The "Heretics" Hermeneutics:
Bosnia And Balkan Bogomils In The Mirror Of Modern Hungarian Literature As Potential (Borrowed?) Theaters Of Multidimensional Orientalism

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Abstract: In Hungary, situated in Central-Eastern Europe, the historical and cultural investigation of its relationship with the Balkans holds particular relevance due to the country's unique and shifting historical position. Hungary has experienced distinct phases in its history: as a medieval middle power, later as a territory under Austrian rule, and subsequently as a state-forming entity within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. This progression has shaped Hungary's perception of its neighbors and its role within European ideological currents, particularly those influenced by Orientalist discourses. The portrayal of the Bosnian (primarily identified – and subject to historical debate – as „Bogomils")in Hungarian historical literature is a compelling case in point. While not explicitly tied to imperial expansionist ambitions, such representations reflect European tendencies of "Othering," where the "heretics" – often dismissed as heretics, tribal, or primitive – were situated in opposition to Western or Catholic norms. This dynamic was further complicated by Hungary's intermediary status between Western Europe and the Balkans, creating a cultural and epistemological space that was neither fully "Orientalized" nor wholly part of the Western Occident. Hungary's historical entanglement with the Balkans, therefore, offers a nuanced vantage point from which to examine Orientalist tendencies. These explorations are further elevated by the ideological debates surrounding the continuity between the medieval Bogomils and the later Bosnian Muslim population. The widely challenged notion that the Bogomils would have been „predecessors" of Bosnian Muslims adds another layer of ideological tension, particularly within critiques of Islam, which often bear a degree of ideological saturation. At first glance, Hungary's portrayals of the Bosnian Christians cannot be isolated from broader European perceptions of Islam, where the historical Crusades, medieval animosities, and Enlightenment-era Orientalist narratives intersect. However, the Hungarian corpus itself rarely engages with the Bogomils as proto-Muslims, a narrative more prevalent in earlier Western and later Balkan discourses. Instead, Hungarian representations tend to emphasize the „sect"'s heretical nature, aligning more closely with medieval historiographical

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traditions than with ideological critiques of Islam. In this context, Hungary's role as both a subject and an actor in these historical frameworks underscores the relevance of analyzing its cultural and literary portrayals of the Balkans and the Bosnia's legacy. This dual position allows for critical insight into the hierarchical nature of Orientalism while also accounting for Hungary's unique historical trajectory and its layered relationship with both "East" and "West."

Keywords: Hungary, Balkans, heretics, Bogomils, Orientalism, Literature, Crusades, Islam

Introduction

"[Friar] Julian looked hesitantly at the vault [...] Then he glanced at the Archbishop. He means well, he's right. It is in the country's interest to convert [...] In the south, in Bosnia, the heretical Bogomils, in the east the pagan Kuns and the Halichi Russians, who are troubling the country against the Hungarians. The Archbishop is right" (Kodolányi, 2003: 306).

This quoted lines of an interbellum historical novel, entitled *Julianus barát* (Eng.: *J*ános Kodolányi are intended, as an Auftakt or a prelude, to grasp here that there is a long tradition of some Hungarian intellectuals being intensely preoccupied with the Balkans, and in particular, on behalf of modern literature, with historical episodes related to Árpád dynasty.

In addition, one significant aspect of Hungary's historical relationship with the Balkans is the rejection of the Bosnian Christian movement portrayed as Bogomils during the medieval period.

The Bogomils, now increasingly distinguished from Bosnia by current literature (i.a. Bijedić, 2011; Lorenz, 2011; Lovrenović, 2015; just to mention some contemporary exemplars of a larger cohort of historians who hold comparable or aligned perspectives) in the first place, considered heretical by the Catholic Church, were present in the Balkans and might have been influenced by dualist beliefs. Hungary's historical stance against this sect, whether due to religious or political reasons, also contributed to shaping its perception of the Balkans and its own identity within the broader European context. The narrative surrounding the Bogomils in Bosnia arguably represents a historiographical fabrication that gradually transformed into a myth. This perspective, arising from the intersection of local and regional political aspirations (Lovrenović,

2015) and post-schism Western/Eastern dichotomy, gained significant traction during the Austro-Hungarian era (Rady, 2022: 316), when numerous intellectuals embraced and disseminated this interpretation in addition to statesman Béni Kállay himself (Bijedić, 2011: 51). Partly, it served as a countermeasure against the nationalist agendae of the Serbs and Croats, who aimed to assimilate medieval Bosnian history and its cultural legacy into their respective national identities. The historically verifiable independent ecclesiastical institution in Bosnia, largely because of its doctrinal positions, was pejoratively branded as heretical.

Hungary, itself has been subjected to "(demi-)Orientalizing tendencies (Wolff, 1994: 302-3 (299-305) and has traditionally maintained a rather hostile or indifferent relationship with the Habsburgs, with the notable exception of the period following the Compromise of 1867 (cf. Niederhauser 1986; Rady 2022). By acknowledging theoretical foundations laid out by other scholars, i.a Edward Said's Orientalism, André Gingrich's Frontier Orientalism, or Bakic-Hayden's „Nesting Orientalism", current approach adapts them to fit Hungary's unique historical and cultural context.

Having these latter factors in mind, the examination of the Hungarian discourse of Bogomils might shed light on lesser-explored aspects of Central European Orientalism, thus, in parallel, also offering a potential contribution to identifying new angles on multidimensional Orientalism.

Fiction and historiography interact in the analysis to be employed, particularly in the depiction of the Bosnian Christians, predominantly in an asymmetric relation, in terms of the former being inspired and influenced by the latter, but also as fictional portrayals rather reinforce than challenge historical narratives.

With regard to methodology, the interpretive framework is based on a particular hermeneutic approach with close reading, thematic analysis, and intertextual comparison of a corpus consisting of some of the most well-known popular Hungarian authors of literary fiction of the modern 19-20th century aimed at the Medieval Era.

Medieval and "mid-Evil:" Historical connections with Bosnia and the Bogomil sect

During the first centuries following the establishment of the Kingdom of Hungary, there was a notable focus on interactions and territorial expansion southward towards the Balkan Peninsula. Croatia became part of the Kingdom of Hungary in 1102 through conquest, followed by Dalmatia in the 12th to 15th centuries. Hungary gradually assumed the role of the weakening Byzantine Empire in the Balkans from the 13th century onward. In the 12th and 13th centuries, Hungary established numerous banates (bánság) along its southern borders, serving as protective buffer zones against neighboring peoples. As a result of these efforts, the Kingdom of Hungary, considered a mid-sized power at the time, could assert control over northern Bosnia, Serbia, and the northwestern region later known as Wallachia (Kitanics, 2008: 51-58; Pap ve Kitanics, 2008: 219-240).

In tandem with that the triangular, medieval conflicts between Bosnia, Rome and Hungary can be characterized as religious, so typical for crusades, while others, emphasize political and territorial pretensions, as the main motif, describing the Holy war idea as a cover story for the sake of the Papal curia (Dautović, 2020: 63).

In the context of these interactions, nevertheless, contacts were made with a "heretic" sect named the Bogomils, a movement, as Diarmaid MacCulloch (2004: 623) explains, to this day remains a highly stereotyped community across Europe, much like of the Balkans itself. The Bogomil heresy emerged in Bulgaria during Peter's reign, where, despite the Christianization of Bulgaria and the establishment of a priestly class, many Bulgarians retained pagan practices. The movement, traditionally attributed to a priest named Bogumil, had been widely believed, as suggested by scholars such as Fine (1991: 171) and Malcolm (1994: 27). to have gradually spread from Bulgaria into Constantinople and other Balkan regions, including Macedonia, Bosnia, and Serbia. However, it is important to acknowledge that this interpretation has been subject to significant scholarly debate in recent literature, with authors like i.a.

Lorenz (2011), Bijedić (2011) and the late Lovrenović (2015) offering critical reassessments and challenging the extent and trajectory of this dissemination. Nevertheless here, a religious aspect of the conflicts comes to life, serving as an additional stimulus for critical approaches directed at the epistemological frameworks accompanying historical-political conflicts (Mignolo, 2011). This dimension further enriches the complexity of such conflicts, particularly given the substantial body of literature suggesting that the Bosnian Christians intepreted as Bogomils were, in a sense, "predecessors" of the later Muslim population (Handžić, 1934: 77-80; Solovjev, 1949: 55-60; cf. Aščerić-Todd, 2022: 213-234). This claim, in itself, raises intriguing questions due to its connection to ideologically charged debates surrounding critiques of Islam (Asad, 2004; Massad 2015; Iványi 2022; Iványi 2023b).

Medieval Western despise of „Greek orthodox heretics" is well-documented already during the era of Crusades (Maalouf 1983: 253) and lies beyond the scope of our central focus. In the context of Bosnia, which on the contrary, is a pivotal point of our examination, the late Dubravko Lovrenović (2015) demonstrated that the first denunciations which brought Bosnia in connection with heresy were started by Vukan, the Grand Prince of Dioclea (Duklja), who, having seen that he was losing the political battle for power, in this way tried to get closer to Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) and ensure the promotion of the Bar diocese to the rank of metropolitan. Later, this mechanical, ideological and clichéd vocabulary was occasonally taken over tactically by the Hungarian rulers who, allying with the universal program of papacy from the 13th century tried to Latinize the Bosnian Slavic diocese and spread the influence of the Hungarian ecclesiastical structures. It is indicative that in the era of the steady relations with Bosnian rulers, the majority of whom were included in the Hungarian feudal system, there is no trace of such accusations.

The Latin Crusades against the Bogomils in the medieval Hungarian Kingdom were prompted by various popes. In 1200, Pope Innocent III urged King Emeric to combat the Bogomil heretics. Later, in 1216, Pope

Honorius III dispatched a subdeacon named Aconcius to Bosnia to convert the ”heretics” through argument, but their influence continued to grow. In response, the Archbishop of Kalocsa led a successful military campaign against the Bogomils in 1222 with the authority from both the pope and the Hungarian king. Pope Gregory IX further incited a crusade against these communities ” in 1238, led by Coloman, Ban of Slavonia. Additionally, Pope Gregory IX organized a crusade against Bulgaria in 1241, enlisting the Hungarian king’s support, although this campaign never materialized due to Bulgarian maneuvers. These papal-backed crusades aimed to eradicate the Bosnian ”heresy”, primarily in the Balkans, involving various rulers and ecclesiastical leaders of the Hungarian Kingdom (Brockett, 1879: 72-77; Obolensky, 1948: 230-235; Bozsóky, 1995: 142-143; Lock, 2013: 162).

During the late Middle Ages, Bosnia, where the Hungarian contacts were made with the Bogomils, emerged as an independent kingdom under the Kotromanić dynasty, blending Slavic, Hungarian, and Bosnian cultural influences, while the Bosnian Church, a unique Christian denomination, also flourished. King Louis I the Great’s (1342-1382) dynastic marriage with Elizabeta Kotromanić of Bosnia also attests to major interactions. In 1463, Bosnia fell under Ottoman rule after the conquest led by Sultan Mehmed II. This marked the beginning of over four centuries of Ottoman dominance in the region. Under Ottoman rule, Bosnia became an integral part of the empire, with Islam gradually becoming the dominant religion and culture (Dervisevic, 2022: 144). In the late 19th century, Bosnia came under Austro-Hungarian rule following the Congress of Berlin in 1878. These periods brought Orientalisation (Dervisevic, 2022: 144; 146) and especially during the latter era, not only modernization and economic development (Wolff, 2023) but also intensified nationalist tensions among Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats (Rady, 2017; Wolff, 2023) After World War I, Bosnia became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, later known as Yugoslavia (Riedlmayer, 1993).

The complex historical legacy of Bosnia’s late medieval and early modern periods continues to shape its society and politics today,

reflecting a diverse cultural landscape marked by centuries of interaction and conflict.

These named series of historical episodes, political trends and conflicts raise the issue of examining the nuances of the West and the East and of considering the respective politically motivated patterns of representation.

Orientalism in globo

In summary, Orientalism, a cultural current in Europe primarily focused on the East, reached its peak during the nineteenth century. Central European scholars during this period began conducting studies independent of direct colonial power relations, aiming to understand oriental languages and primary-source material. Orientalism, as initially conceptualized by Edward Said, denotes the prevalent portrayal of cultures and societies that favor a self-assuredly ‚progressive,' ‚modern,' and ‚rational' Europe, while depicting the Orient as purportedly ‚stagnant,' ‚backward,' ‚traditional,' and ‚mystical.' Unlike Edward Said's (1979) classical model, however, Orientalist thinking in our region presents a more nuanced view of the Orient, with varying perspectives and critiques based on differing positions of strength (Iványi 2022; 2023b).

Edward Said „Orientalism" has had a significant impact on discussions about the 19th century. Born in Jerusalem to a Christian Palestinian family, Said became a prominent advocate for Palestinian nationalism and a literature professor at Columbia University in New York. According to Said, there exists a pervasive and all-encompassing Eurocentric prejudice against Arab-Islamic peoples and their cultures, especially evident in the writings of 19th-century travelers like Chateaubriand, Melville, and Twain. Their works often belittled Arab culture and other Oriental served to justify imperialism (Montefiore, 2014: 19).

This is particularly relevant and illustrative, as historian Montefiore points out in the context of the Middle East and Jerusalem. Accordingly, writers like Gustave Flaubert and Herman Melville followed the

trend of Eastern travelogues. Between 1800 and 1875, approximately 5,000 books were published in England about Jerusalem, many of which shared similar themes: either missionary accounts enthusiastically recounting biblical stories (sometimes with new archaeological findings), or mocking Ottoman ignorance, lamenting Jews, ridiculing Arabs, and criticizing Orthodox believers' banality" (Montefiore, 2014: 406).

Here, vis-a-vis peoples of the East, or other religions (not only Islam but also, for instance, Orthodoxy, which, in the words of Milica Bakic-Hayden (1992: 9), along with „Byzantine" culture or the Balkans, are not included in „Europe" numerous facets of Orientalism come to the forefront, which may also be blatantly visible in terms of European attitudes towards its "neighbors " - both "close" and "distant" ones.

Demi- and Nesting/Frontier Orientalisms vis-a-vis CEE and the Balkans, (dis-) respectively

„Nesting Orientalism," a term coined by earlier quoted Milica Bakić-Hayden, in the Balkans refers to the perception of Balkan countries and cultures within European or Western perspectives. It involves labeling the Balkans as „oriental" or „Eastern," portraying them as a homogeneous group, and oversimplifying their diversity and complexity. This approach distorts historical, political, and social relationships, leading to negative stereotypes and contributing to the dehumanization of the European „other." Furthermore, Orientalism is evident within Europe itself, particularly in the divide between regions under Ottoman rule and those in the West. Terms like „Balkan mentality" or „Balkan primitivism" reflect this hierarchical view, with the West often seen as superior to the East. This symbolic geography creates a hierarchy of cultural representations, where cultures to the south and east are often viewed as more conservative or primitive, perpetuating the nesting orientalisms within European discourse (Bakić-Hayden 1992: 3-4).

We may nevertheless add, following the train of thought of historian Maria Todorova that the "Balkans' predominantly Christian character

[...] fed for a long time the crusading potential of Christianity against Islam. Despite many attempts to depict its (Orthodox) Christianity as simply a subspecies of oriental despotism and thus as inherently non-European or non-Western, still the boundary between Islam and Christianity in general continued to be perceived as the principal one" (Todorova, 1997: 20).

However, the Balkans are far from being the only entity to be exposed to stereotypes on behalf of the (Western) European mainstream. Also Hungary, both per se and with its Central and Eastern European region, was often misrepresented as the nearest agent of „the Orient" to Western Europe. Understanding this dynamic sheds light on the complex concept of Orientalism, revealing how Western European intellectuals constructed and perpetuated stereotypical images of Eastern Europe during the Enlightenment era.

Larry Wolff's exploration highlights how political, cultural, and geographical factors influenced this portrayal, reflecting biases and perceptions of the Western European elite. The construction of Eastern Europe as a separate and somewhat exotic entity in European consciousness was not a natural or innocent distinction but rather a product of cultural creation, intellectual artifice, and ideological self-interest. This historical tendency traces back centuries, as Enlightenment ideals supplanted those of the Renaissance, shifting perceptions of barbarism and backwardness from the north to the east. The concept of Eastern Europe emerged as a paradox of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion, defining itself in relation to Western Europe much like the Orient defined the Occident. This construction mediated between Europe and the Orient, representing an intellectual project of demi-Orientalization aimed at establishing complementary yet hierarchical concepts of Europe (Wolff, 1994: 4-8; Iványi, 2023b: 60-61).

Probably the most significant, epitomic author embodying these defamatory representation(al) trends are, according to Wolff, i.a. Edward Gibbon, Charles de Peyssonnel and Charles d'Hauterive. for them, the

Scythian factor was indispensable for identifying ethnographically the barbarians of Eastern Europe, predominantly Hungarians and Slavic people in general.

The categories of ancient history that identified the barbarians of Eastern Europe, in Peyssonnel and above all, in Gibbon not only corresponded to the impressions of contemporary travelers, but also entered directly into the emerging social science of anthropology (Wolff, 1994: 286; 288; 293; 299).

Bosnia and the Habsburg Empire's mission civilisatrice

Moving one step further and juxtaposing the Central and Eastern European encounters with those of the Balkans, both the intriguing experiences of the historical Habsburg Empire and the concept of "frontier Orientalism" with the corresponding dichotomy of the "Good/Bad Oriental" introduced by André Gingrich also come into play. All the more so this is relevant because this entity not only directly engaged in anti-Ottoman military encounters but also was involved in civilizing/colonial aspirations concerning the Balkans (i.e. earlier home of the Bogomils) for centuries. After 1867, the portion of the Habsburg Empire occupied by the Kingdom of Hungary, an earlier bitter enermy of Austria, received home rule. Thereafter, the Habsburg Empire was also known as the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Austria-Hungary, or Dual Monarchy (Rady, 2017: 6; 84).

The contradictions and anomalies of historical relations, as well as the fact that the Habsburg Empire by no means intended to remain on the sidelines of contemporary trends in modern imperialism within the limits of its capabilities, are epitomized by none other than Archduke Franz Ferdinand (Rothenberg, 1976: 120), who is widely known to have harbored a pronounced anti-Hungarian sentiment (Obey, 2007: 179; Rady, 2022: 311).The Ottoman Pashaluk of Bosnia and Herzegovina, staying at the center of modern era's rivalries (Rady, 2017: 97) was occupied

by the Habsburgs in 1878, following a Christian South Slavic uprising against the sultan in Constantinople, and the province was then annexed by Austria-Hungary in 1908. For Emperor Franz Joseph the occupation and annexation constituted his singular venture in augmenting the Habsburg dynastic possessions, his single colonial achievement as other European powers carved out overseas empires in Africa and Asia. Austria-Hungary promptly assumed a civilizing and modernizing mission in Bosnia, laying railroad tracks to Sarajevo, encouraging agriculture and industry in tobacco and in steel (Wolff, 2023). Robin Okey's ‚Taming Balkan Nationalism: The Habsburg Civilizing Mission in Bosnia, 1878-1914 is a detailed analysis of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy's attempt to integrate and modernise Bosnia into the empire after taking control of the province in 1878. Accordingly, through the narrative of a ‚civilising mission', the Habsburgs, were supposed to manage ethnic and relgious tensions, while seeking justification of occupation and to express Western superiority towards other cultures. This was also internalized by an emerging educated local minority with a deep sense of being the sparehead of their people's emancipation (2007: vii, 26, 149).

Aligned with such policies, Austrian intelligentsia, arguably, favoured an Orientalist stance and tone vis-à-vis Bosnia, in the context of which, Bosnia was exposed to exoticized Viennese fantasies. In conformity therewith, the illustrated account of the province in "word and image" (Wort und Bild), published in 1901, showed Bosnians in baggy pants and turbans, with architectural images of the mosque, the medrese, and the Turkish bath in Sarajevo (Wolff, 2023).It needs to added here, that „Traditional" Turkificating (i.e. depicting Bosnians as Turks *per se*) tendencies on behalf of the Austrian élite, whose attention was rather drawn by Early Modern Turks, than Medieval Bogomils, became coupled with a rather naive rescue intention. This is exemplified by Austrian novelist librettist Hofmannstahl's exchange of letters with composer Richard Strauss, in the context of which the former made a reference to the "death prayer of the Bosnian Muslim, heard by no one except the

imperial [Hasburg] prince, who bent back the underbrush and found the lonely Muslim singing his death song" (Strauss ve Hofmannstahl, 1961: 94; Strauss ve Hofmannstahl, 1964: 134; Wolff, 2023).

As we can see, arguablym the Bosnian occupation in 1878 gave rise to a specific type of Orientalism that originated in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Andre Gingrich coined the term "frontier Orientalism" to describe the attitude that constructs a contested border, where the eternal "we," the Austrians, are contrasted with the Oriental "Turk," later transformed into a Bosnian colonial subject: in the Austrian imaginary, the Turks were a metaphor for "the Bad Muslims," the former dangerous invaders and later defeated and humiliated opponents.

Bosnian Muslims, as pointed out by Jitka Malecková (2020: 121; cf. Gingrich, 1996: 110, 1179), in contrast, had by the end of the colonial period "become 'the Good Muslims,' loyal, armed allies, who fought for Austria-Hungary against the Serbs".

Austria, according also to Pieter M. Judson, aimed to civilize Eastern and Southeastern Europe, including the Balkans. Initially, this mission focused on Galicia, emphasizing civilization, economic development, and education as means of unifying diverse populations. In the late 19th century, Austrian orientalists sought to establish stable borders with the Ottoman Empire and delineate boundaries against Turks in newly acquired provinces, rather than using the concept of an „imperial divide" to justify colonial ventures in distant Ottoman territories. They emphasized „shared experiences" and „shared spaces" with Southern Slavs to legitimize their colonial and cultural mission in the region (Judson, 2016: 149, 317, 328; Karner, 2020: 783).Scholarly attention both on the anti-Ottoman (Muslim) stance of the region and its historical framework have been given wide attention (Sabatos, 2020: ix; Iványi, 2022: 8-31). From here the academic question arises, whether an ideologically charged attitude against "proto-Muslim" Bogomils can be identified. Before we get back to that, we must highlight that Johann Heiss and Johannes Feichtinger cite three epigonal examples to

illustrate the Habsburg-dominated Austro-Hungarian intellectual attitude of the time. Correspondingly, the conservative Austro-Bohemian historian Joseph Alexander Helfert, pro-Compromise Hungarian Diplomat Béni (Benjamin von) Kállay, and German nationalist professor of ancient history Rudolf von Scala "bear witness to the Habsburg form of strategically deployed orientalist discourse, which is characterized by both functions of the Orient: its devaluation in the interests of European self-valorization and the idea of a civilizing mission" (Heiss ve Feichtinger, 2013: 156).

In modern Hungarian literature, numerous reflections of this historical relationship with the broader Balkans can be found. Writers often explore themes related to Hungary's connections with its southern neighbors, sometimes portraying tensions, conflicts, or mutual influences.

As for the Hungarian authors of that time themselves, Baron Zsigmond Kemény (1814-1875) in his 1851 pamphlet entitled *Még egy szó a forradalom után* (Eng.: One more word after the revolution), argues at length (Kemény, 2010: 235-236) for the civilizing transformation of the East, in which Hungarians could play a mediating role.

A similar position is taken by Béni (Benjamin von) Kállay, who assigned a mediatory role to Hungary between the Occident (i. e. influences of Rome) and the Orient (i.e. influences of Byzantine and later the Ottoman Empire) as follows: "The mediation between the two great currents of human development must therefore be our responsibility, because we are the ones who are best called to it. The Orient cannot remain forever in cold isolation. The sum of moral and material forces which constitutes the giant spirit of the Occident will sooner or later break down the remaining barriers. To advance in this great spiritual struggle, to attempt a reconciliation between the millennial antagonisms of two worlds : a difficult but beautiful and rewarding task. And we have a leading role to play in this task, if we want it. Everything points to this" (Kállay, 1883: 69).

Nevertheless, Hungarian intellectual and public life was much more polarized than being able to be retrospectively considered as completely identifiable with Austrian aspirations. Divisions of the Hungarian ruling élite are well documented (Gerő, 2014: 9-11). To sum up, we must conclude that, although the foreign policy after 1867 was basically based on a broad internal consensus, there were serious disagreements[1] and debates on a number of details and on the concretisation of ideas (Galántai, 1985: 228). For instance, a remarkable anti-imperialist trend can also be identified. Mór Jókai, the most popular contemporary author: "The task of Hungary is not to expand but to rise," .

Or, Lajos (Louis) Hatvany's Urak és emberek [Sirs and Men] (1926) grasps nuances of Hungarian intelligentsia's hostile or relationship with Austria.

It is not for us to take a position on the question of how far the contemporary sense of mission civilisatrice can be understood as a specific factor ventilating colonial ambitions. However, it is certain that all of this adds value to the critical analysis of modern fiction that attempts to convey the medieval public mood vis-a-vis the Bogomils of Bosnia.

The romance plot in Mór Jókai's novel *A három márványfej* [*The Three Marble Heads*], published between 1887 and 1889, is rich with scenes of intense battles, complex intrigues, and dramatic events. Within Chapters 13 and 14, Jókai uniquely features the Bogomils, providing a vivid yet interpretive portrayal that blends historical reference with fictional imagination. Jókai presents them as a "band of robbers" with particular beliefs and practices, highlighting their distinctiveness from mainstream religious communities. The author underscores this difference by describing their use of leavened bread, remarking, "that they were a band of robbers, and cruel, it was all just a warlike pace, but that the

1 One of the serious differences of opinion was precisely the question of the annexation of Bosnia. What would we do with these domains? - said Miksa Falk, speaker of the foreign affairs subcommittee. Isn't the machinery of this entire monarchy already complicated enough that the inclusion of yet another heterogeneous element could be considered desirable? See Galántai, "*Habsburg*," 249.

wafers were made of leavened dough: now that was Manichaeism." This use of Manichaeism as a descriptor here subtly emphasizes both an exotic otherness and a departure from orthodox Christian practices, suggesting that their customs were not only divergent but almost provocatively so in the eyes of outsiders.

A particularly notable element in Jókai's portrayal is the unusual prevalence of marriages within Bogomil society. The reference to a leader, or *Knez*, allegedly having nineteen wives (Jókai, 2003: n.p.) evokes an image of excess and nonconformity, hinting at an underlying moral judgment tied to their social organization.

At the same time, one should also not disregard that an anti-Habsburg stance of the Hungarian intelligentsia and authors, including the very same Jókai, is well-documented and attested by a dozen of his historical novels. This remains even after the 1867 Compromise, exemplified by Jókai's novel A kőszívű ember fiai (The Barons' Sons - 1869), where character Alfonsine Plankenhorst is an epitome of the hostile Austrian side, the aristocrat, i.e. a representative of the oppressors and traitors. In chapter A bakfis (Damsel), she is being described as one whose gaze reflects „hate, bitterness, revenge, matricidal cruelty, which cannot be expressed by words".

Coming back to our main line, through Jókai's characterization, nevertheless, the Bogomils emerge not just as outsiders but as almost caricatured in their perceived "primitive" simplicity—gullible, superstitious, poligamous and ultimately doomed. The tragic fate of the Bogomils, as slaves later murder them within their own tribal community, underscores this idea of a group vulnerable to external forces and internal discord.

In comparison, philologist and historian Ede Margalits, in his *Horvát történelmi repertórium* [*Croatian Historical Repertory*], a synthesizing compilation of summaries of historical essays by Croatian authors, adopts a distinctly historical approach to the Bogomils. Writing just over a decade after Jókai, Margalits explores the documented actions of

Hungarian rulers in suppressing Bogomil heresy. His work provides a sober account of medieval policies that reveal a structured and determined resistance to Bogomilism. For example, he records that in 1209, King Andrew II granted the region of Pozsega-Požega to the Archbishop of Kalocsa on the condition that Bogomil heretics be eradicated. Further, he notes how King Charles I tasked Count Paul Breber with eliminating Bogomil influence in Makar, and how the Hungarian monarchy, alongside the Church, invited the Franciscan Order to strengthen Catholic presence in regions like Varasd-Varaždin, directly opposing the spread of Bogomilism (Margalits, 1900: 29-30, 81, 93).

Here, the focus of the sources used by Margalits, is primarily on the political and religious motivations of Hungarian authorities, particularly their commitment to Catholic orthodoxy and the safeguarding of political stability. Unlike Jókai's dramatized depiction, Margalits's account is less about condemning the Bogomils for any specific actions and more about depicting the systematic efforts to counter heretical movements within Hungarian-controlled areas.

Similarly, the narration in Ferenc Herczeg's 1902 novel *Pogányok* [*Heathens*] engages with the Bogomils, aligning them with the Manichaeans as enemies of the Christian Church. Although Herczeg refrains from casting them in a derogatory light, he reflects the medieval ecclesiastical perspective that deemed them highly suspect, if not threatening. This opposition is embodied in the line, "The Christian church persecuted the hydra-headed heresy of the Manichaeans [i.e., Bogomils] more than the infidelity of the heathen" (Herczeg, 2000: 74), illustrating the church's stance toward heresy as more menacing than simple paganism. Here, Herczeg's account hints at the broader medieval condemnation of Bogomilism, echoing the Church's pervasive anti-heretical fervor without the sensationalized overtones found in Jókai's novel.

At the same time, Herczeg's characters at other passages of his oeuvre occasionally challenge German (Austrian) rule. Such is the case also in the novel A hét sváb (The Seven Swabians – 1916) with its anti-Habsburg

undertone, denounces the *divide et impera* of the Viennese court, which deliberately aggravated relations with Serbs and other nationalities.

It can be argued here that both Jókai and Ferenc Herczeg authored a series of historical novels imbued with patriotic pathos, in which their narrative style and character arcs often center on the major challenges posed rather by other groups or entities, for instance, the Habsburgs. These adversaries serve as focal points in Herczeg's works, embodying the external pressures that tested Hungarian sovereignty and resilience. Through his depictions, Herczeg not only elevates the struggles of Hungarian heroes but also reinforces a sense of national pride, presenting these historical conflicts as defining moments in the nation's enduring quest for autonomy and strength.

In sum, these representations—from Jókai's romanticized portrayal to Margalits's historical recounting and Herczeg's dramatized reference—illustrate varying levels of bias, narrative style, and purpose, each adding a distinct layer to the broader depiction of Bogomil identity and its perception within the nexus of Hungarian and Balkans cultural history.

The Hungarian interbellum perspective and a continuity in portraying

After the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, which included Bosnia as part of the Habsburg Empire, Hungarian-Southern Slav relations underwent significant changes as the former territories were reorganized. The interbellum peace treaties and the Treaty of Trianon led to the loss of some of the southern territories of the Kingdom of Hungary, which were transferred to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later Yugoslavia). This loss of territory deeply scarred Hungary's national consciousness and political stability. In the period between the two world wars, political and cultural relations between Hungary and Bosnia were rather limited due to territorial changes and different political regimes. Bosnia and Herzegovina became part of the Yugoslav state,

whose political and cultural identity differed significantly from that of Hungary. In addition, ongoing territorial disputes and instability in the Balkans further complicated relations between the two peoples. At the same time, as Kitanics (2008: 227) points out, cooperation between Hungary and Yugoslavia, which included Bosnia, was also present. While antagonism was a characteristic of this era (1920-1944), in the broader context of Hungarian-Yugoslav relations – highly significant from the point of view of the broader context of present study – mutual aspiration for cooperation emerged as well.

By the 20th century, following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the literary stance transformed: whereas previously conflict and oppression had been the dominant themes, in the interwar period and beyond, many authors viewed the belle époque with a sense of nostalgia, recalling it as a period of stability and a kind of cultural flourishing (although not necessarily sympathizing with the Habsburg-dynasty's or Austria's imperialism as such).

Far from a volte-face, in Chapter 8 of his A fogyó hold [The Waning Moon - 1922] Ferenc Herczeg explicitly presents a scene of peasants complaining that Walloon and German (read: Austrians) Landsknechts are lording over the heart of the country. The general mindset of the era is best reflected in A híd [*The Bridge* – 1925] a historical drama of the same author, in which the common ground between the antagonistic sides of the drama, which contrasts two 19th-century Hungarian historical figures – the thoroughly patriotic Kossuth and the brilliant Széchenyi – as well as their worldviews, is none other than anti-Habsburg sentiment.

To grasp certain distancing tendencies from the Habsburg-dynasty, the characteristic tone of Géza Supka's Habsburg-krónika [Habsburg Chronicle] from 1932 seems to be convincing: „If science [...] wanted to set a textbook example of what the system of incestuous intermarriage means for the degradation of the human race, it would have to look at the genealogy of [Habsburg] Philip II. His grandmothers on both sides were sisters Mary and Joanna the Mad. His father Charles V married

Isabella, his own niece. From this marriage came Philip II, who in turn married his cousin Mary of Portugal as his first wife. His fourth and last wife, Anne of Austria, happened to be the daughter of his own sister. One can imagine what children came from these marriages. From the first came the mad Don Carlos, from the fourth the semi-mystical enthusiast Philip III" (1986: 112).

Still, some like Gyula Krúdy, highlight the lost decades with a sense of melancholic longing, and from his sympathy for the bygone era, the Habsburgs occasionally benefit as well. permeating a toast in the opening scene of Rezeda Kázmér szép élete (The Beautiful Life of Casimir Rezeda – 1933) (Gangó, 2006: 164-165).

Hungarian literature presents a complex perspective on the relationship with the Empire, ranging from ardent resistance and the desire for independence to an increasingly nuanced, ambivalent nostalgia over time.

Once again, the literary trends of this period, as we see, vis-à-vis the Bogomils are not primarily characterized by the conveyance of a civilizing mission, but by a distancing from heretics or even by comedy.

In the novel of Hungarian writer and journalist Gyula Krúdy's *A templárius* [Eng.: The Templar], published in 1926, Roger, a turn-coat Knight Templar recalls his adventures of his past including his interactions with Bogomils here referred to as Paterans. Krúdy depicts the narrator's cynical manipulation of the former's absurd heretical beliefs and practices for personal gain. Roger exploits the Bogomils and incites their violence against priests (Krúdy, 1960: 142-143) Although this portrayal predominantly underscores the twisted and morally bankrupt character of the narrator, while doing so, it also introduces the Bogomils as foolable weirdos in turn. *Nota bene*, it has to be pointed out that the narration of Krúdy neither spares criticism concerning other Medieval communities in the entire book such as the Ismaelites, Templars, Hungarian nobility. With other words, his perspective reveals an overall aversion towards such a troubled period of Hungarian history.

In an early scene of Sándor Makkai's *Táltoskirály* [*Shaman King*, 1934], a character named Zágon disparagingly refers to the Bogomils as "dirty saints" (Hung.: *koszos szentek*), revealing a deep-seated disdain as he recounts King Béla's attempts to expel them (Makkai, 2012: 6). Later in the narrative, Hungarian soldiers encounter a Bogomil preaching what they consider blasphemous beliefs: that the world was created by Satan and that self-destruction would hasten entry into heaven. The Bogomils, referred to as Paterans here, with their seemingly absurd doctrines, openly defy authority (Makkai, 2012: 8). This portrayal weaves together their social rejection and perceived irrationality, framing them as both outcasts and objects of horror. Just like in the case of other works on the Mongol Invasion of 1241-42 described below, however, it needs to be added that the essence of problemization is aimed predominantly, although not exclusively, at the historical threat associated with the latter group.

Alongside the previously mentioned passage from *Julianus barát* (1938) by János Kodolányi, introduced in the paper's introduction, the Bogomils also appear in the novel's concluding part, deepening the theme of ecclesiastical struggle. As the narrative unfolds, we learn: "Paulus had a lot of work to do in the administration of the [Dominican - author] order, but when Archbishop Robertus issued the order to convert the wild khuns of Havaselve [Wallachia - *author*], he took the lead himself. Other friars went to Bosnia to support the work of Archbishop Ugrin in the land of the Bogomil heretics" (Kodolányi, 2003: 332). Here, the determined mission of the Dominican friars to convert the Bogomils underscores the Church's stance on heresy, showing the former group's presence as persistent and challenging within the broader Christian landscape.

In *A vas fiai* (Eng.: *Sons of Iron*), a historical novel that serves as a prequel to *Julianus barát* and was published two years earlier, the Bogomils appear in Chapter 8 of the third part. Here, the narrative recounts a period following King Andrew (Hung.: András or Endre) II's marriage to

Beatrix, when "another ecclesiastical curse" is invoked. The text notes how King Andrew, during his honeymoon, reluctates to "pay the church the ten thousand marks for salt and that he would exterminate or convert the Bosnian Bogomils (sic!). But he had more pressing matters" (Kodolányi, 2004: 162). This scene reflects the lingering yet often sidelined Church-driven imperative to eradicate Bogomilism, explicitly posited to be present in Bosnia, depicting it as a moral obligation that periodically resurfaces only to be deferred on the monarch's side.

In his 1939 essay *Dózsa György*, journalist and sociologist author Géza Féja further explores the Church's stance on the Bogomils, again taking their Bosnian residence as granted, emphasizing the challenges in dealing with heretical sects. He writes, "In Bosnia, another heresy, the Bogumil sect, has also sprung up. The Church initially tried to calm the movements by gentler methods of conversion, sending Franciscans to Bosnia to calm tempers. But these Franciscans became debauched and led a secular lifestyle. The second step was the Inquisition. It was also urgent for the Church to launch the Inquisition" (Féja, 1939: 27). Féja's account thus paints a vivid picture of the Church's escalating response, showing how early efforts at peaceful conversion gave way to harsher measures, reflecting both the persistence of the Bogomil belief system and the Church's eventual recourse to force. Although Féja grasps tensions and hostile attitudes, his main object of critique remains in exploring anomalies of the Hungarian medieval feudal society alltogether.

All in all, also in the interwar period, Hungarian literature's narrations and characters often depicted the Bogomils in a negative and marginalized light, associating them with hostility or grotesque characteristics. These works typically portrayed the Bogomils as religious fanatics with eccentric beliefs, rendering them as objects of ridicule or as societal outcasts in opposition to Christian authorities. This portrayal reflects the historical traumas and social exclusion of the era, with writers resorting to either comedic tones or hostile to emphasize the separation of these „strange" religious and cultural groups from Hungarian society.

Socialist era: episodes of hostility and grotesque

„The chronicle of relations between Hungary and Yugoslavia saw frequent alterations subsequent to 1945. The swift enhancement of mutual ties was abruptly halted by the intensification of the Soviet-Yugoslav discord in 1948–1949. Only after 1953 did tensions alleviate, commencing a gradual and protracted course of normalization between the two nations" (Vukman, 2020: 9).

Bogomils in the relevant period continued to be of interest to historical novelists, predominantly in a descriptive tone which mostly aims sharing information, with occasional comedy-like traits.

In *Hétszer vágott mező* [Seven times cut field] of László Passuth, published in 1970, both King Emeric of the House of Árpád (reign: 1196-1204) and his sister Margaret [Margaret of Hungary, Empress consort of the Byzantine Empire between 1185-1195 and 1203-1204] were, from childhood, and due to their upbringing, well informed about the presence and credentials of the "heretical" Bogomils, discussing the latter in detail, essentially identifying them with Manichaeism. Later on in the book, the aging King Endre (Andrew II) also makes mention of them in the context of his daughter-in-law Hungarian Queen Mary of Lascaris (1206-1270), to Archbishop Tamás of Esztergom, saying ‚she is drawn to her father's religion. She will secretly defend the Bogomils." At the same time the King also tells the Archbishop about his plans, "as for the Bogomils, it would be good to write to Margaret [Margaret of Hungary, Byzantine Empress] in Banat, which I have also given to her son [Guillaume], the heretics have multiplied in the South. May the Lord help you as Archbishop of Esztergom, Thomas" (Passuth, 1979: 42; 709-710).

In Karczag György's novel Zúgó nyilak (Eng.: Roaring Arrows, 1974), the Bogomils appear indirectly, yet meaningfully, when the resolute Archbishop Ugrin conveys to the protagonist Miklós the strategic importance of Hungary in the Pope's mission: "The land of the Hungarians is dear to the Pope. Only from here can we fight the Byzantines and Bogomils. We can and must!" This portrayal underscores Hungary's central role as a

bastion against perceived religious threats, highlighting the Archbishop's fervent, militaristic stance on defending Christian interests. Once again, we may add that Karczag mainly deals with other communities in his novel, in the shadow of the events of 1241-42, Bogomils are not depicted (exclusively) as the main enemy of the contemporaries (Karczag, 2008: 91).

In Béla király (King Béla), Magda Szabó delves into the complex interplay of geopolitical strategies, compromises, and conflicts that characterized the medieval period, which needs to be discussed in more length because of its significance lying in its nuanced depictions of power relations. Set on the brink of the Mongol invasion, as the works of Makkai, Kodolányi or Karczag, once again, the third scene of the drama's second part brings the struggle against the Bogomils into focus, intertwining religious and political motives in a manner that critiques the manipulation of faith for strategic ends. Through the character of Pater Petrus, the synodal and papal envoy, Szabó portrays the church's insistence on harnessing King Béla IV's resources for a crusade against the Bogomils, rather than addressing the looming Mongol threat. When Pater Petrus relays the Synod of Lyon's message—urging the king to „destroy the Bosnian Bogomils (sic!)"—he frames this directive as part of Pope Honorius III's „paternal providence." This phrasing suggests a protective facade for an agenda that prioritizes the eradication of heresy over the immediate defense of Hungary. King Béla's response, characterized by disbelief—"Shall we march into Bosnia?"—reflects his struggle to reconcile the urgency of his kingdom's safety with the Church's diversionary mission. Szabó likely intended this incredulity to underscore Béla's moral dilemma, forced to choose between religious obedience and pragmatic rule. When the envoy responds with the papal sanction for the "Archbishops of Chalcis and Esztergom to crush the snake's nest," the vivid imagery of a „snake's nest" not only dehumanizes the Bogomils but also implies an insidious threat that warrants eradication.

In this context, Szabó seems to cast a critical light on the Church's political motivations, exposing a cynical disregard for Béla's pressing concerns over Mongol invasion. Béla's final exchange with his confidant, the Teutonic Father, wherein he expresses frustration at the "dream" of a unified European defense and bitterly acknowledges that "I can go hunting for Bogomils," serves as a culmination of his disillusionment. Here, Szabó appears to question the Church's use of crusading rhetoric to serve its own aims, framing Béla's resignation as both a tragic concession to ecclesiastical pressure and a critique of the broader failure of European solidarity.

Through these exchanges, Szabó not only reconstructs a historical moment but also critiques the broader dynamic in which religious fervor is co-opted for political agendas, leaving leaders like King Béla caught between their duties to their people and the demands of powerful institutions. This layered portrayal adds depth to Béla's character, depicting him as a leader aware of the cynicism around him yet constrained by forces beyond his control (Szabó, 2011: n. p.).

Péter Szentmihályi Szabó's Édua és Kun László (Eng.: Édua and Ladislaus the Cuman, 1986) situates the Bogomils within the framework of a zealous crusade. In the novel, Ladislaus IV of Hungary, also known as Ladislaus the Cuman, "made a strong vow to exterminate the heretics of the South, and to oblige his mother, who also held the title of Princess of Macho and Bosnia, to do likewise" (Szentmihályi, 1986: 233). This passage presents Ladislaus's mission not only as a personal commitment but as a familial and political obligation, reinforcing the notion of unwavering dedication to eradicating heresy from the region.

Ultimately, the youth novel of Viktor Szombathy, in his *Megszólal a töröksíp* (Eng. Sounding the Turkish pipe) from year 1987, manifests a scene where the travelers encounter a group identifying as Bogomils, who express their uncertainty regarding their own religious beliefs. The Bogomils, displaced and persecuted, seek guidance on whether to adopt Islam, Christianity without acknowledging the Devil as God, or

remain faithful to their Bogomil beliefs, even worshipping the Devil as God. They recount their ancestral journey through various lands (including Syria, Egypt, Arabia, Adriatic and Black Seas, etc.), searching for their true homeland. Meanwhile, Lopócsi, a character in the narrative, recalls hearing about Bogomils from the Al-Danube region, indicating a shared understanding among travelers about the presence of Bogomil traders in the area. Eventually, in a grotesque manner, the protagonists escape from these people portrayed as eccentric, or even crazed, in order to carry on their journey to Istanbul (Szombathy, 1987: 123-127; 134).

Coda

It is intriguing to introduce a relatively unknown feature of Central and Eastern European intellectual trends, which is mostly unrelated to othering ("nesting" and "frontier Orientalist) othering tendencies described earlier (i.a. Said, Bakic-Hayden, Todorova, Gingrich, Maleckova, Heiss-Feichtinger), namely, that of the portrayal of "heretic" Bogomils in modern Hungarian historical fiction.

Such an effort lays on the premise that Orientalism is multidimensional with multiple subjects, objects and concurrent othering strategies throughout history. In accordance with the corresponding hierarchically organized discourses and ideological currents, Hungary, both a displayer of historical dominance as a medieval middle power and at a certain point, an active part of the Habsburg Empire, while being itself subjected to, in the words of Wolff, "(demi-) Orientalizing" intellectual trends as belonging to the East, manifested a peculiar stance vis-à-vis the Balkans and *a fortiori* the medieval Bosnian Christians introduced as Bogomils.

Colonial experience generally, and the narrower sense of *mission civilisatrice* i.e. a newer generation of orientalizing tendencies, raise the question whether a traditional trajectory of portraying Bosnian Christians as 1) Bogomils and as 2) heretics, robbers, tribal, gullible, awkward etc.

is a compensational consequence of (demi-)Orientalization and/or a form of "borrowed colonialism" (Deringil), or independent therefrom as simple *bona fide* literary traditions.*Prima facie* deploying the concept of "Frontier Orientalism" would clearly seem logical both during the pre-Compromise Austrian Empire, as an occupier of Hungary, and the Habsburg-dominated Austria-Hungary, where certain attitudes, such as that of author Zsigmond Kemény or the diplomat Béni Kállay, do in fact reflect mission civilisatrice. Thus, an epistemological regime can be identified, which either advances Habsburg's colonial venture (Heiss ve Feichtinger, 2013: 157) or, in view of the heterogeneity of the Hungarian intellectual playground (cf. i. a. Jókai or Herczeg), is independent therefrom.

Arguably, Hungarian élite, itself being subjected to Austrian rule for centuries, and later as part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, had complex dynamics with its Balkan neighbors, shaped by historical events and various cultural interactions.

In parallel, "Nesting Orientalism" would not grasp why the Bogomils attract an even larger attention that results in typical components of portraying such as hereticism, puerility, outrageousness, than other groups of the Balkan. Neither Hungary's historically ambivalent relations towards its Southern neighbors, anchored between periods of antagonism and cooperation, as relevant contacts took place at during a relatively specific historical period, namely, between the 13th and 15th centuries, would explain such narrative tendencies Basically, Hungary's position led to a nuanced understanding of the Balkans, which differed from the perspectives of Western powers, reflected by French and Austrian Consuls in the portrayal of The Days of Consuls written by Ivo Andrić. While not always or necessarily driven by expansionist aims, Hungary's historical ties and interactions with the Balkans influenced its cultural, political, and literary landscapes. These latter tendencies, all in all, point to a need to somewhat differentiate Hungarian literary traditions from those introduced by earlier academics *pace* Gingrich, Malečková.

In Hungarian literature, which did pay, although not necessarily exclusive, but significant attention the Medieval group in question, the portrayal of the Bosnian Christians and Balkanian Bogomils is complex and sometimes reflects a negative image. While this could be attributed to the authors' historical status as subjects of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, such depictions are more likely rooted in historiographical tradition and the transmission of medieval perspectives rather than directly tied to the power objectives surrounding, for example, the annexation of Bosnia. These representations often echo the inherited biases of medieval worldviews, with which narrators tend to identify on patriotic stances.

In the context of 19th- and 20th-century Hungarian intellectual life, and particularly in literature, did emerge a long-standing tendency—likely inherited primarily from the legacy of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy—to identify Bosnian Christians specifically as Bogomils. This perspective seems less aligned with the currently dominant international historiographical viewpoint (Bijedić, 2011; Lorenz, 2011; Lovrenović, 2015). Nevertheless, it reflects a deeply rooted narrative tradition that significantly shaped Hungarian historical and literary thought during this period. At the same time, this tendency and its inherent bias cannot be attributed solely to the often-contentious connection to the Habsburg legacy, suggesting a more complex interplay of intellectual, cultural, and political factors at work.It is important to see that the attitude of modern Hungarian literature toward the Habsburgs often reflects the societal tensions and ambivalent feelings within Hungary toward the political framework of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Within the Hungarian national perspective, even today, opposing interpretations of the Habsburgs coexist. According to **Version A**, they are seen as the "eternal enemy", the colonizers who suppressed numerous freedom movements in blood, disrupted Hungary's historical development for centuries, and ultimately dragged the country into an inherently doomed world war. Moreover, their *divide et impera* policy is believed to have poisoned relations with the surrounding nationalities, exacerbating ethnic tensions

and fragmenting regional cohesion. **Version B**, while accepting certain elements of this schematic portrayal, emphasizes the cultural and economic prosperity following the Compromise of 1867 and views the Habsburg era as a conduit for European intellectual currents *(Niederhauser, 1986: 428–30).*

In the 19th century, during the Reform Era and the 1848–49 Revolution and War of Independence, Hungarian literature largely conveyed anti-Habsburg sentiments. During the period of repression and retaliation, the theme of opposition to the Habsburgs and the literary efforts aimed at strengthening Hungarian national identity played a particularly strong role. After the Compromise of 1867, though there was a decrease in overt resistance against the Habsburgs in literary works, tensions with the Empire continued to surface, often in symbolic form.

Without any intention to employ a *tu quoque*-type reasoning, it has to be added, *nota bene*, that various peoples of the Empire shared such views, i.e. in the words of Selim Deringil, a "borrowed colonialism." As observed by Jitka Malecková, for instance, "Czechs [had] held the view that the Bosnian church had adopted the theology of the persecuted Bogomils, a dualistic religious sect founded in Bulgaria in the 10th century."

This theory helped explain how it was that some Slavs had become Muslims: the Slavic Muslims were considered descendants of Bosnia's former nobility, most of whom were Bogomils, who, in order to preserve their rights and property after the Ottoman conquest, had adopted the faith of their Muslim conquerors en masse. Local rulers' persecution of the Bogomils combined with European states' attitude toward them during the Ottoman conquest made this population more willing to convert to Islam under Ottoman rule, after which the local Muslims became the ruling class, though they did not hesitate to fight with the Ottoman Turks for their privileges (Malecková, 2020: 126-127).

The general attention (Handžić, 1934: 77-80; Solovjev, 1949: 55-60; cf. Aščerić-Todd, 2022: 213-234) paid to such historical precedents raise the relevance of considering a potential inclination to the negative portrayal

of Bogomils as proto-Muslims, which falls within the Saidian perspective of Orientalist trends. However, such an aspect cannot be explicitly identified in the Hungarian corpus.

Yet, the tendency to depict the Bogomils as one out of many heterodox groups casted in a suspicious or exoticized light, does indeed emphasize the significance of taking into account othering predispositions, especially in view of ambivaent historical settings. Such communities—frequently seen as threatening outsiders — in general are often subject to broader tendencies of exoticization and cultural distancing. Thus, while medieval cultural inheritance plays a central role in Hungarian fiction, the lens of Orientalism offers a valuable framework for interpreting the persistent „othering" of the Bogomils in Hungarian literature.

While a major proportion of the prevalence of innocent comical settings on behalf of certain authors (Jókai, Szombathy) distinctly reflects benevolence, several narrations might have taken the Medieval animosity granted which is represented by the Hungarian characters of several historical accounts, also in order to provide a sense of lifelikeness of historical figures.

An alternative explanation might lie in what Lemberg-born Muhammad Asad identifies in the following: "one has to look far backward into history and try to comprehend the psychological background of the earliest relations between the Western and the Muslim worlds. What Occidentals think and feel about Islam today is rooted in impressions that were born during the Crusades" (Asad, 2004: 5).

Now it is obvious that Medieval Hungary was involved in quasi-Crusades (cf. Dautović, 2020: 63-77) against Bogomils and also encouraged in doing so by the Papal State and Western Europe, the same entities where, as attested by Wolff, since the Enlightenment, perceptions of barbarism and backwardness have shifted from the north to the east.

As Edward Gibbon (n.d.: 321) wrote, "When the black swarm of Hungarians first hung over Europe, about nine hundred years after the Christian

era, they were mistaken by fear and superstition for the Gog and Magog of the Scriptures, the signs and forerunners of the end of the world". This tone not only seems similar to certain attitudes about Muslims and others in the West, but also vis-a-vis the Balkans, Bosnia and Bogomils, once again highlighting the hierarchic nature of Orientalism.

In summary, Hungary, which is itself part of Central-Eastern Europe and has occasionally been the target of Western Orientalism, there are historical traditions of a unique relationship with the Balkans *in globo*. Although this nexus cannot be considered explicitly aimed at imperial expansion, there are definite echoes of European Othering tendencies, particularly in the rejection of the medieval Bogomil sect, at least as reflected in modern literature. Such corresponding representations offer insights into Hungary's complex historical and cultural ties with the "Occident" and "Orient," also shedding light on its unique position within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and broader European context while also displaying the hierarchical organization of Orientalist ideological currents.

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