

A Serbian epic as a call to exterminate the “Race Betrayers”: *The Mountain Wreath* by Petar Petrovic Njegos

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Abstract

The world history witnessed a really dramatic civil war in 1990s in the Balkans. Peoples that lived together for hundreds of years experienced the most violent results of nationalist ideology with the demise of Yugoslavia. Serbs are one of the nations that involved in this civil war and in this period, their conflicts with especially Bosnian Muslims and Croats provided that the term “Serbian nationalism” is heard a lot in the world. Similarly with many other nations in history, the emergence and development of the idea of nationalism for Serbs started in 19th century. Serbs, who lived under the rule of empires, especially the Ottoman Empire, carried out the first rebellion against the Ottomans in 1804 and in this period, Serbian intellectuals were also attempting to create a national consciousness at the same time. These attempts to create a national language and literature would help this consciousness to improve and they would show their effect in that time and in the following century, as well. Even in the fall of Yugoslavia, the effect of this national mythology developed as a result of these efforts is seen clearly. One of the most important of these works written in 19th century is the poetic drama of Petar Petrovic Njegos. When the subject-matter of the work is analyzed, it is seen that the most common myth of Serbian nationalism, the Kosovo Battle, and the enmity against the ones told to have betrayed the Slavic race by converting to Islam are strongly emphasized. The work with this feature forms the basis of Serbian religious-nationalist literature and it would show its influence continuously in future times in the following works within this literary tradition.

Keywords: Nationalism, Serbian literature, Petar Petrovic Njegos, *The Mountain Wreath*.

Slav ırkına ihanet edenleri ortadan kaldırmaya çağıran bir Sırp destanı: Petar Petrovic Njegos'un "The Mountain Wreath" adlı eseri

Özet

Dünya tarihi, 1990'lı yıllarda Balkan topraklarında oldukça dramatik bir iç savaşa şahitlik etmiştir. Yüzyıllar boyunca bir arada yaşamış milletler, Yugoslavya'nın dağılmasıyla milliyetçi ideolojinin en şiddetli sonuçlarını yaşamıştır. Bu savaşın içinde yer alan milletlerin bir tanesi Sırlardır ve bu dönemde özellikle Bosnalı Müslümanlar ve Hırvatlarla yaptıkları savaş, dünyada “Sırp Milliyetçiliği” ifadesinin de çokça duyulmasını sağlamıştır. Tarihte birçok başka ulusta da olduğu gibi, Sırlarda da milliyetçilik fikrinin ortaya çıkması ve gelişimi 19. yüzyılda başlamıştır. Yüzyıllar boyunca imparatorlukların, özellikle Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun yönetiminde hayatlarını sürdürmüş olan Sırlar, 1804 yılında Osmanlı'ya karşı ilk ayaklanmayı yapmıştır ve bu dönemde, Sırp aydınları da bir ulus farkındalığı yaratmaya uğraşmaktadır. Ulusal bir dil ve edebiyat yaratma çabaları, bu bilincin gelişmesini sağlayacaktır ve bu çabalar etkisini yalnızca o dönemde değil, ileriki yüzyılda da

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gösterecektir. Hatta Yugoslavya'nın dağılmasında da bu çabalar sayesinde gelişen ulusal mitolojinin etkisi açıkça görülmektedir. 19. yüzyılda üretilen bu eserlerin başında Petar Petrovic Njegos'un şiirsel drama türünde yazılmış "The Mountain Wreath" adlı eseri en önemlilerinden biridir ve eserin konusu incelendiğinde, Sırp milliyetçiliğinin en temel miti olan Kosova Savaşı ve din değiştirerek Slav ırkına ihanet ettikleri söylenenlere karşı düşmanlığın açıkça vurgulandığı görülecektir. Eser, bu özelliğiyle Sırp dini-milliyetçi edebiyatın temelini oluşturur ve bu edebi geleneği devam ettiren eserlerde etkisini ileriki dönemlerde sürekli gösterecektir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Milliyetçilik, Sırp edebiyatı, Petar Petrovic Njegos, *The Mountain Wreath*.

Introduction

Vuk Karadzic is known as the father of Serbian language and literature because of his attempts to create a Serbian literary language and collect Serbian folk songs. These attempts make him a crucial figure in Serbian history who made great contribution in creating a Serbian national awareness. With his efforts, the memory of the Serbian people was transferred into the future and a structure for the new works of Serbian literary canon was generated. After the works of Karadzic that form a basis for a national literature in 19th century, other writers used the oral folk tradition as a source of inspiration and created their own works using the theme of Serbs' national struggle. In this way, they nourished the national awareness. One of the most significant authors that should be mentioned in this context is the Montenegrin bishop and author Petar Petrovic Njegos whose ideas and work inspired Serbian nationalism not only in his age but in the periods of two Yugoslav states. As stated by Alexander Greenawalt, in the project to complete what Vuk started doing, a generation of nationalistic writers such as Petar Petrovic Njegos created their deeply nationalistic works because they aimed to form a new, clean nationalist memory (Greenawalt, 1994). Likewise, in order to indicate the significance of Njegos' work for the representation of nationalism in a literary work, Albert B. Lord claims that "one must turn to Njegos for patriotic heroic nationalist epics and a more extreme phase of nationalism" (Lord, 1963). The text portrays a society in a mountainous place in Montenegro where Orthodox Christians and Muslims of Slavic race live very close to each other and the reader encounters that the communication among these people is shaped by violent conflicts. The narrative ends with the extermination of the converted Muslims, which is emphasized throughout the text as an obligation for the sake of Serbian identity. So, it can easily be read as a work with ultra-nationalistic references which also in real life had influence on the nationalistic ideologies of Serbian people.

The Mountain Wreath as a deeply nationalistic work in Serbian literary canon

Petar Petrovic Njegos was a poet, a bishop, and a ruler in Montenegro. The area he lived was a mountainous place that could stay independent from the Ottoman rule because of the harsh natural conditions. Nevertheless, obviously it could not get rid of the destabilizing effect of Ottoman incursions. So, the struggle with the Ottomans shaped his life and his writing. According to Greenawalt, in his work this exhibited "a need to order the universe according to tight systems of combating polarities: light and darkness, good and evil, Serb and Muslim" (Greenawalt, 1994). His tutor Sima Milutinovic Sarajlija, a friend of Karadzic and a key figure of Serb Romanticism, introduced European writers such as Dante, Goethe, Milton, and Schiller to young Njegos and encouraged him to compose his own verse.

The Mountain Wreath, Njegos's *magnum opus* written in the form of a poetic drama, is known among the most celebrated works of South-Slavic literature and literary canon. The work is composed in the

style and meter of Serbian oral epic tradition. The main character of the epic is Bishop Danilo, but the reader also encounters other characters and *the kolo*, the voice of collective thoughts of the Serbian people. The epic is set in the eighteenth century and is based on a historical event known as the “extermination of the Turkish converts”, so it has always been regarded together with the myth of Kosovo Battle. In fact, as Greenawalt states, “(it) elevated Kosovo to a whole new level, revealing its most horrific potential” (Greenawalt,1994). The narrative constantly makes reference to Kosovo War and glorifies the hero of the battle, Milos Obilic who is the murderer of the Ottoman Sultan Murad in Serbian mythology. The work was among the most celebrated works in 19th century, the age of nationalism when Serbian people, like many other nationalities in the world, were attempting to establish their own nation state dreaming about a “Greater Serbia”. Likewise, during the two Yugoslav constitutions, the work had a significant place in South Slavic literary tradition. Thus, it is obviously perplexing how such a work with explicit references to Serbian nationalism and the extermination of a people that has a high number of population in the country could be a very celebrated work in both first and second Yugoslav states. It is clear that it has an ultra-nationalist discourse which claims the need to kill the converted Muslims to maintain order in the country. This could be viewed as a prototype of the discourse of politicians in the breakup of Yugoslavia claiming the need to violence.

As pointed out above, the work has the form of a poetic drama and one of the voices in the narrative is *the kolo* constituted by people dancing together and expressing the thoughts of the whole community. Throughout the text, the reader encounters significant events and the deeds of ancestors in the history of the nation via the speeches of the kolo. Among the historical acts of national heroes the kolo sings in the play, the Kosovo Battle, as might be accepted, has a very crucial place. Indeed, it is the milestone in the development of Serbian national, religious, and cultural identity and shape the collective memory of the Serbian and Montenegrin people. After the first time the kolo sings about the Kosovo Battle, it also narrates the story of Ivan Beg all of whose possessions were taken and whose family was murdered by the Turks. Following this part, the text portrays the curses to converts, the siege Novi Grad by Topal Pasha, and the rejoicing of people after the extermination of the Turks. As the stories the kolo sings also indicate, *The Mountain Wreath* is an ultra-nationalist text with plentiful details of violence between Montenegrins and Turks. It depicts the life of Orthodox Christians and converted Muslims living in Montenegro around eighteenth century. As far as this is exhibited in the text, they live in a continuous warfare. It is not possible for them to live together peacefully, and there is no way other than exterminating the other for salvation. All the images the text offer remind the reader the “ancient antagonisms” discourse that spread the entire Balkan region especially after the Balkan Wars and World Wars.

What the Montenegrin characters, especially the leaders search throughout the play is the “unity” of their people because they think that the lack of unity is the cause of all misery that Serbian people experience. In fact, the kolo indicates in the very beginning parts of the drama that “God is angry with Serbian people” (Njegos, 1847:8). because they had many sins. Instead of being in unity, they fought each other, they “sowed the seed of disharmony”, and they became traitors of the nation. So, here the hero of the Kosovo Battle Milos Obilic who killed Sultan Murad is memorialized. Obilic is compared with other leaders who are indicated as the sources of the great sins which destroyed the great Serbian state:

O that accursed supper of Kosovo!
 It would have been better had you poisoned
 all our chieftains and wiped out their traces,
 and left Milos standing there on the field,

along with both of his true sworn brothers;
then would the Serb have remained a true Serb! (Njegos,1847)

Disunity is implied as a sin in the text, because it caused the breakup of the nation in Kosovo. If it could be regained, according to the main character in the text, (one) would feel as if he had the Tsar Lazar's crown and Milos Obilic returned to the Serbs (Njegos, 1847). How the heroes of the Kosovo Battle fall into the memory of the characters in this text seems crucial because it can be claimed that the characters remember the Kosovo Battle in every feeling. They try to describe every emotion, every occurrence in terms of a hero or a memory from the war, and all their identity is shaped according to that past event. Assuredly, Njegos' text is fictional, but it also gives an idea about the collective memory of people which is filled with the deeds of those heroes. A quotation from an anonymous person from the time of the second Balkan War in an article titled "National Memory and Narrative Memory: The Case of Kosovo" makes it clear that the memory related to Kosovo War has also a factual side. Most probably, in this case, as history and myth do, fictional and factual coexist and nourish each other:

Each of us has created for himself a picture of Kosovo while we were still in the cradle. Our mothers lulled us to sleep with the songs of Kosovo, and in our schools our teachers never ceased in their stories of Lazar and Milos...

The single sound of that word- Kosovo- caused an indescribable excitement. This one word pointed to the black past- five centuries. In it exist the whole of our sad past-the tragedy of Pince Lazar and the entire Serbian people. (Bakic-Hayden, 2004)

Bishop Danilo is probably the most unconventional character in the text regarding his attitude towards life. He always seems more thoughtful, indecisive, and pessimistic than the others. He cannot spring into action very easily because he wants to consider all the sides of an occasion. In this regard, he appears to be a Hamlet-like figure. He is the political and religious leader of the people and what he thinks is that the unity of people is lost, so the debate of the problem of unity is pursued by the author through this character. However, dissimilarly with other people in the play, what he means with "the unity of the people", it seems, includes Slavic Muslims who are referred to as Turks in the text. In the very beginning of the play, Danilo has sad feelings and it makes him thoughtful and unable to act whereas he is expected to decide as the leader of the community and start the extermination of the Turks. This is not very easy for Danilo because he still thinks those Muslims are their Slavic brothers, and killing them would bring about a worst division instead of unity:

Some things I see more clearly than you do. -
That is either for the good or the bad.
I fear them not, this brood of the devil,
may they be as many as forest leaves,
but I do fear the evil at our home.
Some wild kinsmen of ours have turned Turkish.
If we should strike at our domestic Turks,
their Serbian kin would never desert them.
Our land would be divided into tribes,
and tribes would start a bitter, bloody feud.
Satan would come to the demon's wedding,
and thus snuff out the Serb slava's candle. (Njegos, 1847)

What is found as a solution for disunity in the drama is to call the Turkish chieftains and persuade them to turn back to their ancestors' religion. One of the Turkish chieftains declares that they think they were called for the meeting for a peace since they are blood brothers. They suggest making peace and leaving the guns (Njegos,1847). For Turks it is acceptable to live together in peace. However, this is something Montenegrins can never accept. For the Christians, there is no way of peace if the Muslims do not convert to Christianity, because race betrayal, according to the Montenegrins, is the cause of their misery now. Those Muslims did not only change their religion, they are also 'Turkifiers' who chose the ethnic identity of the "colonizer" Ottomans and spoiled the purity of the Slavic race as they became Muslim. There is no other way than extermination of the other for salvation if they do not convert to Orthodox Christianity. However, their assembly to convert the Turks turns out to be an argument, which is portrayed in Voivode Batric's speech:

Turkish brothers - may I be forgiven! -
 we have no cause to beat around the bush.
 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 (Njegos,1847)

As the reader would find out, the speech does not result in the conversion of Muslims, the argument between two religions deepens as the conversation continues, and there remains no chance for reconciliation. This time, the Turkish chieftains start talking about the meaninglessness of symbols and beliefs of Slavic Christians:

You fight against both God and the people.
 You live without hope and die without it.
 You serve the Cross, want to be like Milos!
 "The Cross" - indeed an empty, lifeless word.
 Milos throws you into a strange stupor
 or leads you to excessive drunkenness.
 Bowing one day to Mecca is better
 than four years spent making Christian crosses. (Njegos, 1847)

This is not the only time in the text Montenegrins and Turks find themselves in a debate. In fact, as far as the play exhibits, all these people live in an ongoing conflict. In nearly all scenes, the reader encounters a bloody fight happening between Montenegrins and Turks. For example, when they try to come to the first meeting of the Montegrin chieftains, the Ozrinics arrive late, and when they come, it becomes clear that there was a battle with Turks while waiting for the caravan from Niksic (Njegos,1847). Moreover, one other tribe comes to the same meeting late, and what the others think immediately is they must have met some trouble again with Turks. When they arrive, the reader learns from Tomas

Matinovic that they were late since one of their women was captured by Turks. They narrate the event as they were dancing the kolo and suddenly heard a shot and a man shouting. They thought the man is drunk and singing. But the noises of shots and the same man shouting did not stop, which indicated a trouble this time. When they got there, they saw that Mujo Alic who is the Turkish chief of guards ran away with Kasan's wife Ruza. How the story ends is they go to Simunja, where the Turks live, and they kill both Alic brothers and Kasan's wife Ruza because they indicate that with the affair they have besmirched their honor and lost their grace with the Almighty God (Njegos,1847).

Because of all these conflicts and bloody encounters, it is not conceivable to trust each other and the characters never do it. It is crucial in the text that Bishop Danilo does not want to kill the Slavic Muslims as he believes they are blood brothers. He is portrayed as the most thoughtful and indecisive character in the drama, but even he does not show a sign of trust against the Turks. This is very clear in his letter to the vizier. As he is the political leader of the community, the vizier sends him a letter stating the Christian *raya* is like other people in the Empire and if they come to him under his tent, there they can live as before. This is a call for peace under the authority of the vizier, but the Bishop's letter eloquently illustrates his rejection and his distrust against Turks:

Do not prepare for guests from the mountain!
I am sure they have no other thoughts now
than to sharpen their teeth for their neighbours
and to guard their flocks against predators.
The entrance to a beehive is narrow. (Njegos,1847)

There is only one affair in the entire book where a Montenegrin person trusts the Turks and it follows one of the most dramatic scenes of the text. This is the lamentation of the sister of Batric who sings a lament and kills herself too after his brother is murdered by Turks. In the whole scene and in her lamentation, the impossibility of the feeling of trust against Turks is clearly depicted. If somebody makes this mistake, the result becomes as violent as the lament of Batric's sister illustrates:

Didn't you know the faithless Turks?
May God curse them!
Didn't you know they'd deceive you,
O lovely head?
(...)
Why didn't you guard your handsome head,
humanvila?
Why did you make the foe happy,
brotherly pride?
They cut you down on word of honour,
sneaky heathens!
(...)
If you had died in bitter fight,
O warrior,
where young Serbian lads are vying,
O young lad,

to take their toll of arms and men
 our wounds would heal.
 But you trusted the faithless foe,
 O faithful head!
 (...)
 Woe to us all!
 Our whole land has turned to Islam.
 God's curse on it!
 May the leaders turn into stones,
 and their homes die! (Njegos,1847)

In addition to untrustworthiness, the description and representation of Turks in the text include many negative personality traits. The portrayal of those converted Muslims is always conveyed by establishing a connection with the creatures that are traditionally associated with evil. Sometimes they are depicted as a snake, sometimes a liar, or the devil. In the text, as the nationalistic discourse of later times would also adopt and always revisit as the key theme of Christo-Slavism, those who became Muslims and caused the Slavic race to lose its purity are represented with depictions of weakness and cowardice since they are thought to have changed their religion because of their faint-heartedness. So the kolo curses them with one of the most vindictive statements of the text: “may their Serb milk make them all sick with plague” (Njegos, 1847). On the other hand, the ones who protected their faith ran away to the mountains and then, as brave heroes, started to fight the Turks. Also, Turks are represented as the worst enemies of the Slavic people because they betrayed their race. So, adjectives such as “loathsome degenerates”, “rash”, “greedy”, “infidel”, “turncoat” etc. are used in order to describe them. Even the smell of the Turks is described very badly. As narrated in a conversation between Knez Janko and Knez Rogan, Knez Janko indicates that a very bad stench was coming from Turks, and as a response the other Knez approves it adding that when he sat near them in the assemble, he always hold his nose with both hands and for a conclusion he declares “You see how far away from them we are” (Njegos, 1847).

The similar descriptions are used also for people who have a contact with Turks, because they must not need “the company of Turks”. According to the characters, being peaceful is not something expected. So, the expressions “table-licking dogs”, and “the plate lickers” are among the ones used for people who have a relationship with Turks in daily life. One of the events narrated in the text is a Turkish wedding, where Turkish and Montenegrin wedding guests attend. As might be expected, the other characters who see the Montenegrins as wedding guests do not welcome them with nice words. Most probably, the most furious expression for these wedding guests is uttered by Vuk Micunovic:

Shameless, brazen, and stinking-dirty whores!
 Those plate-lickers, bringing us dishonour!
 They know of no dignity of heroes,
 else they wouldn't drag themselves after the Turks.
 They're more hateful to me than are the Turks,
 though I don't care for either of the two.
 In vain do they challenge and spite the Turks,
 for they do lick their plates like whelping dogs. (Njegos, 1847)

It is unlikely that any reader may escape noticing the way Serbian national identity, like most other nationalisms also do, is constructed and defined according to the relationship of enmity with the “other” who are Turks in this narrative. Also, “strong ties” with Orthodox Christianity is another key element of Serbian nationalism. According to historians of the Balkans, the consequential place of religion in the development of not only in the Serbian nationalism, but in other nationalisms in the Balkans is the result of the Ottoman *millet* system they were ruled under for hundreds of years. Kemal Karpat, a historian from the Balkan region, states that the development of ethnic-political identity was not significant during the Ottoman period. In fact, until the nineteenth century when they lost their lands in the Balkans, ethnic sentiments did not exist in the Ottoman Empire. Strikingly, in Ottoman Empire, nationalism started in Salonica as a reaction to Balkan nationalism. Before the nineteenth century, “the growth of religious identity” and “loyalty to belief and its representatives” were encouraged instead (Karpat, 2015). That’s why the continuity depending on not ethnicity but religion from the Middle Ages reaching out to nineteenth century nationalistic movements became possible for Balkan communities.

This critical role of religion and the Orthodox Church with its representatives is also witnessed in *The Mountain Wreath*. Actually, nearly every line of the drama portrays the significance of a political identity shaped by religious belief. However, the two scenes where the characters talk about their dreams seem devastating. The dreams of all the characters are related to religion and religious-national figures. To give an example, Sırdar Janko dreams that Bogdan gets married to “a nice Turkish girl”, they baptize her in the church in their own faith and they marry the Serbian and Turkish couple (Njegos, 1847). What Obrad sees in his dream is a large crowd of people getting together. They bear crosses in a church procession. In the end of the dream people climb onto the church altar after putting ladders against the church wall. Finally, upon the altar they place a golden cross (Njegos, 1847). In the second scene when they tell about their dreams, the Christmas Eve comes and the Montenegrins get prepared to kill the local Turks. While going to the church together, they tell about their dreams. What is interesting here is that their dreams are totally identical:

I had a dream I've never had before
 (a good omen it must be for my arms):
 Last night in dream I saw Obilic' fly
 over the plain Field of Cetinje there,
 on a white steed as if on a vila.
 Oh my dear God, how resplendent he was! (Njegos, 1847)

Abbot Stefan is the blind character representing wisdom in the text. It is narrated that he has been to most places of the world and he is the spiritual leader of the community. He indicates that he is there among these people “to rekindle the holy fire upon their altar, on the altar of their church and honor” (Njegos, 1847). In the end of the play, the reader witnesses that Abbot Stefan is very joyful although he has a letter from a messenger about the events in Crmnica where six people from their community are killed and buried in one single grave. In this time his happiness is really strange, but the source of this feeling is what the text refers from the very beginning: the extermination of the Turks has started. This is learnt by Abbot Stefan and Bishop Danilo on the Christmas Day. In Cetinje on the Christmas Eve Voivode Batric tells they had a fight with Turks. What they attempt to do is again their most basic goal, the conversion of Turks into their original faith:

We put under our sharp sabres all those
 who did not want to be baptized by us.

But all those who bowed to the Holy Child
and crossed themselves with the sign of Christian cross,
we accepted and hailed as our brothers.
We set on fire all the Turkish houses,
that there might be not a single trace left
of our faithless domestic enemy. (Njegos, 1847)

After the extermination starts on the Christmas Eve in Cetinje, the other chieftains are inspired by it and the fight spreads other places such as Rijeka and Crmnica on Christmas Day and New Year’s Day. The drama ends with these scenes of extermination and the joy they create for the Serbs. The very last conversation of the play is between Bishop Danilo and Vuk Mandusic. This conversation and how the play ends is also significant for making an evaluation about Serbian ethno-religious identity. First, the portrayal of Vuk Mandusic’s sadness about losing his beloved *dzeferdar* is noteworthy. It is narrated that he mourns for it as he would for his only son or his own arm. This may indicate a lot considering the modernization process of Serbia. Since the first Karadjordje uprising, Serbian people experienced many wars against various powers, so their modernization process created a militaristic society where there has always been a firm connection between the government and the army, which is also apparent from the military coups in Serbian history. Thus, the love of Vuk Mandusic for his weapon becomes more significant regarding the militaristic character of Serbian society. Besides, the change in the manner of Danilo throughout the play and his determination in the end is also meaningful. In the beginning, he was a thoughtful and pessimistic character and indeterminate about killing Slavic Muslims. Nevertheless, as narrative reaches to a conclusion, his skepticism melts away and he feels the same joy as the other characters. In the end of the text, he gives a new weapon to Vuk Mandusic and in this way participates in the extermination actively, which is expected from him throughout the text. According to Branimir Anzulovic, this concluding scene is significant for the interpretation of the narrative regarding Serbian nationalism because it “conveys the message that the task, which has not been completed, must be carried on, and the abrupt end of the poem reinforces the impression that it is not the true end, and that the extermination of infidels must be pursued to the end” (Anzulovic, 1999:54).

Conclusion

The Mountain Wreath as a literary work starts with the dedication “To the Ashes of the Father of Serbia.” Here, the author makes a reference to the leader of the first Serbian Uprising, Karadjordjevic. In fact, Njegos was born in where this first uprising started and he worked for Karadjordjevic, as well. After the uprising was repressed, Njegos went to Vienna and the book was written there. Such a text with overt intolerance and ultra-nationalistic attitude may of course be common in history within the framework of expansionist politics of nation-states, like the most nation-states in the Balkans in nineteenth century. Nonetheless, it becomes more difficult to understand seeing Njegos’ work as a key element of Yugoslav literary canon praised by both other writers and the government. It seems that this creates a contradiction for a state based on “brotherhood and unity” of various peoples including Slavic Muslims. As stated by Wachtel, “although the Yugoslav state generally stayed out of the cultural sphere, the canonization of Njegos as national artist was carried out with enthusiastic government support” (Wachtel, 1998:105). This is clear in the three-day ceremony in 1925 carried out with the attendance of King Aleksander where the author’s remains was transferred from Cetinje to Mount Lovcen. There, by the king, Njegos was called as “the immortal apostle and herald of the unity” of Yugoslav people

(Wachtel, 1998: 105). Besides, in the period of the Communist Yugoslavia, the celebration in 1947 for the one hundredth anniversary of the publication of *The Mountain Wreath* was remarkable:

The June 7 anniversary was celebrated nationwide (the front page of the Croatian newspaper Vjesnik on June 9, 1947, for example, displays a portrait of Njegos with the headline "The celebration of the hundredth anniversary of 'The Mountain Wreath' is a holiday for all the nations of Yugoslavia"), and Njegos and *The Mountain Wreath* were transformed into precursors of the most up-to-date Communist thought. New editions of *The Mountain Wreath* were published in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, a new translation appeared in Slovenia, as did the first-ever Macedonian translation (25,000 copies were published in Montenegro alone so that 'practically every house in Montenegro will have it') (Wachtel, 1998:143)

According to Wachtel, the use of the same work in such dissimilar contexts became possible with a rereading of it in the framework of different conditions. For instance, what Titoist Yugoslavia deduced from the text was "a red *Mountain Wreath*" emphasizing the unity of all Yugoslav people. On the other hand, it may also show the Serbian hegemony that existed throughout both the first Yugoslav state and in the second Yugoslavia mostly after the 1960s when centralism was weakened and this led to the development of nationalist sentiments and separatist movements.

Milica Bakic-Hayden concludes his article "National Memory as Narrative Memory: The Case of Kosovo" indicating that Kosovo is not a negligible thing in the self-definition of cultural, religious, and national identity of Serbian people. She emphasizes that it is a narrative continuing to interact with reality in a unique way. Bakic-Hayden also questions the interaction between reality and metaphor considering the Kosovo myth and incidents of War in the end of the twentieth century in Kosovo (Bakic-Hayden, 2004:40). What we can add to this debate the relation between fictional or textual and literal because texts like Njegos' *Mountain Wreath* in fact illustrates a strong interaction between real and metaphorical.

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