

## Extended Abstract

# Culture, Gender and Genre as Limits and Motives in the Interpretation of the Bosniak Ballad *Hasanaginica*

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After the Introduction that explains the methodological standpoints and goals, the first section of the article considers cultural limits and initiations in the interpretative approaches to the ballad *Hasanaginica*, with a focus on its key verse “*A ljubovca od stida ne mogla*” [But for the very shame his wife is absent]. The most prominent views on the nature of shame of the female protagonist which functions in the ballad structure as the essential motivation of all successive events and the initiation principle comparable to the tragic guilt in the tragedy are observed. The authors begin the exposition with the thesis that the Bosniak ballad *Hasanaginica* is a work confirmed by Ingarden’s phenomenological standpoint on the existence of places of indeterminacy in the literary text, obliging the reader to fill in the gaps and make them concrete, so that, ultimately, the aesthetic harmony of the whole is achieved. The place of indeterminacy is here connected to the fact that the male or female singer says nothing on the nature of *kadin’s*

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shame. The shame remains unexplained, posing an everlasting problem in the interpretation of the ballad. The majority of interpretations [Lucerna, Murko, Barić, Krnjević] stipulate that shame is a distinctive feature of the *kadin*, a determinant, a common identity characteristic of Muslim women at the time, stemming from the then-ethics, mores and the way of life. Another group of researchers [Gesseman, Georgijević, Medenica...] consider shame to be linked not to the type, but to the character, objecting the opponents' cultural blind spot. In their opinion, the alleged subservient position of the woman in the oriental patriarchal societies cannot be measured by European understanding. The patriarchal way of life and its moral codes are felt as a burden or slavery only when they begin to lose their essential task and function. The authors of the article interpret the key verse, and by that, also the ballad, by starting from the premise that, in the Islamic societies, the totality of life has the source and stronghold in religion that does not recognise the more inherent divergence of the individual and the collective observed in the Western Christian tradition. In that light, the dilemma on the shame, based on the binary relationships *collective – individual, personal – common, subjective – objective*, loses credibility. For Hasanaginica, shame could be both, never only one or the other, and the same applies for the male or female ballad singer who had felt no need to additionally explain the concept, since the listeners had anticipated and understood it.

The issue of divergence between the individual and the collective in the Oriental-Islamic civilization had not manifested until recent times in some dramatic appearance, simultaneously becoming one of the distinctive features based on the Hellenic tradition, Judeo-Christianity and the renaissance acquisitions of the formed, modern Western civilization. The objection that could be addressed to both the antagonised groups, the "typologists" and the "characterologists", after this meticulous consideration of viewpoints regarding the central issue of the ballad is that they have cut us short of the imperative of the newer research methodology – a validly reconstructed horizon of expectations within which a work was created and accepted in the past. "Blending", i.e. understanding of the past that is neither adopted nor rejected by the past as the *other* and the different but with which it is possible to communicate, is only possible after the "reconstructive procedure". Good presumptions for an approach freed from prejudice to cultural variety, including *Hasanaginica*, have been recognised by the authors in the flows of the feminist criticism. Julia Kristeva provided the key contribution in the sense that she positioned the woman simultaneously inside and outside the male

society, making her both his romantically-idealised other and his victim-vagrant. Sometimes, the woman is what stands between the man and chaos, and sometimes she is the very embodiment of chaos. That is why the woman disturbs the settled categories of the man's system and blurs his strictly determined borders. In the male society, the woman is a fixed image, but also a negative of such a social order; there is always something that remains within her, something unexplainable, something that resists fixation. *Hasanaginica's* fate is proof that not even the Oriental-Islamic society, which rests upon more stern, orderly and clearer relationships between sexes, is able to fully realise that fixation, let alone the western society which has failed to do so even theoretically (interpretations of *Hasanaginica* treated in this article observe that quite convincingly) – let alone in social practice.

In the following sections of the article, the authors indicate (in)consistencies of socio-cultural interpretations of *Hasanaginica*. The focus is on Muhsin Rizvić's interpretation according to which shame is motivated by social inequality of the main protagonists – *Hasanaginica*, who comes from a family of *beys*, and her husband who is member of a lower stratum of *agas*. By inertia of social psychology characteristic of her status, *Hasanaginica* can feel shame due to her position that resulted from her marrying a man by birth and socially not her equal. The authors are of the opinion that accepting such a thesis alters the affirmative image of ethical and emotional features of *Hasanaginica's* character, shaking to the very core the foundations of the ballad leaving unprecedented consequences for the internal harmony of structural elements (horizontally) and as opposed to the whole (vertically). In that context, the authors cite some sections from the text that eliminate the thesis on the superiority complex as an explanation for the source and origin of shame.

Regarding the gender-social complexity of the identity, the authors focus on the nature of the tragic conflict between the husband and wife – *Hasanaginica* and *Hasanaga*. The conflict is doubled in the ballad. The conflict between them (external) reveals also the conflict within each of them. Those two conflicts form two concentric circles that further spread to the third circle, which is the plot. (...) That would not be the case if both the protagonists weren't characterised by the preponderance of individual identity as opposed to the typical characteristics of social identity. That makes the conflict evermore complex. On the one hand there is a unique shame, and, on the other, a fatal inconsistency of *Hasanaga's* nature. Such a conflict, together with the previously-mentioned

thematic and identity-related complexity, could only be confirmed in an equally complex genre, recognised in the ballad as a mix of epical, lyrical and dramatic elements. Thus, the genre-related presuppositions appear as an inevitable fact in understanding of its exceptional semantic density. To the extent the genre appears as an ultimate framework, it also intensifies the conflict because both *Hasanaga* and *Hasanaginica* stem from two opposing modes of genre: epical and lyrical. *Hasanaga* is the character of analogue, typically epic background and is unable to behave outside that world. His tragedy is that he *does not know* when and where the space of the analogue action ends and when one enters the space of soft, interpersonal relationships within the family. He is unable to function at different frequencies, which even a man belonging to the most patriarchal communities should master, keeping in mind that the modes of behaviour in war and at home, i.e. in the warrior and family world, are not the same. It has been proven that the ballad is a supra-genre where the borders between the epic and the lyrical are not erased, but are rather even more emphasised. The confrontation between the epical and the lyrical inevitably leads the ballad into tragedy. The tragic guilt with these protagonists is thus written at two levels: gender and genre; thus, not only at the level of gender, such has been the opinion so far. In fact, this is one of the most important conclusions of this paper, and the authors emphasised it at the very conclusion. The article also contains the translation of *Hasanaginica* with appropriate explanations and comments by the prominent Bosnian turkologist Tajjib Okić.

## Kaynakça

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