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Convergence of Literature and History: *The Bridge on the Drina* in the Context of Historiographic Metafiction

Edebiyat ve Tarihin Kesişimi: Tarihsel Üstkurmaca Bağlamında *Drina Köprüsü* Romanı

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Abstract

While the boundary between the disciplines of literature and history has come into question due to the problematization of their ontological natures, their textuality and similar narrative technics stand out as two main elements among the other intersections. As the criticisms of objectivity directed at history have echoed in literary studies, literary works where historical facts and fiction cluster have taken it one step further and rendered it possible to discuss the matter more broadly with cultural aspects. In *The Bridge on the Drina*, it is seen that the main arch of the narration proceeds along the historical realities, and yet Ivo Andrić's sole aim is not to put forward a classic historical novel. In fact, rather than foregrounding the realities in question and erasing the fictive elements, he presents a kind of alternative history by palpably bringing together the historical and the fictional. Hence, the aim of this study is to argue that in *The Bridge on the Drina,* the boundary between history and literature gets blurred and their conventional characteristics get problematised. Presenting views from both historical and literary studies, the primary theoretical frame will be based on the notion of historiographic metafiction.
Keywords: New historical novel, new historicism, modernism, postmodernism, historiographic metafiction, Ivo Andrić.

Öz

Edebiyat ve tarih disiplinleri arasındaki sınır ontolojik yapılarının sorunsallaşmasıyla tartışmaya açılmış, bu disiplinlerin metinsellikleri ve benzer anlatı teknikleri ise kesişim noktasını oluşturan iki temel unsur olarak ön plana çıkmıştır. Genel olarak tarih disiplinine getirilen nesnellik eleştirilerinin edebiyat çalışmalarında da yankı bulmasıyla birlikte, tarihsel gerçekliklerin kurguyla bir araya geldiği edebiyat eserleri söz konusu tartışmayı derinleştirerek değerlendirmelerin çok daha kapsamlı bir şekilde kültürel boyutlarıyla incelenmesini sağlamıştır. *Drina Köprüsü*'nde anlatının ana ekseni tarihsel gerçeklikler çizgisinde ilerken, Ivo Andrić'in amacının klasik anlamda tarihsel bir roman ortaya koymak olmadığı görülmektidir. Öyle ki, yazar söz konusu gerçeklikleri ön plana çıkarıp anlatının kurgusal izlerini saklamaya çalışmamış, aksine bu gerçekliklerle kurgusal olanı açıkça bir araya getirerek adeta alternatif bir tarih ortaya koymuştur. Bu anlamda, çalışmanın amacı *Drina Köprüsü* romanında tarih ve edebiyat arasındaki ayrımın netliğini yitirerek alışılagelmiş özelliklerinin sorunsallaşmasını tartışmaktır. Çalışma tarih ve edebiyat eleştirisi parallelliğinde ilerleyecek olup teorik çerçeveyi tarihsel üstkurmaca kavramı şekillendirecektir.
Anahtar Sözcükler*:* Yeni tarihsel roman, yeni tarihselcilik, modernizm, postmodernizm, tarihsel üstkurmaca, Ivo Andrić.

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Introduction

The relation between literature and history has been a topic of discussion especially following the years of poststructuralist debates. The fact that they were positioned autonomously has led their ontological statuses to be questioned. Actually, Lionel Gossman (1990) says that it was towards the end of the eighteenth century that literature and history began to drift apart from each other and until that time, history had been seen as a branch of literature (p. 227). In the nineteenth century, history is transferred from poets and writers to academicians, and now at present, "the very idea that the historian's activity consists in discovering and reconstituting, by whatever means, a past reality conceived of as something objectively fixed has begun to be questioned" (Gossman, 1990, p. 230). Standing out with his seminal views critical of historical studies, Hayden White (1998) also says that:

> You can't replicate—by definition—historical events. They are no longer perceivable. So they cannot be studied empirically. They can be studied by other, nonempirical kinds of methods; but there is no way of finally determining what is the best theory for studying and guiding research in history. (p. 16)

As is the main theoretical frame of this study, herein it should be noted that postmodernism also entirely problematises the historical knowledge stating that "there can be no single, essentialized, transcendent concept of 'genuine historicity'" (Hutcheon, 2004, p. 89). Hence the established statuses of history and literature – the former's being "bedrock of objective facts and data" (Green and LeBihan, 2001, p. 92) and the latter's being mostly an outcome of the writer's own imaginary world claiming not to the real world like history – are opened to questioning, which indeed begun with historicism being challenged in the first place. At this point, it is necessary to differentiate between the notions of 'event' and 'fact' since "not all facts about the past are historical facts, or are treated as such by the historian" (Carr, 2018, p. 130). We understand that there happens a kind of selection when the historian deals with the past events, and yet, as Edward Hallett Carr also asks (2018, p. 130), "What is the criterion which distinguishes the facts of history from other facts about the past?" In other words, what makes an ordinary fact among the others stand out, which in the end renders it possible to take its place in the records of history? Carr (2018) continues as follows:

> The re-constitution of the past in the historian's mind is dependent on empirical evidence. But it is not in itself an empirical process, and cannot consist in a mere recital of facts. On the contrary, the process of reconstitution governs the selection and interpretation of the facts: this, indeed, is what makes them historical facts. (p. 151)

It is understood that the past really existed, but the fact that it is reconstructed by selection and interpretation is what we call a historical fact and also what changes the ontological nature of 'what really happened,' which obviously goes through the present-day historian's organization. Referring to Peter Munz, Linda Hutcheon (2004) explains the difference between a historical event and a historical fact as such: "Events [...] are configured into facts by being related to 'conceptual matrices within which they have to be imbedded if they are to count as facts'" (p. 122). It is understood that brute events of the past do not mean much on their own. Yet when they are situated in particular c, they become meaningful and are considered to be facts. The fact that events are configured into facts in historiography creates an intersection for history and literature, which is considered highly problematic by postmodernism:

> Historiography and fiction [...] *constitute* their objects of attention; in other words, they decide which events will become facts. The postmodern problematization points to our unavoidable difficulties with the concreteness of events (in the archive, we can find only their textual traces to make into facts) and their accessibility. (Do we have a full trace or a partial one? What has been absented, discarded as non-fact material?) (Hutcheon, 2004, p. 122; italics in the original)

While the objectivity of historical facts is criticized, the historian's treatment of the past seems to outweigh the past itself, which is exposed to selection, evaluation, interpretation, and narration that are all in close relation with the historian and with his/her attitude. White (1978) says that: "Once it is admitted that all histories are in some sense interpretations, it becomes necessary to determine the extent to which historians' explanations of past events can qualify as objective, if not rigorously scientific, accounts of reality" (p. 51). It should be clarified once and for all that such a serious questioning of historicism is not included in the scope of this study, but since we aim to discuss *The Bridge on the Drina* on the grounds of historiographic metafiction rather than a traditional historical novel, it becomes a necessity to deal with historiography at least to the extent of its convergence with literature.

The problematisation of historical studies seems to be related to the breaking down of grand narratives in the 1970s. When it is expressed that "[h]istorical periods are not unified entities" and therefore it is not possible to witness a "single 'history', [but] only discontinuous and contradictory 'histories'" (Selden et al., 2005, p. 181), the naïve historical totalisation of a certain period seems to be no more acceptable because "the particular, the local, and the specific [in history] replace the general, the universal, and the eternal" (Hutcheon, 2004, p. 99). Mindset, perception of notions, and attitudes seem to have turned upside down. Surely, the effect has been widespread acting on the way of thinking in the most general sense:

> We live [...] within the "postmodern condition," in which [...] there is no single, authoritative, overarching story that would allow us to make sense of the world in which we live. Absence of grand narrative changes the writing of history, by calling into doubt the possibility of its unification. (Megill, 1998, p. 3)

One noticeable impact of that has been on the perception of history, which has enabled it to get problematised with respect to its accessibility, i.e. textuality, and narrative technics used in history writing. We see that reliability of written material is opened into question. When the point is considered in the context of the convergence of literature and history, it is seen that

> What the postmodern writing of both history and literature has taught us is that both history and fiction are discourses, that both constitute systems of signification by which we make sense of the past ("exertions of the shaping, ordering imagination"). In other words, the meaning and shape are not *in the events,* but *in the systems* which make those past "events" into present historical "facts." This is not a "dishonest refuge from truth" but an acknowledgement of the meaning making function of human constructs. (Hutcheon, 2004, p. 89; italics in the original)

When history and literature are considered to be discursive, they seem to lose their privileged positions and become constituents of a much wider construct. In this complex web of interrelations, it seems to be unlikely that neither history may refer to historical events as they happened nor fiction may be limited in the rigid boundaries of the view that it bears no reference to the outer/real world, but rather they become a part of a sistem of signification. We can say that "[h]istoriography and fiction are seen as sharing the same act of refiguration, of reshaping of our experience of time through plot configurations; they are complementary activities" (Hutcheon, 2004, p. 100). The point is that perhaps as a consequence of such constant postmodernist problematisation with no absolute denial of any given notion, the meaning of history and literature gets enlarged. Indeed, historiographic metafiction results from such a contradictory (not in a negative mode) way of thinking, which overtly acknowledges the existence of the past, but questions its accessibility to us today. "Historiographic metafiction, while teasing us with the existence of the past as real, also suggests that there is no direct access to that real which would be unmediated by the structures of our various discourses about it" (Hutcheon, 2004, p. 146). Relatedly, postmodernism does not accept the idea that "history is descriptive, and its problem is verification. Fiction is constitutive or inventive, and its problem is veracity" (Berthoff, 1970, p. 272), but rather it refuses this dualism that positions fiction and

history in distinct corners. As two "cultural sign systems, ideological constructions," their "ideology includes their appearance of being autonomous and self-contained" (Hutcheon, 2004, p. 112). The authority of history to verify past events and the imitative nature of fiction seem to be no more relevant. To illustrate the point, we can also put forward the following view of White (1978):

> Like literature, history progresses by the production of classics, the nature of which is such that they cannot be disconfirmed or negated, in the way that the principal conceptual schemata of the sciences are. And it is their nondisconfirmability that testifies to the essentially *literary* nature of historical classics. There is something in a historical masterpiece that cannot be negated, and this nonnegatable element is its form, the form which is its fiction. (p. 89)

As is the reason for its nondisconfirmability, historiography seems to be sharing similar fictive elements with literature. Relatedly, putting forward the view of 'literariness of historical texts,' White (1978) argues that history is not a different field from literature since their devices are highly similar to each other:

> The events are made into a story by the suppression or subordination of certain of them and the highlighting of others, by characterization, motific repetition, variation of tone and point of view, alternative descriptive strategies, and the like – in short, all of the techniques that we normally expect to find in the emplotment of a novel or a play. (p. 84)

The boundaries having privileged literature and history for some time are problematised and the discussions make it a necessity to look at things from a broader angle, perhaps by displacement and a parallel analysis of both discourses. Louis A. Montrose (1989) says that:

> By *the historicity of texts,* I mean to suggest the cultural specificity, the social embedment, of all modes of writing-not only the texts that critics study but also the texts in which we study them. By *the textuality of history,* I mean to suggest, firstly, that we can have no access to a full and authentic past, a lived material existence, unmediated by the surviving textual traces of the society in question-traces whose survival we cannot assume to be merely contingent but must rather presume to be at least partially consequent upon complex and subtle social processes of preservation and effacement; and secondly, that those textual traces are themselves subject to subsequent textual mediations when they are construed as the "documents" upon which historians ground their own texts, called "histories." (p. 20; italics in the original)

It is seen that the grounds of literature and history are reciprocally questioned. While fiction cannot be separated from the historical period in which it is produced, the textuality of historical documents cannot be denied either. Actually, this is one of the most important points which renders it possible to problematise and question the objective nature of history. Hutcheon (2004) touches on it within the scope of postmodern historical fiction and especially of historiographic metafiction: "Historiographic metafiction acknowledges the paradox of the reality of the past but its textualized accessibility to us today" (p. 114). It is understood that postmodernism does not refuse the knowledge of the past but problematises its textuality.

It is understood that the practice of foregrounding literature and backgrounding history is no more meaningful since it is inevitable that the old thick line separating history and literature gets blurred. Neither the solid background upon which history stands nor the foregrounded position literature is appointed to is no more valid. There is an incontestable urge to create a new dialogue between them, which makes it requisite to problematise their grounds and to question them not only with some particular aspects but within the culture as perhaps the most comprehensive frame. Hence, within the light of the theoretical discussions that have been presented so far, historiographic metafiction is believed to offer the right context to discuss the novel *The Bridge on the Drina.*

The Bridge on the Drina

Written during World War II and published in 1945, *The Bridge on the Drina* spans almost four hundred years starting in the second half of the 16th century and ending with the beginning of World War I. In this immense span of time, Ivo Andrić (1892-1975) chooses particular events concerning the Balkans and particularly Bosnia, which "becomes imbued with life, a sort of writer's experimental laboratory for observing human behaviour and the bewildering turns and twists of history and for reflecting on life in general" (Andrić, 1990, p. xix). The narration does not deviate from the chronological order and always moves forward. Along with the historical facts, Andrić decorates the story with delicate details and gives insight into the life of the townspeople. Since these details are reflected as a part of the given history, it becomes an elaborate study of the past. Reader traces real historical events and at the same time witnesses the life of the folk in Visegrad which contains a multi-cultural society and is a meeting point of religions and ethnicities. Forming the heart of the novel, the bridge over the Drina River undoubtedly acts as the most significant juncture throughout the work. Everything occurs, in this course of time, either truly on the bridge itself or around it. It is the only thing which we do not lose sight of from the beginning till the end. It becomes, in this sense, the symbol of permanence.

Set in the four-hundred-year period under, mostly, the rule of the Ottoman Empire, *The Bridge*[1] is presented as a chronicle by Ivo Andrić. In this respect, major historical events, i.e. the Ottoman and the Austria-Hungarian rules, Balkan Wars, and World War I, take place in the factual time order. That is, Andrić deals with the factual events of the past and in a sense, presents his own version by selecting certain historical events and building a coherent narrative. The similar point is expressed as follows: "*He is at his best when the historian walks hand in hand with the story teller*. There is no substitute for his minute description of scenes, which his scholarship bases on a confident mastery of every significant detail" (Andrić, 1990, p. xix; italics added). It seems that here we do not have "a transcending of history, but a problematized inscribing of subjectivity into history" which is presented as a problematisation of the entire notion of subjectivity that privileges two modes of narration (multiple points of view and an overtly controlling narrator), neither of which are considered reliable (Hutcheon, 2004, pp. 117-118). This creates a fracture in the notion of an uninterrupted/totalizing history. It is like "contradictions displace totalities; discontinuities, gaps, and ruptures are favored in opposition to continuity, development, evolution; the particular and the local take on the value once held by the universal and the transcendent" (Hutcheon, 2004, p. 97). Or it is like an alternative history standing up against "the traditional notion of history as non-contradictory continuity" (Hutcheon, 2004, p.162) and that's why, it creates a kind of rupture and discontinuity with the help of bringing together fact and fiction. Rather than the effacement of the line between historical facts and fictive inventions, the novel overtly exposes them. Historiography and literature "*walks hand in hand"* as the historian does with the story teller (Andrić, 1990, p. xix), and this reminds us of the fact that "In historiographic metafiction, the novelist and the historian are shown to write in tandem with others—and with each other" (Hutcheon, 2004, p. 190). Wachtel (1995) adds another dimension to that:

> Andric [...] understood that the historian/archeologist can also and with equal justification choose to explore history diachronically, through a vertical examination of a society's *longue durée.* [...] it is certainly not an approach that can be accommodated by the chronotope of the traditional historical novel. (pp. 88-89)

So again, we see that Andrić as a novelist works like a historian or an archeologist while exploring his country's past vertically. While traditional historical novels progress horizontally and synchronically, they have spatially broad yet temporally limited forms. However, *The Bridge* proceeds vertically and diachronically, which makes it a spatially limited yet a temporally broad novel. Choosing a specific

[1] Hereafter, the title of the novel will be shortly referred as *The Bridge*.

historical site – a small town of Bosnia, Visegrad – Andrić acts like an archeologist and goes into the deeper strata of the area, at the end of which "we get a deep feeling for the various temporal layers of local development, exactly the opposite effect from the one produced by the broad but temporally shallow approach of the historical novel" (Wachtel, 1995, pp. 88-89). *The Bridge* presents the flow of time and the existence of human life as E. D. Goy (1963) puts it: "History, for him, is rather the flow of change. In *Travnićka hronika* and in *Na Drini ćuprija* it is the connecting link between the characters and events that form the body of the novel" (p. 308; italics added). Historical facts are used as a frame which holds the pieces of the narration together. They are not distorted, not changed but just told as they are which refers to the postmodernist view: "The ontological line between historical past and literature is not effaced [...] but rather is underlined. The past really did exist, but we can 'know' that past today only through its texts, and therein lies its connection to the literary" (Hutcheon, 2004, p. 128). It is seen that Andrić does not use historical records to make his work appear as a historical novel. In the following lines, Goy (1963) explains Andrić's treatment of history:

> History is not an end in itself but an essential means, a dimension of reality. [... H] istory is serving as a means of taking a wider view of existence, not spatially but temporally. [... W]ith Andric, history adds the dimension of time which, for him, is an essential one in which to view individual and collective human fate. History is not therefore a period defined by the historian, with its characteristic traits and events, nor is Andric concerned to conjure up the past; for him it is time, the constant flow of change that is a condition of human existence. (p. 309)

It is understood that Andrić does not aim to present a portrayal of the past as it was, but rather to show the individuals going through the very same past/history, to show how their lives are affected, and to show that things happen and the life changes unceasingly, but the very same life is also permanent like the Bridge over the Drina River and nothing is powerful enough to destroy it. Herein, history can be suggested, in the most general sense, as a context in which life exists, alters, but never disappears. Celia Hawkesworth (1984) explains it as follows:

> *The Bridge on the Drina* can be seen as a portrait of history itself. History is made as much by individual personalities as by mass movements and the upheavals created by the rise and fall of empires. In *The Bridge on the Drina* there is a constant balance between the impact of external events, of natural vicissitudes, and the particular flavour imparted by individual personalities who capture the imagination of the local people and determine the temper of an age. (pp. 139-140)

This balance between the macro and the micro, the major historical events (like the wars and the upheavals) and the minor individual lives is the historical understanding of the novel. It is not a classic historical fiction that "is motivated and made operative by a notion of history as a shaping force" (Hutcheon, 2004, p. 113). Indeed, rather than being a shaping force, history represents the flow of actions and that is why real historical events are not foregrounded but are equalled to the individualities, at the end of which we get an alternate history. Hutcheon (2004) says that "In many historical novels, the real figures of the past are deployed to validate or authenticate the fictional world by their presence, as if to hide the joins between fiction and history in a formal and ontological sleight of hand" (p. 114). However, we do not see such an endeavour in *The Bridge* since, as we have said, historical personalities and events are not brought to the fore. Hutcheon (2004) continues as such: "The metafictional self-reflexivity of postmodern novels prevents any such subterfuge, and poses that ontological join as a problem: how do we know the past? What do (what can) we know of it now?" In this sense, *The Bridge* is believed to render it possible to raise similar questions.

We have seen that while the historically known facts like the Ottoman rule, construction of the bridge, occupation of the Bosnian town by the Austrians, Annexation Crisis, the Balkan Wars and the real historical figures like the Grand Vezir Mehmed Paša, General Filipović, and Franz Joseph constitute the historical aspect, the minute details which offer an insight into the life of the common folk and the

individuals who live through all those historically known events are the author's invention. All the details regarding the life of the townspeople and other things which occur till the bridge is destroyed at the end of the novel are conceived within the context of history. Herein it can be suggested that having a claim upon the truth no longer becomes limited to only history, but rather it becomes partially a human construct. Actually, as a characteristic of postmodern fiction, historiographic metafiction defines such works like *The Bridge* as "both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages" (Hutcheon, 2004, p. 5) and it also does not accept the view that "only history has a truth claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their major claim to truth from that identity" (Hutcheon, 2004, p. 93). A similar point is also noted by Brian McHale (2004):

> Apocryphal history, creative anachronism, historical fantasy—these are the typical strategies of the postmodernist revisionist historical novel. [...] First, it revises the *content* of the historical record, reinterpreting the historical record, often demystifying or debunking the orthodox version of the past. Secondly, it revises, indeed transforms, the conventions and norms of historical fiction itself. (p. 90)

We can say that the noted orthodox understanding of the past is not available for *The Bridge*, but rather there is a revisionist approach to history. The classic principles of historical fiction are refuted and an "apocryphal or alternative history" is presented (McHale, 2004, p. 90). McHale (2004) continues as follows:

> Apocryphal history contradicts the official version in one of two ways: either it *supplements* the historical record, claiming to restore what has been lost or suppressed; or it *displaces* official history altogether. In the first of these cases, apocryphal history operates in the "dark areas" of history, apparently in conformity to the norms of "classic" historical fiction but in fact *parodying* them. (p. 90; italics in the original)

Actually, *The Bridge* mostly seems to be supplementing the historical record, to be shedding light on the dark, the lost, the unspoken or the unwritten parts of the given history. In other words, it tries to "restore 'lost' groups (the peasantry and working-class, women, minorities) to the historical record that animates historical research itself in our time" (McHale, 2004, p. 91). It might be said that in the end there happens to exist an alternative history, and perhaps more importantly, what is fiction and what is real is opened into the discussion:

> In postmodernist revisionist historical fiction, history and fiction exchange places, history becoming fictional and fiction becoming "true" history—and the real world seems to get lost in the shuffle. But of course this is precisely the question postmodernist fiction is designed to raise: real, compared to what? (McHale, 2004, p. 96)

This is highly important for both literary and historical studies since all these discussions make it possible to question the monopolisation of truth and to problematise the boundaries drawn between so-called distinct fields of studies like literature and history. Major historical events constituting the main arch of the narration like the construction of the bridge, the occupation of the town by the Austrians, the Annexation Crisis, the Balkan Wars, and the First World War are accompanied by Fata Avdagina's, Fedun's, Lotte's, Corkan's or two gamblers' individual stories, all of which offer another dimension of the history. In other words, there happen to be smaller fictional histories within a grand one. The point of blending such historical factualities and fictional constructions can be found again in historiographic metafiction:

> History offers facts— interpreted, signifying, discursive, textualized—made from brute events. Is the referent of historiography, then, the fact or the event, the textualized trace or the experience itself? Postmodernist fiction [...] complicates the issue of reference [...] in this

> ontological confusion (text or experience) and in its overdetermination of the entire notion of reference (we find autoreferentiality, intertextuality, historiographic reference, and so on). (Hutcheon, 2004, p. 153)

Indeed, *The Bridge* seems to question the grounds of this experience and text conflict by mingling the individualities with the historical facts.

It is clear that *The Bridge* does not present a "history as the unimpeded sequence of raw empirical realities" (Krieger, 1974, p. 339), and yet it seems that we can talk about a history that may fall into the category of "the imaginative reconstruction of the past," by means of which "the historian endeavors to reconstruct as much of the past of mankind as he can" (Gottschalk, 1969, pp. 48-49). The attempt to reconstruct past events is seen to require a certain *narrative* which includes the selection of some particular events, their interpretation, organization, and narration. Relatedly, in *The Bridge*, the chronicler resembles a historian who selects, interprets and organizes his material to his own end. Andrew Wachtel (1995) says that "Equally important [...] is the narrator's emphasis on his connection to the townspeople (both lifelong and temporary) in his role as chronicler, the synthesizer and ultimate repository of the collective memory that organizes the life of the town" (p. 92). What is read in the story is up to his selection and organization. We cannot know more than what he tells us. Postmodern fiction says that "Historiography and fiction [...] *constitute* their objects of attention [...] they decide which events will become facts" and asks further questions like "Do we have a full trace or a partial one? What has been absented, discarded as non-fact material?" (Hutcheon, 2004, p. 122; italics in the original). Regarding that, it is observed that the chronicler does not give the same amount of weight to each and every event told in *The Bridge*. To illustrate it, the fifth chapter begins as follows:

> The first century passed, a time long and mortal for men and for many of their works, but insignificant for great buildings [...] So too would a second century have passed over them, with its changes of seasons and human generations, and the buildings would have lasted unchanged: but what time could not do, the unstable and unpredictable influence of faraway affairs did. (*The Bridge*, p. 72)

As another example of the same situation: "Time did its work. Life went on, to all appearances unchanged. More than thirty years passed since that conversation on the kapia" (*The Bridge*, p. 96). In the light of the given examples, it is seen that while some episodes pass more sweepingly, some of them are told in more detail and more vividly. This is because of the fact that each event taking place in this four-hundred-year timespan does not have the same importance. Hawkesworth (1984) states that "Such a scheme allows the author to describe the main events affecting the life of the town in detail and also to suggest *an awareness of history as never uniformly well-known or related*" (p. 125; italics added). White (1978) touches on this point regarding history:

> For it is in this brutal capacity to exclude certain facts in the interest of constituting others as components of comprehensible stories that the historian displays his tact as well as his understanding. The "overall coherence" of any given "series" of historical facts is the coherence of story, but this coherence is achieved only by a tailoring of the "facts" to the requirements of the story form. (pp. 90-91)

The point of highlighting certain events can also be related to the matter of relevance: "Any narrative is a structure imposed upon events, grouping some of them together with others, and ruling some out as lacking relevance" (Danto, 1965, p. 132). And yet "How do we know whether or not an event would lack relevance and so be excluded either by novelist or historian? [...] it may be part of his business to establish it where it had not been suspected before" (Kermode, 1968, p. 231). This may shed some light on the sweeping accounts of some events and the detailed explanations of some others in *The Bridge*.

Among the other issues that postmodernism problematises about the relations between history and fiction, *narrative* particularly stands out since "the process of narrativization has come to be seen as a central form of human comprehension, of imposition of meaning and formal coherence on the chaos of events" (Hutcheon, 2004, p. 121). Again it turns out to be a matter of making sense of the world as a chaotic place. In this respect, it becomes more understandable why narrativization plays a pivotal role both for authors and historians. Kermode (1968) says that: "The historian postulates some kind of story, on the basis of a set of records, and then seeks further supporting evidence. The narrative link between such events is an historical explanation" (pp. 231-232). Similarly, its echoes in literary studies can be seen as follows:

> It is historiography's explanatory and narrative emplotments of past *events* that construct what we consider historical *facts*. [...] Postmodernism returns to confront the problematic nature of the past as an object of knowledge for us in the present. [...] The past really did exist. The question is: *how* can we know that past today—and *what* can we know of it? (Hutcheon, 2004, p. 92; italics in the original).

And this is exactly what is tried to be achieved by the fact that historiographic metafiction's "contradictory 'contamination' of *the self-consciously literary* with the verifiably historical and referential challenges the borders we accept as existing between literature and the extra-literary narrative discourses which surround it: history, biography, autobiography" (Hutcheon, 2004, p. 224; italics added). Accordingly, the legends told in *The Bridge* can be considered as an illustration of that. As a kind of emplotment embodying both realities and fictive aspects, legends act like a repository that stores the collective memory of the town. Here are some related parts from the novel:

> The common people easily make up fables and spread them quickly, wherein reality is strangely and inextricably mixed and interwoven with legend. (*The Bridge*, p. 36)
> Such things were long remembered and spoken about when tales were told of the creation of the bridge, the more so since, it seems. Generous Vezirs and honest officials in later years died out and such feasts became rarer and rarer and at last completely unknown, until in the end they passed into legend with the vilas with Stoja and Ostoja and similar wonders. (*The Brige*, p. 66)
> One of the very greatest of all these floods, which occurred in the second half of the eighteenth century, was especially long remembered and became the subject of countless tales. (*The Bridge*, p. 76)

Goy (1963) explains the use of legends both by relating it to history and by making a comparison between the earlier and the later works of Andrić: "History works in two ways – by physical changes and by the accumulation of legend which, for Andrić, serves as a subjective collective memory" (p. 308). This might also be explained with Nortroph Frye's (2000) view of "pregeneric elements of literature" or "*mythoi* or generic plots" (p. 162). White (1978) explains this as such: "Frye conceives fictions to consist in part of sublimates of archetypal myth-structures. These structures have been displaced to the interior of verbal artifacts in such a way as to serve as their latent meanings" (p. 83). According to White's (1978) explanation of this theory, these mythical structures offer some particular themes known to us and make it easier to understand the point of a story. And by referring to Frye, he states that its relation to history is that when these mythical structures are used in history writing, it becomes discursive, which means that "when the fictional element—or mythic plot structure—is *obviously* present in it, it ceases to be history altogether and becomes a bastard genre, product of an unholy, though not unnatural, union between history and poetry" (White, 1978, p. 83). If history uses such mythical structures in which might be embedded some discursive hints, then we may readily think about "the ideological implications of writing about history" (Hutcheon, 2004, p. 117). We can conclude that the role of legends and myths in history does not differ much from the ones used in fiction. They serve to make meaning of the real world, to construct a coherent narrative in a way that we can recognize and understand. And historiographic metafiction questions the discursive nature

of such references both in fiction and history: "The referent is always already inscribed in the discourses of our culture" (Hutcheon, 2004, p. 119). This serves two things: first, the objectivity of history is opened into discussion and second, it indicates that literature and history make use of the same cultural sources.

As we draw to the close, it should be noted that constructions of edifices, wars, hostilities among cultures living on the same territory, i.e. the townspeople in Visegrad, their solidarity in hard times, injustices, occupations, devastations, struggles and above all human's endurance are all the recurrent phenomena intrinsic to the histoy of humankind. And Andrić, by framing the story with real historical events and personages, tells us a different version of history or in McHale's (2004) words an "alternative history" (p. 90) which is accompanied by individual lives that do not take place in the historical records and which is also circulated through the collective memory. For Andrić, history represents the flow of change/time and with the version that we see in *The Bridge*, the very same history gets fractured, its continuity gets interrupted since he offers us a new version of it. In fact, the following part seems to cover what has been discussed so far:

> But these are all things which we recall only in passing and which poets and scientists of coming ages will investigate, interpret and resurrect by methods and manners which we do not suspect and with a serenity, freedom and boldness of spirit which will be far above ours. Probably they will succeed in finding an explanation even for that strange year and will give it its true place in the history of the world and the development of humanity. (*The Bridge*, p. 401)

Poets and scientists will work on the past. They will do some research, interpret the found data, reconstruct the history with their methods and analyses. And in the end, they will offer some explanations for those past events and will place them in the history of the world. And yet it seems that in the records of these poets and scientists, something will be missing; something of the experience and the life of the people who went through all those historicities. Referring to Barbara Foley's notion of documentary novel, Hutcheon (2004) notes that postmodernist fiction does not "aspire to tell the truth" (Foley, 1986, p. 26) but rather is interested in different versions of truth, of whose association with empirical validation is questioned since:

> How can a historian (or a novelist) check any historical account against past empirical reality in order to test its validity? [...] What postmodern discourses— fictive and historiographic— ask is: how do we know and come to terms with such a complex "thing"? (Hutcheon, 2004, p. 123)

Literature and history are just two constituents of this hugely complicated organism. When we say organism, we hope there would be no mistake in the analogy as we think that we discuss a living entity (culture, history, language, literature) still in the making. And perhaps the hardship to resolve such a complexity may be arising from that. In this respect, historiographic metafiction offers a convenient theoretical area to problematise both literary and historical studies considering their established or labelled statuses. And it is quite valuable regarding that it simultaneously deconstructs the binaries (fiction/fact, mythical/empirical, subjective/objective, literature/history), posits questions and constructs new dialogues between them. And perhaps the value of *The Bridge on the Drina* lies more than anything in this dialogue created between literature and history as interrelated sources making sense of the world.

Conclusion

It is seen that the prevalent intellectual atmosphere particularly in the 1960s and 1970s renders it possible to question the accepted grounds of grand narratives. As one of them, the traditional notion of history as a continuing development and as a scientific discipline gets problematised since its textuality, referentiality, objectivity, transparency, signifying and discursive nature are all found to be disputable. This echoing in literary studies, the autonomy of literature gets also complicated since it is shown that a literary

text bears indispensable historical and cultural bonds and that is why, it cannot be positioned within the boundaries of fictive elements. In other words, it cannot be considered solely as a fictitious product of an imaginary world.

Throughout the study, it has been discussed that as a notion of postmodernist problematisation, historiographic metafiction concerns itself with novels which are both self-reflexive and also give place to historical events and personages. In this respect, since for Ivo Andrić, history does not come to mean the historical events with all its properly defined and named periods but rather represents the flow of time and perhaps more broadly the existence, it becomes a pertinent canvas upon which he portrays the human condition. In this sense, as a chronicle, *The Bridge on the Drina* cannot be regarded as a traditional historical novel since it neither brings the historical events or the personages to the forefront nor struggles to efface the line between fact and fiction to hide the textuality of historiography and yet can conveniently be regarded as a historical novel that aims to present the passing of time and the indestructibility of mankind like the Bridge over the Drina River. Creating a balance between historical realities and fictive individualities/experiences, it shows that literary works cannot be regarded mainly as products of a writer's imagination and that history's claim to truth needs to be questioned since they should be seen as the constituents of a complex system embodying discourse, textuality, referentiality, intertextuality, perception, mindset, and ideology. In this respect, it is discussed that *The Bridge on the Drina* is a major contribution to the studies of literature and history. With its metafictional and historical elements, it further effaces the line separating these two disciplines and offers the idea that they are cultural, social and historical constructs.

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