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The Lamentations of Faithful Wives: Desdemona and Hasanaginica

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to present a comparative analysis of two prominent female characters from William Shakespeare's *Othello* and the Bosnian ballad of *Hasanaginica*. The paper is based on the theoretical overview of the ballad's development, through defining of the literary genre, and the arrival of the story into English. Also, the paper presents the comparison of the tragic fates of Desdemona and Hasanaginica as two literary personae who stem from different cultural backdrops, and who are subjugated within a world ruled by men. The paper concludes that Desdemona and Hasanaginica are connected by their respective tragic ends which are caused (in)directly by their husbands.

Key Words: Hasanaginica, Desdemona, folk ballad, tragedy.

I Introduction

When considering the cultural heritage of England on one side and Bosnia on the other, there are several writers and their works which come to mind immediately. For example, William Shakespeare and his magnum opus is one of the most famous writers in English

literature and it would be very difficult to understand English literature without the Bard's contribution. On the other side, the folk ballad of *Hasanaginica* may be one of the finest and most recognisable pieces of Bosnian oral literary past. Without a single name to substantiate the authorship of the ballad, the road of *Hasanaginica* from a minor culture and language onto the great linguistic and literary scene of Europe is a profoundly interesting story.

This paper is divided into three basic parts. The first chapter will explore the theoretical background of the story of Hasan-aga's wife. Primarily, the first part will describe the evolution and transformation of the folk ballad, by focusing on several crucial elements. The elements which will be considered are: the evolution of *Hasanaginica* from orature to literature, from Alberto Fortis, to Goethe, to Walter Scott and other translators, but also from the genre of a lyrical ballad to its dramatic adaptations. In other words, the first theoretical chapter will explore the notions of how *Hasanaginica* was written down, translated from one author to the other, and how it eventually came to the Anglophone language sphere and was translated by Sir Walter Scott in Great Britain. The second chapter of the paper will explore the well-known story of Desdemona and her tragic fate. This analytical chapter will focus on Desdemona's character, her portrayal in the Bard's opus, as well as on the idea of why Desdemona had to suffer at the hands of her husband. By exploring the idea of a hidden 'hubris', this paper will analyse the notion that Desdemona had to perish because she dared to disobey the standardised norms of the male-dominated Venetian society. Lastly, the third chapter will create a comparative analysis of Desdemona and *Hasanaginica*. By examining the term of 'shamefacedness' in Scott's translation, this paper will observe some of the reasons behind *Hasanaginica*'s tragic fate, her so-called shame/modesty and why *Hasanaginica* had to leave the castle once her husband proclaimed that she was no longer welcome in his home. Essentially, this segment of the paper will present the notions of a hidden 'shame' which actually lies in the heart of Hasan-aga himself. Ergo, the basic aim of this paper is to explore *Hasanaginica*'s tragic fortune, her own 'mistake in conduct', as well as to understand the overall Bosnian ballad in different ways, for one is never enough.

II *Hasanaginica* in English: A Theoretical Survey

The ballad of *Hasanaginica* is one of the most astonishing pieces of Bosnian oral literary tradition, which remains a prominent part of the Bosnian cultural heritage even within the course of the twenty-first century. Interestingly enough, the story of *Hasanaginica* has transcended the linguistic barriers of its origins by passing from a single language into another. Namely, the ballad of *Hasanaginica* was translated by several famous authors, thereby the ballad has found its place even within the English-speaking community. In order to better understand the very background of *Hasanaginica*, it is first important to understand the theoretical elements of the work.

Hasanaginica is classified as a 'folk' or 'traditional ballad', therefore, ballads can be examined as narrative species of folk songs which originate and are communicated orally. Abrams (1999), in his work *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, defines the ballad in the following:

A short definition of the popular ballad (known also as the folk ballad or traditional ballad) is that it is a song, transmitted orally, which tells a story. Ballads are thus the narrative species of folk songs, which originate, and are communicated orally, among illiterate or only partly literate people. In all probability the initial version of a ballad was composed by a single author, but he or she is unknown; and since each singer who learns and repeats an oral ballad is apt to introduce changes in both the text and the tune, it exists in many variant forms. (p. 18)

It is commonly believed that *Hasanaginica* originated between 1646 and 1649 from Imotski Kraj, which was at that period a part of the Bosnian Eyalet. Presumably, the ballad passed from one generation to another through the region of Imotski, first appearing in oral form ("Hasanaginica" in German language!, 2019). Through the endeavour of Alberto Fortis, the aforementioned folk ballad was not forgotten. Primarily, it was written down and translated by none other than Fortis, who was an Italian traveller, writer and ethnographer. Fortis, also dubbed *Hasanaginica* the "Morlachian ballad". The work was published in Venice in the book *Viaggio in Dalmazia*, translated as *The Way to Dalmatia*, in 1774. Additionally, the ballad of *Hasanaginica* has been translated by various famous authors, such as Goethe or Pushkin. Besides Fortis and his version, *Hasanaginica* was translated by Johann Wolfgang Goethe in

1775, Walter Scott in 1798, as well as by A. S. Pushkin in 1835, and Adam Mickiewicz in 1841 (“Hasanaginica” in German language!, 2019). It becomes apparent that the popularity of *Hasanaginica* gradually developed and that the same story grew out of its oral tradition into the written form. Moreover, the ballad also ventured into different languages, such as Italian, German and even English, emphasising the notion of how a folk story from Imotski could surpass even its own Balkan borders and appear in other versions and languages across the continent of Europe.

The tale of Hasanaginica, the wife of Hasan-aga, is a mournful story depicting the life and the sad fate of a woman who was soullessly driven away from her home, her husband and children. It is believed that the overall story occurred during the Cretan War, within a well-to-do family, from Imotski. It was sung by an anonymous author, conducting it in the Imotski dialect. Additionally, due to the sensual nature of the ballad, it is widely believed that the ballad was sung by a woman (Imotski and Hasanaginica, 2019). Furthermore, taking into account the popularity of *Hasanaginica*, different dramatic versions of the story have been adapted over the years. Some of the adaptations include: *Hasanaginica*, a three-act drama in 1909, Milan Ogrizović, *Hasanaginica* in 1911, Aleksa Šantić, *Hasanaginica* (Šefka Hasanova), a four-act drama in 1929, Vladislav Veselinović Tmuša, *Hasanaginica* in 1976, Ljubomir Simović, *Hasanaginica* in 1982, Alija Isaković, *Hasanaginica* in 1999, Nijaz Alispahić, *Hasanaginica* in 2010, Vahida Šeremet (Hasović, 2020, p. 9). The dramatic tension of the story, emotions, class issues, psychological issues, the state of patriarchy and its influence on women, drew the attention of many by opening great questions, thus making *Hasanaginica* an inspiration for new artistic adaptations, in this case several dramatic pieces (Hasović, 2020, p. 9). Ergo, *Hasanaginica* has not only surpassed various language and cultural borders from Bosnia and beyond, but the ballad has also transcended even the literary genres and was adapted from an oral lyrical form into theatrical pieces.

The basic storyline of the ballad is a simple one, however it is imbued with great emotion. Predominantly, in order to better grasp the full importance of the Bosnian ballad, one should, as Alija Isaković (1975) mentions, venture into the very birthplace of the ballad, to the borders of Imotski (p. 232). Hasanaginica’s husband, Hasan-aga, lies wounded after a battle and summons his spouse. However, Hasanaginica did not come to him, and being extremely angered by such a gesture, Hasan-aga

orders his wife to leave their home. Moreover, in his fury, Hasan-aga forbids his wife from taking their children with her. They are ordered to stay, but she must depart. Hasanaginica attempts to resolve the issue with her brother, who brings her the news of banishment, however her brother already wants her to marry another wealthy man. The ballad then shifts to Hasanaginica's wedding procession where she sees her children. The children are able to recognise Hasanaginica, but once the mother attempts to bid them farewell, she dies heartbroken.

The arrival of *Hasanaginica* into the Anglophone sphere is a particularly interesting element within the development history of this lyrical form. As previously mentioned, venturing from orature into literature by the endeavours of the Augustinian abbot Fortis, the ballad was retranslated into other European tongues. It is important to mention the period of Romanticism, due to the fact that: "This interest for one's native, as well as foreign literature, was typical for these times and finds its peak in the Romantic era" ("*Hasanaginica*" in German language!, 2019). After Fortis, as well as Goethe, Sir Walter Scott introduces *Hasanaginica* to the world of English. Namely, in Scott's translation, the ballad is dubbed as *The Lamentation of the Faithful Wife of Asan-aga: from the Morlachian Language*. To an extent, this type of a translation actually reveals certain portions of the emotional segment within the ballad. In other words, the basic content of the ballad is reflected in Sir Walter Scott's translation. What is even more interesting is the fact that after Scott's translation in 1798, the ballad was printed in 1924, within the first half of the twentieth century. Scott's original manuscript was published 126 years after the initial translation. It appeared in 1871, at the Edinburgh exhibition, one hundred years after Scott's birth, and it was registered within the catalogue of the exhibition, yet with a notice that the translation dates back to the 1798 (Isaković, 1975, p. 251). *Hasanaginica* remains a prominent piece of artistic beauty which arrived to the British Isles and left its mark. By gradually venturing into the written form, then moving across the continent in various languages, as well as continuing in its path even after Walter Scott, the ballad has seen numerous textual translations and literary reiterations, albeit in different European societies. Evidently, the heritage of Bosnian literary tradition was noticed and appreciated even outside the Balkans, and it is no wonder that *Hasanaginica* could be compared and contrasted to some of the greatest works in literary history. In its thematic scope,

the story of *Hasanaginica* can be compared and analysed with William Shakespeare's tragedy of *Othello*, especially in regards to the character of Hasan-aga's wife and the Bard's Desdemona. The figure of Hasanaginica and Desdemona actually share more common traits and their fates are eventually marked by sheer tragedy, suffering greatly at the hands of their dominating husbands. Suffice it to say, the relatively smaller literary culture of Bosnia and Herzegovina will be contrasted to the much larger dramatic heritage of England and the British Isles.

III The Tragic Figure of Desdemona

Among numerous plays written by William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice* stands out as one of Shakespeare's greatest dramatic pieces ever created. In the story of passion, race, maliciousness, jealousy and murder, *Othello* still remains one of the most recognisable characters within the Bard's opus. However, the tale of *Othello* is a play which highly perpetuates the notion of a wronged woman. Desdemona is a character who perhaps suffers the greatest misfortune until the very end of the play, albeit she is not depicted as a character suffering from an overt kind of hubris and as someone who has to be punished for her wrong-doings. Rather, Desdemona is destroyed by the forces out of her control, and like Hasanaginica, she suffers greatly at her husband's hands, both literally and metaphorically.

By genre, *Othello* is one of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies and many characters therein personally weave the net of tragic events transpiring around them. Professor Harold Bloom (1998) lists several dramatic personae as the obvious examples of tragic figures: "The great victims: Juliet, Ophelia, Desdemona, Cordelia, and the near-victim yet troubled survivor Edgar" (p. 218). In the play, Desdemona is a young, beautiful and particularly naïve character. Regardless, she is deeply in love with her husband, and remains loyal to him, after the two characters elope. By eloping with Othello, Desdemona goes directly against her father's wishes. However, their love is thwarted by Iago who gradually fills Othello's susceptible mind with notions of Desdemona's (alleged) infidelity. Due to a simple rumour about his own wife's infidelity, Iago decides to punish Othello. The rumour has it that the Moor made a cuckold of Iago, therefore Iago decides to pass similar rumours about Desdemona, destroying a perfectly innocent character on his road to

vengeance: “Iago exerts an almost supernatural penchant for evil deeds, whereas the ability to use his voice allows this villain to perpetuate quarrels, intolerance and eventually the very murder committed by the Venetian Moor” (Kahrić, 2020, p. 20). Evidently, Othello’s love for Desdemona is genuine, however Iago cleverly manipulates the Moor, planting seeds of deception in his mind and by his narcissistic and psychopathic manner actually destroys other characters in the process, including Desdemona. Moreover, Shakespeare portrayed Desdemona as a well-meaning dramatic individual, yet it should be taken into consideration that Desdemona is not a very wise personality herself. She is not guilty of her alleged disloyalty, yet she does not do much in order to try and prevent the demise, remaining quite gullible and allowing Iago to manoeuvre his ploys.

Desdemona is clueless about why she is gradually losing Othello’s love, while on the other hand, Othello is not wise enough to see through Iago’s evil intent. Still, Desdemona has some inkling of why the relationship may be deteriorating. When she speaks to Emilia she says: “Believe me, I had rather have lost my purse / Full of crusadoes. And but my noble Moor / Is true of mind and made of no such baseness / As jealous creatures are, it were enough / To put him to ill thinking” (Shakespeare, 1603, 3.4.25-29). At certain moments in the play, Shakespeare allows the readers/spectators to notice how observant Desdemona may appear, but even this suspicion is not enough to save her from the impending doom. Desdemona is, hence, more than just a tragic Shakespearean character: she is literally a living scapegoat of Iago’s villainy: “Basically, Iago has made her lose control of her affairs turning her into a poor scapegoat. First, she lost her father when she left with the Moor, then Iago took away her loving husband without whose love and trust she has even lost herself” (Pratap, 2016). Desdemona may not be utterly foolish, as a dramatic character, however she is still frustratingly ignorant about various things happening around her.

She somewhat desperately believes that things will simply become well again, and that her relationship with Othello will be rekindled easily. Nonetheless, the readers or the audience still remain sympathetic towards Desdemona; the Bard brilliantly exemplifies how fictional individuals adore Desdemona. As a character, she radiates goodness. But even with such traits, she is still unable to convince Othello of her loyalty and dedication. Due to his erupting pride, the Moor is unwilling

to accept the factual state of things and great misconceptions are rendered in his mind, fuelled by the heavy persuasion from the devilish Iago. Thus Shakespeare presents a gloomy yet interesting picture to his dramatic persons. Even though Desdemona is innocent, Othello kills her. Her goodness makes her a vulnerable target and her gentle nature is to no avail in this situation. The cost of her goodness and her affection for the Moor was death, and Iago made her an indirect victim of the tragedy, but a victim nonetheless (Pratap, 2016). Moreover, Desdemona, although being a part of the tragedy, does not ‘encompass’ vividly any form of dramatic ‘hamartia’, yet she still ventures through the segment of dramatic pathos.

Namely, in drama, a character’s hamartia is described as: “his “error of judgment” or, as it is often though less literally translated, his tragic flaw. (One common form of hamartia in Greek tragedies was hubris, that “pride” or overweening self-confidence which leads a protagonist to disregard a divine warning or to violate an important moral law)” (Abrams, 1999, p. 322). Her biggest mistake, perhaps, could be her overall sincerity. Iago is eventually beaten, through the progression of the plot, while Desdemona lingers in her naivety and actually courts death in her sincerity: “Othello is consciously theatrical but quite humorless, and Desdemona is a miracle of sincerity” (Bloom, 1998, p. 446). It is plausible then to exemplify her own hamartia as the desire to live happily in a male-dominated society wherein characters such as Iago, or even Othello to an extent, make the decisions on who is to live and who is to perish. Suffice it to say, Desdemona’s hamartia in this context could be perceived as her degree of naivety, innocence and non-experience to fend for herself in a dangerous world.

In his own ilk of hubris, Othello is guided by manipulation, misinformation and ill-intent. Iago, in all of his psychopathic and anti-social demeanour, advises the Moor on how to commit the crime, and Iago says: “Do it not with poison. Strangle her in her bed, even the bed she hath contaminated” (Shakespeare, 1603, 4.1.228-229). The villain orders Othello to murder his wife with his own hands, emphasising the notion that Desdemona had polluted their marital bed with Cassio, fuelling the Moor’s rage further. As Kahrić (2020) explains: “He adds insult to injury by claiming that Othello should suffocate the beautiful Desdemona in the same bed which she had polluted by her infidelity. Iago’s instructions present a clear picture of a psychopathic figure, who is able to go

so far as to explain someone how to commit murder of the innocent young woman” (p. 25). Unable to reason with her husband, the killing of Desdemona brings the audience closer to the very climax of the play. Othello, being greatly misguided and gaslighted by Iago, and in his pain and misery, decides to follow Iago’s advice and smother Desdemona. By being unable to stand against Iago’s manipulation, Desdemona still remains true to her word. She explains to Othello, no matter how unsuccessfully: “And have you mercy, too. I never did / Offend you in my life, never loved Cassio / But with such general warranty of heaven / As I might love. I never gave him token” (Shakespeare, 1603, 5.2.73-76). The Bard of Avon seems to imply that women in the Renaissance era simply stand against various elements of the patriarchal society, and such elements are too powerful to overcome. By seemingly dishonouring Othello, Desdemona had to perish, and there was no power which could save her in such a male-dominated community. Shakespeare shows how women do not fit easily into the Renaissance categories of patriarchy. Female characters in Shakespearean dramas may appear at times nobler than men, more honourable in fact.

For Shakespeare, female characters are fully developed human individuals; they are changeable characters, albeit quite tragic in the end due to the very nature of the dramatic performance. In her ingénue-like personality, Desdemona may not be the most sympathetic of characters, still she is more sympathetic than the likes of Iago or even Othello. Being surrounded by predominantly male characters, Desdemona is constantly subdued by patriarchy. In the beginning, she flees her father’s care, marries a dark-skinned character and is eventually accused of adultery. For this reason, she is punished by men who surround her (Karim-Cooper, 2015). By refusing the rigidity of patriarchy, she is shamed by patriarchy. Iago defames her, and Desdemona becomes guilty without any substantial truth to Othello’s doubt. Rather, the circle of guilty and shamefulness is a long one. Iago pays back shame with shame, whereas Othello is quickly driven into the revolt. Othello brings moral fault on himself, by killing his beloved wife, but he also brings shame on Desdemona by false accusations (Fernie, 1999, p. 19). It is only after realising the error of his ways, and only after the dramatic denouement, that Othello truly becomes ashamed of his action. He attempts to kill Iago, but in the end he commits suicide. This idea of shame is an interesting notion, considering that Walter Scott’s translation of

Hasanaginica comes long after Shakespeare's dramatic contributions.

Undoubtedly, Scott must have been well-acquainted with the Bard's literary opus, since Shakespeare's great tragedies not only influenced English culture but the whole world, as such. In his translation of the Bosnian ballad, it becomes apparent to the English readers that the issue of shame is a prevailing one. The female shame, for that matter, is an important subject, which is dominated on various fronts. Through misconceptions, misinformation and misjudgement, Shakespeare's characters in *Othello* delve deeply into the dramatic pathos, whereby all of the previously-mentioned aspects revolve around the sensation guilt inflicted upon all, from Iago, to Othello, and finally Desdemona. For this reason, the story of *Hasanaginica*, arriving into English from a smaller culture when compared to the English nation, shares particular similarities with Shakespeare's own writings. Although *Hasanaginica*'s own shame/modesty cannot be defined straightforwardly as Desdemona's alleged adultery, it is still worth exploring the parallels between the two women who are deeply affected by their respective societal norms.

IV *Hasanaginica*'s Shame

As established in the first theoretical chapter of this paper, the fate of Hasan-aga's spouse is a tragic story, however the tale covers more elements than initially meets the eye. Firstly considering the overall character of *Hasanaginica* herself, one should analyse her own background. While not many historical aspects may be substantiated when *Hasanaginica* is concerned, there are several elements worth mentioning. The protagonist of the ballad is most presumably Fatima Arapović, the wife of Hasan-aga, and the mother of their five children. It is commonly accepted that the characters appearing in the ballad may be true, whereas the events described may be perceived as fictitious (Hasanović, 2018, p. 18).

The brother of Fatima Arapović is believed to have been the bey Pintorović, yet not many pieces of evidence exist to support any reasonable data which would provide a greater insight into the realm of Pintorović's history (Hasanović, 2018, p. 19). Obviously, *Hasanaginica* stems from a well-to-do family background, likewise being married into a wealthy family under the supervision of her husband Hasan-aga. The aspect of family backdrop is an interesting one. For example,

by examining Hasanaginica's own family history, we realise that she comes from a nobler background. Simultaneously, a connection with Desdemona can be established. In *Othello*, Desdemona elopes with the Moor, leaving her father behind. Her father is Brabantio, a Venetian senator, therefore it becomes apparent that Desdemona also stems from a nobler household of the Venetian society. The ballad of *Hasanaginica* begins with a well-known 'Slavic antithesis', even in Sir Walter Scott's English translation: "What yonder glimmers so white on the mountain / Glimmers so white where yon sycamores grow? / Is it wild swans around Vaga's fair fountain? / Or is it a wreath of the wintry snow?" (Isaković, 1975, p. 261). Firstly, the Slavic antithesis refers to the following formula: a particular question is asked, an enquiry is made. Next, an echoing suspense, in the negative, is formulated and offered. Afterwards, the real answer is provided to the readers (Wagner, 2008). In the original and in Scott's translation, we quickly realise the truth behind the opening lyrical scene. A brave warrior named Hasan-aga lies wounded in his tent. He is visited by his mother and sister, however there is still one very important female figure missing from this scene. Namely, his wife does not appear in the beginning of the folk ballad. Hasan-aga's frustration and hurt vividly grow once he realises his wife is not present and the tragic events gradually unfold thereafter.

The ballad continues: "Low lies the Chief on the couch of the wounded, / There watch his sisters with tenderest care. / There weeps his mother in sorrow unbounded / Every sad friend —tout his Lady—is there" (Isaković, 1975, p. 261). The 'Lady' in this case is Hasanaginica. His saddened followers arrive to show respect to Hasan-aga, but perhaps the most important woman does not venture into the wilderness to show respect towards her husband. The crucial question lies in Hasanaginica's decision. Or rather, the reason behind her absence should be explored further. Primarily, the motif of 'shame' should be taken into consideration. From Fortis, to Goethe and Scott, the term is reiterated in one way or another. In *Othello*, shame has been transmitted from one character to the other, rendering the tragedy which would perpetuate the dramatic piece. Iago feels ashamed and later schemes to bring shame on Othello, while in turn Othello unfairly shames Desdemona. The emotion tension grows and develops throughout the plot-line. Similarly enough, in Hasanaginica's case, this motif of shame remains a prevailing element: "In various Slavic renditions of the poem, the diagnostic reason for her

absence is given as *stid* (“*od stida ne mogla*”); it was shame that prevented her” (Wagner, 2008). In Isaković’s book (1975), Walter Scott’s translation also uses the lexeme of Hasanaginica’s emotion straightforwardly: “She sorrowed more than the fondest of mothers, / But from the thronged camp in which wounded he lay / Tho there flocked sad friends, tender sisters and brothers / Timid shamefacedness compelled her to stay” (p. 261). Herein, Scott uses the lexeme ‘shamefacedness’ in order to denote the aforementioned sensation. Hasanaginica is more sorrowful than all the people surrounding Hasan-aga’s tent, yet regardless of her emotional pain, she is still compelled to stay at home. Enraged by this disrespect, Hasan-aga orders his wife to leave their castle and demands for divorce: “But at her absence high kindling his anger / Wrote the stern chieftain this severing line / —»Away from my Castle, its mistress no longer, / Away from my children and all that is mine.« —” (Isaković, 1975, p. 262).

The rest of the story unfolds as mentioned in the theoretical chapter of the paper. The motif of ‘shamefacedness’ should be analysed more closely. To an average European reader enjoying the lyrical lines of *Hasanaginica*, the protagonist’s own flaw may be an unclear element of the ballad. The lexeme ‘shamefacedness’ may pose more questions than anticipated. The first possible interpretations of Hasanaginica’s shame can be observed in Goethe’s translation-cum-interpretation. Goethe calls Hasanaginica’s shame her modesty. During the period in which *Hasanaginica* is taking place, women were simply not supposed to enter male spaces. In this case, that male space was the war camp in the wilderness. Therefore, all too plausibly, Hasanaginica actually charts her destiny by resting her, primarily female, case in between two spheres – the sphere of modesty and the sphere of obedience (Wagner, 2008). In comparison to Desdemona, Hasanaginica is described as far more submissive. The Bard developed Desdemona into a character who may radiate goodness and naivety, but even Desdemona marries a black Moor and professes her love openly in a predominantly white society. She disobeys her father’s wishes and loses her stable family ground in order to live in affection with none other than the black Othello. Shakespeare obviously hints at some notions of Desdemona’s bravery to seek her fortune, although her worldviews differ from the standardised Venetian conventions. On the other hand, Hasanaginica knows her place and does not stray from her shame and/or modesty. By knowing her place, as a woman within a patriarchal construct, Hasanaginica does

the only thing possible: she stays at the castle and does not visit her husband. She acts out of convention. In patriarchal systems, to know the rules implies that one should live by the rules. However, this can be perceived as a formula for success or rather as a formula for demise. In other words, by following the tradition, Hasanaginica is still destined to perish and she does become a tragic figure in the end. However, by offering an alternative, a new question arises. It is important to notice what would have happened if Hasanaginica had truly gone to see her husband. By disregarding modesty, Hasanaginica would have witnessed a crumbled ego, a diminished set of manhood, a weakened family protector, an incapable lover, an ashamed man. In other words, it was Hasan-aga's shame that was portrayed. Hasanaginica could identify with this sense of shameful and decided to spare her husband. She opted for the preservation of her husband, and by not venturing into the wilderness, she attempted to preserve his manliness, the true sense of his manhood (Wagner, 2008).

In Scott's translation, two other women are present. Hasan-aga's mother and sister still arrive, whereas the feeling of shame and/or modesty is seemingly non-existent among other female characters. By not coming, Hasanaginica portrays her acute perception, while her husband quickly comprehends this fact. It was not that Hasanaginica did too little, but that she knew too much. In fact, Hasanaginica is dismissed due to her psychological acuity. She did not have to see Hasan-aga's shame to know it. Hasanaginica's own perception becomes a dangerous thing in a patriarchal code of conduct; the Aga is in full awareness that his wife knows the secret. He is weakened and in need of protection. He did not know, however, what his wife would have done with the secret. She might have raised the children more unpredictably. By dismissing Hasanaginica and by proclaiming her guilt, the secret of the male shame would not have been revealed to the children. The knowing mother departs henceforth, and the image of the father remains intact (Wagner, 2008). Desdemona was accused of infidelity and Othello killed her, while Hasanaginica was accused of disobedience, thus she had to leave their home forever, yet without the children. Finally, it is important to interpret Hasanaginica's act as an act of complete free will. By refusing to arrive to the camp, for one reason or another, the sorrowful wife exerts her own free will. A woman in a male-dominated world decides for herself, even though contextually her act can be seen

as transgression. One emotion makes room for another – namely, the sensation of shame brings forth fury in Hasan-aga. The fury places the tragedy in motion and the fury is perpetuated by an insulted husband, father and lover (Fazlić, 2020, p. 19). Naturally, various interpretations could be implemented in order to define Hasanaginica's own hamartia, or whether she suffered from some lesser form of hubris, like Desdemona. Additionally, various interpretations could be formulated in order to further explore Hasanaginica's true fault, and it would be unfair to offer only a single solution to the provided enquiry. The question of Hasanaginica's guilty, shame and/or modesty remains an important one, similarly to an open lotus flower, the analysis can be conducted in numerous directions.

Be that as it may, both female figures eventually perish, both within the dramatic opus and in the folk ballad. Their death, a necessary closure apparently, comes directly or indirectly at the actions and words of their husbands. The injustice imposed on Desdemona is a vivid one, while Othello realises his own faults only when it is too late to bring the blush back onto Desdemona's alabaster face. Hasanaginica may not be directly accused of adultery like Desdemona, but she is banished from her home for her patriarchal insubordination. In his whirlpool of miscommunication between Hasan-aga and Hasanaginica, she always remains the downtrodden character. By knowing her place and following the patriarchal code, she is dubbed disobedient, whereas if she goes against the grain of patriarchy, she will bring shame upon her wounded patriarch. In Scott's translation, the phrase 'faithful wife of Asan-aga' appears to denote Hasanaginica's true loyalty, and it could be likewise applied to Desdemona. This paper establishes that Hasanaginica remains far more faithful to her husband than can be detected at first glancing.

V Conclusion

The connection between the Bosnian ballad of Hasanaginica and Shakespeare's Desdemona is an intriguing one. For this reason, the main role of the paper was the portrayal of the similar tragic fates which the two heroines shared in their respective fictitious worlds. Primarily, the paper was divided into three basic sections or chapters. The first chapter introduced the story of Hasanaginica and her arrival into the

world of various European languages, especially English. Additionally, the first chapter introduced the two intertwined terms of transformation and evolution. *Hasanaginica* was described on the basis of its formal evolution and genre transformation, because through the endeavours of Fortis the story was written down and saved from oblivion, whereas through the dedicated works of Goethe, Scott, Pushkin and others, the ballad was transported from the Balkans into the farthest linguistic corners of Europe.

The subsequent two chapters presented a comparative-analytical approach. First the tragedy of Desdemona was examined, depicting the heroine as both a courageous and naïve character. Desdemona was killed for nought, or rather, Othello murdered his wife due to false accusations, however when delving deeper into the dramatic piece, it becomes apparent that Desdemona was essentially destroyed by patriarchy. By refusing the societal norms and eloping with a black Moor, Brabantio's daughter was punished. The paramount role of shame was explained, since Iago transmitted the feeling of shame onto Othello, who by accusing Desdemona, passed the same sensation onto her, albeit she was actually innocent. Similarly, *Hasanaginica* also presented the motif of 'shamefacedness', yet the question of shame was juxtaposed with modesty. Namely, this paper described several of the possible explanations why Hasanaginica refused to visit her husband, with the most intriguing one perhaps being that she quietly acknowledged Hasan-aga's own shame and downfall even before they met. In other words, the paper explored the idea of how Hasanaginica tried to preserve her husband's dignity after being wounded in battle by not showing up, whereas Hasan-aga decided to divorce her once he realised that Hasanaginica knew of his weakness. Since he did not want his wife to raise their children with an inkling that the father of the family was now a weakened protector, he ordered Hasanaginica to depart from their castle, until eventually she died of a broken heart. As established earlier, both women were victimised by the patriarchal society, directly or indirectly, because at the end they had to suffer at the whims of their husbands for their alleged 'transgressions' made in their conduct.

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Jadikovke vjernih žena: Dezdemona i Hasanaginica

Sažetak

Osnovni cilj rada je predstavljanje i komparativna analiza dva prominentna ženska lika iz drame Williama Shakespearea *Othello* i bosanskohercegovačke balade *Hasanaginica*. Rad se bazira na teorijskom pregledu razvoja balade o Hasanaginici, kroz definiciju književne vrste, te prijevode i sam dolazak priče o Hasanaginici u engleski jezik. Također, rad predstavlja usporedbu tragičnih sudbina Dezdemone i Hasanaginice kao dva književna lika koja potiču iz različitih kulturoloških okvira, te koja su potlačena u svijetu gdje vlada moć muškaraca. Rad se zaključuje uz ideju da Dezdemonu i Hasanagicu povezuje tragični kraj koji za oba književna lika na (ne)posredan način prouzrokuju vlastiti muževi.

Ključne riječi: Hasanaginica, Dezdemona, folk balada, tragedija.