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**(Re)construction of Identity along the Croatia-Herzegovina Border – Literary
Narratives in the Period 1878 – 1991**

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SUMMARY

Literary and non-literary narratives related to the border area analyzed here present an inspiring yet insufficiently researched topic but also a fertile ground for marginalization, stereotyping, and politicization. Aiming to make a contribution to the present scientific study as well as verifying and demystifying the available sources, this thesis tried to examine the two-way relationship between the literary-cultural models of the *sensu largo* understood border area and the identity of its inhabitants.

The corpus of analyzed texts included selected works by Croatian authors who wrote in the Croatian language and were related to the Croatia-Herzegovina border region by their origin and/or their work. The special focus was on the area of the so-called Bekija and the border between the microregions of Imotska Krajina and western Herzegovina. The starting and ending years of the research period were turning points in a non-literary sense: the year 1878, when Bosnia and Herzegovina came under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (the Monarchy had already ruled the then Croatian countries that were not *de facto* a part of Croatia, which is indicative in the case of Dalmatia) and the year 1991, which marks the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the beginning of the Croatian War of Independence, the so-called Homeland War.

The aim of the research was twofold: firstly, to investigate the (micro)regional specifics outlined in the literary works from the Croatian and (Bosnian-)Herzegovinian sides and to see if it is justifiable to talk about the double affiliation of the analyzed literature to (1) the regional and national and (2) the borderland and native literature (Croat. *matična književnost*), i.e., to see if the literature written on the periphery forms a kind of *corpus separatum* or it enriches the canonical (Croatian) literature thus giving a broader picture of its historical development; secondly, to investigate to what extent and in what ways the so-called small (left out and/or marginalized) authors fit in Croatian literature and point to the possible need for the re-evaluation of their works.

An interdisciplinary approach, i.e. combining several methodologies (elements of new historicism, spatial sciences, new regionalism, literary history) and methods of comparison, analysis, and synthesis, enabled an insight into different literary genres while special emphasis was on lyric, epic, and different pieces of non-fiction. Furthermore, the relationships established by Croatian authors were examined diachronically and synchronically (among the authors, but also in relation to members of Bosniak and Serbian literary circles) when this proved to be relevant for obtaining a broader picture of literary, historical, cultural, and social circumstances.

To achieve the research aim, three hypotheses were defined. The first hypothesis is that regional literature follows the continuity of Croatian literature in its themes, literary movements, styles, and currents, thus making a part of national literature, and the latter part of European literature. The second hypothesis is that literature of the border region enriches native literature without denying its special position between the centers that dictate the ideological and aesthetic norms in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia (but also European centers) and opens up the issue of multiple identities. The third hypothesis is that identity, especially in the literary and cultural sense, should be viewed as a “slippery area”, subject to extraliterary manipulations, that is, as an area of mutual overflowing and multiplicity.

The hypotheses were examined in three research periods, which relate to the three central chapters of the thesis: (1) from the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the First World War; (2) in the war and interwar periods; (3) from the beginning of World War II to the beginning of the Homeland War.

The first hypothesis was partially confirmed because the analysis showed that the analyzed literature mostly does not follow current literary movements, with the exception of several canonical writers included in the paper. The atypical development of the Croatian-Herzegovina literary region and the significant influence of non-literary reality on literary works are to some extent in line with the atypical development of Croatian canonical literature, which nevertheless opens up to European trends earlier. The second hypothesis was fully confirmed, i.e. it was shown that borderland narratives not only enrich native literature but are also included in the main complex of Croatian autonarratives. Thus, it is possible to discuss the borderland mindset not only in the context of the area analyzed here, but also about Croatia as a marginal area, a point of contact between the two larger cultural and civilizational entities, the West and the East. The third hypothesis was also fully confirmed, and it was concluded that the only sustainable approach to observing the development of

(literary) identity is the one that highlights multiplicity and continuous recreation. This is not only a prescriptive approach of the 21st century, but also a description of literary narratives in the three research periods, as it turned out that even those authors who in their political and journalistic texts tend to advocate homogenization (of identity), in their literary texts are more tolerant, even endowed with visionary tendencies.

Furthermore, in an area that is linguistically, nationally, ethnically, and religiously quite homogeneous, in all three research periods identity proved to be a complex category in the sense of individual poetics, themes, motifs, styles, and especially ideas presented in the literary works of individual authors. Therefore, not wanting to (over)generalize and bearing in mind a wide time span and the shifts of literary paradigms, (un)stable and recursive (personal and collective) identity categories were identified through which different literary characters are reaffirmed, embodying different ideas: from obedient, family, pious, tolerant Catholic Croat (first period), through the image of a more liberal, Western European-oriented intellectual powerless in the face of (post)war disintegration (second period) to a contemporary intellectual, an outsider who remains an “individual case”, a roguish adventurer, and *homo ludens* (third period).

Finally, the following eight dominant narratives were identified: language, patriotism, harmony, religion, family, tradition, homeland, and personality. It was concluded that the selected authors portray the protagonists in accordance with the value system of the period in which they write, that is, that they convey the ideas of their era, which differ depending on the author's identification, their literary-cultural and socio-political engagement. Therefore, there are accompanying counter-narratives, which are exemplified in the paper and once again confirm the thesis about the constant reconstruction of an unstable, slippery identity.

Keywords: (auto)narratives, (de)mythization, Croatia-Herzegovina region, marginalized authors, regional literature, periphery, tradition, multiple identities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ivana Dizdov". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Ivana" is written in a larger, more prominent script, and the last name "Dizdov" is written in a similar but slightly smaller script. The signature is located in the bottom right corner of the page.