazza), Nazor spent most of his life working as a school teacher. His poetry, mostly focusing on patriotic themes and on the history and legends of his native Dalmatia, propelled his fame across the country. To the surprise of many, in 1942, at age sixty five, he joined the communist partisan movement. His fame as a patriot and convert to communism led to his appointment as President of the Parliament of Croatia – now one of Socialist Yugoslavia’s federal republics. Apparently, Nazor immediately started quarrelling with the Yugoslav central government, as he realised his authority was more nominal than real, to the point that he had to be put in his place by Milovan Djilas (1911-1995).¹⁷ However, his death in 1949 prevented any serious conflict with Belgrade to happen, and Nazor’s figure remained a honoured one in Croatian culture both in communist and post-communist times.

Nazor tried his hand at epic literature in several occasions.¹⁸ Remarkably, he revived the long-extinct *bugarštice*¹⁹ as a way to stress the connection between his poems and traditional Croatian culture – especially the one of his native Dalmatia, whose legends and landscape became the subjects of many of Nazor’s work. The work I will take into account for my comparative is *Hrvatski kraljevi* [Croatian Kings], a

¹⁷ Milovan Djilas, *Wartime*, trans. by Michael B. Petrovich (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), 317. See also Walter Lalich, “History, Politics and War in the Life of a Resistance Poet and Statesman”, in *Croatian Studies Review/Časopis za hrvatske studije*, Vol. 7, 2011, 113-129.

¹⁸ See for instance his *Živana* (1902) and *Medvjed Brundo* [Brundo the Bear] (1915).

¹⁹ See above, 80. For an analysis of Nazor’s use of the *bugarštice* see Sanja Franković, “Kulturno značenje bugaršćice u djelima Vladimira Nazora/The cultural meaning of the bugaršćica in the works of Vladimir Nazor”, in *Narodna umjetnost*, 48/2, 2011, 119-136.

collection of epic poems first published in 1912 under the name of *Knjiga o hrvatskim kraljevima* [The Book of Croatian Kings]. The poems in *Hrvatski kraljevi* recount the history of the Croats through the deeds of their *banovi* [governors] and kings, from the arrival of the Slavs in the Balkans down to Petar Svačić (?-1093), the last Croat to rule the country before the crown was taken by the King of Hungary Coloman (circa 1074-1116).



3. The 1976 Yugoslav stamp marking the centennial of the birth of Vladimir Nazor. <http://www.ebay.com/itm/1976-YUGOSLAVIA-COMPLETE-SET-MNH-vladimir-nazor-famous-people-serbia-J11/351800092362> (accessed on 12th August 2016).

Kinship

Nazor treats the element of kinship in a very subtle way: He almost never mentions common ancestry as a benchmark of Croatianness, but nonetheless the entire *Hrvatski kraljevi* is imbued with it.

The key to understand kinship in the world of *Hrvatski kraljevi* is to be found in its final poem *To davno bješe* [This happened long ago],²⁰ where Nazor unfolds the ultimate purpose of his national epic poem:

This happened long ago . . . Blood and tears were poured
In stormy centuries – but the sun shone too.
The blazing lightning pierced the thick darkness
Until everything we had was broken, burnt in the dark night.

Everything goes by, but again the bygone beacons
Shine bright before our eyes,
Once again the ancient storm thunders in our veins,
And our hearts grow strong.²¹

Lies he who says that we are a branch of laurel,
An oil for wounds, a rainbow in a cloud.
We are offspring of wolves and lions!

What used to be is now inside us,
Again the hand finds the old strength,²²
To rebuild the walls of the shattered temple.²³

To davno bješe is a masterpiece of cultural nationalism: While the physical traces of the glorious Croatian past might have disappeared, its history survives (according

²⁰ The poem eventually became the epilogue of *Hrvatski kraljevi* in the 1931 edition.

²¹ Literally: “and flint blossoms again in our hearts.”

²² Literally: “Again the old strength makes a firm fist”.

²³ “To davno bješe . . . Krv i suze tekle – Sred burna v'jeka; al i sunce sjalo. – Sjajne su munje gustu tam sjekle, – Dok sve nam klonu, u noć crnu palo. – Sve prođe, al još utrnute luči – Odsjevi bl'ješte pred našim očima, – Još vihor drevni žilama nam huči, – I kremen niče u našim srcima. – Slaga, tko reče, da smo lovor-grana, – Melem na rani, dúga u oblaku: – Mi porod jesmo vuka e arslana! – Što davno bješe i sad je u nama; – Još snaga stara tjera čvrstu šaku, – Da digne zide porušena hrama.” Vladimir Nazor, “Hrvatski kraljevi” [Croatian Kings], in *Epika* (Zagreb: Naklada Dr. Branka Vodnika, 1918), Vol. I.

to Nazor) in the heart and soul of every Croat. It is a spiritual community which bonds Croats across time, a community which Nazor set out to bring together and glorify in his verses.²⁴ From this point of view, *Hrvatski kraljevi* is an incredibly smooth piece of national epos, as Nazor has been able to introduce the element of kinship into his depiction of the nation without explicitly mentioning it.

Religion

Not quite a taboo like it was for Demeter, but certainly not a fundamental element either: This is religion in the *Hrvatski kraljevi*. Nazor actually brought up two religions which Croats have practiced at a certain point of their history, i.e. Slavic paganism (“Perun is our god...”)²⁵ and Christianity. However, he never picks one specific faith as the pillar of the nation: Both of them look somewhat marginalised if compared to the nationalistic message conveyed in those lines.

The poem dedicated to Grgur Ninski (It.: Gregorio di Nona, IX-X century AD), is illuminating on this point. Grgur was a Dalmatian bishop who struggled to have the right to use the Slavic language in Church services granted by Rome,²⁶ and the poem is basically a long prayer where he begs God for help in his struggle for the mother tongue:

And the Bishop prays: “Oh God, a pearly sound
Surrounds the marble tiles of the holy altar;²⁷”

²⁴ See Danijel Džino, “The Perception of Croatian Medieval History by Vladimir Nazor in *Hrvatski kraljevi (The Kings of the Croats)*”, in *Croatian Studies Review/Časopis za hrvatske studije*, Vol. 7, 2011, 89-100.

²⁵ “Bog nam je Perun...”, from the song *Sepont*. Nazor, “*Hrvatski kraljevi*”.

²⁶ Grgur’s activity in favour of Slavic culture and his supposed anti-Roman edge were the only reasons why, despite him being a priest, no harm was made in communist time to his memorial in Split (It.: Spalato), which was built in 1936 by Ivan Meštrović (1883-1962).

²⁷ Literally: “...a pearl resounds on the marble tiles of the holy altar”.

My mother' words smell like incense...’’²⁸

While religion as a general concept does have a role in Nazor's epic, there is no specific faith or confession serving as the spiritual bedrock for the Croatian nation.

Patriotism

The very title “Croatian Kings” betrays Nazor's intention to pen an epos imbued with political and patriotic meaning. Croatian history is seen as a succession of political leaders, from its early-medieval establishment until the loss of political freedom due to Hungarian intervention.

And this polemic against the external enemies of the fatherland is one of the crucial themes in *Hrvatski kraljevi*: The political antagonists of (Nazor's) today, i.e. Germans, Hungarians, and Italians, are represented by the political antagonists of yesterday,²⁹ i.e. the Franks,³⁰ Arpad's Magyars,³¹ and the Venetians.³² In particular, Nazor shows a quite marked animosity towards Italians, animosity which may also be easily noticed in much of his poetic production.

Nazor's relationship with Italian culture was complex and at times contradictory. Like all the educated Slavic Dalmatians of his time, he was perfectly fluent in Italian, and had top-notch knowledge of Italian literature. His own works were heavily inspired by Italian poets, especially Leopardi.³³ However, cultural proximity was not

²⁸ “I biskup moli: „Bože, biser zveči – Na mermer-ploči svetoga oltara; – Ko tamjan mire majčine mi r'ječi...” Ibid., from the song *Grgur ninski*.

²⁹ See Džino, “The Perception of Croatian Medieval History by Vladimir Nazor in *Hrvatski kraljevi (The Kings of the Croats)*”.

³⁰ In the song *Istarski ban* [Ban of Istria].

³¹ In the song *Prvi sukob* [First Clash].

³² In the songs *Galeoti* [Galley Slaves], *Olujin ženik* [A Hot-Headed Bridegroom], and *Prva bitka* [First Battle].

³³ See Antun Barac, *Vladimir Nazor* (Zagreb: Nakladni zavod „Jug“, 1918).

enough of a reason for Nator to sympathise with Italy at a political level: He deeply resented the political presence of Venice first and the Kingdom of Italy later in those territories he believed had to belong to Croatia – Inoslav Bešker sees a sort of anti-colonial undertone in Nator’s work³⁴ – and he used epic literature to spread this idea, thus making *Hrvatski kraljevi* a quintessential patriotic poem.

Petar Petrović II Njegoš

Quite possibly one the most controversial writers of national epic ever, Petar Petrović II Njegoš, born in 1813 as Radivoje “Rade” Tomov, was the ruling bishop of Montenegro. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, the Petrovići clan, an offshoot of the Njeguši tribe, managed to slowly impose itself over the other Montenegrin tribes by assuming the title of ruling bishop, a title which was passed on from uncle to nephew due to the prohibition, in the Byzantine Church, for monks and bishops (who are chosen among monks) to get married. This process led to a de facto independence of Montenegro from the Ottoman Empire.³⁵ In 1830, young Rade became ruling bishop of Montenegro, assuming the name Petar. Despite the adversities (endemic warfare with the neighbouring Pashas of Scutari and Herzegovina, the unruliness of the Montenegrin tribes, non-existing infrastructures), Njegoš set out to modernise his country, an effort which led to the establishment of the Senate, to the elaboration of a taxation system, reorganisation of the army, the establishment of primary schools, and the opening of the very first Montenegrin

³⁴ Inoslav Bešker, “ ‘Ova mržnja stara’ - Nator i stereotipi o Talijanima u hrvatskoj štokavskoj književnosti/‘This Old Hate’ - Nator and Stereotypes of Italians in Croatian Shtokavian Literature”, in *Croatian Studies Review/Časopis za hrvatske studije*, Vol. 7, 2011, 31-48.

³⁵ Even before the rise of the Petrović dynasty, Turkish rule on Montenegro was little more than nominal. The official proclamation of Montenegrin independence only happened with the Treaty of Berlin in 1878.

printing house. His efforts were stopped by his premature death, caused by tuberculosis, in 1851.

As a literate, Njegoš was influenced by his tutor, the writer and adventurer Sima Sarajlija Milutinović (1791-1847), who in had composed the Serbian national epics *Srbijanka* (1826), *TrojeseSTARSTVO* [Three Sisters] (1837), and *Trojebratstvo* [Three Brothers] (1844); by Vuk Karadžić, whom he knew personally and whose linguistic reform he openly supported,³⁶ and by Gundulić's *Osman*, which helped him shaping his allegorical representation of the Serbo-Montenegrin nation in his epic works. And epos is undoubtedly the field where Njegoš shined as a writer: During his life he composed several epics, among which the Miltonian 1845 *Luča mikrokosma* [A Ray of Mikrokosm], and the 1847 *Gorski vijenac* [The Mountain Wreath]. This latter will be the one taken into account for the comparative study.

Gorski vijenac is the recount of an episode of Montenegrin history which allegedly took place in 1702, at the time of Prince-Bishop Danilo I Petrović Njegoš (1670-1735). On that occasion, Montenegrin warlords attacked and slaughtered those Muslim Slavs who dwelled in the country, for they were regarded as the physical and moral vanguard of Islam in what was the only free Serbian land. Despite modern scholarship regards the fact as a legend, it was hold as true in Njegoš's time.

It goes without saying that the *Gorski vijenac* has been, and still is, a dramatically polarising poem, and so it is the figure of its writer. In Yugoslav times, both before and after World War II, the *Gorski vijenac* was regarded as “the” national epic poem of the South Slavs. However, given the less-than-flattering image given of the Muslims, the only passage of the *Gorski vijenac* which were read in Yugoslav schools

³⁶ See above, 82.

were the ones with the least politically sensitive content, like the one dealing with the trip of a Montenegrin priest to Venice.³⁷

The Yugoslav War put an end to the *Gorski vijenac* as the poem of South Slavdom, confining it to Serbian literature. But controversies were not over yet, as the proclamation of independence of Montenegro in 2006 led to a new contention over Njegoš's heritage, with the Montenegrins claiming him as the father of the Montenegrin nations on the one hand, and the Serbs regarding him and the *Gorski vijenac* as the quintessential embodiment of Serbianness on the other.



4. *The presence of Njegoš in Serbian public space: Ulica Njegoševa [Njegoš Street] in the centre of Novi Sad (Hun.: Újvidék), 2016. Photo by the author.*

³⁷ Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation*, 102-107.

Kinship

The element of kinship turned out to be quite problematic for Njegoš. The main “villains” in the *Gorski vijenac* are the Muslim Slavs, the descendents of those Serbs who accepted Islam after the Turkish conquest. Therefore, they share the same blood and language with the Christians:

A fierce struggle lies ahead for you all:
Part of your tribe has renounced its own roots
and is therefore serving the dark Mammon!
The curse of shame has now fallen on it.
What is Bosnia and half of Albania?
They're your brothers of the same parentage.
United all, there's enough work for all!
Your destiny it is to bear the Cross
of the fierce fight against brothers and foes!³⁸

As we see, blood communality does not suffice to make brothers part of the same nation: Having embraced the invader’s faith, the converts put themselves out of the Serbian space. Kinship, therefore, failed at providing Njegoš with a proper benchmark of national identity.

Religion

Njegoš is quite possibly the writer of national epic who emphasises religion the most as constitutive element of national identity, thus compensating the failure of kinship to fulfil this role.

The side Njegoš stands by is the Orthodox one: Christian Montenegrins are the real Serbs, they resisted both the military advance of the Turks and the lure of Islam.

³⁸ Njegoš, *Gorski vijenac*, part II.

Those Serbs who abandoned Christianity are therefore nothing but renegades, dangerous for the faith and the national cohesion.

This concept is most effectively explained in the episode, where Muslim and Orthodox chieftain gather for a last attempt at avoiding an open conflict between the two groups. The Muslims praise the glory of their faith and the advantages coming from being in service of the sultans:

Petty people, how can you be so blind?
 You do not know the joys of paradise.
 You fight against both God and the people.
 You live without hope and die without it.
 [...]
 O Istanbul, palace of the Prophet,
 the source of his power and his holy shrine -
 it is Allah's pleasure to rule the earth
 only from the palace of the Prophet.
 What can ever separate me from you?³⁹

But these arguments are refused by the Orthodox, who state that Christianity and Islam cannot possibly peacefully coexist in Montenegro:

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.
 Lay the Serbian Christmas-log on the fire,
 paint the Easter eggs various colours,
 observe with care the lent and Christmas fasts.
 As for the rest, do what your heart desires!⁴⁰

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid. (footnotes omitted).

In the end, the Montenegrin Vuk Mikutinović spells out what all the Montenegrins are really thinking in that moment:

Let the Cross and the Mace strike each other,
but woe to him whose forehead gets broken!
A whole egg wins over the one that's cracked.
You'll hear what I can do if I want to.⁴¹

As we have seen, Islam is allegorically depicted as the leprosy which corrupts the body of the Serbian nation. The battle between Christianity and Islam is the battle between good and evil, between light and darkness – a dualism which is a staple in Njegoš's literary production.⁴² Siding with Christianity, in the *Gorski vijenac*, is the only way for a Serb to remain true to his nation.

Patriotism

Njegoš has no use of patriotism in the *Gorski vijenac*. At times Bishop Danilo despairs over the loss of medieval Serbia, but that state is nothing but a memory for him.

Montenegro was not a political entity at the time of the poem's events: The Montenegrin tribes are only loosely hold together by the authority of the Bishop, who acts much as a *primus inter pares*: It was not him who came up with the idea of getting rid of the Muslims, nor he had any role in its implementation. The concept of a central authority is nowhere to be found here.

⁴¹ Ibid. (footnotes omitted).

⁴² See J. H. Dubbink, 'The Ideas of Good and Evil in 'Luca Mikrokosma' by P. P. Njegos'', in *Tijdschrift voor Philosophie*, 23ste Jaarg., Nr. 4 (DECEMBER 1961), 653-663.

The poem does not even include a vision of a future independent Serbia or Montenegro – there is no implicit or explicit political ideal put forward in the *Gorski vijenac*: Its scope is limited to the action against the Muslims and its allegorical interpretation, thus giving no room to the patriotic element in this epic representation of the Serbian nation.

Medo Pucić

The life of Medo Pucić (It.: Orsatto Pozza, sometimes also spelled Orsat) is the perfect example of how national identities were permeable and negotiable in the nineteenth-century Balkans. Born in 1821 to one of the most influential noble families of Dubrovnik, Pucić received his education at the universities of Venice and Padua. During his staying in Italy he met two personalities who ended up having a strong influence on his intellectual and personal development, i.e. Ján Kollár, one of the fathers of Pan-Slavism, and Adam Mickiewicz,⁴³ who also was a vocal advocate of Slavic unity. It is thanks to his association with the Slovak pastor and the Polish exile⁴⁴ that Pucić was introduced to the tenets of Pan-Slavism, tenets which he enthusiastically embraced.

Medo's Pan-Slavism eventually took an inedited spin, as in the 1840s he joined the “Serb-Catholic circle”, a group of Dalmatian Catholic personalities who decided to identify as ethnic Serbs, despite retaining their Catholic faith. This particular variation of Pan-Slavism was mostly the consequence of Vuk Karadžić's theorisation on the

⁴³ Pucić went on to translate the text of lectures on Serbian popular songs Mickiewicz gave at the Collège de France where he served as professor of the newly-established chair of Slavic languages (1840-1844). Medo Pucić (Orsatto Pozza), *Dei canti popolari illirici: discorso detto da Adamo Mickiewicz nel Collegio di Francia a Parigi* [On the Illyrian Popular Songs: Speech by Adam Mickiewicz at the Collège de France in Paris] (Zara: Fratelli Battara Tipografi Editori, 1860).

⁴⁴ Kollár and Mickiewicz were also composers of literary epos, respectively the *Slávy dcera* [The Daughter of Sláva] (1824) and the *Pan Tadeusz* (see above, 45-46). Coincidence?

connection between nationalism and language. For Vuk, Serbian language was also the language spoken by Croats and Bosnians: Consequently they too, regardless of their religious or political belonging, are in fact Serbs.⁴⁵ In particular, in his 1814 work on Serbian grammar entitled *Pismenica srpskoga jezika* [Notes on the Serbian Language] Vuk identified the Ikavian⁴⁶ speakers of Dalmatia as “Serbs of Roman-Catholic persuasion”,⁴⁷ thus paving the way to the idea of “Catholic Serbianness.” Eventually, some Catholic Dalmatian intellectuals ended up endorsing this concept, including the politician and writer Matija Ban (1818-1903) and Medo Pucić.⁴⁸

The adoption of Serbian identity provided Pucić with a spotlight in Serbian cultural and political environments, to the point that between 1868 and 1872 he served as preceptor of Prince Milan Obrenović IV (1854-1901), who would go on to become the first king of modern Serbia in 1869. Pucić hold on to the Serb-Catholic ideal until his the end of his days (1882), ideal which granted him a place in the history of Serbian Romanticism.

The *Karađurđevka* (1862) is Medo Pucić’s contribution to Serbian national epic. Drawing much inspiration from Gundulić’s *Osman*,⁴⁹ the poem recounts the events of Karageorge’s life, from the first actions taken against the Ottoman empire in 1804, until his assassination in 1818. The narration is completed with digressions on the

⁴⁵ See Ivo Banac, “The Confessional ‘Rule’ and the Dubrovnik Exception: The Origins of the ‘Serb-Catholic’ Circle in Nineteenth-Century Dalmatia”, in *Slavic Review*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Autumn, 1983), 448-474.

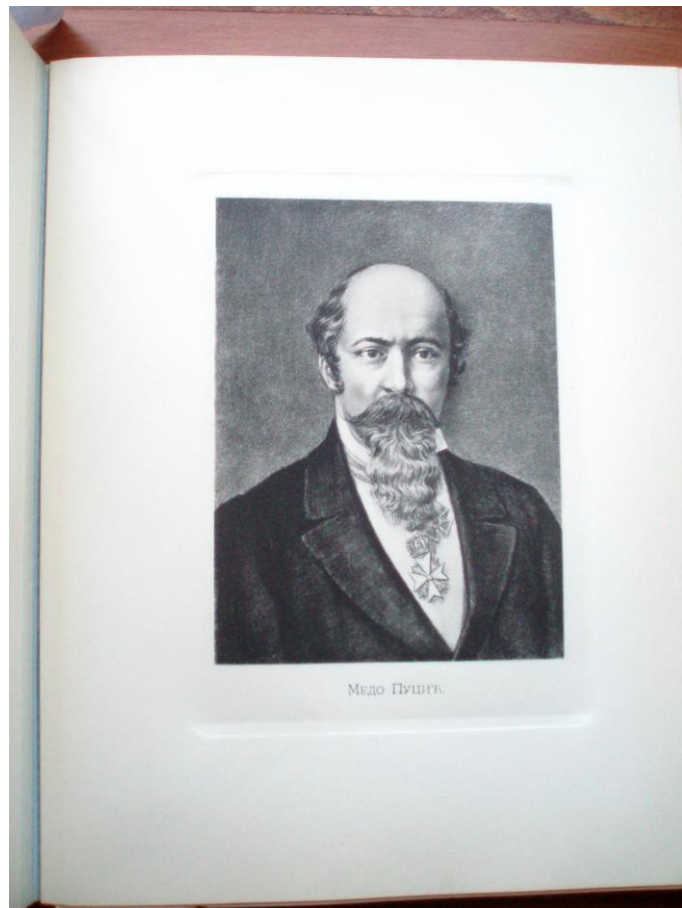
⁴⁶ See above, 17.

⁴⁷ “Serbli Rimskokatoličeskog vijeroispovijedania”. Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, *Pismenica srpskoga jezika po govoru prostoga naroda* [Notes on the Serbian Language Based on the Speech of the Ordinary People] (Vienna: 1814), 106.

⁴⁸ This train of thought is also evident in Pucić’s *Dei canti illirici*: While in the understanding of the Italian audience of the time, “Illyrian” was basically a synonym to “Croatian”, here it ends up signifying “Serbian”, for Pucić regarded this term as more familiar to the Italian audience. *Dei canti illirici*, 3.

⁴⁹ Pucić devoted a fair amount of attention to Gundulić and his *Osman*, a work which led, in 1843, to the publication of the essay “Giovanni Gundulich” in the journal *La Favilla* [The Spark] from Trieste. The article, which also contains an Italian translation of some excerpts of the epic. Medo Pucić (Orsatto Pozza), “Giovanni Gundulich”, in *La Favilla*, Year VIII, 15th October 1843, 293-301. The essay was purposefully tailored to popularise the *Osman* among Italian audiences.

battle of Kosovo, lucubrations on Serbian history, and considerations on the political events (mainly the Napoleonic wars) which serve as background to Karageorge's adventures.



5. A Catholic writer in the Serbian national literary pantheon: Portrait of Medo Pucić in the anthological volume Znameniti Srbi XIX. Veka [Renowned Serbs of the XIX Century], Vol.I (Zagreb: 1901) by Andrea Gavrilović.

Kinship

Much like Nazor, Pucić does not feel the need to lecture his reader on the importance of kinship for the Serbian nation: He gives for granted that there is an uninterrupted continuity between the Serbs of old and their nineteenth-century

descendants. This concept becomes self-evident every time Pucić hints at the glory of medieval Serbia, in his eyes the centre of Balkan Slavdom:

Then⁵⁰ the army led under the Serbian flag
All the Slavic nation.⁵¹

However, this heroic time ended as the Serbs were crushed at Kosovo:

But Lazar was given to heaven,
The wreath which fell at Kosovo.⁵²

It is now up to Karageorge to revive the Serbian might:

One head rules all the nation
And what the young Serbs do
Wonders the seven kingdoms⁵³
Shakes the Turkish empire.⁵⁴

Hrvatski kraljevi and *Karađurđevka* deal with kinship in a very similar way: Both poems aim at reviving the glory and the strength which once characterised, respectively, the Croatian and Serbian kin. What differentiates them is the way they do so: In *Hrvatski kraljevi*, the Croats are supposed to rekindle their might by remembering the heroic deeds of their forefathers; in *Karađurđevka*, the Serbs redeem themselves in the battlefield, led by Karageorge. This difference between the two

⁵⁰ In the Middle Ages.

⁵¹ "Tada vojska, srpsku pod zastavu – Svu slovisku podstavi državu". Medo Pucić (Orsatto Pozza), "Karađurđevka", in *Pjesne* (Karlovac: 1862), 101.

⁵² "A Lazaru na nebu predade – Vienac koji na Kosovu pade." Ibid.

⁵³ The "seven kings" or "seven kingdoms" is the Balkan folk expression to define the nineteenth-century European concert of powers. More specifically, the "Kings" are the Emperor of Austria (or, depending on the context, Austria-Hungary), the King of Great Britain, the French President (or Emperor), the King of Italy (or Piedmont), the Russian Tsar, the German Emperor (or the Prussian King), and the Ottoman Sultan.

⁵⁴ "Svim narodom jedna glava vlada – A šta radi mlada Srbadija – Začudi se sedam kraljevina – Zadrma se turska carevina." Ibid., 104.

national epic poems is explained by their respective historical background: There was no independent Croatian state at the time when Nator penned *Hrvatski kraljevi*, as the revolt of 1848 had met with no success; conversely, Karageorge did manage to establish an independent Serbian principality at the expenses of the Ottoman Empire, therefore his story became a successful example for the Serbian patriots of the nineteenth century – including writers of national epics.

Religion

The religious element is definitely present in the *Karađurđevka*: The Serbs are a staunch Christian people, whereas Islam is the religion of the enemy, i.e. the Turks. Unlike the *Gorski vijenac*, the *Karađurđevka* shows no moral conflict between the Serbs and Muslim Slavs: Islam belongs entirely to the Other.

The Serbs' Christian faith may be easily noticed in the several prayers or exclamations where God is brought in, which pepper the entire poem:

Dear God, thank You for all!⁵⁵

“Glory to God!” said the traveller to her,
And she to him “Lord help us”...⁵⁶

However, Pucić Serbs, despite being devout Christians, are not depicted as specifically Orthodox. The Serbian Orthodox Christianity is totally lost to the *Karađurđevka* for the same reasons why Dimitrija Demeter shied away from mentioning religion in his national epos: Pucić was a Catholic, and he remained so

⁵⁵ “Mili Bože, na svemu ti fala!” Ibid., 130.

⁵⁶ “Slava Bogu!” Putnik veli njojzi – Ona njemu ‘Gospodi pomoz!’”. Ibid., 131.

even after his “conversion to Serbianness”. Relying on the religious factor as an element of national identity could have brought into question his own belonging to the Serbian people, thus explaining the superficial elaboration of the religious element in the *Karađurđevka*.

Patriotism

Politically, Pucić found himself in a quite tricky situation, as he identified himself as a Serbian but he was also the scion of one of the most important families of Dubrovnik. His brother Niko Pucić (It.: Nicola Pozza, 1820-1833) served a deputy of the Dalmatian parliament, where he advocated the union of all the Habsburg lands inhabited by South Slavs into one administrative unit. Moreover, for most of the nineteenth century the Obrenović were the ruling house of Serbia, whereas Pucić dedicated his national epic poem to the founder of the rival Karađorđević dynasty.

Pucić manages to get around these issues in the *Karađurđevka* by deploying a huge degree of diplomatic skills: He never provides a negative depiction of Karageorge’s rival Miloš Obrenović (1780-1860), the founder of the Obrenović dynasty,⁵⁷ nor he openly praises the Principality of Serbia itself. All the patriotism in the *Karađurđevka* is for Serbia in the most general understanding of the concept: It is the Serbia which died at the Kosovo battle, it is ethnic Serbia as imagined by the Serb-Catholic circle.

This attachment to the ideal Serbia rather than the political one characterises Pucić’s biography too: Besides the time he spent in Belgrade as preceptor of Milan IV, he never was really involved in Serbian political life. This “apolitical patriotism” is reflected in Pucić’s national epic.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 149-153.

Naim Frashëri

Naim Frashëri (1846-1900) was, together with his older brothers Abdyl (1839-1892) and Sami (Turk.: Şemseddin Sami, 1850-1904), one of the most important representatives of the *Rilindja*. Whereas Abdyl was mostly engaged in active politics, and Sami focused his effort in his scholarly work, Naim found his way in poetry. Born in the town of Frashëri, Naim was first educated in the local Muslim school, where one may reasonably infer that he was exposed to Dalip's *Hajdikaja*⁵⁸ along with the curricular study of Arabic, Ottoman, and Persian literatures. When he turned nineteen, Naim enrolled in the Zosimea Lyceum of Janina (Gr.: Zosimea Skoli). The Lyceum, founded in 1829 and active until 1913,⁵⁹ was one of the many schools the Greek state founded all around the Balkans to spread Greek culture and, contextually, win Orthodox Christians to the Greek national idea.⁶⁰ The Zosimea attracted many youth from all over the region, Albanians and Greeks, Christians and Muslims – including Naim and his brother Sami. There, he received his second, major influence concerning literary epos, for he had the opportunity to study the great epics of classical antiquity, most notably Homer (he translated the first book of the *Iliad* into Albanian in 1896) and Virgil, whose *Aeneid* he reportedly learned by heart.⁶¹ He spent most of his adult life serving in the public administration of the Ottoman Empire, a career which led him to become a functionary of the Ministry of Education in Constantinople. There, Naim worked and lived for the rest of his life.

⁵⁸ According to Alfred and Neki Frashëri, who carried a genealogical research on the historical families of the town of Frashëri, Naim and his brothers were not related to Dalip and Shanin, see their *Frashëri në historinë e Shqipërisë*, 122-124, 185.

⁵⁹ See Kostantinos Apostolou Vakalopoulos, *Istoria tis Epirou: apo tis archis tis Othomanokratias os tis meres mas* [History of Epirus: From the Beginning of the Ottoman Rule to Our Days] (Thessaloniki: Herodotos, 2003), 599-598.

⁶⁰ Grigoriadis, *Instilling Religion in Greek and Turkish Nationalism*, 14-30.

⁶¹ See Edlira Dhima & Ermelinda Kashahu, "Homer's Influence on Naim Frashëri's Poem 'History of Skanderbeg'", in *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 4, Nr. 4, March 2013, 235-238.

Frashëri's lyrics are among the most famous pieces of poetry in the entire Albanian literature. Lyricism is where Naim's patriotic activity mostly took place: Unlike his brother Abdyl, whose political work, particularly his engagement in the League of Prizren,⁶² cost him many years of imprisonment, Naim's strictly literary patriotism allowed him to avoid repression by the Ottoman authorities. This does not mean that his "poetic activism" was any less relevant: On the contrary, in a time where Ottoman Albanians found themselves facing the cultural and religious assimilationist policies of Sultan Abdul-Hamid II (1842-1918),⁶³ the cultivation of Albanian culture was a matter of capital importance for the emerging Albanian nation. From this point of view, the Frasher Brothers' generation really found itself between the hammer and the anvil: Politically still loyal to the Empire, they desperately tried to juxtapose Albanian and Ottoman interests in a time when the Empire had little patience with centrifugal forces after the debacles of the Crimean War (1853-1856), the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878) and the subsequent Treaty of San Stefano and Treaty of Berlin (both in 1878), which comported great territorial loss for the Ottomans and the establishment of the official role of the Western Powers and Russia as protectors of the Ottoman Christians. It is only by taking into account this context that we may come to understand why many prominent exponents of the *Rilindja* were also in service of the Ottoman Empire, e.g. Naim and his brother Sami, or the poet and activist Pashko Vasa (1825-1892), a Catholic Albanian from Scutari who, in 1882,

⁶² The League of Prizren (Alb.: *Lidhja e Prizrenit*) was a political organisation founded in 1878 in the homonymous town of Kosovo as a reaction to the decisions of the Congress of Berlin, which took place in the same year, to assign Montenegro some Ottoman lands inhabited by ethnic Albanians. After having sent protests to the Congress of Berlin, the League promoted organised armed resistance against the Montenegrin forces, resistance which Fishta will eventually sing in his *Lahuta e Malcis*. In order to abide by the treaty, Sultan Abdul-Hamid II had to militarily intervene in the region and ban the League of Prizren (1881). Abdyl Frashëri, who had been one of the promoters of the league, was arrested and, after having spent three years in the prison in Prizren, he was eventually confined to Constantinople, never to come back to Albania again.

⁶³ See Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 72-105.

served as Governor of Lebanon following the Organic Regulation (1860-1864) which prescribed the appointment of an Ottoman Christian to that position. And it is only taking into account this context that we may truly appreciate the appeal of Naim's work at that time: Poems like *Bagëti e Bujqësia* (Herds and Tillage, 1886), a moving ode to the Albanian nature, legitimate the existence of Albanian first at foremost at a cultural and spiritual level, thus not necessarily clashing with different political allegiances. And a spiritual poem *Bagëti e Bujqësia* truly is, for Albania with all her nature is represented as a gift of God:

Oh, what a beauty is the herd! How joyful is tillage!
Lo come the good crop! God be blessed!⁶⁴

These two elements, i.e. patriotism and spirituality, will be the major underlying themes of Naim's national epics.

Naim's Albanian patriotism was double-edged, as his opposition to the Ottoman Empire came from the fact that his Albanian self-consciousness and from his being a Bektashi. Naim combined both themes in his national epics *Istori e Skënderbeut* [History of Scanderbeg] and *Qerbelaja* (both published in 1898). The *Istori* is a recount of the life and deeds of Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu (1405-1468), the Albanian prince who successfully led the resistance against the Ottoman forces of

⁶⁴ "O! sa bukuri ka tufa! Sa gas bije bagëtija! - Vinë posi mblet' e plotë! I bekoftë Perëndija!" Naim Frashëri, *Bagëti e Bujqësia* [Herds and Tillage] (Constantinople: 1886). I find Selim Syleimani's interpretation of this passage a bit problematic, for he claims that "Në vargjet e Naimit natyra shqiptare është magji, ëndërr me bukuri tërheqëse." [In Naim's verses Albanian nature is magic, is a dream of attractive beauty.] See Selim Syleimani, "Tema e atdheut në poemën 'Bagëti e Bujqësi' të Naimit" [The Fatherland Theme in Naim's Poem 'Bagëti e Bujqësi'], in Bardh Rugova (ed.), *Seminari ndërkombëtar për gjuhën, letërsinë dhe kulturën shqiptare/The XXXI International Seminar for Albanian Language, Literature and Culture* (Prishtinë, 2012), 201-209. Albania is no magic to Naim, if by magic we mean a supernatural force which may be bound with the proper spells and formulas, for it is a gift from God, which deserves the Albanian's love and protection; nor is a dream, for it is so dramatically real to him. I largely draw my distinction between magic and faith from Émile Durkheim, "Cours sur les origines de la vie religieuse" [Course on the Origins of Religious Life], in *Revue de philosophie*, 1907, vol. 7, nr 5, 528-539; vol. 7, nr 7 92-114; vol. 7, nr 12, 620-638.

Murad II (1404-1451) and Mehmet II (1432-1481), thus becoming Albania's most famous hero. With this poem Frashëri took on the task making Scanderbeg a figure Muslims Albanians could relate to, a task complicated by the fact that the Albanian prince,⁶⁵ who had grown up in Adrianople as a hostage of Murad II, and had also gallantly fought in the Sultan's army, in 1443 abandoned the Turks and returned to Albania during the campaign against János Hunyadi (1407-1456). Despite his credentials as betrayer of Islam, Naim succeeded at making him a legitimate hero for the Albanian Muslim community⁶⁶ by almost completely wiping out any reference to any religion, be it Christianity or Islam, in his epos: In the *Istori*, Scanderbeg is not anymore the one who turned his back to the Empire and to Islam, but a patriot who first and foremost fought for Albania.

If the *Istori* is purposefully a very non-religious national epos, the *Qerbelaja* is the flagship song of Bektashi Albania. Much like Dalip's *Hajdikaja*, the *Qerbelaja* deals with the fateful battle of Kerbela. Husain is the righteous hero, innocently slaughtered by the Sunni forces.⁶⁷ What makes this poem a national epic is the fact that, at the very end, the strong anti-Sunni feeling of the narration is catapulted to nineteenth-century Albania: The Sultans, the Caliphs of Sunni Islam, still oppress Albania much like his predecessors oppressed Husain.⁶⁸ The *Qerbelaja* is clearly a national epic

⁶⁵ Naim wrongly introduces him as King of Albania, a title Scanderbeg never had.

⁶⁶ As one may imagine, Western authors had long embraced his figure, glorifying him in countless works over the centuries, from the epic *Scanderbeide* (1606-1623) by Margherita Sarrocchi (1560-1617), possibly the first and last woman in Italian literature to ever pen an epic) to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882), whose poem *Scanderbeg* appeared in the 1863 collection entitled *Tales of a Wayside Inn*. This poem was eventually translated into Albanian by Fan Noli in 1916. Christian writers from the Balkans too gave Scanderbeg's figure a much positive welcome, e.g. Kačić Miošić in his *Razgovor* or *Njegoš* in the *Gorski vijenac*.

⁶⁷ Dujizings has sketched a very interesting comparison between the use of the Kerbala imagery in the *Qerbelaja* and the role the Kosovo myth has played in Serbian nationalism, as both focus on a fateful battle lost on Earth in order to achieve a greater good in Heaven. *Religion and Politics of Identity in Kosovo*, 172-173.

⁶⁸ Ger Dujizings, "Qerbelaja e Naim Frashërit: feja e politika në Shqipëri" [The Qerbelaja by Naim Frashëri: Faith and Politics in Albania], in *Përpyjekja*, 16-16, 1999, 44-57.

written by a Muslim for a Muslim audience – no surprise here than Catholic authors gave this poem a much colder welcome compared to other nationalistic works by Naim like *Bageti e Buiqesija*, or its non-religious national epic *Istori e Skënderbeut*.⁶⁹

Naim's figure, together with his two brothers, soon became a firm part of the Albanian national pantheon, a position left untouched by the succession of regimes Albania has experienced in the twentieth century.⁷⁰



6. Portrait of Naim Frashëri on the two hundred Albanian Lek bill.
https://www.bankofalbania.org/web/200_leke_5653_1.php (accessed on 8th August 2016).

Kinship

Kinship is quite a marginally important element of national identity in Frashëri's national epic work. Naim does bring up the notion, popular at that time, of the

⁶⁹ Koliqi barely mentions it, whereas Schirò quickly labels it as a poem “about the civic and religious struggle of the Arabs” [sulla lotta civile e religiosa degli Arabi] in his *Storia della letteratura albanese*, thus overlooking (or pretending to overlook) the quite explicit connection between Bektashi Islam and Albanian national identity which is to be found in the *Qerbelaja*.

⁷⁰ Even in communist time, Naim's fortune remained pretty much intact, to the point that the main State-owned printing house was named after him, printing house which also survived the fall of communism.

Albanians as descendants of ancient, classical and even pre-classical Balkan populations like the Pelasgians, the Macedonians and, most importantly, the Illyrians.⁷¹ Therefore, for Frashëri Albanians are the legitimate heirs of such heroes like Pyrrhus and Alexander the Great, and created by God as distinct and independent from their neighbours:

The hero Alexander the Great
 Who did not have much to live,
 [...]
 Pyrrhus is the other hero
 A much lauded man,
 They have been once,
 And they've never been forgotten,
 They were all Albanians,
 Sons of Albania,
 Neither Greek nor Bulgarian,
 But from the land of God.⁷²

However, this is all Naim does with kinship: He does recognise it as an element of national identity, but only in this brief mention at the beginning of the *Istori*, never to be recovered again in the poem if not as some passim remarks:⁷³ The bedrock of his epic construction of the Albanian nation lies somewhere else.

⁷¹ See, Džino, “Constructing Illyrians”.

⁷² “Aleksandr’ i Math e burrë, - I cili s’pat shok në jetë, - [...] - Piro trimi e të tjerë – Burra shumë të levduar, - Që kanë qenë njëherë, - Edhe sot s’janë harruar, - Qenë gjithë shqipëtarë – Ishin djemt’ e Shqipërisë, - Nuk’ ishin greq e bullgarë, - Po nga vënd’ i Perëndisë.” Naim Frashëri, “Istori e Skënderbeut” [History of Scanderbeg], in *Vepra letrare* [Literary Works] (Tirana: Naim Frashëri, 1996), Vol. 4, song I, lines 37-48. The editor replaced Naim’s spelling of “Piro” (Pyrrhus) with contemporary Albanian form “Pirro”. I have decided to use Naim’s original spelling here.

⁷³ Frashëri, “Istori e Skënderbeut”, song III, 535-540; song IV, lines 129-231.

Religion

For Naim Frashëri, religion is possibly the most important benchmark of national identity. As we have seen before, Naim's nationalistic and religious message as expressed in his epics is doublefold: On the one hand, with the *Istori e Skënderbeut* he intends to make Scanderbeg a suitable hero for the entire Albanian nation, including the Muslims; on the other hand, with the *Qerbelaja* he attacks the oppression exerted by the Ottoman and Sunni power on the Shia community.

The key to explain the religious factor in Naim's national epics may be inferred by juxtaposing Naim's biography with the history of the *Rilindja*: Naim writes most of his works, including his two epic poems, after the defeat of the League of Prizren (1881), which also led to the imprisonment of his brother Abdyl, and also after Ottoman authorities disbanded the Constantinople-based Albanian literary association promoted, among the others, by his brother Sami (1879).⁷⁴ It is at this point that Naim realises that the Ottoman Empire's rule in Albania cannot be sustained anymore – realisation which leads him to pen the *Istori e Skërbeut* and the *Qerbelaja* in 1898.⁷⁵

This train of thought may explain Naim's interest in Scanderbeg, for he was the Albanian hero who managed to defeat the Turks as long as he was alive. However, to make him a suitable hero for the Muslims, Naim had to strip Scanderbeg of every single reference to his Christian faith. At no point one may find Christianity or any Christian symbolism mentioned in the *Istori* – nor, quite interestingly, is Islam ever

⁷⁴ The connection between the failure of the League, the persecutions of his brothers, and the inception of Naim's career as a patriotic writer has been already noticed by the Albanian writer and literary historian Dhimitër Shuteriqi (1915-2003), see Dhimitër Shuteriqi et al., *Historia e letërsisë shqipe* [The History of Albanian Literature] (Tirana: 1952), vol. II, 292-357. However, Shuteriqi saw the emergence of patriotism in Naim's work as a process which happened at the expenses of the Persian and religious influence, whereas I argue that his influence did actually reinforce and shape Naim's epic representation of Albania.

⁷⁵ Not surprisingly, Naim's two epics were not published in the Ottoman Empire, but in Bucharest.

brought up, quite possibly not to make Scanderbeg appear as a Christian fighting against Muslims.

Despite the quite secular rendition of Scanderbeg' figure, Naim does manage to provide the *Istori* with a religious undertone by constantly reminding the reader that Albania is actually God's creation, God's own gift to the Albanians:

Lord, the great and real,
Made also Albania,
And brought Albanians to life.⁷⁶

This way, Naim manages to cunningly link his non-confessional depiction of religion to Albanian nationalism: Being Albania a gift from God, whoever attacks her automatically sides against God, including those Muslims who conquered and now oppress her – i.e. the Ottoman Turks.⁷⁷ Conversely, fighting for Albanian freedom is fighting by God's side, regardless of one's religion. This way, Naim succeeds at creating an epic national narrative suiting both Christian and Muslim Albanians.

The non-confessional spirit which animates the *Istori* is nowhere to be found in the *Qerbelaja*: This epic is a straightforward poem for the Shia Albanians. The immanent narrator himself – and by extension the immanent reader, the nation, too – is a Shia Albanian, as spelled out very clearly in the very last song of the poem.⁷⁸ By having both the narrator and the audience Shia, Naim associates the Albanians to Husain and his followers, to the point that they become almost indistinguishable from each other:

⁷⁶ “Zot i math e i vërtetë - Ka berë dhe Shqipërine - E shqipëtarët në jetë.” Frashëri, “Istori e Skënderbeut”, song I, lines 22-24. I replace the editor's current Albanian form “i madh” with the *tosk* (Southern Albanian) “i math”, the one Naim uses throughout the entire poem.

⁷⁷ And we may now understand why Sultan Mehmet II, who occupied Albania following Scanderbeg's death, is quite unceremoniously labelled by Naim as “Armiku i Perëndisë” [enemy of God]. Frashëri, “Istori e Skënderbeut”, song XXII, line 139.

⁷⁸ Naim Frashëri, *Qerbelaja* (Korça: Koti, 1922), song XXV.

Great Lord, for the sake of Kerbela,
 For Husain and Hassan,
 For the twelve⁷⁹
 Who suffered so much evil in life,
 For all that suffering,
 For my own solicitude,
 Do not abandon Albania⁸⁰

How to make sense of Naim's apparently contradictory depiction of religion in his national epics (non-confessional in the *Istori*, openly Shia in the *Qerbelaja*)? I suspect that even while penning the *Istori* Naim was only marginally interested in appealing Christian Albanians: His main goal was to create an image of Scanderbeg which could be acceptable to prospective Albanian Muslim patriots. In other words, both epics are actually addressed first and foremost to the Muslims, and more specifically to the Shia and Bektashi audience. This way, it is possible to see the religious element of the *Istori* and the *Qerbelaja* as two faces of the same medallion, both of them functional to Naim's political agenda, i.e. to mobilise Bektashi Albanians by providing a suitable hero, and by tapping into the political and religious animosity between Shia Albanians and the Sunni Ottoman power.

Patriotism

If the idea of Frashëri embracing Albanian nationalism at a later stage of his life is correct, it comes as no surprise the fact that little or no patriotism is present in his national epics for, unlike the religious element, politics had little to no relevance in his literary production for most of his life.

⁷⁹ Naim here refers to the twelve Imams who, according to the Shia tradition of Islam, are the spiritual successors of Mohammed.

⁸⁰ "Zot i math për Qerbelanë! – për Hysejn' e për Hasanë! – për ata të-dy-mbë-dhjetë! – që heqe' aqë keq në jetë! – për gjithë ato mundime! – për gashërimënë t' ime! – Shqipërinë mos e lerë". Ibid.

In the *Istori e Skënderbeut*, Albania is a lost kingdom, whose freedom died with Scanderbeg.⁸¹ There is no nostalgia, no desire to restore what used to be. However, though Albania disappeared from the political map, it has never stopped living at a spiritual level for Naim. But this remains at this spiritual level: Besides venting against the Turks, no vision of a potentially politically independent Albania is to be found in the *Istori* or in the *Qerbelaja*.⁸² This fact showcases Naim as an author of his generation, a generation of Albanians torn between the Empire and the emerging nationalistic claims. This contradiction will eventually be solved in the national epic of Fishta.

Gjergj Fishta

Gjergj Fishta (1871-1940) is one of the greatest personalities of the entire Albanian literature. Born in the village of Fishta, one of the little settlements of the Zadrima plain (today in Lezha district), he soon manifested a religious vocation and joined the Franciscan Friars (Lat. Ordo Fratrum Minorum). This led him to study in various Franciscan schools and monasteries both in Albania (Troshan, Scutari) and in Bosnia (Livno, Sutiska).

It is in those years that Fishta became attracted to literary epic. This first happened through scholarly education, as he was exposed to Greek and Roman classics during his time in Scutari – exposition which led him, much like Frashëri, to translate parts of

⁸¹ Ibid., song XXII.

⁸² One may imagine that Naim would have eventually enhanced the political dimension in his epic and non-epic work contextually with the advancement of the Albanian national movement. However, his death in 1900, two years after the publication of the *Istori* and the *Qerbelaja*, prevented him from further elaborating on this topic.

Homer's *Iliad* into his mother language (1931).⁸³ The second exposure to epic happened during his staying in Bosnia, where he became acquainted with South Slavic literary epos thanks to his mastering of Serbo-Croatian. This encounter has been documented by his fellow Franciscan Pashk Bardhi (1870-1948), who also was studying in Bosnia at that time. According to Bardhi,⁸⁴ in those days Fishta was always to be seen carrying around the books of two Franciscan Croatian writers of epic, i.e. Kačić-Miošić and Grgo Martić. Martić (1822-1905) was the author of the *Osvetnici* [The Avengers],⁸⁵ an epic which celebrates the great heroes of all the South Slavic peoples, and since he was active by the time Fishta lived in Bosnia, it is likely that the two have met at some point. Fishta surely also read Njegoš in those years, a reading which inspired the *Lahuta* in more than one way, to the point that he eventually paid tribute to the Montenegrin poet by having him briefly appearing as a character in his *Lahuta*:

Then transformed herself the *ora*,⁸⁶
 Took the shape of Petar Njegosh,
 Bishop he, two spans his whiskers,
 From that powder keg Cetinje,
 Far and wide a figure famous
 In the past and in the present
 For his "Mountain Wreath," that epic
 Verse of divine inspiration,

⁸³ Fishta drew massive inspiration from Homeric poetry. This can be seen particularly in canto XX of the *Lahuta e Malcis*, where the Albanian warrior Bec Patani intervenes in the fight between his fellow countryman Rrushman Hasani with the Montenegrin Milo Spasi, to whom he is bound by blood brotherhood: As Rrushman becomes aware of the sacred oath between the two, he immediately calls off the fight, instead befriending Milo and offering him to become the godfather of his newborn son. Fishta, *Lahuta*, canto XX, lines 405-817. This scene is a call back to the sixth book of the *Iliad*, where Diomedes ceases his fight with the Lycian Glaucus, as they discover that their families are tied by hospitality bond, thus peacefully parting ways from him after having exchanged their armours as token of allegiance. Homer, *Iliad*, edited with Italian translation and commentary by Rosa Calzecchi Onesti (22nd edition. Turin: Einaudi, 2009), book VI, 219-236

⁸⁴ Pashk Bardhi, "Si xuni fill Lahuta e Malcis" [How the *Lahuta e Malcis* Originated], in Gjergj Fishta, *Lahuta e Malcis* (1937. Second edition, Rome: 1958), xv-xviii.

⁸⁵ Grgo Martić, *Osvetnici* [The Avengers] (1861-1883. Reprint, Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1991).

⁸⁶ Fairy figure in Northern Albanian folklore, see Elsie, *A Dictionary of Albanian Religion, Mythology, and Folk Culture*, "ora".

Garbed in tears and black gunpowder.
 He went up to Mark Milani,⁸⁷
 With faint voice did he address him⁸⁸

After his return in Albania, Fishta served as a parish priest for some years, but soon he became involved in the educational activities of the Order, serving as director of the Franciscan schools in Scutari. Education led him to intervene in the Albanian cultural movement as well as in actual politics. As a cultural activist, one of the highlights of his career was the promotion of the 1908 Congress of Monastir (Alb.: Manastir, today Bitola, Republic of Macedonia), which established the use of a standard alphabet, based on the Latin one with some phonetic adjustments, for the Albanian language. As a politician, Fishta was a member of the Albanian delegation to the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. The following year he was elected member of the Albanian parliament, where he also served as vice president (1921-1923). Due to his opposition to the rising power of Ahmet Zogu (1895-1961), he spent two years in voluntary exile in Italy (1925-1926). After his return he was still engaged in political life, representing Albania at the first Balkan Conference which took place in Athens in 1930. He then retired from active politics in order to focus on his work as literate and as director of the Franciscan schools in Albania. He died in Scutari on 30th December 1940.

Fishta was a versatile author, his literary work ranging from theatre (*Barit e Belemit*, *The Shepherds of Bethlem*, 1925; *Sh' Françesku i Asisit*, *Saint Francis of Assisi*, 1925), to satire (*Anzat e Parnasit*, *The Wasps of Parnassus*, 1907) and translation (Molière, Metastasio, Manzoni etc.). But the most impactful contribution

⁸⁷ Marko Miljanov Popović (Alb.: Mark Milani, 1833-1901), was the Montenegrin general (Serb.: *vojvoda*) who led the Montenegrin army against the Albanians in the events narrated in the central part of the *Lahuta*.

⁸⁸ Fishta, *Lahuta*, canto XXV, lines 86-96.

provided by Fishta is undoubtedly the epic poem *Lahuta e Malcis* [The Mountain Lute], published in Scutari in 1937. The *Lahuta* is the epic recounting of the tumultuous years between the Congress of Berlin (1878) and the Congress of London (1913), when Albanians stood up against the decisions to give the newly-recognised Principality of Montenegro the right to occupy the Ottoman districts of Gusnje (Alb.: Gucia) and Plav (Alb.: Plava), as well as the cities of Bar (Alb.: Tivari; It.: Antivari) and Podgorica, decision which the Albanian leaders strongly opposed, as these lands were mostly inhabited by Albanians. The eventual defeat only fuelled the anti-Ottoman feelings among Albanians, who rose up against the Empire in the aftermath of the first Balkan War (1912), when the joint forces of Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro and Serbia managed to strip the Ottomans of almost all their Balkan territories. The revolt is now successful, and the poem ends with the European Powers gathered in London granting Albania the long-desired independence.

Fishta's figure and work have been highly contested in the decades following his death. During all his life and until the end of World War II, he was regarded as Albania's foremost poet, especially due to the *Lahuta*. However, the communist regime which took over the country after the war was particularly hostile to him. Aside from the stain of being a Catholic priest,⁸⁹ the communists blamed him for his support to the Italian Fascist rule in Albania,⁹⁰ as well as of stirring anti-Slavic feelings with his *Lahuta*.⁹¹ As a result, his bones were exhumed and thrown in the river Drin, and all his work was censored in the country under the blame of

⁸⁹ Being Catholic clergy, however, did not prevent other writers from becoming canon literature in communist Albania.

⁹⁰ It is no secret that Fishta did actually see with positive eye the Italian influence in Albania, attitude which in 1939 led to his appointment at the Reale Accademia d'Italia [Royal Italian Academy], the institution which replaced the Accademia dei Lincei during Fascism.

⁹¹ See below, 138-140.

anticommunist spirit.⁹² However, the memory of Fishta was secretly preserved in Albania, especially in the North,⁹³ and was also cultivated abroad both by the Albanian Catholic diaspora and by the small number of Albanian scholars scattered around the world (including the Arbëresh).⁹⁴ It was only with the fall of communism that Fishta has been rehabilitated in his country, with the *Lahuta* today fully acknowledged as Albania's national epic.

⁹² See, for instance the handbook of Albanian history *The History of Albania: From Its Origins to the Present Day*, by Stefanaq Pollo and Arben Puto, translator uncredited (1981. Reprint, London et al.: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), which was explicitly prepared for the foreign market. On page 223, the two Albanian historians state that “On the other side of the fence, the best-known representatives of conservative and reactionary literature are Gj. Fishta and E. Koliqi. Their works, which are heavily imbued with clericalism together with chauvinist and racist ideas, reflect the conservative, patriarchal mentality of the most backward-looking sections of Albanian society.” For an overview on the reception of Fishta in the twentieth century see Lili Sula, “The Critical Reception of Gjergj Fishta during 1944 - 1990”, in *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, Vol. 2, Nr. 3, November 2013, 99-102. To Dhimitër Shuteriqi's credit, he actually managed to sneak a nod to Fishta into the *Historia e letërsisë shqipe*, as he wrote on page 35 “Është koha kur në letërsinë shqipe duken disa personalitete të fuqishme leterare, që lozin, kush më shumë e kush më pak, një rol të dukshëm gjatë Rilindjes, po që e ushtrojnë veprimtarinë e tyre të gjëre edhe në kohën e pamvarësisë [sic!], si Konica, Sqiroi, Fishta, Noli.” [It is a time in Albanian literature when some seminal figures emerge, figures who play, to some extent, a visible role during the Rilindja, and who also remain active after independence, such as Konica, Schirò, Fishta, Noli.]

⁹³ See below, Appendix I.

⁹⁴ See Sula, “The Critical Reception of Gjergj Fishta during 1944 - 1990”.



7. *Statue of Fishta in the centre of Lezha: A sign of his rehabilitation in post-communist Albania, 2010. Photo by the author.*

Kinship

Whereas the element of kinship was only briefly dealt with by Frashëri, Fishta fully embraces it, making it the most important factor in his epic representation of the Albanian nation. Blood (Alb.: *gjak*) is what makes the Albanian a nation, an uninterrupted bloodline stemming from the Pelasgians which survived until the twentieth century, as reminded by Abdyl Frashëri in canto IX, which deals with the creation of the League of Prizrend:

“Long before the grey-skinned she-wolf
Left the Capitoline forest
To take Romulus to suckle,
After Troy had been demolished,

And in yonder Ural mountains,
 In those rough and rugged forest,
 Were the Slavs, like craggy beasts there
 On the lookout for crabapples,
 And where here, down in the Balkans,
 Our forefathers, the Pelasgians,
 Grazed their herds on fields and meadows
 [...]
 Nowhere is an older people
 Than the famed race of Albanians.⁹⁵

This unique bloodline is what sets Albanians apart from their neighbours, especially the Montenegrins. One of the reasons behind Fishta's fall from fortune in communist Albania was his less-than-flattering depiction of the Slavs, attitude that communists saw as a potential insult to their Yugoslav and Russian allies. Fishta's relationship with the Slavic world is rather complex: On the one hand he did address them with derogatory terms like *shkija* (Slav) in the *Lahuta*; On the other he did bother to learn Serbo-Croatian during his time in Bosnia, which opened his work to the influence of Njegoš (to whom he paid tribute to in this epic), Kačić-Miošić, and Martić. However, despite crediting some Montenegrins with gallantry on the battlefield, it is a fact that the Slavs are depicted in the epic as an invading race who, from the Middle Ages down to present days, have always tried to lay hands on the Albanian lands, thus marking kinship as a prominent constitutive element of the Albanian national identity:

“But the Prince of Montenegro,
 Prince Nikolla the foolhardy,
 Yes, foolhardy, but a nuisance,
 Gathered weapons, mustered soldiers
 To attack and take Albania,
 To subdue the plains and mountains
 Down the length of the Drin river,

⁹⁵ Fishta, *Lahuta*, canto IX, lines 250-272.

Right to Rozafat's great fortress,
 There to plant his *trobojnica*.⁹⁶
 Place on Shkodra his *kapica*,⁹⁷
 Make it part of Montenegro,
 Leave a bloodbath behind him.⁹⁸

The aversion to the *kapica*, here presented as symbol of Montenegrin identity, is a recurring theme in the *Lahuta*, as we may also see in canto XXV, where the hero Lleshë Nikë Daka proclaims the motivations which lead him to fight the Slavs – in the heat of a battle with the Montenegrins:

We've not come to steal and plunder,
 But to stop the Slavic onslaught,
 Keep the *shkjas* far from our country,
 Like a nest of wasps a-buzzing
 When a child comes by to prod it,
 Will the wasps swarm out to sting it,
 Or to wound a hundred children.
 Thus the *shkjas* swarm, even thicker,
 Bringing with them men and women,
 But we'll not give up Albania,
 Even if Moscow attacks us,
 We'll not dress in their *kapica*.⁹⁹

But what is by far the most drastic manifestation of anti-Slavic feeling in the *Lahuta*, *kapica* included, is to be found in canto VIII, where Ali Pasha Gucia (1828-1889), upon leaving to join the other Albanian warriors, instructs his wife to kill their newborn son should the Montenegrins manage to conquer the Gucia district of which he is the *kaymakam* (Ottoman vice-governor).

Should however Montenegro
 Rise and occupy Gucia,

⁹⁶ Literally “tricolour”, *trobojnica* is the Serbo-Croatian name of the Montenegrin flag – much like the American flag is familiarly called Stars and Stripes.

⁹⁷ The *kapica* is the traditional Montenegrin round cap.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, canto I, lines 49-60.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, canto XXV, lines 241-251.

While the lad lies in his cradle.
 Then, by God who did create him,
 Listen, woman, to my words now,
 Make of lifeless stone our heart and
 Chop his head off in the cradle.
 Let the prince not take him living,
 For I'll not disgrace our homeland,
 I will not have people saying
 Scanderbeg's blood, Ali Bey's son,
 Has been wearing their *kapica*,
 Under Slavic yoke he's living,
 Has to him paid tithes and taxes.
 Better mourn him at his graveside
 Than see him in Slavic serfdom."¹⁰⁰

The fact that Guçia was eventually annexed to Montenegro provides these lines, and the marked anti-Slavic feeling they are based on, with a much darker tone.

Religion

Fishta's approach to religion is radically different from Naim's own. In the *Lahuta*, the Franciscan friar insists on the fact that the Albanian heroes are both Muslims and Christians, who fight together for Albania despite the profound religious divide – a concept which is a staple in the ideological structure of the *Lahuta*. Countless examples might be brought up here, including the fight between the Albanian heroes and the *kulshedra*:¹⁰¹

Both the Muslims and the Christians
 Set upon her, the,
 Shooting at her and attacking,
 Some above her soared and harried,
 Others from the side assaulted,
 All together they harassed her

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., canto VIII, lines 41-52.

¹⁰¹ See above, 63-64.

With their long harpoons and hatchets.¹⁰²

The episode where Fishta's approach to religion is best fleshed out is to be found in canto XXI. After the events of the previous canto, where a fierce battle has been fought between Albanians and Montenegrins at the Sutjeska bridge, the Catholic priest Father Gjon is sent to arrange a truce with the leader of the Montenegrin army, Mark Milani, in order to tend to the wounded and to bury the dead. The truce is agreed, and during the discussion Mark asks Father Gjon why a Catholic clergy like him might possibly side with so many Muslims, instead of pledging his allegiance to Nikola, a Christian prince. Gjon's answer is basically the exposition of the *Lahuta's* religious policy:

Don't repeat that accusation,
That I'm in the Turkish army
Fighting against Montenegro,
For it's not true, that assertion.
Yes, my Lord, I've joined the army,
Not as Turk but as Albanian.
Both the Muslims and the Christians,
Christians Muslims all together,
Have but one land, their Albania.
Therefore we will all defend it,
All protect it and do battle,
All together torn to pieces,
Latins, Orthodox and Muslims,
For Albania, yes, we'll struggle.
You brought out no guns and cannons
To convert the Turks from Islam,
But to conquer poor Albania
Down at least to where the Drin flows.
May your life be long, so be it,
I'm a priest, but I'll with Muslims
Sacrifice myself, I'll tell you.
Let them chain me, let them hang me,
But I'll not give up Albania,

¹⁰² Ibid., canto XVI, lines 330-336.

Not a big piece or a little,
 Without seeing Montenegro
 Bathed in blood for every handbreadth.¹⁰³

The use of the religious factor in the *Lahuta* is the logical consequence of the idea Fishta has of kinship: All the Albanians are bound by common blood, a bound which religion is not meant to break. However, unlike Naim who completely wrote off Christians and Christianity in his epic representation of Albania, Fishta has a more positive attitude towards the religious Other: The *Lahuta* is not the national epos of Catholic Albania, but on the contrary it presents the unity of Christian and Muslim Albanians as one of the pillars of nation. This concept was not really new among Catholic authors: Pashko Vasa's most famous poem is *O moj Shqypni* [Oh Albania], an anthem of Albanianness beyond the religious divide,¹⁰⁴ and the Arbëreshë writer Giuseppe (Alb.: Zef) Schirò Sr (1865-1927), while regretting the religious division among Albanians, recognised the good faith and the undeniable Albanian character of the Bektashi and the other Muslims in his poem *Këthimi* [The Return].¹⁰⁵

However, not all the religions practiced by the Albanians are treated so inclusively: Judaism and Orthodox Christianity, unlike Islam, are all but forgotten in the *Lahuta*. Whereas the absence of the Jews may be more easily explained, as the Jewish community in Albania was always very small and aloof of the nation-building process, the same cannot be said about the Orthodox. Konstantin Kristoforidhi,¹⁰⁶ Mihal

¹⁰³ Ibid., canto XXI, lines 280-306.

¹⁰⁴ Pashko Vasa, *O moj Shqypni* [Oh Albania], (1878-1880).

¹⁰⁵ Giuseppe Schirò Sr, *Këthimi* [The Return] (Florence: Olschki, 1965).

¹⁰⁶ Konstantin Kristoforidhi (1827-1895) was a scholar and cultural activist, mostly famous for his translations of the Bible which contributed to the systematisation of literary Albanian, thus prompting the French scholar Georges Castellan (1920-2014) to compare his role in Albanian literature to the one Martin Luther had in the German one. See Georges Castellan, "Le romantisme historique : une des sources de l'idéologie des Etats balkaniques aux XIX^e et XX^e siècles" [Historical Romanticism: One of the Ideological Sources of the Balkan States in the XIX and XX Centuries], in *Revue Historique*, T. 273, Fasc. 1 (553) (JANVIER-MARS 1985), 187-203.

Grameno,¹⁰⁷ Kristo and Thedos Negovani,¹⁰⁸ Fan Noli:¹⁰⁹ These are only some of those Orthodox who gave a crucial contribution to the Albanian cultural and political nation building during the *Rilindja*, some of whom Fishta knew in person and even worked with. So why is there almost no trace of them in the *Lahuta*?¹¹⁰ Whereas a first reason may be seen in the fact that the events of the poem take place in a region where the presence of Orthodox Albanians was close to nonexistent, this does not explain why Fishta fails to mention them whenever he deals with Albania as a whole. This cannot possibly be because the Montenegrins, the main “villains” of the poem, were themselves in majority Orthodox, as the last part of the *Lahuta* recounts the last wars against the Ottoman Empire, and yet Islam is not written off from the theoretical fabric of the epic. The reason, in my opinion, is more subtle: Gjergj Fishta, as brilliant as he was, was still a man of his times, which in this particular case means that he was a Catholic priest who lived way before the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), and therefore way before Rome embraced ecumenism as the way to deal with the separate sister Churches of the East.¹¹¹ Orthodox Albanians, despite all their patriotism, were still the representatives of a schismatic Church, and openly praising them could have

¹⁰⁷ Mihal Grameno (1872-1931), poet, partook in the Congress of Manastir (1905), after which he joined the armed bands of Çerçiz Topulli (1880-1915) in their struggle against the Ottoman Empire. Grameno opposed the Hellenising tendencies promoted by part of the Orthodox clergy in Albania. He also spent many years in the United States, where he became a prominent member of the local Albanian community.

¹⁰⁸ Kristo and Thedos Harallambi Negovani were two brothers and Orthodox clergy who promoted the use of Albanian in the Holy Liturgy of the Orthodox Church. For this reason, after being subject of vehement attacks from many Greek clergy, they were assassinated on 12th March 1905 in their hometown, Negovani (today Flampouron, Greece).

¹⁰⁹ Theofan “Fan” Stilian Noli (1882-1965) was a writer, politician, and Orthodox priest. He promoted the autocephaly of the Albanian Orthodox Church, of which he became its first bishop in 1919. His briefly served as Prime Minister in 1924, an experience which came to an end with Ahmed Zogu’s seizure of power. He then went into exile to the United States, where he resided until the end of his life.

¹¹⁰ The previously mentioned speech by Father Gjon is one of the very few times, if not the only one, when Orthodox Albanians are brought up in the *Lahuta*.

¹¹¹ In the interwar years the Catholic Church in Albania promoted a last unionist effort towards the Orthodox population, effort which Fishta was well aware of. See Ines Angeli Murzaku, *Returning Home to Rome: The Basilian Monks of Grottaferrata in Albania* (Grottaferrata: Analekta Kryptoferis, 2009).

implied a praise of their religious background too – a step Fishta was not ready for. However, Fishta was crafty enough to tone down the obvious Catholic belonging of the Christian Albanians in the *Lahuta*, almost always labelling them as *krishterë* [Christian] instead of *katolik*. While I cannot tell if this was what actually Fishta originally envisaged for his poem, in this way he somewhat managed not to make the Orthodox feel estranged from his epic portrayal of the Albanian nation.¹¹²

Patriotism

The entire poem is permeated by a marked political atmosphere: The very first canto is nothing but a poetic recount of the Congress of Berlin and its decisions concerning the Albanian lands, with particular attention paid to the support Russia provided Montenegro with, support which eventually led to the confrontation of the Montenegrins with the League of Prizren:

Still the Turk sat in a stupor,
Teardrops from his eyes a-trickling,
For the shkjas he could not counter
Now that Moscow has surrounded
Stamboul and besieged the city.
There the Seven Kings took counsel,
There they talked and pondered evil,
(may their evil thoughts confound them!)
To deliver fair Albania
To the hands of Montenegro.¹¹³

¹¹² Stavro Skendi's more than positive reception of Fishta is a good example of the success of the *Lahuta* among Albanian Orthodox, see Skendi, *Balkan Cultural Studies*.

¹¹³ Fishta, *Lahuta*, canto I, lines 61-70. On the seven kings see above, 120.

And on a political note the epic wraps itself up, as the last song celebrates the birth of the independent Albanian state saluted by the national flag finally fluttering in the breeze:

Red and black, the banner's flying
For the first time in its beauty,
Like the wings of all God's angels,
O'er the land of Castriota,
Waving now as it once used to.¹¹⁴

Gjergj Fishta stems from the generation after Naim's: Unlike the Bektashi Albanian writer of tales, he saw the end of the struggle for the Albanian independence and the establishment of an Albanian state – state which he also served in various capacities. With his *Lahuta* Fishta crowned this process, penning an epic narrative of Albania's path towards victory and independence, a narrative where all the parts who have been involved in the struggle may identify with,¹¹⁵ thus providing the national epic with an intrinsic, strong patriotic element.

Bridging Albanian and South Slavic National Epics

Far from being two sealed-off worlds, the epic literary cultures of the Albanian and their neighbouring South Slavic cultures have revealed to actually share many relevant features, and so do the histories of their cultural nation-building processes. Three are the conclusions I come to from the comparative analysis of these epics.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., canto XXX, lines 35-40.

¹¹⁵ See Francesco La Rocca, "Troublesome Self-Representations: The Albanian Ottoman Past in Gjergj Fishta's *Lahuta e Malcis* (The Highland Lute)", in Dimitris Stamatopoulos (ed.), *Balkan Nationalism(s) and the Ottoman Empire*, Vol. 1 (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2015), 223-237. Almost paradoxically, Fishta composed his national epic in a very strict *gegnishtja*, the dialect of Northern Albania, which is extremely hard to understand for those who speak *toskerishtja*, the Southern dialect, which is the basis of today's standard Albanian and the Arbëresh language. See Shefikije Islamaj, *Gjergj Fishta: Gjuha dhe stili* [Gjergj Fishta: Language and Style], 2 vols. (Prishtinë: Instituti Albanologjik, 2012).

Different Approaches to Epic Nation Building: A Non-National Nationalism

The first conclusion is that there is no “national way” to epic nation building, in that it is not possible to pin down a specific and exclusive Albanian, Croatian, or Serbo-Montenegrin approach to national identity: We have seen how Njegoš and Frashëri are quite similar to each other when it comes to the role of religion, both of them assigning their respective faiths a pivotal role in the national representation; Demeter and Pucić, on the other hand, deliberately write off faith from their epics, as this would inevitably cut them off the national communities they strove so hard to belong to, Demeter being an Orthodox in a predominantly Catholic nation and Pucić a Catholic in a predominantly Orthodox one. Conversely, Fishta and Nazor stress the relevance of ethnic communality in their depictions of the Albanian and Croatian nations – especially when they are opposed to the “enemy”, i.e. the Montenegrins and the Italians respectively.

All these different, and at times competing, epic representations of the nation show how cultural nationalism was far from being a univocal phenomenon not only at a pan-European level, but also at a national one.

The “Minority/Majority Factor”

The absence of a homogeneous, “national” way to represent the nation in literary epics leads us to the second conclusion: Authors coming from religious or ethnic minorities tend to exclude their “minority factor” in their poems, i.e. they avoid to mention what sets them apart from the national majority. This was clearly the case of Dimitrija Demeter who, being born to a Greek family and being an Orthodox, could not really bring up common blood and faith as primary elements in his epic

construction of the Croatian nation without undermining his own Croatianness. The only element at his disposal was his patriotism, his firm commitment to Croatia as a cultural and civic nation. Fishta and Pucić too had to deal with the minority factor, although from a far easier position than Demeter's own, for they could both count on their ethnic communality with the religiously diverse Serbs and Albanians. And, not by chance, this ethnic communality was one of the elements they brought up the most as a way to reach out their fellow countrymen (or potentially so).

The omission of the "minority element" by some authors may be also flipped over, in that authors coming from the majority (be it religious, ethnic or linguistic) tend to highlight the "majority element" which they share with most of the national body: Frashëri, Fishta, Nazor, and Pucić could all count on the fact of being, respectively, Albanians among Albanians, a Croat among Croats and, in Pucić's quite peculiar case, a Slav among Serbs, which eventually made him a fully-recognised Serb. Conversely, Njegoš could not emphasise kinship as an element of national identity, for the main enemy in the *Gorski Vijenac* is represented by other fellow Slavs. Therefore, he relied on a different, "majority" element in order to stress the Serbo-Montenegrin national identity: Faith, in this case Orthodox Christianity, which he shared with most of the Montenegrins and Serbs. In a similar way Naim Frashëri stressed his own religion, Bektashi Islam, as a potentially aggregative element for the entire Albanian nation. He did not cut off Christian Albanians from the national body the same way Njegoš did with Muslim Montenegrins, but by putting forward Bektashi Islam as the main road towards national unification in his *Qerbeleja* he quite clearly showed that he did regard this faith as a pivotal element in the Albanian nation-building process.

This does not of course mean that mainstream Croatian and Serbian nationalisms did not see Catholicism and Orthodoxy as potential sources of national identity (in the

Albanian case, as we have seen, faith played a completely different role), nor that ethnic belonging was neglected either, but the comparative study of epic suggests that there has been room for diversity, be it ethnic or religious, as long as there was full commitment to the national cause – the patriotic element of the Tripod model. Voluntarism, under certain circumstances, became a stronger factor than heritage.

National Epic as an Opportunity for Integration

My third conclusion is a direct consequence of the previous one: As we have seen in the case of Demeter, Fishta, and Pucić, national epic provided authors coming from religious and/or ethnic minorities with an outlet to join the literary pantheon of the mainstream nations and, contextually, to promote their personal integration in the nation. Granted, Albanian Catholic writers like Fishta did not really need to struggle over their national credentials: As demonstrated by Clayer, it was the Muslims who had to go the extra mile in order to make the Albanian national idea their own.¹¹⁶ However, Fishta's approach to Albanian religious diversity in the *Lahuta* helped presenting the Albanian national idea as a not-necessarily Christian/Catholic project – a message also Frashëri admittedly intended to spread among his fellow Muslims with his *Istori e Skënderbeut* half a century prior.

Roman epos provides again a classical antecedent to this phenomenon. Ennius,¹¹⁷ the father of Latin epic literature, was not born as a Roman, but came from the Messapian town of Rudiae, a settlement close to what is nowadays Lecce (Italy). However, he totally embraced Rome as his fatherland, a feeling which led him to pen

¹¹⁶ Clayer, *Aux origines du nationalisme albanais*.

¹¹⁷ See above, 50.

an epic, the *Annales* [The Annals] dealing with and glorifies the history of Rome. Here, Ennius proudly brings up his nature of “acquired” Roman:

We, who once were Rudian, are now Roman.¹¹⁸

This explicit declaration of Romanness, together with the epic depiction of Roman history which represents the main topic of the *Annales*, was Ennius’ utmost statement of his Roman (national?) identity – identity which was not at odds with his “ethnic” or linguistic background. From this point of view, the epics of Demeter and Pucić follow the lead given by Ennius more than two millennia prior.

The role of national epics as an outlet for their authors’ national integration may be better understood if one takes into account the story of Grigor Pärličev¹¹⁹ and the difficulties his figure has encountered in joining an “established” national canon, be it Bulgarian, Greek, or Macedonian, as well as his personal failure at embracing one of those national projects. In his study on Pärličev, Raymond Detrez claimed that an author should meet certain criteria in order to be admitted to a national literary pantheon: This author shall belong to the nation to which the pantheon is related, shall write in the national language, and shall write a work of reasonable size and artistic value.¹²⁰ In addition to this, an author might also be “canonised” by virtue of “devotion to the national cause”.¹²¹ Admittedly, Pärličev failed to meet almost all of these criteria: Writing in Greek alienated his *O Armatolos* from the Bulgarian literary canon; his work for the Bulgarian national cause in Ohrid undermined his position vis-

¹¹⁸ “Nos sumus Romani qui fuimus ante Rudini.” Ennius, *Annales*, liber XVIII, line 525. “Nos” is used here as a *pluralis maiestatis*, whose use Ennius pioneered.

¹¹⁹ See above, 47.

¹²⁰ Detrez, “Canonization through Competition”, 37.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

à-vis the Greeks; the archaic Greek language and style he used for his epic did not survive the fall of the classicist, über-purist tendencies of nineteenth-century Greek culture, making him totally irrelevant in modern-day Greece;¹²² and the poem's main theme left the Greeks indifferent on the long run but ended up becoming a point of dispute between Bulgarians and Macedonians in the twentieth-century.¹²³ Demeter and Pucić, on the other hand, displayed a high degree of devotion to the Croatian and Serbian national projects, to the extent that Demeter marginalised his original support to the Greek cause, while Pucić, together with the Ragusan Serbian-Catholic circle, fully embraced the Serbian identity in spite of Dubrovnik's traditional association with Croatian culture. These moves guaranteed Demeter and Pucić a prominent position in the Romantic literary canons of Croatia and Serbia – unlike the more unfortunate Pärličev.

¹²² On nineteenth-century Greek cultural and linguistic nationalism see Peter Mackridge, *Language and National Identity in Greece, 1766-1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 84-88.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of a particular case-study such as the Albanian and South Slavic epics, combined with the excursus on the nature and history of national epic which makes up the first half of this study, offers some insights on the broader phenomenon of national epos in Europe.

A Long Story

The necessity to investigate the deep roots of national epos in the ancient, medieval, and Renaissance literary monuments shows that, *pace* Gellner and Hobsbawm, we are dealing with a long-term phenomenon, whose birth and evolution cannot be possibly explained by a too drastic modernist approach. This conclusion shall not, of course, mislead us into thinking that contemporary nations and nationalism have always existed, but it rather suggests that the elaboration of the idea of the nation long predates the nineteenth century, thus confirming cultural nationalism and national thought as fruitful fields of research – related to, but independent from the study of political nationalism.¹

Roman culture is admittedly the bedrock upon which national epics grew and prospered. Tasso, Zrínyi, Spenser, Frashëri and many other composers of epos drew on and paid homage to Virgil for his depiction of the origins of Rome, with the prophecy of her greatness becoming one of the most influential example in Western culture of how to poetically shape a community – and, of course, a seminal lesson in literary style.

¹ See above, 33-34.

In the early Middle Ages, the theme of the glorification of Rome disappeared in epic literature, replaced by poems dealing with great personalities or events devoid of collective, “national” narratives. It was only from 1000 AD, thanks to the development of juridical thought, of the bureaucracy and the sacralisation of the state due to the Crusades, that patriotism re-emerged as a major theme in European literary epics, paving the way to the future birth of national epic.

Renaissance saw in fact the birth of national epos, with the works of Camões and Spenser among its first instances: Crucial, on this point, was also Tasso’s reflection on the epic representation of history and its potentially explosive allegorical interpretation. Is Renaissance too early of a historical landmark for the birth of national epic? I argue that it is not, provided that one sees national epos as a vehicle for cultural nationalism, a phenomenon not immediately referable or functional to the contemporary idea of nation-state.² Once this perspective has been taken on, it becomes clear that national epos was only one among other early-modern instances of cultural nationalism strikingly resembling their nineteenth- and twentieth-century offspring. Just to mention a few, in 1434 the Swedish Archbishop Nils Ragvaldsson (Lat.: Nicolaus Ragvaldis, 1380-1448) was at odds with the Spanish Bishop Alfonso de Cartagena (1384-1456), for both claimed a more relevant role for their respective countries at the Council of Basel on the basis that the kingdoms of Spain and Sweden were founded by no other than the Goths, thus not being subject to the Holy Roman Empire of Frankish foundation.³ Two centuries later, the Danish polymath Ole Worm

² Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe*.

³ See Werner Söderberg, “Nicolaus Ragvaldis tal i Basel 1434” [Nicolaus Ragvaldis’ Speech in Basel 1434], in *Samlaren*, Vol. 17, 1896, 187-195. Ragvaldsson’s position would eventually pave the way to Swedish Gothicism (Sw.: *Göticism*), i.e. the cultural trend which explored and glorified the Goths and their connection with Sweden, see Josef Svennung, *Zur Geschichte des Göticismus* [On the History of Gothicism] (Stockholm : Almqvist och Wiksell, 1967); and Martin Arnold, *Thor: Myth to Marvel* (London & New York, 2011), 77-86. On the Spanish theorisations of their own Gothic ascendancy see

(Lat.: Olaus Wormius, 1588-1655) published a massive collection of old Norse literary texts⁴ in order to prove that the Nordic countries (and especially Denmark) were not Europe's backwater,⁵ but the recipient of an ancient culture and language, i.e. Norse, whose origins he ingenuously but wrongly traced back to biblical Hebrew.⁶ It is not hard to see in these early manifestations of cultural nationalism the direct antecedent to what Macpherson, Jacob Grimm and Vuk would do centuries later. However, these instances dramatically differ from the Romantic experience in that they were not the direct consequence of a philosophical reflection on the idea of the nation: Worms had no Renaissance Herder to rely on for a theory on language, folk poetry, and culture as the founding pillars of the nation: Consequently the cultivation of national thought, including the composition and reception of national literary epics, remained the domain of restricted intellectual circles at least until the mid-eighteenth century.⁷

The French Revolution and the unstoppable successes of Napoleon showed the power of a nation at arms especially when opposing the forces of dynastic absolutism embodied mostly by Prussia, which Napoleon soundly defeated in 1806. National belonging became a matter of life and death, and nationalism became a new tool for mobilisation and political legitimation (let us just think of Napoleon's title of

Biörn Tjällén, "Political Thought and Political Myth in Late Medieval National Histories: Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo (†1470)", in Erik Kooper, Sjoerd Level (ed.), *The Medieval Chronicle VIII* (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2013), 273-288. The Swedish royals would retain the title of "King of the Goths" (Sw.: *Götes konung*) until 1973, when King Carl XVI Gustaf dropped this and other obsolete titles in favour of the more modern *Sveriges kung* (King of Sweden) upon his accession to the throne.

⁴ Ole Worm, *Runir seu danica literatura antiquissima, vulgo Gothica dicta, luci reddita* [Runir or the Most Ancient Danish Literature, also Known as Gothic, Brought Back to Light] (1636. 2nd edition 1651).

⁵ Worm, *Runir*, Introduction. See also Arnold, *Thor*, 82-83.

⁶ Worm, *Runir.*, 9-13.

⁷ Peter N. Miller provides some valuable insights on the eighteenth-century passage from antiquarianism to actual historical research, see his "Goethe and the End of Antiquarianism", in Anna Blair & Anja-Silvia Goering, *For the Sake of Learning: Essays in Honor of Anthony Grafton* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2016), Vol.2, 897-916.

Empereur des Français, Emperor of the French): It is in such a framework that national literary epos became such a powerhouse of cultural nation building.

The *Poems of Ossian* played a crucial role in this process. Despite their current reputation as a notorious hoax, their arrival undisputedly upset eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European culture: A new idea on the national spirit stemmed from the reception of Ossianic poetry, that a people may be regarded as such by virtue their genuine *corpus* of folk culture – epic poetry being a crucial element thereof. Herder was instrumental in giving this idea a proper philosophical elaboration and legitimacy, idea whose future developments he anticipated and promoted with his work on the *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern* and on the *Cid*, the forerunners of all folklore collections and folk-inspired national epics of nineteenth-century Europe.

The history of national epos does not end with Romanticism: Even though the composition of genuine national epic poems in Europe quite possibly ends with Fishta, the twentieth century saw some of these epics playing a role of paramount importance in the life of their countries. It was not anymore a matter of composing or retrieving national poems, but of exploiting the already-existing corpus' symbolic power in the political and cultural arena. We have already seen how this has been the case with Fishta and Njegoš in the Balkans, with their works and figures being appropriated or dismissed, and at times even violently opposed, by different political agents, but this dynamic is far from being a Balkan prerogative.

Again, the Baltic area provides plenty of valuable food for thought on this point. In Finland, the *Kalevala* has been and still is a primary constitutive element of the established Finnish national identity, having legitimised the use of Finnish as a literary

language and having inspired countless artistic production,⁸ to the point that the date of its publication is the date of national holiday of that country (28th February). In the twentieth century, the epic and its composition history, i.e. the collection of Finnish folklore in Karelia⁹ by Lönnrot, were the bone of contention between Finnish and Soviet scholars, for the latter intended to frame Karelian culture as integral part of Soviet heritage, and by extension not so subtly advocating a Soviet ascendancy on the founding literary monument of Finnish culture: Given Finland's precarious situation vis-à-vis Soviet Union during the Cold War, it is not hard to realise why the struggle over the *Kalevala* became such an important issue in the cultural and political life of Finland.¹⁰



8. The 1935 stamp series celebrating the centenary of the publication of the *Kalevala*. <http://www.ebay.com/itm/Kalevala-100-Centenaryof-the-national-Epic->

⁸ A trend well alive even today, as testified, among the many examples, by the contemporary *Kalevala*-inspired music of the Finnish Melodic-Death Metal band Amorphis.

⁹ Karelia (Fin.: Karjala, Rus.: Karelija) is the region which faces the easternmost part of the Gulf of Finland. It is today divided between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Finland, a division which traces back to the peace treaty between Finland and Soviet Union at the end of World War II. It is inhabited by the Karelians, a Finnish-speaking population among whom Lönnrot collected much of the material which eventually became the inspiration for the *Kalevala*. See Gay, "The Creation of the 'Kalevala'"; Royal Skousen, "The Dialect of the Kalevala", in *Scandinavian Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (SUMMER 1986), 275-284; William A. Wilson, "The Evolutionary Premise in Folklore Theory and the 'Finnish Method' ", in *Western Folklore*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Oct., 1976), 241-249.

¹⁰ For an overview of the Finnish-Soviet quarrel over Karelia and its heritage see Takehiro Okabe, "Negotiating Elias Lönnrot: Shared Soviet-Finnish National Symbol Articulated and Blurred, 1945-1952", in *Revue d'histoire nordique*, n°19, 129-149; Marina Vitukhnovskaya, "Cultural and Political Reaction in Russian Karelia in 1906-1907. State Power, the Orthodox Church, and the 'Black Hundreds' against Karelian Nationalism", in *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas, Neue Folge*, Bd. 49, H. 1 (2001), 24-44; William A. Wilson, "The 'Kalevala' and Finnish Politics", in *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, Vol. 12, No. 2/3 (1975), 131-155.

Finland-1935-MNH-Stamps-/161921713407 (accessed on 2nd August 2016).

Estonians and Latvians too have extensively drawn their nationalistic imagery from their respective national epics, i.e. the *Kalevipoeg* and *Lāčplēsis*. While this was the case already in the interwar years, this process became way more relevant as these countries came under Soviet occupation in 1944. In fact, during this time Soviet authorities had a quite schizophrenic attitude towards the *Kalevipoeg* and *Lāčplēsis*: One was appropriation, for these epics were studied in Soviet academia and celebrated as elements of Soviet culture; the other was suppression, for they could also serve as catalyst of national pride, and consequently potential opposition. Consequently, in 1961 Soviet Union celebrated the first centenary of the of the *Kalevipoeg* with a scholarly edition published by the Soviet-Estonian Academy of Science as well as by issuing a commemorative stamp; but in 1950 they also destroyed the statue of the hero Kalevipoeg, the protagonist of Kreutzwald's poem, originally erected in 1933 in the city of Tartu to commemorate those who fell in the 1918-1920 War of Independence.¹¹

¹¹ The statue was eventually restored in 2003.



9. *The Kalevipoeg statue in Tartu, 2015. Photo by the author.*

Similar dynamics took place in neighbouring Latvia: The Soviets were not necessarily against Pumpurs and his work, and people could read it in the Soviet years, although in a much sanitised version.¹² However, in the 1980s the *Lāčplēsis* became eventually the flagship of Latvian protest against Soviet rule, and now *Lāčplēsis*-inspired imagery is to be found everywhere in the country. The following lines by Daina Stukuls Eglis effectively depict the role this national epic has in contemporary Latvian history and society:

Indeed, representations of the Bearslayer abound, particularly in Riga (which, ironically, did not occupy a place of great favour in Pumpurs' epic): There one can stroll down *Lāčplēsis* street, drink *Lāčplēsis* beer, and

¹² On Pumpurs' reception in Soviet Latvia see Ojār Lāms, "The Interaction of Power and Culture in Perceptions of the Latvian epic *Lāčplēsis*", in Johnatan Osmond & Ausma Cimdiņa (eds.), *Power and Culture: Identity, Ideology, Representation* (Pisa: Edizioni Plus - Pisa University Press, 2007), 117-137.

examine the figure of the Bearlayer on the south side of the Freedom Monument. In the interwar period (1918-1940), the *Lāčplēsis* Order was a military decoration of highest regard. This award had been renewed in the post-Communist period. In 1988, fully one hundred years after Pumpurs's epic appeared, the rock opera *Lāčplēsis* opened to great acclaim, and a physical representation, Kārlis Jansons's interwar statue of the Bearlayer, broken and decapitated, was unearthed in the city of Jelgava after decades beneath the soil. Dainis Īvāns, an important figure in the opposition movement of the late 1980s, wrote of the statue: "With flowers in place of his severed head, without legs, but with the handle of the sword in his hand, with strength in his muscles and heart, which had survived destruction, he spoke to an unthinkable wonder of resurrection." Īvāns, in fact, called 1988 "the year of the Bearlayer." The same year, on *Lāčplēsa diena*, (Bearlayer Day, November 11), the interwar Latvian flag was raised over Riga Castle for the first time since the Soviet occupation. During the demonstrations of the period of opposition, signs could be seen in crowds calling for the removal of *kangari* from posts of power: the word comes from a character in the epic, Kangars, who betrays his nation for personal gain.¹³



10. *Lāčplēsis* as symbol of Latvian freedom. In the banner, the Bearlayer is represented as fighting against Soviet occupation. Photo taken at the rally "For a legal state in Latvia" which took place in Riga on 7th October 1988. <http://www.lvarhivs.gov.lv/Praga68/index.php?id=1050> (accessed on 2nd August

¹³ Daina Stukuls Eglītis, *Imagining the Nation: History, Modernity, and Revolution in Latvia* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2002), 3 (footnotes omitted).

2016).

East vs. West...Again?

Fleshing out the birth and development of Romantic national epos in Europe, one cannot help but notice that the overwhelming majority of these epics come from Eastern and Central European literary culture. Apparently, cultural activists of the West did not feel the need to provide their peoples with an influential national epic poem. Is it true at all? Why did this happen? Are we supposed to think that Hans Kohn's distinction between a Western, Enlightenment-inspired and an Eastern, Romantic, ethnocultural nationalism¹⁴ still holds water in this context?

As one may imagine, the picture is a bit more complex than that. Composition of literary epics in Europe, as we have seen, experienced a resurgence in the late Renaissance thanks to Tasso and continued uninterrupted in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Romanticism only boosted this trend, undoubtedly also thanks to the success of the *Poems of Ossian*. However, Western attempts at creating a national epic poetry, i.e. intentionally penning an epos which were truly national in spirit (also one of the four features of national epic)¹⁵ are much fewer and far between during Romanticism and afterwards – and definitely much less renewed. Just to mention a few: In 1807, in the then young United States of America, the writer and politician Joel Barlow (1754-1812) took on national epos by publishing *The Columbiad*,¹⁶ a

¹⁴ See above, 24-25.

¹⁵ See above, 42-44.

¹⁶ Joel Barlow, *The Columbiad: A Poem* (Philadelphia: Fry & Kammer, 1807). For an analysis of the poem and its composition history see Steven Blakemore, *Joel Barlow's Columbiad: A Bicentennial Reading* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2007). On Barlow's role in moulding American nationalism, including *The Columbiad*, see also Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*, 297-299. Columbus' had already inspired a host of epic literature in the late Renaissance and Baroque eras, particularly in Italy, see Lorenzo Bocca, "La scoperta dell'America nell'epica italiana tra Tasso e Stigliani" [The Discovery of America in Italian Epic between Tasso and Stigliani], in Alberto

poetic recounting of Columbus' flight over the Atlantic and vision of the USA's future God-given greatness; almost a decade later, Italian poet Angelo Maria Ricci (1776-1850) decided to honour his divided country with his *L'Italiade* [The Italiad],¹⁷ an epic set at the time of Charlemagne's wars with the Longobards in Italy. However, both these epics only had some moderate success upon publication before falling into obscurity (Barlow less than Ricci), thus failing at meeting the last requirement a national epic poem is supposed to fulfil: To enjoy a positive reception.¹⁸ On the other hand, not all the literary cultures of the East have developed national epic poetry: To the best of my knowledge, no national literary epos has been produced by any modern Greek, Lithuanian, Macedonian,¹⁹ or Romanian²⁰ author. The final picture is much blurrier, but nonetheless we see our first assumption somewhat confirmed: The composition of Romantic national epic was a mostly Central and Eastern European phenomenon.

A partial explanation comes from the fact that all the Romantic national epics were produced by authors stemming from, in Miroslav Hroch's words, "small" and/or "emerging nations"²¹, as many of the cultures of Eastern Europe were at that time. This is surely the case of the Balkan epics we have scrutinised, as well as of the Baltic ones: Their authors were struggling to promote and establish their nations either at a

Beniscelli, Quinto Marini, Luigi Surdich, *La letteratura degli Italiani: Rotte, confini, paesaggi* [The Literature of the Italians: Routes, Borders, Landscapes] (Genova: 2012), 1-12.

¹⁷ Angelo Maria Ricci, *L'Italiade* [The Italiad] (Livorno: Masi, 1819).

¹⁸ See above, 48.

¹⁹ This, of course, provided that one regards Macedonian language and literature as separate entities from the Bulgarian one.

²⁰ The *Miorița*, the folk poem usually regarded as the best achievement of Romanian folklore, is not an epic poem, but rather a lyrical ballad. Literary epos is remarkably absent in Romanian literature. One of the few exceptions is Ion Budai-Deleanu's (1760?-1820) *Țiganiada* (1800-1812), which is actually a mock-epic actually enjoyed quite a bit of popularity in Europe still in the nineteenth century, let us just think of the *Dionomachia* (1817) by Salvatore Viale (1787-1861), the first poem which combined Corsican songs in a text written in literary Italian. See Salvatore Viale, *Dionomachia* (1817. 2nd edition, Paris: Dufart, 1823).

²¹ See above, 1.

cultural and/or at a political level, and the composition of an epic reflecting the soul of their nation was a go-to weapon for cultural activists to win the day. This might also be the reason why no relevant national epic appeared in the West at that time: No major literary culture of Western Europe had to struggle for recognition by the nineteenth century, and despite political contingencies might have prompted the composition of national epic in some contexts, this was either neglected or cultivated by authors with lesser artistic skills compared to their counterparts in Eastern Europe – Ricci's *Italiade* being nowhere close to a *Lahuta*, a *Grobničko polje* or a *Kalevala* in terms of literary valour and thematic depth, which also explains its total absence in contemporary Italian literary canon.²² This, however, does not explain why some Eastern European literary cultures did not produce any national epic, even though they had a political and cultural background extremely similar to the one of their neighbours which did turn to national epic: Why there is no Lithuanian *Lāčplēsis*? Why there is no Romanian *Gorski Vijenac*? A proper answer may only come from a proper reflection on these specific national contexts, reflection which exceeds the scope of this research.²³

National Epics = Political Epics?

Many of the Albanian and Serbo-Croatian authors of national epics we have scrutinised were also important actors in the political lives of their countries or

²² A last, dramatically late in the action attempt at giving Italy a full-fledged national epic was made in the twentieth century by poet Luigi Polacchi (1894-1988) with his *Italide* (1937-1970), a 58.000 verse long mammoth which, needless to say, had no better fortune than Ricci's *Italiade*.

²³ There is only one case of lack of national epos which might be easily explained here: The Greek one. Nineteenth-century Greek nationalism had as a fundamental assumption the idea of the continuity, both ethnic and linguistic, between ancient and modern Greece, an idea first promoted by Adamantios Korais (1748-1833), see Macridge, *Language and National Identity in Greece*. With such a mindset, why should a Greek cultural activist have penned a national epic poem, if the nation could already boast the founding monuments of epos itself, i.e. the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*?

communities. Leaving aside for a moment the political and social relevance some of their national epics have eventually acquired, are we supposed to infer that these epics were first and foremost vehicles of their author's political agendas, particularly autonomist and separatist claims? The answer, again, is to be found in the details.

Demeter's *Grobničko polje* does not promote any immediate political claim, nor did Demeter's involvement in public life go beyond the publication of pamphlets and the time spent as manager of the Croatian National Theatre. Medo Pucić too, besides the time when he served as preceptor of Prince Milan, spent most of his political career promoting the union of the South Slavs within the Habsburg Empire: His commitment to the Serbian cause, including the composition of the *Karađurđevka*, belonged almost exclusively to the cultural realm. On the other hand, authors like Fishta, Frashëri, and Njegoš did, in fact, compose their national epics with the intent to back their political agenda: Fishta intended to provide an epic legitimation to the new Albanian state; Frashëri aimed at winning the Muslims to the Albanian national cause by "secularising" the figure of Scanderbeg and by stirring up the anti-Ottoman feelings of the Shia community; Njegoš wrote his *Gorski vijenac* as the mirror for a besieged people. Nator represents somewhat of a transitional phase between these two extremes, for he did heavily draw on Croatian medieval history and folklore to pen in poems, but these shall not be interpreted as his poetic manifesto for an independent Croatian state – the proof is the fact that his work enjoyed positive reception both in monarchist and in Communist Yugoslavia. However, his dedication to the Croatian cause was the factor which eventually propelled his much later political career in Tito's Yugoslavia.

The tension between the cultural and political realms is also to be observed in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century process of collection and publication of folk epics

and songs – an issue further complicated by the fact that many of these alleged treasures of national folklore turned out to be hoaxes. Here too one may observe the same dichotomy we have noticed among literary national epics: On the one hand we have Macpherson’s, La Villemarqué’s and others’ folklore collections which, despite being forgeries, were not always the product of political agendas, if by political agenda we mean that their authors were aiming at influencing the political status quo – maybe even pushing for a full-fledged statehood for their countries or regions. La Villemarqué, the prophet of Breton culture and language, argued that the compilation of the *Barzaz-Breiz* was actually his patriotic duty as a Frenchman, not as a Breton:

Here is what we should have learned, already long time ago, from the foreigners. This is unconceivable! Spain has some folksong collections printed back in 1510; Italy has Guillaume Muller’s collections; Sweden – Wolf, Geyer and Afzélius’; Holland – Fallers-Leben and Lejeane’s; Bohemia – Hauker’s, Russia – Goetze’s,²⁴ Serbia – Vuk’s,²⁵ Denmark – *messiers* Grimm and Thièle’s; Germany – *messiers* Herder, Van der Hagen, Görres, Bäsching, Erlach and Brentano’s; England – Percy, Warton, Ritson, Ellis, Jamieson, Brooke, Brooke, Evan and Walter Scott’s; modern Greece – *monsieur* Fauriel’s; and we, we who so often give Europe a lead, we do not have anything in this field to oppose the foreigners.

I intend to obviate the lack I have just brought up in the context of one of the French provinces.”²⁶

²⁴ That is Peter Otto von Goetze (1793-1880), who also translated Vuk Karadžić’s *Srpske narodne pjesme* into German, thus paving the way to its reception in the Nordic countries. The collection La Villemarqué is referring to is *Stimmen des russischen Volks in Liedern* [Voices of the Russian People in Songs] (Stuttgart: 1828). The title clearly pays tribute to Herder’s *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern*.

²⁵ That is our Vuk Karadžić. This accolade provided to a Serbian intellectual in the introduction to a Celtic-themed study is just another evidence of the Europe-wide fortune of Vuk’s work.

²⁶ “Voilà ce que nous aurions dû apprendre, il y a longtemps, des étrangers. Chose inouïe ! l’Espagne a des recueils de chants populaires, imprimés depuis 1510 ; l’Italie a les collections de Guillaume Muller ; la Suède en a de Wolf, de Geyer et de Afzélius ; la Hollande, de Fallers-Leben et Lejeune ; la Bohème, de Hauker ; la Russie, de Gœtze ; la Servie, de Vuk ; le Danemark, de MM. Grimm et Thièle ; l’Allemagne, de MM. Herder, Van der Hagen, Görres, Bäsching, Erlach et Brentano ; l’Angleterre, de Percy, Warton, Ritson, Ellis, Jamieson, Brooke, Evan et Walter Scott ; la Grèce moderne, de M. Fauriel ; et nous, nous qui donnons si souvent l’impulsion à l’Europe, nous n’avons rien en ce genre à opposer aux étrangers. J’ai tâché de combler, à l’égard d’une des provinces de France, la lacune que je viens de signaler.” La Villemarqué, *Barzaz-Breiz*, 5-6.

However, on the other hand we do have instances of nineteenth-century cultural activists who bent their work on folklore, linguistic, and ancient literature to their political purposes: Jacob Grimm's mixed history with Scandinavian cultures, especially the Danish, is a fitting example thereof. The great German intellectual had in fact touched upon the Scandinavian cultural world in more than one occasion, most notably with the publication, together with his brother Wilhelm (1786-1859), of the *Poetic Edda* (1815), as well as with his seminal *Deutsche Grammatik*, whose first edition appeared in 1819. In the end, it was the *Grammatik* which became the object of harsh critiques coming from the Scandinavian countries, for Jacob had classified the Nordic languages, along with Dutch and ancient Gothic, as basically dialects of German.²⁷ Particularly severe with Jacob was the Danish scholar Rasmus Rask, despite the fact that he was already in correspondence with the Grimm Brothers²⁸ and that Jacob had consulted his studies for the elaboration of the second edition of the *Grammatik*. Jacob's pan-German tendencies, initially confined to his scholarly production, eventually acquired a markedly political nature at the time of the first Schleswig War (1848-1850), when Denmark had to face the assault of the German Confederation led by Prussia, who were supporting the rebellious, German-speaking duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. On this occasion Jacob, who was serving as member of the Frankfurt Parliament, addressed a speech in which he urged the German states to support the duchies in their struggle against Copenhagen, for the inhabitants of the Jutland peninsula, where Schleswig and Holstein are located, are actually inhabited by people of unequivocal German, and not Scandinavian, heritage, and therefore entitled to receive assistance from their brethren from the South. Grimm

²⁷ See Jacob Grimm, *Deutsche Grammatik* [German Grammar], 2nd edition (Göttingen, 1822). See also Elmer H. Antonsen, James W. Marchand, Ladislav Zgusta (eds.), *The Grimm Brothers and the Germanic Past* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 1990).

²⁸ See above, 84.

claimed he had in fact proved the Germanness of Jutland in his studies on Danish culture and linguistic, thus explicitly using his scholarship to back German political claims.²⁹

What is clear here is that there is no sharp demarcation between a purely cultural and a purely political space when it comes to epic nation building – a conclusion which most surely may be also applied to other embodiments of cultural nationalism. This somewhat forces us to reconsider the idea of cultural nationalism as a totally independent field of study from political nationalism. In fact, in a Europe where the Romantic idea of the cultivation of the nation by means of culture has survived until today,³⁰ it is virtually impossible to separate political from national cultural instances, and this is particularly true in the case of epic nation building. What is possible is to investigate the “dosage” of the political element in literary epos, an investigation made possible by the exploration of the epics’ historical background without trying to dismiss the political or cultural dimension on the way, but on the contrary embracing them both, for these are in fact the realms where the writers of tales have exerted their influence.

²⁹ Jacob Grimm, Speech on the declaration of war against Denmark over the Schleswig-Holstein in the 1848 Frankfurt Parliament, in *Stenographischer Bericht über die Verhandlungen der Deutschen Constituirenden Nationalversammlung zu Frankfurt am Main* [Stenographic Report of the Works of the German National Constitutional Assembly in Frankfurt am Main] (Frankfurt: Sauerländer, 1848), Vol. 1, 289-90. See also Francesco La Rocca, “Clashing Cultural Nationalisms: The nineteenth-Century Danish-German Intellectual Debate, the Schleswig Wars (1848-1864), and Some Reflections on the Cultural Roots of National Socialism”, in *Revista Română de Studii Baltice și Nordice / The Romanian Journal for Baltic and Nordic Studies*, Vol. 7, Issue 1 (2015), 105-122; Arnold, *Thor*, 120. Pan-Germanism, however, did not leave all Scandinavian intellectuals indifferent: German writer Ernst Moritz Arndt (1769-1860), for instance, was originally born a Swede but eventually became a German by choice, to the point of becoming one of the most important promoters of German resistance against Napoleon. Coincidentally, Arndt too ended up serving in the Frankfurt Parliament alongside Jacob Grimm.

³⁰ Joep Leerssen, *When Was Romantic Nationalism? The Onset, the Long Tail, the Banal* (Antwerp: NISE, 2014).

A Final Synthesis

During this long foray into the history and nature of national epos we have come across some new concepts and definitions (and expanded upon some preexisting ones as well) like “writer of tales”, “epic as mirror of the nation”, “epic nation building”, and “poetic history”: I shall now conclude with the elaboration of a narrative consistently encompassing all these concepts, a narrative which is to serve as an overall insight into the phenomenon of national epic.

It was John Lord’s reflection which paved me the way to the concept of “writer of tales”, i.e. the composer of national literary epics, for he drastically separated orally transmitted folk epic from written epic:

As I review the texts that over the years have given me pause as to whether they might be termed transitional, I find that in every case the answer is negative. They are either one or the other; they are either oral or written. Those poems are written “in the style of” the oral epic, such as those in Kačić’s *Razgovor*, or of Niegoš in his *Ogledalo Srpsko*, strikingly close though they may sometimes be to the folk epic, are nevertheless definitely written texts. I strongly suspect that in the very process of writing these songs both authors were psychologically out of the oral tradition of composition. In both cases, of course, they had heard oral epic from their earliest years. Yet they were after all educated men, learned in books. They could not compose an oral epic.³¹

Not a folk singer, then, but an intellectual who has been exposed to the great epic literature of the past and, after *Ossian*, also to folklore: This is the basic profile of every writer of tales from Camões down to Fishta. Unlike his folk relative, the writer cannot count on his being contemporarily “singer, performer, composer and poet”³² to create and communicate his art, but he only has his pen at his disposal and the hope in

³¹ Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, 132. The impossibility for the oral bard to become a writer of epics was a staple in Lord’s theory on oral composition, see also his “Homer as Oral Poet”, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Vol. 72 (1968), 1-46.

³² Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, 13.

a positive reception of his epos. However, writer and singer of tales both share one, fundamental feature which is connected to their being producers of epic poetry: *They perform a social function*. The singer of tales entertains the audience while reviving the stories of old, a quite important task particularly for the Balkan Muslims until World War II, where the epic songs resounded at village gatherings during the long nights of Ramadan.³³ At times, the singers may have also served as vehicle for political propaganda, as some singers happened to compose songs at request of this or that patron.³⁴ The writer of tales, on the other hand, takes up the task, much larger in scope for he is potentially addressing the entire nation, of creating a literary epos which his audience may identify with, whose story they may feel as their own story too. In other words, he provides an epic which is to function as a mirror for the nation, thus serving a function which, in some of the contexts we have explored in this thesis, was of dramatic relevance.

Being epic first and foremost narrative poetry,³⁵ the writer of tales almost inevitably ends up looking into the main events of his nation's history in order to find inspiration for his poem, be these events real history, legendary history or complete imagination: Moving in the realm of poetry, the writer is in fact not forced to strictly adhere to reality. Actually, *all* national epics do blend, to different degrees,

³³ Ibid., 14-17.

³⁴ In August 1938 Ernest Koliqi witnessed such an instance on the occasion to a visit he paid to a friend of his, an Albanian highlander chieftain. This chieftain's family was at that time being accused of the murderer of a man whose death could have harmed the chieftain's honour, despite the murdered did not have good reputation in the region. To obviate this situation, the chieftain hired a folk singer to compose a song about the event (obviously from his point of view) which, once spread, would have set the record straight. Koliqi was present when the singer composed and performed the poem in front of his audience, and the report of this fascinating event is included in Koliqi's *Saggi di Letteratura Albanese*, 35-46. In more recent times – particularly during and after the Yugoslav Wars – folk singers of Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia have used their music as vehicle of political instances. See also Dimitrije O. Golemović, "Contemporary Singing to *Gusle* Accompaniment in Serbia and Montenegro", in Bohmlan & Petković, *Balkan Epic*, 133-143; Svanibor Pettan, "Singing Epic Songs with Bowed Lute: A Vignette from Croatia", in Bohmlan & Petković, *Balkan Epic*, 262-276.

³⁵ See above, 39.

imagination with reality, and no one of them is purely a historiographical work or a fantasy fiction. Even the *Kalevala*, a poem which begins with the creation of the world, where the world is depicted as being born from eggs laid by the Air Spirit,³⁶ is eventually, although very loosely, anchored to reality, for its plot takes place in actual Karelia, not in an imaginary world à la Tolkien's Middle-earth, thus allowing the Finns to regard the *Kalevala* not just as an epic, but as *their* own national epic. It is therefore this mixture of imagination and reality that the writer of tales distils into a poetic history of the nation.

Whereas figures like Camões and Zrínyi may be well regarded as true composers of national epic of the early modern period, it is with Romanticism that the importance of the writer of tales reaches its zenith, for the reception of the *Poems of Ossian* and the subsequent reflection undertaken by Herder legitimised “folk” epic as a vehicle of the national spirit: This is the reason why, in their effort to gain recognition for their emerging nations, some cultural activists undertook the composition of national epos. This phenomenon, which especially took place in Central and Eastern Europe, shall be identified as epic nation building.

Literary national epic has been, and partially still is, a powerful force in the cultural fabric of some European countries. It would be totally naive to deny that some national epics have been used to prompt hostile attitudes towards other communities, but having Radovan Karadžić gloating over the inspiration he drew from the *Gorski vijenac*³⁷ must not make us forget the undeniably positive role national epics had in giving dignity to the languages and cultures of Estonians, Latvians, and Finns, a role

³⁶ Elias Lönnrot, *Kalevala*, trans. by Francis Peabody Magoun Jr., (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1963), poem 1.

³⁷ “Karadžić ‘Njegoš je slavio ubijanje muslimana’ ” [Karadžić ‘Njegoš Glorified the Slaughter of the Muslims’] http://www.slobodna-bosna.ba/vijest/12584/karadzic_njegos_je_slavio_ubijanje_muslimana.html (accessed on 30th August 2016).

whose memory is still warmly cherished in those countries – nor shall we overlook the stubbornness of those Albanians, both Christians and Muslims, who preserved the knowledge of the *Lahuta e Malcis* despite the opposition of the communist regime.

In the end, the success of national epics as a nation-building tool testifies to the power ideas and culture have to shape and influence human society – a lesson which I think is still a positive contribution to our future.

Ideas for Future Research

This dissertation, like most of doctoral dissertations, has a complicated backstory: While it started off as a study solely focused on the comparison of Albanian and Serbo-Croatian epics, I realised during the research process that the very concept of national epic was lacking of theoretical background and historical documentation, a fact which clearly undermined the original intent of my thesis. This somewhat forced me to expand on the history of the phenomenon of national literary epos, without necessarily losing sight of what was my original idea but instead trying to juxtapose it with my new research goals. As I do intend to carry on the work done so far, I may already see how these two aspects of the dissertation, i.e. the general insight on national epos and the Balkan case study, will need to be separated and expanded on in two different studies, the first dealing with epic nation building in Europe and the second with the comparison of the Albanian and South Slavic epic traditions.

The comparative methodology I have elaborated for this dissertation may be fruitfully applied to other Balkan national literary epics too, more specifically the ones

of the Slovenes³⁸ and the Bulgarians. The method may also be applied to nineteenth- and twentieth-century national epics from all over Europe (particularly the Balkan and the Baltic epics), paving way to plenty of innovative and fruitful combinations.

Other issues which have only been marginally touched upon, such as the string of failed attempts at composing an Italian national epic, might also receive full attention in another study.

I will do my best to carry on this research, a research of which I hope this doctoral thesis represents only the first step. More than that, I hope that one day someone else will come across the results of my work and will decide to further elaborate them: It would be a sign that I have managed to put together a valuable work in these pages.

³⁸ It is interesting to notice how Slovenes, who do not have a folk epic tradition, ended up elaborating a national epic poem, more specifically the *Krst pri Savici* [The Baptism on the Savica] (1836) by France Prešeren (1800-1849), whereas Bosnians, whose corpus of folk epos is incredibly vast, did not.

APPENDIX I: WHY THE *SMRT SMAIL-AGE ČENGIĆA* IS NOT A NATIONAL EPIC POEM

The reader versed in the history of South Slavic literatures has surely noticed the absence, in this study, of the 1846 epic *Smrt Smail-age Čengića* [The Death of Smail-aga Čengić] by Ivan Mažuranić (1814-1890), and would probably raise an eyebrow because of it. Given the importance of the poem in question, I have decided to address this issue in this appendix, as to make sure that this situation was not the result of negligence or even ignorance from my side, but rather the logical consequence of my ideas on the nature of literary national epos.

As I have (hopefully) made clear in the main corpus of this thesis, there are four elements which suggest that an epic poem ought to be regarded as a national epos: the author's intention, the time of its composition, the use of the national language and its eventual recognition as a national epic by successive reception. Two of these elements (timeframe and language) are indisputably there, having the poem being composed in the heydays of Romanticism and in pristine Croatian. Unfortunately, it is the other two factors which undermine the "national" credential of Mažuranić's masterpiece.

The plot of *Smrt Smail-age Čengića*, set on the background of the skirmishes between Montenegrin and Herzegovinian tribes during the first half of the nineteenth century, is the story of the assassination in an ambush of the Herzegovinian pasha Smail-aga Čengić (1788-1840) as a retaliation for the aga's mischievous behaviour.¹ I argue that pan-Slavic ideals, and not nationalistic ones, are at the basis of this epic poem.

¹ Ivan Mažuranić, *Smrt Smail-aghe Čengića* [The Death of Smail-aga Čengić], trans. Zdenko Zlatar, in Zlatar, *The Poetics of Slavdom*, vol. I, 377-437. The assassination was apparently orchestrated by Njegoš himself, for Smail-aga Čengić had had one of his brothers killed as a retaliation for a Montenegrin foray in Herzegovina.

Smrt Smail-aghe Čengića is quintessential pan-Slavic poetry: the reason why Mažuranić bothered writing about what in the end was just a minor event which had taken place in a relatively far-off land is because he felt a communality of ideas and ethnic belonging with what he saw as heroic Slavic freedom fighters. Their cause was his cause, and he saw no contradiction between his Croatianess and his belonging to the greater Slavic people. Pan-Slavism, however, is *not* nationalism: it belongs to the great family of pan-movements, admittedly connected to certain forms of nationalism due to its emphasis on communality of language and/or religion and/or kinship but radically different in its ultimate goals, pan-movements aiming at overcoming national barriers in order to build broader communities. And it is because of the pan-Slavic intention, *not* a national one, of the author that I could not regard the *Smrt Smail-aghe Čengića* as a genuine piece of national epic poetry.

A critique I might see coming against this train of thought is that pan-Slavism and Illyrism were basically the precursors of the Yugoslavist idea, therefore Mažuranić should be regarded not a Croatian national epic poet but rather a Yugoslav one. Leaving besides the fact that the Yugoslav idea has never been a consistent doctrine, ranging from a mild form of pan-Slavism to an actual national project opposed to the traditional ones (Croatian, Serbian and so on),² the answer to such a remark actually leads us to the second reason why the *Smrt Smail-age Čengića* fails as an national epic poem: its reception. While the *Gorski Vijenac* enjoyed massive success well beyond the borders of his author's homeland, the *Smrt Smail-age Čengića* was not so lucky on this point. Granted, it was recognised as a beautiful piece of literature, but its fortune remained confined within the boundaries of Croatian literature. Things did not change much in Socialist Yugoslavia, where the poem's 100-year anniversary passed almost

² Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation*.

unnoticed,³ as opposed to the support the *Vijenac* continued to enjoy. Nor could the establishment of an independent Croatian state (1991) reverse this situation, given the Serbo-Montenegrin identity of the epic's protagonists and the complete absence of any reference to Croatia or Croatians.

To sum up, the *Smrt Smail-aghe Čengića* is a powerful epos of death and revenge, a poem written by its author as a token of his fraternal feelings towards his other South Slavic brethren. No national idea is to be found here, nor were the audience of the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries interested in transfiguring it in the mirror of a specific national soul, thus keeping this poem out of the realm of national epic poetry.

³ Ibid., 142-143, 272.

APPENDIX II: A NOTE ON THE ROLE OF FOLKLORISATION OF THE ALBANIAN NATIONAL EPICS

Albanian nationalism has been once tackled by Eric Hobsbawm in his 1992 book *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, as he reflected on the “proto-national” elements which some national activists have used and reinvented in their own national projects.¹ Language, of course, is one of the most prominent of these proto-national elements, and in some contexts, like the Albanian one, it played a more crucial role than in others. However, Hobsbawm suggested that the role of language and literacy in the Albanian nation building process was less relevant than what cultural activists themselves liked to think, as the endemic illiteracy among Albanian speakers at the time worked as a formidable barrier against the influence intellectuals might have exerted on them.² Hobsbawm has undoubtedly a point here, and his argumentation brings up a relevant objection to the entire idea of epic nation building: To which extent shall we talk about “national” literary epic in contexts where illiteracy is the norm rather than the exception?

In 1999, ethnomusicologist Jane Sugarman directly tackled Hobsbawm’s reasoning in her article *Imagining the Homeland: Poetry, Songs, and the Discourses of Albanian Nationalism*.³ Sugarman’s counterargument was that “the support of villagers for the nationalist cause was secured in part when nationalist poems – the medium of the literate middle class – were transformed into men's narrative songs, the medium of a rural population on the verge of literacy.”⁴ In other words, the process of folklorisation helped national epos becoming available to an audience who could not

¹ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, 46-79.

² *Ibid.*, 53-54.

³ Jane C. Sugarman, “Imagining the Homeland: Poetry, Songs, and the Discourses on Albanian Nationalism”, in *Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Autumn, 1999), 419-458.

⁴ *Ibid.*

have possibly accessed it otherwise. Sugarman focused her research on Southern Albanian folklore, showing how passages from Naim's *Qerbelaja* have been orally passed from generation to generation among Muslim Albanians dwelling in the Prespa Lake region. She suggested that the folklorisation process started as the epic, similarly to Dalip's *Hadikaja* and Shahin's *Muhtarnameja*, was once being recited aloud in the Bektashi lodges (Alb.: *teqe*) during the ten days of commemoration of Husain's death observed in Shia Islam, the *Matem*.⁵

Sugarman's intuition helps us throwing some light on the reception of Fishta's *Lahuta e Malcis* in Northern Albania too. Its survival by folklorisation is a quite remarkable phenomenon, for we have seen how staunchly the Albanian communist regime opposed Fishta's legacy.⁶ Nonetheless, the *Lahuta* survived in the hearts and souls of many Albanians, as clearly testified by an events which took place in Albania at the beginning of the 1990s: On 5th January 1991, a public commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of Fishta's death (the first commemorative event for the Franciscan friar ever to take place in Albania after the establishment of the communist regime) was organised in Scutari. The event was accompanied with a performance of actor Ndrek Luca (1927-1993), who recited passages of the *Lahuta*. At one point during the performance, Luca happened to hesitate, having apparently forgot some lines, but the audience spontaneously started chanting the missing verses.⁷

To conclude, folklorisation worked as a sort of antidote to illiteracy, and it was instrumental in the dissemination of national epos among the illiterate Albanian audience – a phenomenon which could only take place among a people, like the Albanians, who already had a vibrant oral tradition.

⁵ Ibid., 439-445.

⁶ See above, 136.

⁷ Elsie, "Introduction", in *Lahuta e Malcis*, xvi-xvii.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Literary Epic Poems

- Barlow, Joel. *The Columbiad: A Poem* (Philadelphia: Fry & Kammer, 1807).
- Camões, Luís Vaz de. *Os Lusíadas* [The Lusiads], trans. John James Aubertine (1572. Reprint, London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1868).
- Cesarotti, Melchiorre. *Poesie di Ossian, figlio di Fingal, antico poeta celtico, trasportate dalla Prosa Inglese in verso Italiano dall'ab. Melchior Cesarotti edizione II ricorretta e accresciuta del restante dei componimenti dello stesso Autore* [Poems of Ossian, Son of Fingal, Ancient Celtic Poet, Brought from the English Prose to the Italian Verse by Abbot Melchiorre Cesarotti, 2nd Edition Corrected and Expanded with the Remaining Compositions by the Same Author] (Padua: Comino, 1772).
- De Rada, Girolamo. *L'Odisse* (Naples: Tipografia del giornale *Il Salvador Rosa*, 1847).
- Demeter, Dimitrija. *Grobničko polje* [The Field of Tombs], edited by Milorad Živančević (1842. Reprint, Zagreb: Liber, 1973).
- Digenis Akritas*, edited with Italian translation and commentary by Paolo Odorico (Florence: Giunti, 1995).
- Ennius, *Annales* [The Annals], ed. by Otto Skutsch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).
- Ferdowsi. *Shahnameh* [The Book of Kings] (1010 AD), <http://classics.mit.edu/Ferdowsi/kings.html> (accessed on 13th August 2016).
- Fishta, Gjergj. *Lahuta e Malcis* [The Mountain Lute], trans. Robert Elsie & Janice Mathie-Heck (London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2005).
- Frashëri, Naim. “Istori e Skënderbeut” [History of Scanderbeg], in *Vepra letrare* [Literary Works] (Tirana: Naim Frashëri, 1996), Vol. 4.
- Frashëri, Naim. *Qerbelaja* (Korça: Koti, 1922).
- Fredrik, Oscar (King Oscar II of Sweden). *Cid, efter spanska romanser af J.G. von Herder* [The Cid, from the Spanish Romances of J.G. von Herder] (Stockholm, 1859).
- Hadji-Sekretis, “Alipashiada”, in Konstantinos Sathas, *Tourkokratoumeni Ellas* [Greece Under Turkish Occupation] (Athens, 1869), 595-604, and *Istorike diatrive* [Historical Studies] (Athens 1870), 123-336.
- Herder, Johann Gottfried von. *Der Cid: nach spanischen Romanzen besungen* [The Cid: As Sung in Spanish Romances] (Tübingen: 1805).

- Homer. *Iliad*, edited with Italian translation and commentary by Rosa Calzecchi Onesti (22nd edition. Turin: Einaudi, 2009).
- Lönnrot, Elias. *Kalevala*, trans. by Francis Peabody Magoun Jr., (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1963).
- Lucanus. *Pharsalia*, ed. by Carolus Hermannus Weise (Leipzig: Bassus, 1835).
- Macpherson, James. *Fingal, an Ancient Epic Poem in Six Books: Together with Several Other Poems, Composed by Ossian the Son of Fingal. Translated from the Galic Language by James Macpherson* (London: Becket & De Hondt, 1762).
- _____. *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, Collected in the Highlands of Scotland and Translated from the Galic or Erse Language* (Edinburgh: Hamilton & Balfour, 1760).
- _____. *Temora, an Ancient Epic Poem in Eight Books: Together with Several Other Poems, Composed by Ossian, the Son of Fingal. Translated from the Galic Language by James Macpherson* (London: Becket & De Hondt, 1763).
- _____. *The Works of Ossian, the Son of Fingal. In Two Volumes. Translated From the Galic Language by James Macpherson* (London: Becket & De Hondt, 1765).
- Martić, Grgo. *Osvetnici* [The Avengers] (1861-1883. Reprint, Sarajevo: Svijetlost, 1991).
- Mažuranić, Ivan. *Smrt Smail-age Čengića* [The Death of Smail-age Čengić], trans. Zdenko Zlatar, in Zlatar, *The Poetics of Slavdom*, vol. I, 377-437.
- Mickiewicz, Adam. *Pan Tadeusz, czyli ostatni zajazd na Litwie. Historia szlachecka z roku 1811 i 1812 we dwunastu księgach wierszem* [Sir Thaddeus, or the Last Lithuanian Foray: A Story of Life among Polish Gentlefolk in the Years 1811 and 1812], trans. George Rapall Noyes (London & Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1917).
- Njegoš, Petar II Petrović. *Gorski vijenac* [The Mountain Wreath], trans. Vasa D. Mihajlović (Belgrade: Serbian Europe Publishing, 1997).
- Nazor, Vladimir. "Hrvatski kraljevi" [Croatian Kings], in *Epika* (Zagreb: Naklada Dr. Branka Vodnika, 1918), Vol. I.
- Pucić, Medo (Orsatto Pozza). "Karadžurđevka", in *Pjesne* (Karlovac: 1862).
- Ricci, Angelo Maria. *L'Italiade* [The Italiad] (Livorno: Masi, 1819).
- Sarrocchi, Margherita. *Scanderbeide* (Rome: 1606-1623).
- Spenser, Edmund. *The Faerie Queene* (1596).
- Stavridis, Grigorios. *O Armatolos* [The Armatolos] (Athens, 1860).
- Viale, Salvatore. *Dionomachia* (1817. 2nd edition, Paris: Dufart, 1823).
- Virgil. *Aeneid*, ed. by Rosa Calzecchi Onesti (Turin: Einaudi, 1962).

Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet). “Henriade”, in *Œuvres de M. de Voltaire* [M. de Voltaire’s Works], vol. I (Amsterdam: Desbordes, 1732), 1-207.

Vörösmarty, Mihály. *Zalán futása* [The Flight of Zalán] (1825), online edition <http://mek.oszk.hu/01100/01122/html/zalan01.htm> (accessed on 30th August 2016).

Zrínyi, Miklós. *Szigeti veszedelem* [The Siege of Sziget] (1651), online edition <http://mek.oszk.hu/01100/01136/01136.htm> (accessed on 18th June 2016).

Other Primary Sources

Alighieri, Dante. *De vulgari eloquentia*, edited by Enrico Fenzi et al. (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2012).

_____. *The Banquet*, translated by Philip H. Wicksteed (London: J. M. Dent and Co., 1903).

Aristotle, *Ars Poetica*, ed. R. Kassel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966).

Augustine of Hippo, *De civitate Dei* [The City of God], online edition <http://www.augustinus.it/latino/cdd/index2.htm> (accessed on 18th June 2016).

Bardhi, Pashk. “Si xuní fill Lahuta e Malcís” [How the Lahuta e Malcís Originated], in Gjergj Fishta, *Lahuta e Malcís* (1937. Second edition, Rome: 1958), xv-xviii.

Burke, Edward to James Berry, August 1784, in James Prior, *Memoir of the Life and Character of Right Hon. Edward Burke; with Specimens of His Poetry and Letters, and an Estimate of His Genius and Talents, Compared with Those of His Great Contemporaries*, 2nd ed., vol. I (London: Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, 1826).

_____. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757).

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. “Table Talk”, in *Complete Works* (Hastings: Delphi, 2013).

Dara Jr, Gabriello. *Kënka e sprasme e Balës* [The Last Song of Bala] (Catanzaro: 1906).

Demeter, Dimitrija. “Teuta”, in *Dramatika Pokušenja* [Attempts at Drama] (Vienna: 1844), Vol. 2.

Djilas, Milovan. *Wartime*, trans. by Michael B. Petrovich (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977).

Frashëri, Naim. *Bagëti e Bujqësia* [Herds and Tillage] (Constantinople: 1886).

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers/The Sorrows of Young Werther*, dual-language edition by Stanley Applebaum (1787. Reprint, Mineola & New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2004).

Goetze, Peter Otto von. *Stimmen des russischen Volks in Liedern* [Voices of the Russian People in Songs] (Stuttgart: 1828).

Grimm, Jacob. *Deutsche Grammatik* [German Grammar], 2nd edition (Göttingen, 1822).

_____ Speech on the declaration of war against Denmark over the Schleswig-Holstein in the 1848 Frankfurt Parliament, in *Stenographischer Bericht über die Verhandlungen der Deutschen Constituirenden Nationalversammlung zu Frankfurt am Main* [Stenographic Report of the Works of the German National Constitutional Assembly in Frankfurt am Main] (Frankfurt: Sauerländer, 1848), Vol. 1, 289-90.

_____ to Rasmus Rask, 24 November 1823, in Elias von Steinmeyer, "Ein brief Jacob Grimms an Rask" [A Letter from Jacob Grimm to Rask], in *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur*, 42. Bd., 2. H. (1898), 221-223.

Herder, Johann Gottfried von. *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache* [Essay on the Origin of Language] (Berlin: 1772).

_____ *Auszug aus einem Briefwechsel über Ossian und die Lieder alter Völker* [Extract from a Correspondence on Ossian and the Songs of Ancient Peoples], edited by Josef Rohfleisch (1773. Reprint, Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 1946).

_____ *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* [Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Humanity], 4 vol., (Riga und Leipzig: Hartknoch, 1784-1791).

_____ *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern* [Voices of the Peoples in Songs] Hrsg. von Christel Käschel, (1807. Reprint, Leipzig: Reclam, 1968).

_____ *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie. Eine Anleitung für die Liebhaber derselben, und der ältesten Geschichte des menschlichen Geistes* [The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry: An Introduction for Lovers of the Same and of the Most Ancient History of the Human Spirit], Band I, (Dessau, 1782).

_____ *Von Ähnlichkeit der mittlern englischen und deutschen Dichtkunst* [On the Similarity between Middle English and German Poetry] (1777), https://www.uni-due.de/lyriktheorie/texte/1777_herder.html (accessed on 10th July 2016).

"Karadžić 'Njegoš je slavio ubijanje muslimana' " [Karadžić 'Njegoš Glorified the Slaughter of the Muslims'] http://www.slobodna-bosna.ba/vijest/12584/karadzic_njegos_je_slavio_ubijanje_muslimana.html (accessed on 30th August 2016).

Karadžić, Vuk Stefanović. *Pismenica srpskoga jezika po govoru prostoga naroda* [Notes on the Serbian Language Based on the Speech of the Ordinary People] (Vienna: 1814).

- Las Cases, Emmanuel de. *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène. Journal de la vie privée de l'Empereur Napoléon* [The Memorial of Saint Elena: Journal of the Private Life and Conversations of the Emperor Napoleon], vol. III (London: 1823).
- La Villemarqué, Théodore Hersart de. *Barzaz-Breiz – Chants populaires de la Bretagne recueillis et publiés avec une Traduction française, des Arguments, des Notes et les Mélodies originales, par Th. Hersart de La Villemarqué* [Barzaz-Breiz – Folk Songs of Brittany Collected and Published with French Translation of the Arguments, Notes and Original Melodies by Th. Hersart de La Villemarqué], 4th edition (Paris: Franck, 1846).
- _____ *Myrdhinn ou l'enchanteur Merlin. Son histoire ses œuvres son influence* [Myrdhinn or Merlin the Enchanter. His History, His Works and His Inf] (Paris: Didier et C^{ie}, 1862).
- Leopardi, Giacomo. *Zibaldone di pensieri* [The Notebooks], 4th July 1823.
- Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth. *Tales of a Wayside Inn* (1863).
- Morganwg, Iolo. Draft, National Library of Wales 13091E, 300, in Mary-Ann Constantine, "Ossian in Wales and Brittany", in Gaskill (ed.), *The Reception of Ossian in Europe*.
- Pucić, Medo (Orsatto Pozza). *Dei canti popolari illirici: discorso detto da Adamo Mickiewicz nel Collegio di Francia a Parigi* [On the Illyrian Popular Songs: Speech by Adam Mickiewicz at the Collège de France in Paris] (Zara: Fratelli Battara Tipografi Editori, 1860).
- _____ "Giovanni Gundulich", in *La Favilla*, Year VIII, 15th October 1843, 293-301.
- Schirò Sr, Giuseppe. *Këthimi* [The Return] (Florence: Olschki, 1965).
- Schlegel, Friedrich von. *Geschichte der alten und neueren Literatur: Vorlesungen, gehalten zu Wien im Jahre 1812* [History of the Old and New Literature: Lectures given in Vienna in the Year 1812] (Berlin: 1841).
- Staël, Madame de (Anne Louise Germaine de Staël-Holstein). *De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales* [On Literature Considered in Its Relationship with Social Institutions] (1800, reprint Paris & London: Colburn, 1812).
- Tasso, Torquato. *Allegoria della Gerusalemme Liberata* [Allegory of the Jerusalem Delivered] (1576), online edition http://www.bibliotecaitaliana.it/indice/visualizza_testo_html/bibit001538 (accessed on 31st May 2016).
- _____ *Discorsi dell'arte poetica* [Discourses on the Art of Poetry], I, (1587), online edition http://www.bibliotecaitaliana.it/indice/visualizza_scheda/bibit000577 (accessed on 31st May 2016).

Vasa, Pashko. *O moj Shqypni* [Oh Albania], (1878-1880).

Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet). “Anciens et modernes: d’un passage d’Homère” [Ancients and Moderns: On a Passage by Homer], in *Œuvres de Voltaire: Questions sur l’Encyclopédie* [Voltaire’s Works: Questions on the *Encyclopédie*] (Paris: Stoupe, 1792), 328-335.

_____. “Essai sur la poésie épique” [Essay on Epic Poetry], in *Œuvres de M. de Voltaire* [M. de Voltaire’s Works], vol. I (Amsterdam: Desbordes, 1732), 209-299.

Worm, Ole. *Runir seu danica literatura antiquissima, vulgo Gothica dicta, luci reddita* [Runir or the Most Ancient Danish Literature, also Known as Gothic, Brought Back to Light] (1636. 2nd edition 1651).

Secondary Literature

Aarseth, Asbjørn. *Episke strukturer: Innføring i anvendt fortellingsteori* [Epic Structures: Introduction to Applied Narrative Theory], 2nd edition (1979. Reprint, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1991).

Abalain, Hervé. *Histoire de la langue bretonne* [History of Breton Language], 10th edition (Paris: Jean-Paul Gisserot, 2000).

Adler, Hans; Koepke, Wulf (eds.). *A Companion to the Work of Johann Gottfried Herder* (Rochester & New York: Camden House, 2009).

Alexander, Ronelle. *Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian: A Grammar with Sociolinguistic Commentary* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

_____; Elias-Bursać, Ellen. *Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian: A Textbook with Exercises and Basic Grammar* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010).

_____. “Language and Identity: The Fate of Serbo-Croatian”, in Roumen Daskalov and Tchavdar Marinov (eds.), *Entangled Histories of the Balkans. Volume one: National Ideologies and Language Policies* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2013), 341-417.

Altimari, Francesco; Bolognari, Mario; Carrozza, Paolo. *L’esilio della parola. La minoranza linguistica albanese in Italia: profili storico-letterari, antropologici e giuridico-istituzionali* [The Exile of the Word. The Albanian Linguistic Minority in Italy: Historical, Literary, Anthropological, Juridical and Institutional Outlines] (Pisa: ETS 1986).

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities* (1983. Reprint, London/New York: Verso, 2006).

Antonsen, Elmer H.; Marchand, James W.; Zgusta, Ladislav (eds.). *The Grimm Brothers and the Germanic Past* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 1990).

- Anzulović, Branimir. *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1999).
- Arnold, Martin. *Thor: Myth to Marvel* (London & New York, 2011).
- Azevedo, Milton M. *Portuguese: A Linguistic Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
- Baglioni, Daniele. "L'Italiano fuori d'Italia: dal Medioevo all'Unità" [The Italian Language outside of Italy: From the Middle Ages to the Unification], in Sergio Lubello, *Manuale di linguistica italiana* [Handbook of Italian Linguistic] (Berlin & Boston: de Gruyter, 2016).
- Bak, János M., Geary, Patrick J., Klaniczay, Gábor (eds.). *Manufacturing a Past for the Present: Forgery and Authenticity in Medievalist Texts and Objects in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).
- Balić, Smail. *Kultura Bošnjaka: Muslimanska komponenta* [Bosniak Culture: The Muslim Component] (Tuzla: PP "R&R", 1994).
- Banac, Ivo. *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (1984, reprint, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991).
- _____. "The Confessional 'Rule' and the Dubrovnik Exception: The Origins of the 'Serb-Catholic' Circle in Nineteenth-Century Dalmatia", in *Slavic Review*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Autumn, 1983), 448-474.
- Barac, Antun. *Vladimir Nazor* (Zagreb: Nakladni zavod „Jug“, 1918).
- Baric, Daniel. *Langue allemande, identité croate* [German Language, Croatian Identity] (Paris: Armand Colin, 2013).
- Baycroft, Timothy; Hopkin, David (eds.). *Folklore and Nationalism in Europe during the Long Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).
- Beaton, Roderick, *Folk Poetry of Modern Greece* (1980. Reprint, Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
- Bene-Katunarić, Sineva. "Images ottomanes dans la littérature croate : Marulic (1450-1524), Gundulic (1589-1638), Mazuranic (1814-1891)" [Ottoman Images in Croatian Literature: Marulić (1460-1524), Gundulić (1589-1638), Mažuranić (1814-1891)], in *Cahiers balkaniques* [En ligne], 36-37 | 2008.
- Berger, Stefan. "On the Role of Myths and History in the Construction of National Identity in Modern Europe," *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 3, 490-502.
- Bešker, Inoslav. " 'Ova mržnja stara' - Nazor i stereotipi o Talijanima u hrvatskoj štokavskoj književnosti/ 'This Old Hate' - Nazor and Stereotypes of Italians in Croatian Shtokavian Literature", in *Croatian Studies Review/Časopis za hrvatske studije*, Vol. 7, 2011, 31-48.
- Billig, Michael *Banal Nationalism* (London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: Sage, 1995).

- Bjelobaba, Sonja. *Översättning i nationens tjänst. J. L. Runeberg och de centralsydslaviska folksångerna* [Translation in the Service of the Nation. J. L. Runeberg and the Central South Slavic Oral Songs] (PhD thesis, University of Gothenburg, 2014).
- Bloch, Marc. "Pour une histoire comparée des sociétés européennes" [For a Comparative History of European Societies], in *Revue de synthèse historique*, LXVI (1928), 15-20.
- Bocca, Lorenzo. "La scoperta dell'America nell'epica italiana tra Tasso e Stigliani" [The Discovery of America in Italian Epic between Tasso and Stigliani], in Alberto Beniscelli, Quinto Marini, Luigi Surdich, *La letteratura degli Italiani: Rotte, confini, paesaggi* [The Literature of the Italians: Routes, Borders, Landscapes] (Genova: 2012), 1-12.
- Bohlman, Philip Vilas; Petković, Nada (eds.). *Balkan Epic: Song, History, Modernity* (Lanham, Toronto, Plymouth, UK: Scarecrow Press, 2012).
- Bohlman, Philip Vilas. "Historiographic Heterophony: Epic and the Narration of the Timeless Present", in Philip Vilas Bohlman & Nada Petković (eds.), *Balkan Epic: Song, History, Modernity* (Lanham, Toronto, Plymouth, UK: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 81-98.
- Booth, Wayne Clayson. *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).
- Bošković-Stulli, Maja. "Bugarštice", in *Narodna umjetnost*, 41/2, 2004, 9-51.
- Bowra, Cecil Maurice. *Heroic Poetry* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1952).
- Brown, Keith. "Villains and Symbolic Pollution in the Narratives of Nations", in Maria Todorova, ed., *Balkan Identities: Nation and Memory* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 233-252.
- Burović, Kaplan. Interview by Vitomir Dolinski, <http://www.forumishqiptar.com/threads/14822-Interviste-me-Dr-Kaplan-Resuli-Burovich> (accessed on 23rd March 2016).
- _____. *Njegoš i Albanci: studije* [Njegoš and the Albanians: Studies], (Geneva & Podgorica: OMPA 2002).
- Carr, Edward Hallett. *Nationalism and After* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1945).
- Casella Paltrinieri, Anna. *Lineamenti essenziali di storia dell'antropologia culturale* [Introduction to the History of Cultural Anthropology] (Milan: I.S.U. Università Cattolica, 2000).
- Castellan, Georges. *Histoire des Balkans : XIV^e-XX^e siècle* [Histories of the Balkans: From the XIV to the XX Century] (Paris: Fayard, 1991).
- _____. "Le romantisme historique : une des sources de l'idéologie des Etats balkaniques aux XIX^e et XX^e siècles" [Historical Romanticism: One of the

Ideological Sources of the Balkan States in the XIX and XX Centuries], in *Revue Historique*, T. 273, Fasc. 1 (553) (JANVIER-MARS 1985), 187-203.

Central European University Nationalism Studies Program:

<http://nationalism.ceu.hu/about-us> (accessed on 1st October 2014).

Clark, Robert Thomas. *Herder: His Life and Thought* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 430-432.

Clayer, Nathalie. *Aux origines du nationalisme albanais : La naissance d'une nation majoritairement musulmane en Europe* [To the Origins of Albanian Nationalism: The Birth of a Nation mostly Muslim in Europe] (Paris: Karthala, 2007).

_____ "Islam et identité nationale dans l'espace albanais (Albanie, Macédoine, Kosovo) 1989-1998" [Islam and National Identity in the Albanian Space (Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo) 1989-1998], *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 115, juillet-septembre 2001.

_____ *L'Albanie, pays des derviches: les ordres mystiques musulmans en Albanie à l'époque post-ottomane (1912-1967)* [Albania, Country of Dervishes: The Mystique Muslim Orders in Post-Ottoman Albania (1912-1967)] (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1990).

_____ "The Myth of Ali Pasha and the Bektashis: The Construction of an 'Albanian Bektashi National Identity' ", in Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers & Bernd Jünger Fischer (eds.), *Albanian Identities: Myth and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 127-133.

Constantine, Mary-Ann. "Songs and Stones: Iolo Morganwg (1747-1826), Mason and Bard", in *The Eighteenth Century*, Vol. 47, No. 2/3, Ballads and Songs in the Eighteenth Century (SUMMER/FALL 2006), 233-251.

_____ "Ossian in Wales and Brittany", in Gaskill (ed.), *The Reception of Ossian in Europe*, 67-90.

Conte, Francis. *Gli Slavi: Le civiltà dell'Europa centrale e orientale* [The Slavs: The Civilisations of Central and Eastern Europe], trans. Ernesto Garino and Dario Formentin (Torino: Einaudi, 1991), 514-518.

Cooper Jr., Henry R. "Tasso in Eastern Europe", in *Italica*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (Winter, 1974), 423-434.

Cornis-Pope, Marcel; Neubauer, John (eds.). *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, 4 vols. (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins, 2007-2011).

Cronia, Arturo. *Grammatica della lingua serbo-croata* [Grammar of Serbo-Croatian Language] (Milan: Trevesini, 1922).

- Curley, Thomas M. *Samuel Johnson, the Ossian Fraud, and the Celtic Revival in Great Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
- Curtis, Matthew C. "Petar II Petrović Njegoš and Gjergj Fishta: Composers of National Epics", *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European History* (2007).
- Čilaš-Mikulić, Marica; Gulešić Machata, Milvia; Pasini, Dinka; Udier, Sanda Lucija. *Hrvatski za početnike: Udžbenik i rječnik I* [Croatian for Beginners: Handbook and Dictionary 1] (Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, 2006).
- Črnja, Zvane. *Kulturna historija Hrvatske: ideje – ličnosti – dijela* [Cultural History of Croatia: Ideas – Characters – Works] (Zagreb: Epoha, 1965).
- Czigány, Lóránt. *A History of Hungarian Literature: From the Earliest Times to the mid-1970's* (1984), online edition <http://mek.oszk.hu/02000/02042/html/index.html> (accessed on 30th August 2016).
- Daskalov, Roumen et al. (eds.), *Entangled Histories of the Balkans*, 3 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2013-2014).
- Despotović, Ilija. "Jedan pogled na Njegoševo srpstvo" [A Look at Njegoš's Serbdom], in *MATICA – časopis za društvena pitanja, nauku i kulturu*, jesen/zima 2012, 197-204.
- Detrez, Raymond. "Canonization through Competition: The Case of Grigor Pärličev", in *Slavica Gandensia*, 33-1, 2006, 37-89.
- _____ "The Temptation of National Identity: The Case of Grigor Pärličev", in *Studies in Slavic Literature & Poetics*, 2010, Vol. 55, 53-63.
- Dhima, Edlira; Kashahu, Ermelinda. "Homer's Influence on Naim Frashëri's Poem 'History of Skanderbeg' ", in *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 4, Nr. 4, March 2013, 235-238.
- Doja, Albert. "A Political History of Bektashism in Albania", in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Taylor & Francis, 2006, 7 (1), 83-107.
- Dubbink, J. H. "The Ideas of Good and Evil in 'Luca Mikrokosma' by P. P. Njegos", in *Tijdschrift voor Philosophie*, 23ste Jaarg., Nr. 4 (DECEMBER 1961), 653-663.
- Dujizings, Ger. "Qerbelaja e Naim Frashërit: feja e politika në Shqipëri" [The Qerbelaja by Naim Frashëri: Faith and Politics in Albania], in *Përpyjekja*, 16-16, 1999, 44-57.
- _____ *Religion and Politics of Identity in Kosovo* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2000).
- Durkheim, Émile. "Cours sur les origines de la vie religieuse" [Course on the Origins of Religious Life], in *Revue de philosophie*, 1907, vol. 7, nr 5, 528-539; vol. 7, nr 7 92-114; vol. 7, nr 12, 620-638.

- Džino, Danijel. "Constructing Illyrians: Prehistoric Inhabitants of the Balkan Peninsula in Early Modern and Modern Perceptions", in *Balkanistica*, 27 (2014), 1-39.
- _____. "The Perception of Croatian Medieval History by Vladimir Nazor in *Hrvatski kraljevi (The Kings of the Croats)*", in *Croatian Studies Review/Časopis za hrvatske studije*, Vol. 7, 2011, 89-100.
- Eglitis, Daina Stukuls. *Imagining the Nation: History, Modernity, and Revolution in Latvia* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2002).
- Elsie, Robert. *A Dictionary of Albanian Religion, Mythology, and Folk Culture* (London: Hurst & Co., 2001).
- _____. *Albanian Literature: A Short History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005).
- Fairclough, Henry Rushton (trans.). *Aeneid* by Virgil (1916-1918, reprint Cambridge, Mass., and London: Loeb, 1969).
- Fowler, Alastair. *Literary Names: Personal Names in British Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
- Franković, Sanja. "Kulturno značenje bugaršćice u djelima Vladimira Nazora/The cultural meaning of the bugaršćica in the works of Vladimir Nazor", in *Narodna umjetnost*, 48/2, 2011.
- Frasheri, Alfred; Frashëri Neki, *Frashëri në historinë e Shqipërisë* [Frashëri in Albanian History] (Tirana: 2014).
- Frashëri, Kristo. *The History of Albania: A Brief Survey*, (Tirana 1964), 115.
- Friedman, Victor A. "The Balkan Languages and Balkan Linguistics", in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 40. 2011. 275-291.
- Galinsky, Karl. *Augustus: Introduction to the Life of an Emperor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- Gaskill, Howard. "Herder, Ossian and the Celtic", in Terence Brown (ed.), *Celticism* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), 257-271.
- _____. (ed.). *The Reception of Ossian in Europe* (Bristol: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004).
- Gavrilović, Andrea. *Znameniti Srbi XIX. Veka* [Renowned Serbs of the XIX Century], Vol.I (Zagreb: 1901).
- Gawrych, George W. *The Crescent and the Eagle: Ottoman Rule, Islam and the Albanians, 1874-1913* (London & New York: I. B. Tauris), 2006.
- Gay, David E. "The Creation of the 'Kalevala', 1833-1849", in *Jahrbuch für Volksliedforschung*, 42. Jahrg. (1997), 63-77.
- Gellner, Ernest. *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1964).

- Gillies, Alexander. *Herder und Ossian* [Herder and Ossian] (Berlin: Junker und Dünhaupt Verlag, 1933).
- Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah. *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Random House, 1997).
- Golemović, Dimitrije O. "Contemporary Singing to *Gusle* Accompaniment in Serbia and Montenegro", in Philip Vilas Bohlman & Nada Petković (eds.), *Balkan Epic: Song, History, Modernity* (Lanham, Toronto, Plymouth, UK: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 133-143
- Graubner, Hans. "Epos, Volksepos, Menschheitsepos – zum Epos-Konzept bei Herder" [Epos, National Epos, Human Epos – on Herder's Concept of Epos], in Heinrich Detering, Torsten Hoffmann, Silke Pasewalch, Eve Pormeister (eds.), *Nationalepen zwischen Fakten und Fiktionen* [National Epics between Facts and Fiction] (Tartu: Tartu University Press, 2011), 73-92.
- Grigoriadis, Ioannis N. *Instilling Religion in Greek and Turkish Nationalism: A "Sacred Synthesis"* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
- Hadfeld, Andrew. *Literature, Politics, and National Identity: Reformation to Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
- Hägg, Göran. *Den svenska litteraturhistoria* [Swedish Literary History] (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1996).
- Halili, Rigels. *Naród i jego pieśni: Rzecz o oralności, piśmienności, i epice ludowej wśród Albańczyków i Serbów* [A Nation and its Songs: About Orality, Literacy and Folk Epics among Albanians and Serbs] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2012).
- Hammond, Lila. *Serbian: An Essential Grammar* (London & New York: Routledge, 2005).
- Hasluck, Frederick William. *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, 2 Vols., (London et al.: Oxford University Press, 1929).
- Haupt, Heinz-Gerhard. "Comparative History", in Neil J. Smelser et Paul B. Baltes (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioral Sciences* (Amsterdam et al.: Brill, 2001), vol. 4, 2397–2403.
- Haxhihasani, Qemal (ed.). *Këngë popullore legjendare* [Legendary Folk Songs] (Tirana: 1955).
- Healey, Frank George. *The Literary Culture of Napoleon* (Paris: Librairie Droz, 1959).
- Henning, John. "Goethe's Translation of Ossian's 'The Song of Selma'", in *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (Jan., 1946), 77-87.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (1990; reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

- _____ ; Ranger, Terence (eds.). *The Invention of Tradition* (1983; reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- Horigan, Stephen. *Nature and Culture in Western Discourses* (London & New York: Routledge, 1988).
- Hroch, Miroslav. "Is there a South-East European Type of Nationalism?", in Dimitris Stamatopoulos (ed.), *Balkan Nationalism(s) and the Ottoman Empire*, Vol. 1 (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2015), 13-27.
- _____ *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations*, trans. Ben Fowkes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
- Hutchinson, John. Interview by Eric Kaufmann, 11th December 2011, www.networks.h-net.org/node/3911/pages/5923/h-nationalism-interview-john-hutchinson (accessed on 16th October 2014).
- _____ *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987).
- Islamaj, Shefikije. *Gjergj Fishta: Gjuha dhe stili* [Gjergj Fishta: Language and Style], 2 vols. (Prishtinë: Instituti Albanologjik, 2012).
- Jelavich, Barbara. *History of the Balkans: Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
- Jenks, Chris (ed.). *Culture: Critical Concepts in Sociology*, 4 Vols. (London: Routledge, 2003).
- Joseph, Margaret Paul. *Caliban in Exile: The Outsider in Caribbean Fiction* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1992).
- Judah, Tim. *The Serbs: History, Myth and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (1997. 3rd edition, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009).
- Jurić, Sime. "Grčke lirske pjesme Dimitrije Demetra" [Dimitrija Demeter's Greek Lyrics], in *Grada*, V, 20 VI 1957, 463-533.
- Kantorowicz, Ernst H. "Pro Patria Mori in Medieval Political Thought", in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (Apr., 1951), 472-492.
- Károly, Árpás. "A Kalevipoeg fordításának kérdései és lehetőségei" [The Issues and Possibilities of the Kalevipoeg Translation], in *Folia Estonica*, Vol. IX, Szombathely, 2003, 105-133.
- Kedourie, Elie. *Nationalism* (1960. 4th edition, Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).
- Kelly, Matthew J. *The Fenian Ideal and Irish Nationalism, 1882-1916* (Woolbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2006).
- King, Katherine Callen. *Ancient Epic* (Chichester/Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

- Kohn, Hans. *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1944).
- Koliqi, Ernesto. *Saggi di letteratura albanese* [Essays on Albanian Literature] (Florence: Olschki, 1972),
- Kolstø, Pål (ed.). *Myths and Boundaries in South-Eastern Europe* (London: Hurst & Company, 2005).
- Kristmannsson, Gauti. “The Epic Nature of the Nation: the Need for an Epic in European National Literatures”, in Gerald Bär, and Howard Gaskill (eds.), *Ossian and National Epic* (New York, Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, Frankfurt am Main, Oxford, Wien: Peter Lang, 2012).
- Kristóf, Ildikó Sz. “Domesticating Nature, Appropriating Hierarchy: The Representation of European and Non-European Peoples in an Early-Nineteenth-Century Schoolbook of Natural History”, in Dagnosław Demski, Ildikó Sz. Kristóf and Kamila Baraniecka-Olszewska (eds.), *Competing Eyes: Visual Encounters with Alterity in Central and Eastern Europe* (Budapest: L’Harmattan, 2013).
- Kropej, Monika. “The Cooperation of the Grimm Brothers, Jernej Kopitar and Vuk Karadžić”, in *Studia mythologica slavica*, XVI, 2013, 215-231.
- La Rocca, Francesco. “Clashing Cultural Nationalisms: The 19th-Century Danish-German Intellectual Debate, the Schleswig Wars (1848-1864), and Some Reflections on the Cultural Roots of National Socialism”, in *Revista Română de Studii Baltice și Nordice / The Romanian Journal for Baltic and Nordic Studies*, Vol. 7, Issue 1 (2015), 105-122.
- _____ “Troublesome Self-Representations: The Albanian Ottoman Past in Gjergj Fishta’s *Lahuta e Malcis* (The Highland Lute)”, in Dimitris Stamatopoulos (ed.), *Balkan Nationalism(s) and the Ottoman Empire*, Vol. 1 (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2015), 223-237.
- Lalich, Walter. “History, Politics and War in the Life of a Resistance Poet and Statesman”, in *Croatian Studies Review/Časopis za hrvatske studije*, Vol. 7, 2011, 113-129.
- Lampert, Francis J. “Goethe, Ossian and *Werther*”, in Fiona J. Stafford, Howard Gaskill (eds.), *From Gaelic to Romantic: Ossianic Translations* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), 97-106.
- Lāms, Ojār. “The Interaction of Power and Culture in Perceptions of the Latvian epic *Lāčplēsis*”, in Johnatan Osmond & Ausma Cimdiņa (eds.), *Power and Culture: Identity, Ideology, Representation* (Pisa: Edizioni Plus - Pisa University Press, 2007), 117-137.
- Lauer, Bernhard; Plötner, Bärbel & Laurent, Donatien. “Jacob Grimm und Th. Hersart de La Villemarqué: Ein Briefwechsel aus der Frühzeit der modernen Keltologie” [Jacob Grimm and Th. Hersart de La Villemarqué: A Correspondence at the Dawn of Modern Celtic Studies], in *Jahrbuch der Brüder Grimm-Gesellschaft* 1, 1991, 17-83.

- Laugaste, Eduard. "The Kalevala and Kalevipoeg", in Lauri Honko (ed.), *Religion, Myth and Folklore in the World's Epics: The Kalevala and Its Predecessors* (Berlin & New York: Mouton De Gruyter, 1990), 265-286.
- Leerssen, Joep. *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (2006, third edition Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010).
- _____. "The Cultivation of Culture: Towards a Definition of Romantic Nationalism in Europe", *Working Papers European Studies Amsterdam*, 2 (2005).
- _____. *When Was Romantic Nationalism? The Onset, the Long Tail, the Banal* (Antwerp: NISE, 2014).
- Lord, Albert Bates. "Homer as Oral Poet", *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Vol. 72 (1968), 1-46.
- _____. *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, Mass.: Oxford University Press, 1960).
- Lothspeich, Pamela. "The Mahābhārata as National History and Allegory in Modern Tales of Abhimanyu", in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, Vol. 71, No. 2, Scripture and Modernity: A Tribute to Professor John Wansbrough (2008), pp. 279-296.
- Łużny, Ryszard. "The Kiev Mohyla Academy in Relation to Polish Culture", in *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1/2, The Kiev Mohyla Academy: Commemorating the 350th Anniversary of its Founding (1632) (June 1984), 123-135.
- Mackridge, Peter. "Aspects of Language and Identity in the Greek Peninsula since the Eighteenth Century", in The Newsletter of The Society Farsarotul, Vol. XXI & XXII, Issues 1 & 2, Fall 2007/Spring 2008
- _____. *Language and National Identity in Greece, 1766-1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
- _____. "The Myth of Asia Minor in Greek Fiction", in Renée Hirschon (ed.), *Crossing the Aegean: An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey* (New York & Oxford: Berghahn, 2003), 235-45.
- Mandalà, Matteo. *Mundus vult decipi: i miti della storiografia arbëreshe* [Mundus vult decipi: The Myths of Arbëreshe Historiography] (Palermo: Mirror, 2007).
- Mason, Herbert. *Gilgamesh: A Verse Narrative* (New York: New American Library, 1972).
- Maxwell, Alexander. "Twenty-five Years of A-B-C: Miroslav Hroch's Impact on Nationalism Studies," *Nationality Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, Vol. 38, No. 60 (2010).
- McIlvanney, Liam. "Hugh Blair, Robert Burns, and the Invention of Scottish Literature", in *Eighteenth-Century Life*, Volume 29, Number 2, Spring 2005, 25-46.

- Medenica, Radoslav. "Arbanaške krešničke pesme i naša narodna epika" [Albanian Border Songs and Our National Epic], *Rad XIV kongresa Saveza folklorista Jugoslavije (u Prizrenu 1967)* [Proceedings of the Fourteenth Congress of the Union of Yugoslav Folklorists (in Prizren 1967)], (Belgrade, 1974).
- Mićović, Dragutin. *Albanske junačke pesme* [Albanian Heroic Poems] (Jedinstvo: Priština, 1981).
- Miller, Peter N. "Goethe and the End of Antiquarianism", in Anna Blair & Anja-Silvia Goering, *For the Sake of Learning: Essays in Honor of Anthony Grafton* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2016), Vol.2, 897-916.
- Miłosz, Czesław. *The History of Polish Literature*, 2nd edition (Berkeley: University of California Press), 117.
- Minisci, Alessandra. *Eneide: Guida alla lettura* [Aeneid: A Reader's Guide] (Milano: Alpha Test, 2006) 25.
- Monteiro, George. *The Presence of Camões: Influences on the Literature of England, America, and Southern Africa* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1996).
- Morace, Rosanna. *L'allegoria biblica tra 'Gerusalemme Conquistata' e 'Mondo Creato'* [Biblical Allegory between the 'Jerusalem Conquered' and 'The Creation of the World'], in Tiziana Piras (ed.), *Gli scrittori italiani e la Bibbia. Atti del convegno di Portogruaro, 21-22 ottobre 2009* [The Italian Writers and the Bible: Proceedings of the Portogruaro Conference, 21-22 October 2009], (Trieste: Edizioni Università di Trieste, 2011), 41-53.
- Moser, Charles A. (ed.). *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)
- Moser, Nelleke. "Camões as a Romantic Hero: 'Os Lusíadas' as an Example of Patriotism in the Netherlands between 1766 and 1880", in *Portuguese Studies*, Vol. 12 (1996), 55-67.
- Murzaku, Ines Angeli. *Returning Home to Rome: The Basilian Monks of Grottaferrata in Albania* (Grottaferrata: Analekta Kryptoferis, 2009).
- National Library of Scotland, Early Gaelic Book Collection, Ossian Collection: <http://digital.nls.uk/early-gaelic-book-collections> (accessed on 9th March 2015).
- Nora (ed.), Pierre. *Les Lieux de mémoire* [Realms of Memory], 3 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1984-1986).
- Norsk biografisk lexicon* [Norwegian Biographic Lexicon], https://nbl.snl.no/Oscar_1 (accessed on 19th July 2016).
- Oinas, Felix Johannes. "Folk Epic", in Robert M. Dorson (ed.), *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 99-115.

- _____. “The Study of Folklore in Yugoslavia”, in *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, Vol. 3, No. 3, [Special Issue: The Yugoslav-American Folklore Seminar] (Dec., 1966), pp. 398-418.
- Okabe, Takehiro. “Negotiating Elias Lönnrot: Shared Soviet-Finnish National Symbol Articulated and Blurred, 1945-1952”, in *Revue d’histoire nordique*, n°19, 129-149.
- Oskala, Teivas. “Virgil’s Aeneid as Homeric, National and Universal Epic”, in Lauri Honko (ed.), *Religion, Myth and Folklore in the World’s Epics: The Kalevala and Its Predecessors* (Berlin & New York: Mouton De Gruyter, 1990).
- Oxford Dictionary of English*, 3rd ed.
- Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed.
- Ó Dochartaig, Caitríona. “Goethe’s Translation from the Gaelic *Ossian*”, in Howard Gaskill (ed.), *The Reception of Ossian in Europe* (Bristol: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004), 156-175.
- Page, Norman. *An Oscar Wilde Chronology* (London: Macmillan, 1991).
- Parry, Adam (ed.). *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).
- Pavlović, Srdja. *Balkan Anschluss: The Annexation of Montenegro and the Creation of the Common South Slavic State* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008).
- _____. “The Mountain Wreath: Poetry or a Blueprint for the Final Solution?” in *Spaces of Identity*, Vol. 1, iss. 4 (2001), http://spacesofidentity/Vol_4/_html/pavlovic.html (accessed on 22nd February 2016).
- Payne, Richard. “The Making of Turan: The Fall and Transformation of the Iranian East in Late Antiquity”, in *Journal of Late Antiquity*, Vol. 9, Nr. 1, Spring 2016, 4-41.
- _____. “The Reinvention of Iran: The Sasanian Empire and the Huns”, in Michael Mass (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Attila* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 282-300.
- Pettan, Svanibor. “Singing Epic Songs with Bowed Lute: A Vignette from Croatia”, in Philip Vilas Bohlman & Nada Petković (eds.), *Balkan Epic: Song, History, Modernity* (Lanham, Toronto, Plymouth, UK: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 262-276.
- Pietrzak-Thébault, Joanna. “Fortune and Misfortune of Italian Chivalric Literature in the Early Modern Poland”, in *Zalącznik Kulturoznawczy*, 1/2014, 430-448.
- Pinson, Mark (ed.). *The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina: Their Historic Development from the Middle Ages to the dissolution of Yugoslavia* (1993, second edition Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1996).

- Plakans, Andrejs “Peasants, Intellectuals, and Nationalism in the Russian Baltic Provinces, 1820-90”, in *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (Sep., 1974), 445-475.
- Pollo, Stefanaq; Puto, Arben. *The History of Albania: From Its Origins to the Present Day*, translator uncredited (1981. Reprint, London et al.: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981).
- Popper, Karl. *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (London: Routledge ,1963).
- Porter, James. “‘Bring Me the Head of James Macpherson’: The Execution of Ossian and the Wellsprings of Folkloristic Discourse”, in *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 114, No. 454, James Macpherson and the Ossian Epic Debate (Autumn, 2001), 396-435.
- Primorac, Jakša; Čaleta, Joško. “Croatian Gusle Players at the Turn of The Millennium”, in Philip Vilas Bohlman & Nada Petković (eds.), *Balkan Epic: Song, History, Modernity* (Lanham, Toronto, Plymouth, UK: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 145-200.
- Ridgeon, Lloyd (ed.). *Shi‘i Islam and Identity: Religion, Politics and Change in the Global Muslim Community* (London & New York: I.B.Tauris, 2012).
- Robins, Robert Henry. *A Short History of Linguistics*, 4th ed. (1997, reprint London & New York: Routledge, 2013).
- Rotelli (ed.), Claudio. *Gli Albanesi in Calabria: secoli XV-XVIII* [The Albanians in Calabria: XV-XVIII Centuries] (Cosenza: Edizioni Orizzonti Meridionali, 1990).
- RTP, Rádio e Televisão de Portugal, *Grandes livros: "Os Lusíadas", de Luís de Camões* [Great Books: “The Lusiads”, by Luís de Camões], <http://ensina.rtp.pt/artigo/a-ilha-dos-amores/>, 2009 (accessed on 12th April 2016).
- Rubel, Margaret Mary. *Savage and Barbarian: Historical Attitudes in the Criticism of Homer and Ossian in Britain, 1760-1800* (Amsterdam, Oxford, New York: North Holland Publishing Company, 1978).
- Schaller, Dieter. “Das mittelalterliche Epos im Gattungssystem” [Medieval Epos in Genre Theory], in Willi Erzgräber (ed.), *Kontinuität und Transformation der Antike im Mittelalter: Veröffentlichung der Kongreßakten zum Freiburger Symposium des Mediävistenverbandes* [Continuity and Transformation of the Antiquity in the Middle Ages: Proceedings of the Freiburg Symposium of the Medievalists’ Society] (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke 1989), 355-371.
- Schirò Jr, Giuseppe. *Storia della letteratura albanese* [History of the Albanian Literature] (Milano: Nuova Accademia Editrice, 1959).
- Schmidt, Claudia Maria. *David Hume: Reason in History* (University Park: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).
- Schmidt, Wolf Gerhard. “Homer des Nordens” und “Mutter der Romantik”. *James Macphersons Ossian und seine Rezeption in der deutschsprachigen Literatur*

- [“Homer of the North” and “Mother of Romanticism”: James Macpherson’s Ossian and its Reception in the German-Speaking Literature], 4 Bde. (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2003/04).
- Scholz, Friedrich. *Die Literaturen des Baltikums: Ihre Entstehung und Entwicklung* [The Literatures of the Baltic: Their Emergence and Development] (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990).
- Schöpflin, George (György). *Nations, Identity, Power: The New Politics of Europe* (2000, reprint, London: Hurst & Co., 2002).
- Schuster-Šewc, Heinz. “Der Zerfall der slavischen Spracheinheit (des Urslavischen) und die genetische Gliederung der slavischen Sprachen/The Decay of the Slavic Language Unit (of Proto-Slavic) and the Genetic Structure of the Slavic Languages”, in Karl Gutschmidt, Sebastian Kempgen, Tilman Berger, Peter Kosta, *Die slavischen Sprachen/The Slavic Languages: Ein internationales Handbuch zu ihrer Struktur, ihrer Geschichte und ihrer Erforschung/An International Handbook on their Structure, their History and their Investigation. Band 2/Volume 2* (Berlin/Munich/Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2014), 1153-1165.
- Schwandner-Sievers, Stephanie; Fischer, Bernd Jünger (eds.). *Albanian Identities: Myth and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).
- Scravi, Tiziano. “Lassù qualcuno ci chiama” [Someone Up There is Calling Us], *Dylan Dog*, No.136 (Milan: Sergio Bonelli Editore, 1998).
- Selimović, Meša. *Za i protiv Vuka* [For and against Vuk], (1967. Reprint, Belgrade: BIGZ, 1987).
- Seton-Watson, Hugh. *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism* (New York: Westview, 1977).
- Sewell Jr., William H. “Marc Bloch and the Logic of Comparative History”, in *History and Theory*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1967), 208-218.
- Shuteriqi, Dhimitër et al. *Historia e letërsisë shqipe* [The History of Albanian Literature] (Tirana: 1952), vol. II.
- Skendi, Stavro. *Balkan Cultural Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).
- Skousen, Royal. “The Dialect of the Kalevala”, in *Scandinavian Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (SUMMER 1986), 275-284.
- Smith, Anthony D. *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
- _____ *National Identity* (1991. Reprint, Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991).
- _____ *Nationalism and Modernism* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

- Söderberg, Werner. "Nicolaus Ragvaldis tal i Basel 1434" [Nicolaus Ragvaldis' Speech in Basel 1434], in *Samlaren*, Vol. 17, 1896, 187-195.
- Stafford, Fiona J; Gaskill, Howard (eds.). *From Gaelic to Romantic: Ossianic Translations* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998).
- Stavrianos, Leften Stavros. *The Balkans since 1453* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1958).
- Storelev, Sven. "Semiotics in Norway", in Thomas A. Sebeok and Jean Umiker-Sebeok, *The Semiotic Sphere* (New York & London: Plenum Press, 1986), 369-386.
- Sugarman, Jane C. "Imagining the Homeland: Poetry, Songs, and the Discourses on Albanian Nationalism", in *Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Autumn, 1999), 419-458.
- Sula, Lili. "The Critical Reception of Gjergj Fishta during 1944 - 1990", in *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, Vol. 2, Nr. 3, November 2013, 99-102.
- Svennung, Josef. *Zur Geschichte des Goticismus* [On the History of Gothicism] (Stockholm : Almqvist och Wiksell, 1967).
- Swedish Musical Heritage: www.swedishmusicalheritage.com/composers/soderman-august/ (accessed on 12th March 2014).
- Syleimani, Selim. "Tema e athdeut në poemën 'Bagëti e Bujqësi' të Naimit" [The Fatherland Theme in Naim's Poem 'Bagëti e Bujqësi'], in Bardh Rugova (ed.), *Seminari ndërkombëtar për gjuhën, letërsinë dhe kulturën shqiptare/The XXXI International Seminar for Albanian Language, Literature and Culture* (Prishtinë, 2012), 201-209.
- Taterka, Thomas. "Die Nation erzählt sich selbst. Zum europäischen Nationalepos des 19. Jahrhunderts" [The Nation Narrates Itself: On 19th-Century European National Epos], in Heinrich Detering, Torsten Hoffmann, Silke Pasewalch, Eve Pormeister (eds.), *Nationalepen zwischen Fakten und Fiktionen* [National Epics between Facts and Fiction] (Tartu: Tartu University Press, 2011), 20-72.
- Ther, Philipp. "Beyond the Nation: The Relational Basis of a Comparative History of Germany and Europe", in *Central European History*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (2003), 5-73.
- Thomas, R. George. "Lord Bute, John Home and Ossian: Two Letters", in *The Modern Language Review* 51, no. 1 (1956): 73-75.
- Tjällén, Biörn. "Political Thought and Political Myth in Late Medieval National Histories: Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo (†1470)", in Erik Kooper, Sjoerd Level (ed.), *The Medieval Chronicle VIII* (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2013), 273-288.
- Todorovski, Gane. "Il Poema epico come forma letteraria caratteristica della tradizione mediterranea con particolare riferimento all'analogia Mažuranić – Njegoš – Prličev" [The Epic Poem as the Characteristic Literary Form of Mediterranean Tradition with Particular Reference to the Mažuranić – Njegoš –

- Prličev Analogy], in Ante Stamać et al. (eds.), *Les littératures européennes contemporaines et la tradition méditerranéenne* [Contemporary European Literatures and the Mediterranean Tradition] (Le pont/The Bridge: Zagreb, 1974), 231-236.
- Torun, Aytül Tamer. "The Balkan Imagination of Balkan-Origin Intellectuals: From Ottomanism to Nationalism", in Dimitris Stamatopoulos (ed.), *Balkan Nationalism(s) and the Ottoman Empire*, Vol. 1 (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2015), 251-266.
- Treip, Mindele Anne. *Allegorical Poetic & the Epic: The Renaissance Tradition to Paradise Lost* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1994).
- Trencsényi, Balázs; Kopeček, Michal et al. (eds.). *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe 1770-1945: Texts and Commentaries*, 5 vols. (Budapest/New York: CEU Press, 2006-2014).
- Tusnády, László. "Tasso Magyarországon" [Tasso in Hungary], in *Irodalomismeret*, XVII. évfolyam, 2007, 1-3. szám, 238-246.
- Urban Dictionary: <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=epic> (accessed on 3rd November 2014).
- Vakalopoulos, Kostantinos Apostolou. *Istoria tis Epirou: apo tis archis tis Othomanokratias os tis meres mas* [History of Epirus: From the Beginning of the Ottoman Rule to Our Days] (Thessaloniki: Herodotos, 2003).
- Vezenkov, Aleksander; Marinov, Tchavdar. "The Concept of National Revival in Balkan Historiographies", in Roumen Daskalov et al. (eds.), *Entangled Histories of the Balkans*, (Leiden: Brill, 2013-2014), Vol. 3, 406-463.
- Vitukhnovskaya, Marina. "Cultural and Political Reaction in Russian Karelia in 1906-1907. State Power, the Orthodox Church, and the 'Black Hundreds' against Karelian Nationalism", in *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas, Neue Folge*, Bd. 49, H. 1 (2001), 24-44.
- Wachtel, Andrew Baruch. *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).
- Werner, Michael; Zimmermann, Bénédicte. "Beyond Comparison: *Histoire croisée* and the Challenge of Reflexivity", in *History and Theory*, 45 (February 2006), 30-50.
- Wiles. James W. (trans.). *Gorski vijenac* [The Mountain Wreath] by Petar II Petrović Njegoš (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1930).
- Williams, Theodore C. (trans.). *Aeneid* by Virgil (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1910).
- Willson, Kendra. "Literary Diplomacy and the International Genre of National Epic", in Merrill Kaplan and Timothy R. Tangherlini (eds.), *News from Other Worlds: Studies in Nordic Folklore, Mythology and Culture* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: North Pinehurst Press, 2012) 154-172.

- Wilson, William A. "The Evolutionary Premise in Folklore Theory and the 'Finnish Method' ", in *Western Folklore*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Oct., 1976), 241-249.
- _____ "The 'Kalevala' and Finnish Politics", in *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, Vol. 12, No. 2/3 (1975), 131-155.
- Zaharchenko, Tanya. *Where Currents Meet: Frontiers in Post-Soviet Fiction of Kharkiv, Ukraine* (Budapest & New York: Central European University Press, 2015).
- Zlatar, Zdenko. *The Poetics of Slavdom: The Mythopoeic Foundations of Yugoslavia*, 2 vols. (New York et al.: Peter Lang, 2007).
- Zlatar, Zdenko. *The Slavic Epic: Gundulić's Osman* (New York et al.: Peter Lang, 1995).
- Žužul, Ivana. "Pamćenje, sjećanje i zaborav: figure oblikovanja nacionalne kulture/ Memory, Remembrance and Forgetting: Tropes Constructing National Culture", in *Dani Hvarškoga kazališta : Građa i rasprave o hrvatskoj književnosti i kazalištu*, Vol. 37 No. 1, 37-65.