

Reader as Critic: Ivo Andrić's *Bosnian Chronicle*

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Ivo Andrić, a Bosnian by birth and a Yugoslav by political orientation, remains an active presence on the cultural scene of the “post-Yugoslav” period. His works are read and discussed both abroad and in the states created after the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, and the interest in him does not show any signs of abatement. In a way, his works appear to be more relevant today than when they first appeared. This is certainly true of his doctoral dissertation,¹ his short stories that are set in Bosnia, and his two major novels, *The Bridge on the Drina* (*Na Drini ćuprija*, 1945, for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, and *Bosnian Chronicle* (*Travnička hronika*, 1945), which also appeared in English in different translations as *Bosnian Story* and *The Days of the Consuls*.

Since the 1990s, Andrić's works have been addressed in cultural conversation not only as literary works but also as topics. This paper will try to shed light on this cultural discussion, in which Ivo Andrić became both an agent and an object. Paying special attention to the ideological rhetoric, it will focus on recent discussions in and around *Bosnian Chronicle*, which certain critics, including myself, consider to be of no less artistic value than *The Bridge on the Drina*.

Ideologies, seen here as sets of beliefs and practices, take defining positions in any cultural conversation. Representing particular sociopolitical interests in a given historical context, these sets of beliefs take the form of strategic arguments in the cultural conversation. In the case of the above-mentioned works by Andrić, including *Bosnian Chronicle*, the ideological discussion centers on the author's attitude toward Bosnian Muslims. These are the people of Slavic and Christian origin whose conversion to Islam started at the beginning of the Ottoman occupation of Bosnia, in the fifteenth century, and continued all the way through the nineteenth century.

¹ Ivo Andrić, *The Development of Spiritual Life in Bosnia under the Influence of Turkish Rule*, trans. B. Juričić and John Loud (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991); comprises Andrić's Ph.D. dissertation (1924).

Andrić grew up in the town of Višegrad, which had an ethnically mixed population and was in that sense typical of the whole of Bosnia. This background provided the author with a variety of topics he exploited in his writing. In his works, Andrić wrote about four religious groups which coexisted in his native Bosnia: Catholic Croats, Sephardic Jews, Orthodox Serbs, and Bosnian Muslims.

The question of whether or not Andrić was sympathetic in his portrayal of any of these groups had not been openly discussed until quite recently. Discussing religion, ethnicity, or other matters which could point to various cultural differences between the Yugoslav peoples was out of the question during Tito's life. Anything that could have disturbed the precarious balance in this insecure region was censored. In addition, religion was suppressed and post-World War II identities in Yugoslavia were constructed largely without it. However, the events of the 1990s, when Yugoslavia started to fall apart, clearly pointed to those very differences; with that change, Andrić's portrayal of Bosnian Muslims became problematic for certain audiences.

This article will first examine the historical circumstances in which *Bosnian Chronicle*² was originally written and how it was received by readers and critics; it will then analyze the relationship between the past and present circumstances, which have brought about different readings of the novel.

The idea to write on the historical events that constitute the basis of *Bosnian Chronicle* must have occurred to Andrić in the 1920s. By that time, he was already an accomplished writer who had published poetry, essays, and a number of short stories that drew their inspiration from oral tradition and were all set in Ottoman Bosnia, such as "The Journey of Alija Đerzelez" (1920), "Mustafa the Hungarian" (1923), "Death in Sinan's Tekke" (1924), "The Pasha's Concubine" (1926), "The Bridge on the Žepa" (1926), and others.

In 1924, Andrić read a book by the historian Mihajlo Gavrilović entitled *Excerpts from the Archives of Paris (Ispisi iz pariskih arhiva)*,³ which contained reports written by Pierre David, Napoleon's consul to Bosnia from 1807 to 1814. That same year, the journal *Revue d'histoire diplomatique*⁴ published selections from Pierre David's diary. Andrić, who was collecting

² All citations are from Ivo Andrić, *Bosnian Chronicle*, trans. Joseph Hitrec (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1993).

³ Mihajlo Gavrilović, *Ispisi iz pariskih arhiva* in *Zbornik za istoriju, jezik i književnost srpskoga naroda* (Građa za istoriju prvoga srpskoga ustanka) (Belgrade: Serbian National Academy, 1904).

⁴ "Extraits du Journal de Pierre David, consul de France à Travnik (1807–1809)," in *Revue d'histoire diplomatique* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit et Cie, 1924); April 141–69; July 301–28.

material for his stories, must have found these texts interesting. During his busy diplomatic career, he sojourned in many European capitals and thus was able to use their libraries and archives. While in Paris in 1927, and in Vienna some ten years later, Andrić was in a position to read the original reports by both the French and the Austrian consuls to Travnik, as well as other documents pertaining to the Napoleonic period in Bosnia. He compiled a large dossier on the times of the consuls.

In 1938, Andrić was sent to a diplomatic post in Berlin. After the fall of Yugoslavia to Nazi Germany in 1941, the author decided to return to Belgrade. Like other citizens of Belgrade, he led a life filled with daily concerns and uncertainties. He rarely ventured out of his apartment. From there, he was able to see people hanged on the central city square of Terazije, and he lived in constant terror. For the first time in many years, Andrić had a lot of free time, allowing him to write continuously. By the time the country was liberated, he had three novels ready for publication, including *Bosnian Chronicle*.

It is impossible to say how Andrić would have used the material he had collected in the European archives if he had continued with his busy diplomatic career. All we know is that until 1941 his preferred medium was the short story. Celia Hawkesworth believes that without four war years of enforced isolation in Belgrade, the three novels would have never been written.⁵ *The Bridge on the Drina*, *Bosnian Chronicle*, and *The Woman from Sarajevo* (*Gospodica*) were all published in 1945 to great acclaim.

Andrić wrote *Bosnian Chronicle* first, finishing it in April 1942. Unlike *The Bridge on the Drina*, which takes a broad view of life in Ottoman Bosnia over several centuries, *Bosnian Chronicle* focuses on the period between 1807 and 1814 and is set in the town of Travnik, the seat of the Ottoman viziers in Bosnia.

The beginning of the nineteenth century was a historically tumultuous period. Napoleon was waging his wars while at the same time the huge Ottoman Empire was showing signs of decay. Great European powers had their eyes on the western Ottoman provinces. In Serbia, the Ottomans were trying to crush a rebellion led by Karađorđe Petrović.

During the time of the Napoleonic wars, Bosnia was still largely a feudal country. The four main religious groups, although living side by side, in essence existed separately from each other. For different reasons, they were all distrustful of any social and political changes—Bosnian Muslims in par-

⁵ Celia Hawkesworth, "Ivo Andrić (9 October 1892–13 March 1975)," in *South Slavic Writers Before WWII*, vol. 147, *Dictionary of Literary Biographies*, ed. Vasa D. Mihailovich (Detroit, MI: Gale Research Inc., 1995), 8.

ticular. They received the arrival of the French consul with open hostility and the arrival of the Austrian consul who followed soon after with apathy. With the arrival of foreign representatives, isolated Bosnian society was suddenly confronted with the contemporary European way of life.

Bosnian Chronicle emphasizes this encounter between the two mutually uncomprehending cultures of the East and the West. This clash was further accentuated by the existence of a third world which had been created in this buffer zone between the two civilizations and did not belong to either. While the European consuls experienced culture shock and grappled with their professional and existential problems in this isolated and hostile land, their Ottoman colleagues, the viziers themselves—usually sent to Bosnia by way of punishment—felt as if they were in exile. Both groups viewed their opponents, as well as the local population, as the Other.

These foreigners, the consuls and the viziers, are the protagonists of the novel. The town of Travnik, Bosnia and Bosnians are the background against which Andrić develops his story. Even though the novel is based on historical facts, many critics insist that history is of secondary importance for Andrić. His story is primarily a *human story* and is seen thus as timeless and universal.

Andrić's approach to history constitutes an essential element in understanding his works. This is important, in particular, when one considers what elements the author chose from the historical sources available to him and how he aesthetically shaped the chosen material. Many critics claim that history is of only secondary importance in Andrić's works. The author himself denied that both *The Bridge on the Drina* and *Bosnian Chronicle* are historical novels. By calling his first novel a "chronicle" Andrić further underscores this. Even though he constructed his works using verifiable historical sources, Andrić remained a story-teller who believed in a higher, more *truthful* history.

Just like some modern critics, Andrić maintained that all historical events have changeable and unstable historical meaning. What he believed was that historical events provoke human reactions. Thus, two parallel histories existed for Andrić: one external, directed by important events and great individuals, and another internal, which affected ordinary people. The latter one is more important to Andrić, and in that sense his attitude to history is largely ahistorical. When he presents historical background in his stories and novels, he does it not to "reveal" history, but to depict reactions of generations of people toward fundamental elements of life. According to Andrić, both historical and non-historical material shape the collective experience of a community.

Andrić believed that the tragic history of the South Slavs, the historical curse of the Balkans, began when the Ottoman Turks separated them from Christian Europe and exposed them to the process of de-culturalization, which

undermined their identity. Andrić saw this as cultural genocide, a wall erected between the Balkan Slavs and Western Europe, which many wars and rebellions since attempted to tear down.

One of the first reviews of *Bosnian Chronicle* appeared in the first issue of the journal *Naša književnost* in 1946. The reviewer, Milan Bogdanović, praised *Bosnian Chronicle* as a superb psychological novel, one of the best novels in all of Yugoslav literature. According to Bogdanović, the main protagonists of the novel, the Western consuls and Ottoman viziers, experience life in the backward and isolated province of the Empire in a similar fashion. Bogdanović sees Bosnia and Bosnians only as setting, a background against which the destinies of foreigners unfold: “All that is local acts only as a contrast, as an exotic framework. Travnik, Bosnia, the internal relations, the tragedy of division and bloodshed of the same people, that Balkan reality of ours, reverberating ominously in that place and at that time, is somehow insufficiently present if not entirely absent. There are only occasional hints, solely to enhance the atmosphere... The local environment is constructed as a vivid, finely nuanced antique frame.”⁶

Like *The Bridge on the Drina*, *Bosnian Chronicle* enjoyed great popularity both at home and abroad. Translated by Kenneth Johnston into English as *Bosnian Story*, it was published by Lincolns Prager in 1948 in London, ten years before the English translation of *The Bridge on the Drina*. It was republished as *Bosnian Chronicle* in 1963, and again in 1992 as *The Days of the Consuls*.

When Andrić was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1961, he was recognized as one of the foremost twentieth-century writers and his books appeared translated into many foreign languages. In his native Yugoslavia he was considered a national treasure.

Andrić died in 1975, and the country he so enthusiastically supported began to unravel in the 1990s. In 1991, the monument to Andrić in Višegrad was destroyed and the library he helped establish with his Nobel prize money was turned into a supermarket. His works were recently reintroduced into school curricula in Bosnia and Herzegovina and have been purged of what is deemed to be offensive fragments.⁷

The articles which appeared in the issue of *Sveske* 9–10 (1993–1994), the journal published by The Andrić Foundation in Belgrade, indicated that some readers had started reading Andrić’s works in a different light. This volume of the journal also reprinted an article by Šukrija Kurtović, which had been pub-

⁶ Milan Bogdanović, “*Travnička hronika Ive Andrića*,” in *Naša književnost* 1 (1946): 271.

⁷ See Radoslav Petković, “Obeležavanje stote godišnjice Ive Andrića,” in *Sveske* 9–10 (1993–1994): 12.

lished in installments between 1960 and 1967 in emigré newspapers in Freiburg and Vienna. In the article entitled “*The Bridge on the Drina and Bosnian Chronicle* by Ivo Andrić in the Light of Brotherhood and Unity,” Kurtović accused the author of a hostile portrayal of Bosnian Muslims.⁸

In 1995, a large study by Muhsin Rizvić, entitled *Bosnian Muslims as Viewed by Andrić*⁹ was published in Sarajevo. Rizvić reiterates the accusations of Kurtović’s article and charges Andrić with placing historical ideas in the service of national ideology and with reducing literature to mere commentary. More specifically, he accuses Andrić of a biased portrayal of Bosnian Muslims, of Islam and the East in general, and of distorting the sources on which his stories and novels were based.

It is known that no text offers unchanging truths, be it a historical account or fictional literature, and that the interpretation of past events can be substantially altered and histories rewritten. Fictional literature creates its own reality. This may be unsettling, but it forces reader and critic to look even more closely to the text. We have to look both at what Andrić wrote in his works and what Rizvić objects to in Andrić.¹⁰ The comments in this article are limited to *Bosnian Chronicle*, but many apply to Andrić’s other works as well.

Rizvić claims that, by calling the Bosnian Muslims “Turks,” the author of *Bosnian Chronicle* essentially equates them with the Ottoman Turks. Even though Andrić wrote a disclaimer saying that he did not use the term in order to refer to the race or ethnicity of that part of the Bosnian population, but because it was a common appellation of the time, Rizvić maintains that Andrić used the term rhetorically.

The claim that Andrić likens the Bosnian Muslims to the Ottomans cannot be supported. In the novel and elsewhere the author presents the two groups as separate. The author portrays the local Muslims and the Ottoman Turks as mistrustful of each other just as much as of the other ethnic groups in Bosnia. In *Bosnian Chronicle*, the Ottomans display an active dislike for the Bosnian Muslims and *vice versa*.

In the introduction to her study *Ivo Andrić: Bridge between East and West* (1984), Celia Hawkesworth takes Andrić’s side in this matter when she writes

⁸ Šukrija Kurtović, “‘Na Drini ćuprija’ i ‘Travnička hronika’ od Ive Andrića u svijetlu bratstva i jedinstva,” *Sveske* 9–10 (1993–1994): 387–440.

⁹ Muhsin Rizvić, *Bosanski muslimani u Andrićevo svjetu* (Sarajevo: Ljiljan, 1995).

¹⁰ See the chapter on *Travnička hronika* in Rizvić’s book, pp. 299–440.

that Bosnian Muslims call themselves *Turks* but “only in religious affiliation.”¹¹

According to Rizvić, Andrić portrayed Islam and the East in a negative light. Andrić sympathized with the Christian *rayah* and—in particular—with the Orthodox Serbs, maintains Rizvić.

While the novel is seen as a study of the contrast between East and West, its author recognized the values of both cultures. His identification with the *rayah* can only be seen as his sympathy for the victims of oppression, a part of his enlightened philosophy. The Serbian uprising led by Karadorđe Petrović in 1808 is present in the novel only as distant thunder, something that threatens the established order of the Ottoman Bosnia. The few Orthodox Serbs, all incidentally minor characters, are not presented in the novel in any particularly flattering manner. As indicated earlier, Bosnia and its people, as well as the contest among the great powers for dominance in the Balkans, served only as a backdrop against which Andrić developed his topic of choice: the continual struggle between good and evil and the human suffering it entails.

According to Rizvić, the characterization of Bosnian Muslims by Andrić is biased. Their utterly negative image acquired a universal character and became the underlying structure of *Bosnian Chronicle*. In Rizvić's opinion, Muslims are seen as backward, hostile, devious, and mistrustful, among other things.

In fact, with minor exceptions, it is the major characters of the novel, Westerners and Ottomans alike, who view not only local Muslims but all Bosnians negatively. This is particularly true of the French Consul, who reacts with physical disgust to the scents and sounds of Bosnia, to the smell of mutton fat, the mournful tunes of local songs, or the clothes Bosnians are wearing. Likewise, the wife of the Austrian Consul, Anna Maria, feels revulsion toward local people, both Christians and Muslims. In contrast, Madame Daville, one of the few principal characters who is not based on a historical personage, but largely invented by the author, is fully sympathetic toward the local population and does not display any animosity towards Muslims or any other ethnic and religious group.

In other words, different characters regard the local population differently. While the French Consul does not even try to understand the attitudes of the local people, his young deputy Des Fosses tries to understand the Bosnians and struggles to grasp what historical or social circumstances have made them behave differently from the Westerners.

¹¹ Celia Hawkesworth, *Ivo Andrić: Bridge between East and West* (London & Dover: Athlone Press, 1984), 29.

Even when Western protagonists say something flattering about the East and the Ottomans, Rizvić finds bias. For example, when Daville says that the new Vizier is “lively, pleasant and open for an Oriental,”¹² Rizvić interprets the comment, a cliché in itself, not as the result of a cultural gap, but rather as a racial slur.

The negative opinion the Westerners have of the local population is shared by the Ottomans as well. The Ottoman viziers in the novel are very critical of the locals. However, it should not be forgotten that this negative attitude does not reflect any animosity on the part of the author, but rather the subjective opinions of the characters.

Andrić, who sets his novel in Bosnia, the place where the two civilizations meet and repeatedly clash, could hardly avoid displaying cultural gaps between them. The reactions of the French Consul and other Westerners to the Bosnian lifestyle represent the Western reaction to the ways of the East. The Ottoman viziers likewise demonstrate a lack of sensitivity to the ways of the West. The reader recalls the scene in which the Vizier, who is otherwise an admirer of France and its culture, finds the play by the famous French playwright Racine, laughable.¹³ Both East and West look at each other from a distance. The author brings out these cultural differences.

Andrić does introduce indirect commentaries throughout the book that alternate with other perspectives expressed by the novel's characters. These comments reflect his basic belief that the South Slav peoples should focus on things that unite them rather than those that set them apart. A member of *Mlada Bosna*¹⁴ and a champion of Yugoslav unity, Andrić insisted that an alternative to such a view could lead to fratricidal wars.

In short, for Rizvić the author of *Bosnian Chronicle* did not have anything good to say about the East or Islam. A diametrically opposed opinion is expressed by Celia Hawkesworth, who wrote: “For Western Europeans, whose attitude to the ‘Turk’ was for centuries hostile, Andrić represents one of the brightest aspects of this meeting [of East and West], in his positive fusion of features of each culture.”¹⁵

The major criticism Rizvić directs at Andrić deals with the novelist's treatment of historical documentation; namely, Rizvić insists that Andrić was not faithful to his sources and that he altered them in order to stress the negative aspects of Muslim culture. In the case of *Bosnian Chronicle*, critics are

¹² *Bosnian Story*, 28.

¹³ *Bosnian Story*, 142.

¹⁴ *Mlada Bosna* was a revolutionary organization of Bosnian youth, the goal of which was the demise of the Austrian-Hungarian empire.

¹⁵ Hawkesworth, *Ivo Andrić: Bridge Between East and West*, 1.

fortunate because they can compare Rizvić's charges with an extensive study on the historical sources of the novel by another Bosnian Muslim in 1962.¹⁶

Stating that *Bosnian Chronicle* is a fictional work with many fictional characters, the author of this study, Midhad Šamić, cites the major sources of events, episodes, and characters described in the novel. He finds that Andrić changed the names of certain historically attested characters and did not always follow the chronology of events. He sometimes expanded on what he found in his sources and at other times reduced the material substantially. Šamić further states that the French Consul's life, with all the unpleasant things he encountered in Bosnia—as well as his reaction to his Austrian colleague, the viziers, and the local population—is “based on documents” and “agrees with existing documents not only in general terms but sometimes also in details.”¹⁷ Even though Andrić's portrayal of the three viziers was not based on Ottoman sources, he found a lot of information about the viziers in David's diaries and reports. According to Šamić, due to his Bosnian background, Andrić was familiar with the Ottomans and their way of thinking and thus was able to present his characters convincingly.

Šamić meticulously compares documentary sources with the text of *Bosnian Chronicle*, event by event, and does not have any negative comments about minor digressions in dates and names which he finds insignificant. He concludes that Andrić reproduced the facts with great precision and aesthetically molded the material so as to give life to the dry historical accounts he found in archives. By digressing slightly from his sources, he created, in Šamić's opinion, some of the most successful scenes in the whole of Yugoslav literature, the scenes of riots and the closing of the Travnik bazaar, for example.

Šamić claims that all the negative opinions Andrić's French Consul expressed about the local population—some even worse than those that can be found in the novel—could be found in the sources, in particular in the book written by the historical character on which Des Fosses was based.¹⁸ While Rizvić claimed that Andrić ascribed excessive cruelty to the Ottomans in general, Šamić reached a different conclusion after he had examined the sources. According to him, Andrić tried to diminish the impression of cruelty in some instances. For example, in the scene of the execution of two Serbian

¹⁶ Midhad Šamić, *Istoriski izvori Travničke hronike Ive Andrića* (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1962).

¹⁷ Šamić, 43.

¹⁸ Chaumette Des Fosses (Jean-Baptiste-Gabrielle-Amedee), *Voyages en Bosnie dans les années 1807–1808 par ...* (Paris, 1822), in-8o, VIII, 155.

rebels by strangulation, the author did not mention that in a last act of cruelty the victims' genitalia were also crushed.

Rizvić harshly criticized the reaction of Daville and other Westerners to Bosnian folk music, which they considered as “the singing more akin to the howling of dogs than to human songs” and “which show the same morbid barbarian frenzy which is to be found in every other activity of their [of the Bosnians] minds and bodies.”¹⁹ While Šamić does not react to these particular comments, he comments on another remark by Daville about Bosnian music as “screaming that gets on one's nerves,”²⁰ saying that Andrić found the remark *verbatim* in David's papers.

Both Rizvić and Šamić agreed that the character of Seliktir Ali Pasha was depicted as excessively cruel. However, Šamić felt that by doing that the author tried to make the pasha a symbol of the Ottoman oppression; he also added that in fact the pasha was a bandit.

Šamić concludes his study by saying that the historical material did not limit but only enhanced the writer's imagination. He reiterates that Andrić was very much concerned about authenticity, and that it is quite clear by simply comparing the sources with Andrić's text. According to Šamić, the novelist sometimes repeated word for word what he found in the documents; his choice of material was generally dictated by the philosophical concepts he was trying to project. Šamić insists that Andrić did not introduce all the negative comments about Bosnians he found in the historical sources into his novel. He also gives Andrić credit for a faithful portrayal of the historical era. He echoes Celia Hawkesworth when he asks: “In all of Yugoslav literature, is there a work in which the writer displays such a nuanced understanding of different cultures: Oriental, antique, European?”²¹

Another Bosnian Muslim, the critic and university professor Salko Nazečić, writing about *Bosnian Chronicle* and other of Andrić's works²² stated that the four groups divided by religion in Bosnia did not differ among themselves as much as they collectively felt divided from the rest of Europe. As such, they did not easily accept foreigners. According to Nazečić, Andrić knew the soul of Bosnia, and was thus able to depict faithfully such a complex region and reveal its deep humanity.

After reading these generally positive comments by both foreign and local scholars on Andrić and his exploitation of historical material and comparing

¹⁹ *Bosnian Chronicle*, 123.

²⁰ *Bosnian Chronicle*, 20.

²¹ Šamić, 204.

²² Salko Nazečić, “Merilo trajnosti u Andrićevim romanima,” in *Kritičari o Andriću*, ed. Branko Milanović (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1966), 199–207.

them with what Rizvić has to say in his study, one cannot but wonder how such diametrically opposed readings of the same literary work can be possible. How can an analysis of the same work produce such divergent readings?

Naturally, a literary text can have a different effect on different people, and also on the same people at different times. What counts as a “correct” interpretation can change because the circumstances in which readers live have changed. Reading, after all, is something that happens not necessarily on the printed page, but in the mind of the reader. It is not so much what a work says, but what it does. This is in fact happening with the way in which certain groups of readers now approach *Bosnian Chronicle* and Andrić’s other works.

Given the frame of possibilities of how a literary text can be interpreted, the identity of the reader becomes crucial. The reader makes decisions and interprets the text according to her/his point of view. Judgments the reader passes on the literary work will reflect various attitudes and norms of the group to which he/she belongs. In that way, one can say that the judgments mirror the cultural codes which condition these judgments.

From the standpoint of the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s, a majority of readers in Bosnia, including Bosnian Muslims such as Midhad Šimić and Salko Nazečić, appreciated Andrić and his books. However, since the Bosnian Muslims were recognized as a nation by the Tito regime in the 1970s, their sense of ethnic identity was strongly influenced by their religious affiliation and as a result their relationship to Andrić and his works began to change. Unlike 1945, when *Bosnian Chronicle* appeared, and the 1960s, when Šamić and Nazečić wrote their studies, the rhetorical attention in the 1980s and 1990s turned to the matters which separated the Yugoslav people. Certain Muslim readers from Bosnia, conditioned by recent history, began to read Andrić within a new context.

If we ask which expectation of Muhsin Rizvić—as a reader and a critic of *Bosnian Chronicle*—has not been fulfilled, allowing him to criticize the novel, Andrić’s depiction of Muslims stands in the foreground. Within the changing context of history, Rizvić applied a new frame of reference in his analysis and reinterpreted *Bosnian Chronicle* and other works by Andrić.

Ultimately, do we really have to address the question whether or not the portrayal of the Bosnian Muslim in Andrić’s work is negative? According to Hans Robert Jauss,

When a preceding interpretation can be falsified, for the most part it indicates neither historical error nor objective “mistake” but rather a falsely posed question on the part of the interpreter. The very term

“fiction” implies that the words on the printed page are not meant to denote any given reality.²³

The question posed is not a valid one. By definition, fiction is not something that can be judged in this fashion and subjected to the test of truthfulness.

²³ Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 185.