Chapter Two

Translators as Ambassadors and Gatekeepers: The Case of South Slav Literature

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Like scholars and journalists, translators also struggle with notions of objectivity, impartiality, commitment and engagement. They are not merely humble language workers, some claim; their work involves them in conflicts of this world and makes them inevitably partial: 'engaged and committed, either implicitly or explicitly' (Tymoczko, 2000, 24). Mona Baker (2013, 24) believes that the inevitable partiality of translation is not to be bemoaned, but embraced and celebrated, and used 'as a tool for changing the world'. Translators never simply reproduce texts, but 'reframe aspects of political conflicts, and hence participate in the construction of social and political reality' (Baker, 2007, 151). Baker (2007, 154) rejects the notion of objectivity and notes that even 'uncritical fidelity to the source text or utterance has consequences that an informed translator or interpreter may not wish to be party to' (Baker, 2006, 128). Instead of a calm space in which notions of accuracy and faithfulness reign supreme, the translation space is a battlefield of partialities. How far can we go in being partial before we lose the trust readers grant our translations and the promotions we arrange for them? Is there still some space left for the outmoded notion of professional ethics in this world of conflicting partialities, or is professionalism always merely a cover-up for a partiality different to mine?

A version of this stance can be found in Francis R. Jones's (2009) article 'Ethics, Aesthetics and *Décision*. Literary translating in the wars of the Yugoslav succession', included in Baker's *Translation Studies*. Jones is not only a translator of Bosniak, Croatian and Serbian literature, but a translation studies scholar keenly aware of the ethical and political dimensions of his profession: in several publications he has thematized the problem of

deciding what to translate – or not to translate – during the times when his source cultures were in conflict, and thus represents an ideal test-case for the principles discussed above. Jones (2001, 263) sees the translator as both ambassador and gatekeeper: 'I see part of the translator-as-ambassador's role as that of a gatekeeper: in other words, by translating or refusing to translate, she has the power to decide which writers and which ideas can be heard in the target culture.' This position begins to cause concern when Jones (2000, 66) pairs it with his view of the general tenability of objectivity and impartiality: 'any notion of academic impartiality is a dangerous fiction', and 'no neutral, objective stance is possible when describing recent and drastic events' (Jones and Arsenijević, 2005, 69). Even if possible, objectivity and impartiality are undesirable, for 'might an Olympian stance of pan-Yugoslav fairness not be an act of hypocrisy or blindness as reprehensible as my government's insistence that aggressor and victim were equal?' (Jones, 2009, 12) Those who still insist on objectivity as a valid academic position are actually unethical: 'the ethics of neutrality … may not always be the most appropriate ethic for the literary translator. Indeed, partiality might often be more appropriate' (Jones, 2009, 16). Objectivity and impartiality are both impossible and unethical; partiality is not only the sole position available, but also the only ethical one. Hence, Jones (2009, 7) frequently underlines his partiality: 'I am patently not neutral in my account of external events and social relations, nor can I be'.

All scholars find themselves in a hermeneutical situation: *absolute* objectivity and impartiality are impossible, as our understanding is always limited by the prior intelligibility with which we understand the issue we want to interpret, guided by a specific perspective or point of view, and shaped by a specific conceptuality, the vocabulary at our disposal. These are all good reasons for interpretative humility. Yet thousands of academics pursue what Jones dismisses as dangerous fiction and reprehensible hypocrisy; they believe that being in

a hermeneutical situation does not mean that we can never overcome it through a revision of the prior intelligibility we brought to the process, by taking another perspective, and by devising a new vocabulary. This guarantees not absolute objectivity – hence our humility, a recognition that our truths are only human and subject to revision, re-interpretation and dispute – but that we have done everything in our power to propose what we see as truth beyond reasonable doubt. There is no reason for translators to be in a different position. Jones's reply to this objection is that his partisanship is justified because he chose to represent the cosmopolitan voices from within the source cultures in conflict, and to deny any presence in the lingua franca to what he sees as ethnonationalist views. 'This means that translation', maintains Jones (2005, 72), 'has the power to support, subvert or ignore the images created by nationalism or Balkanism. I can do so either by giving international voice to discourses supporting, subverting or ignoring these images; or by validating such discourses in the eyes of source readers'. Having been 'strongly committed to an anti-nationalist, civil-society agenda' (Jones, 2005, 69) and following his 'own cosmopolitanist views' (Jones, 2010, 233), Jones (2009, 11) has 'felt the need to defend and promote the complexity and potential for tolerance in Bosnian culture, both via literary translation and the translation editing of works and discussions promoting inter-communal/non-particularistic dialogue'. He frames the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1992-1995 as 'the political conflict between cosmopolitanism and ethnonationalism' (2010, 245) in which the Bosniak-dominated government led by Alija Izetbegović's Party of Democratic Action stood for cosmopolitanism, while Bosnian Serbs, and to lesser extent Bosnian Croats, stood for ethnonationalism. It is worth noting that Jones regularly qualifies the Bosniak government's cosmopolitan stance as ambiguous: it adhered to the cosmopolitan principle 'officially at least' (2011, 20; 2005, 75); it 'claimed to uphold a "multicultural" model of Bosnia (no matter how imperfectly it did so in practice)' (2014, 360).

But even this merely official, only claimed and imperfect cosmopolitanism justifies the translator's bias: Jones's partisanship led him in the 1990s to promote, translate and edit translations of the Bosniak authors close to Izetbegović's government: Džemaludin Latić (b.1957), whose poetry he found 'rather sub-standard', but as his 'socio-political loyalty outweighed artistic judgment' he 'improved' it in his translation (Jones, 2009, 13); the essays of Rusmir Mahmutćehajić (b.1948), 'which promoted inter-ethnic tolerance rooted in a shared religiosity as the unifying Bosnian idea' (Jones, 2009, 10);[1] and also the poetry collection *Kameni spavač* (1971) by Mak Dizdar (1917-1971), whose work in the 1990s 'became seen as an iconic symbol of Bosnian identity by those who supported Bosnian independence' (Jones, 2011, 47).

The gatekeeping part of the translator's work consisted in refraining from publishing translations of Serbian authors even when they were not ethnonationalists: he feared that publishing his translations of Serbian poets 'might be propagandized by the nationalist regime in Belgrade' (2009, 12). This applied to the unnamed 'living writers of excellent texts (and/or personal friends) who supported or failed to oppose regimes which [he] felt to be hateful' (Jones, 2009, 12), as well as to dead ones, such as Vasko Popa (1922-1991). Popa's collection *Uspravna zemlja* (1972) explored some motives from the Kosovo myth, and although Jones (2009, 12) admits that while 'writing these poems, Popa was positively exploring his cultural roots, seeking pan-human archetypes through cultural particulars, in an age (the 1970s) when such explorations were relatively untainted', he feared that publishing translations of these poems might give credibility to Serbian nationalism. This is the ambassadorial-gatekeeping logic: the excellent texts are to be suppressed, and the sub-standard ones improved and published; of the two poetry collections, published at the same time and exploring the medieval motives in a similar way, the one which received an ideological and political reading

would be promoted, and the other, which received no such reading, will be suppressed. Years after the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina ended, Jones (2010, 245) surveyed the field to assess who translated Bosniak and Serbian poetry into English, and what was translated, and concluded that no translation projects of Bosniak poetry promoted ethnonationalism.

There is, however, at least one ethnonationalist poet promoted by Jones himself: Džemaludin Latić (Ali & Lifschultz, 114-115), a professor at Sarajevo's Faculty of Islamic Studies, one of the accused in the 1983 trial of Bosnian pan-Islamists, one of Izetbegović's closest associates and a founder of the Party of Democratic Action (SDA), and the editor-in-chief of the Party's news magazine *Ljiljan* (1990-1994). Judging by the following claim he can hardly be described as the promoter of cosmopolitan views:

> My religion prohibits a marriage between Muslim women and non-Muslim men. (…) In principle, a Muslim man can marry a monotheist woman. (…) However, this is only in principle. Most religious scholars, such as European Council for Fatwas, maintain that in the situations such as the Bosnian and Balkan ones, Muslim men should merry only Muslim women. (Arnautović, 2009)

John R. Schindler (2007, 142) noted several other similar claims made by Latić: he 'lashed out at "the apostate Salman Rushdie" […] adding that "Imam Khomeini's fatwa [the death sentence against Rushdie] is a must for every Muslim to carry out."' The list goes on: he also claimed that '"Jihad is our holy task" […]. Citing a popular SDA view, Izetbegović's top propagandist denounced the Serbs as "polytheists" (a common prejudice among devout Muslims, who consider that belief in the Holy Trinity removes Christians from the ranks of monotheist)' (Schindler 2007, 197).

Beganović (2011, 427) quotes Latić's claim that the Bosniak members of Sarajevo's *Club 99* – at the time an association of liberal intellectuals from all Bosnian ethnicities

committed to the promotion of democracy and civil society, opposed to all ethnonational policies and thus closest to Jones's understanding of cosmopolitanism – will lead Muslims into a decaying civilization, and will 'turn them into a shapeless mass, a people in religious and political amnesia – because they think that the road to a free society goes via rejecting national, and especially religious specificities in Bosnia and Herzegovina'. These statements do not present Latić as a bearer of cosmopolitan views.

Jones's claim that the Bosniak-dominated government in Sarajevo advocated cosmopolitanism 'at least officially' attests that he is aware of the discrepancy between the declared political aims of Izetbegović's SDA and its activities during the war. 'SDA adopted an ambiguous stand and reiterated its commitment to a united and multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina while turning the territories held by the Bosnian army into a *de facto* Muslim entity', maintains Bougarel (1999, 9). 'Living together is a beautiful thing, but I think and I can freely say that it is a lie, that it is not that for which our soldiers are dying… [Our soldier] risks his life to defend his family, his land, his people', stated Izetbegović at the SDA convention in March 1994 (Bougarel, 1996, 94). Vjekoslav Perica (2002, 88), who studied the impact of religion on the wars of Yugoslav succession, concludes that 'Alija Izetbegović and the SDA pursued Bosnian nationalism with a strong religious dimension'. It was 'a nationalist party created by the representatives of a pan-Islamist stream that first appeared in the 1930s and reorganized in the 1970s'; thus in the first democratic election in 1990 a 'secularized Bosnian Muslim population brought to power the representatives of a small pan-Islamist minority' (Bougarel, 2007, 99, 117). Izetbegović's pan-Islamist ideology was explained in his *Islamic Declaration*, written in 1970 and published in 1990. There he clearly stated that 'once Muslims become a majority in one country (thanks to the relative high population growth) they should demand a state of their own, organized according to Islamic laws and norms because, in

Izetbegović's words, "Islam and non-Islamic systems are incompatible"' (Perica, 2002, 77). In a recent publication Bougarel claims that 'most research published about Bosnia-Herzegovina has failed to take account of political Islam. This failure is attributable sometimes to simple ignorance, and sometimes to a well-intentioned form of self-censorship that is no longer necessary' (Bougarel, 2017, location 168). The Party's main goal was the 'greater Muslim' project: 'a state composed of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Sandžak [a part of Serbia], in which Muslims would be the majority, and the Serbs and Croats would be reduced to national minorities' (Bougarel, 1999, 7). Izetbegović was very explicit about this point: 'Serbs and Croats will have in Bosnia-Herzegovina the same rights as Arabs in France', he promised (Bougarel, 2007, 120). Nor were others ambiguous about their vision of Bosnia's future: Adnan Jahić, the Party's spokesperson and the president of its parliamentary group, wrote in 1993 that 'Islam is not primarily interested in formal democracy … but rather in its principles and positive ethical values that will contribute to the fulfilment of the Islamic idea within the community' (Bougarel, 2007, 112). Instead of 'formal democracy', '[t]he future Muslim state "will have a Muslim ideology based on Islam, on Islamic legal-religious and ethical-social principles, but also on elements of Western-European origin that are not in conflict with the former ones"' (Bougarel, 2007, 116). As for non-Muslims, a 'complete equality of rights will be guaranteed to all citizens, yet the social achievement of each individual will depend not only on his own economic activity, but also on how much he will consciously accept and follow the principles and the spirit of the Muslim ideology' (Bougarel, 2007, 117). Bougarel (2007, 118, 120) concludes that Jahić openly expressed a political project which remained, for the most part, implicit; he formulated 'the geopolitical dream that motivates the funders of the SDA in 1990: the wish to bring back Bosnia-Herzegovina into the "house of Islam" (dar-al-islam) from which it had been torn away in 1878.' For Bosnian non-Muslims, this would mean

a return to the *dhimmi* status which they enjoyed during Ottoman rule: 'protected' in the sense that they can practice their religion with certain limitations, but politically and legally subjugated to Muslims. Consequently, Izetbegović 'felt it was logical for Bosnia to become a state for the Muslims, as Croats and Serbs each already had a state of their own', as noted in the *Srebrenica Report* (328). On the same page, this *Report* also concludes:

> When Izetbegović, also as president, spoke of "our people", he meant the Muslims and not the Croats and Serbs. On state occasions, the SDA flag often flew alongside the Bosnian one. At party meetings, those present expressed their support for the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein and saw Arab clothing. The many green flags flying on such occasions, some with half-moons, were a clear reference to Islam, not to any multi-cultural Bosnian identity.

The *Srebrenica Report* also records the claim by Rusmir Mahmutćehajić, one of Izetbegović's closest associates, from December 1990, that Serbs and Croats had to adapt all aspects of their development to those of the Bosnian Muslims (328). In the years preceding the war in Yugoslavia, Mahmutćehajić 'was the key strategist of Bosnian independence' and also 'instrumental in establishing the Patriotic League', the SDA's paramilitary wing which would later grow into the Muslim–dominated Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Banac, 2000, x).[2] From 1991 to 1994 Mahmutćehajić was the vice-president in SDA's government. Banac (2000, x) notes that 'all forces … that promoted the negotiated settlement of the Bosnian war' had a prominent adversary in Mahmutćehajić, and that the diplomats of important powers blamed him for obtaining military help for Bosnian Muslim forces from the 'wrong countries', namely, Iran. The founder of paramilitary forces, the opponent of negotiated settlement to end the war, and the link between SDA's government and the foreign Islamist forces began, as of 1995, to reinvent himself as a promoter of the image of Bosnia as 'unity in diversity', and

of dialogue and tolerance. However, Mahmutćehajić's engagement on the side of unity, dialogue and tolerance is only 'at least official' as well.

Mahmutćehajić is an opponent of rationalism and secularism, liberalism and modernity, an anti-modernist of the René Guénon variety: from the time of the Enlightenment, the West fell into barbarity (Mahmutćehajić, 2000, 34); modern Western civilization is materialistic and intellectually barren because, sunk in positivism and agnosticism, it does not rely on transcendent principles (Mahmutćehajić, 2000, 56).[3] Salvation lies in returning to tradition, which in Guénon's manner stands for religion, or more specifically, the Tradition, i.e. the Koran. The 'being of Bosnia', which is 'the treasury of Tradition', cannot be understood without understanding the difference between the Tradition and the 'paganism of modernity' (Mahmutćehajić, 1997, 8), but the English translation substitutes the 'paganism of modernity' with 'the shallow vulgarity of our new-age outlook' (Mahmutćehajić, 2000, 6). Christianity in his view is responsible for much of Europe's moral degradation: the genocide of Jews and Muslims in Europe, which has been going on for centuries, cannot be explained without taking into consideration Christianity as Europe's core feature (Mahmutćehajić, 1997, 204); crimes committed against Bosnia are always discussed only as simple, individual crimes, instead of analysing them from the perspective of the holy tradition of the perpetrators, which is Christianity (1997, 212). The English translation, however, modifies this sentence so that Christianity as such does not appear as the basis from which the crimes arise, and substitutes this with 'the use of Christianity by the anti-Bosnian elites' (Mahmutćehajić, 2000, 217). In spite of what he perceives as Christianity's dismal historical record, Mahmutćehajić (1997, 126) advocates *unity in diversity* as the 'Bosnian model', which stands for 'the trust in the possibility of a peaceful dialogue between the three Abrahamic traditions', 'a constant aspiration to establish

permanent dialogue between different ways and laws, and between individuals exercising their right to seek perfection through following different paths' (Mahmutćehajić, 2000, 215). This obviously does not mean that, historically, Bosnia has been the site of a constant and peaceful theological debate about the nature of God and inter-confessional tolerance: up until the twentieth century, different confessional communities barely communicated with each other (Sundhausen, 2014, 85-87). Mahmutćehajić does not dispute this, but boldly postulates the embodiment of unity in diversity in Bosniaks/Bosnian Muslims, 'the most numerous people of Bosnia' (Mahmutćehajić, 2000, 115): unity in diversity is 'in the very essence of Bosniaks' being' (Mahmutćehajić, 1997, 211), as Bosniak identity stands for 'the essential unity of all sacred traditions' (Mahmutćehajić, 2000, 31). Thus, although absent from Bosnian history, unity in diversity still remains potentially anchored in the country through Bosniaks, while Serbs and Croats in all of Mahmutćehajić's publications appear only as Bosnia's relentless fascist destroyers. However, since 'religion is the nucleus of Bosniaks' culture' (Mahmutćehajić, 1997, 55), since Islam is their 'unifying and defining essence' (Mahmutćehajić, 1997, 130), it logically follows that 'Islam shoulders the unity in diversity' (Mahmutćehajić, 1997, 132). Modern culture, claims Mahmutćehajić (2000, 57), resembles a tree without a root: the social order of the contemporary world is not based on a 'transcendental principle' – meaning, it is secular, with sovereignty derived from people instead of from God and his holy book. 'But for a Muslim, law in its totality is a part of religion', claims Mahmutćehajić (1997, 55). The English translation modifies this sentence by introducing a general religious perspective instead of the Muslim one: 'From the religious perspective religion and law are inseparable' (Mahmutćehajić, 2000, 57), which is neither a correct translation, nor a verifiable fact, as all other religions do not mind separating law and faith. This is, in a nutshell, the definition of Islamic political imagination: only God legislates,

'neither the people nor the parliament nor the sovereign can be sources of law' (Roy, 1994, 61). Mahmutćehajić rejects democracy quite explicitly: he lists Plato's main forms of political order, positioned on the scale from the best, which is aristocratic rule, via timocracy, oligarchy and democracy, to tyranny, as the worst. For him, 'aristocracy corresponds today to theocracy' (Mahmutćehajić, 2000, 35). 'Theocracy is the rule of the higher order', claims Mahmutćehajić (1997, 43), but the English translation omits this sentence (2000, 35). 'Democracy is, by its nature, the predecessor of dictatorship and demagogy', continues the author (1997, 43): it is in the *nature of democracy* to degenerate into dictatorship or demagogy. The translation kindly softens the edges again: 'Democracy is, however, always vulnerable to displacement or demagogy' (Mahmutćehajić, 2000, 35). In the future, Bosnians should be 'directed towards the "general good" which is realized by following transcendent principles' (Mahmutćehajić, 2000, 36); Bosnians should be steered away from the secular, popular sovereignty-based democracy, toward the theocratic system. 'This will require a fundamental and decisive reconsidering and denying of lower forms of freedom, and re-establishment of order' (Mahmutćehajić, 1997, 44). Naturally, in a theocracy, some forms of freedom will have to go, just as in the English translation the verb 'denying' had to go. What will this theocratic system be based on? The followers of Muhammad have

> a task of building a model community, guided by their obligation to establish a place where people will be brought into God's moral structure (*madina*). Wherever Muslim are living, they should order their community and their society on the basis of the Message and Example of God's Messenger. They should desire that the whole world be transformed into a *madina*, a community of believers. (Mahmutćehajić 2000, 23-24)

Those who are not Muhammad's followers, such as Christians, 'are ruled by their own sacred laws'; however, '[t]heir independence ceases only at the point where it limits or

endangers the priority of Islam as God's final and complete message' (Mahmutćehajić, 1997, 27-28) This is Mahmutćehajić's political vision: a theocratic state, based on Islamic law, in which non-Muslims can enjoy freedom as long as it does not contravene the primacy of Islam. They cannot be equal to Muslims; they are only tolerated so long as they submit to Islamic law. Even tolerance has its limits: tolerating what contravenes Islam is impossible, for otherwise '[t]olerance becomes the name for surrendering the fundamental principles without which religion is not possible' (Mahmutćehajić, 1997, 56). This view of the value of tolerance is, however, omitted in the English translation (Mahmutćehajić, 2000, 57). This vision is not limited to Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is global. Mahmutćehajić explains this in the following paragraph, which is also omitted in the English translation of *Bosnia the Good*: 'The world community of Muslims is the categorical and integral political ideal. This community is determined not by human, but by God's laws. No sovereign or authority can change these laws. This is the multiplicity of laws based on God's commands' (Mahmutćehajić, 1997, 31). This is, *pace* Mahmutćehajić, how Islam facilitates unity in diversity. This unity appears to be very clearly structured: Islam preserves its primacy, and from that position 'tolerates' those who submit to it, provided they respect Islam's priority. If unity in diversity is the dialogue between the sacred traditions, it certainly is not a dialogue of cultures, comments Nicolosi, as it is based on the recognition of Islam's supremacy (Nicolosi, 2010, 723). This is a crypto-nationalist thesis disguised as multiculturalism (Nicolosi, 2010, 725-26). In *Bosnia the Good* one reads the following lyrical paragraph:

> The blood of *shaheeds*, *those who testified with their lives that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is His slave and His Messenger*, cleanses this world, and enables the scent of the rose, its testimony to the love of God, and Paradise to open to the those who refuse to be enslaved to anything but God. (Mahmutćehajić, 1997, 134, my italics)

Shaheeds, Islamic martyrs who died to testify that Muhammad is God's Messenger, in the English translation surprisingly become martyrs for Bosnia's multi-confessional and multi-ethnic future:

> The blood of *those who died in the belief that Bosnia stands for all faiths and all peoples* cleanses the world […]. (2000, 143, my italics)

This is not an example of an ethical, responsible, and professional translation, but merely of an engaged, partial and committed one. There is nothing ethical in this modification of the source text: it radically changes the text's meaning and the political position of its author.

Mahmutćehajić's ethnonationalism is most obvious in his reinterpretation of Bosniak history. In almost all his publications, from *Živa Bosna* (1994) to the latest, *Andrićizam* (2015), he repeats the cornerstones of contemporary Bosniak mytho-history: in addition to the myth of the perfect tolerance of non-Muslims in the Ottoman state, there is also the representation of Muslims as the victims of a centuries-long genocide in Europe, the myth of the Bosnian uninterrupted statehood from the Middle Ages to the present, and the famous *Bogomil* myth. Their main purpose is, as Džaja (2003, 58) noted, 'to marginalize the Serbian and Croatian presence in Bosnia' and 'to create the idea of Bosniaks as the corner-stone people' within it (Džaja, 2003, 53). The *Bogomil* myth was created at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century by several Romantic historians and Austro-Hungarian officials, who strove to create a Bosnian nation to suppress already-formed Serbian and Croatian identities in occupied Bosnia and Herzegovina. It crumbled when twentieth-century historians re-examined it. The myth maintained that the members of the medieval Bosnian Church collectively accepted Islam after the Ottoman conquest in the mid-fifteenth century, which would make them the ancestors of the present-day Bosniaks, who are thus their only true heirs. According to the *Bogomil* myth, the followers of the Bosnian Church were

theologically similar to dualist, neo-Manichean Cathars, and perceived as heretics by Roman Catholic and Serbian Orthodox churches, which instigated a genocidal campaign against them. As victims of their neighbours, the *Bogomil* saw salvation in Islam, and converted *en masse*. Twentieth-century historians, however, demonstrated that its ritual was similar to Catholic and Orthodox practice, that it was not persecuted, as the churches co-existed cordially and peacefully, that it was never a state church, and that there is no evidence that the majority of the population ever belonged to it, that by the time of Ottoman conquest only a handful of its members remained, and that *en masse* conversion to Islam never occurred.[4] Rather, it was a slow process, which accelerated only when the Bosnian Church was long gone.

The new Bosniak historiography, however, revived the *Bogomil* myth and transformed it into the founding Bosniak national myth. Mahmutćehajić not only frequently retells it in his books, but (2000, 117-139) extends it further in the past, constructing an 'uninterrupted' continuity composed of quite disparate and disconnected elements: from Alexandrian bishop Arius, exiled to Illyricum after the First Council of Nicaea (325 AD) and his Balkan followers, via some Muslim presence confirmed in parts of present-day Serbia and Croatia, to the first-known Bosnian *ban*, Borić (12th century), who bequeathed his estate to a Templar monastery, the Knights Templars being, in Mahmutćehajić's view (2000, 117-139), 'under the influence of Islam'. From the Templars to the Bosnian Church, formed in the mid-thirteenth century, is but a short step, and the Church naturally metamorphoses into Islam and present-day Bosniaks. What connects Arius's followers, the Knight Templars, the Bosnian Church and Bosnian Muslims is their religious difference, the status of heretics, and 'a historical experience of persecution and genocide' (Mahmutćehajić, 2000, 139). Mahmutćehajić (1997, 105) rejects any questioning of this construction, claiming that 'exclusively rationalist and dogmatic-secular approach', which demands evidence and logical coherence, is not the right

path to understanding 'the essence of Bosniaks' being'. This fable resembles early nationalist chronicles more than modern historiography; its expected effect on the reader should be to justify Bosniaks' claim on Bosnia, to prove that 'since the medieval foundations [they have an] active and historical right to Bosnia' (Mahmutćehajić, 1997, 39) at the expense of Serbs and Croats, who in the fable stand for persecutors coming from outside to eradicate different paths to God. In the English translation their 'historical right to Bosnia' becomes their 'historical rights within Bosnia and Herzegovina' (Mahmutćehajić, 2000, 33), a significantly different meaning, for the original implies that Bosnia belongs to Bosniaks only, while the translation allows for others having similar rights as well. Dubravko Lovrenović (2009, 276), a Bosnian medievalist who devoted a book to debunking nationalist myths of all three ethnicities in recent Bosnian historiography, maintains that this arbitrary construction of Mahmutćehajić is 'based on reviving stereotypes, on conceptual and factual confusion, [and] unsustainable simplifications', and that he demonstrates 'intellectual arrogance … which laconically eliminates several generations of historians'.

This myth responds to the claim that 'Bosnia does not have its myth or its mythology' which Muhamed Filipović (2006, 10) put forward in 1967 in 'Bosnian Spirit in Literature – What is it?', a manifesto from the earliest phase of modern Bosniak nationalism. This essay was apparently about literature, but its allegorical meaning was obvious to all: Bosnian literature is the embodiment of the Bosnian spirit which emanates from the Bosnian nation. Filipović explicitly rejects the literature written in Bosnia before the 1960s as merely Serbian and Croatian literature, the literature which 'divided Bosnia more than many an army marching through' it (Filipović, 2006, 5). The new Bosnian literature will unite Bosnia by emitting the authentic Bosnian spirit, and is being written by Bosniaks alone. Thus – similarly to Mahmutćehajić's various images of Bosnia – the Bosniak identity is superimposed on

Bosnia, as supposedly the only authentic 'Bosnian' one. As an example of this literature, Filipović cited Dizdar's collection, *Kameni spavač* (Stone Sleeper, 1966). Dizdar gathered inscriptions from *stećci*, medieval tombstones in Bosnia, which ranged from trivial notes merely mentioning the names of the deceased, to more elaborate efforts to capture their lives in lapidary sentences which sometimes achieve unexpected poetic qualities. He developed some of them further, thus creating exemplary modern poetry based on medieval images of simple lives focused on basic existential situations: the reader hears the voices of those long gone, who talk to him about love, death, fear, joy, hope, children, honour, etc. There is little specifically Bosnian in these elliptic verses: one poem mentions Bosnia, one 'good Bosnians', one lists several Bosnian rivers, and one several Bosnian rulers. Dizdar was not a Bosniak nationalist – he considered himself a Croat – and there is no evidence that he was attracted to medieval tombstones by the notorious nationalistic attachment to all things medieval. On the contrary, he once said: 'For me, the *stećak* is but an inspiration to address in poetic terms the existential [NB: not national – ZM] questions pertinent to all historical epochs. Hence a misconception that my poetry is only a representation of medieval times, or any other for that matter' (Buturović, 2002, 79). This is how Dizdar was read until 1990s; since then, however, a host of critics instilled in *Stone Sleeper* the whole repertoire of nationalist myths and transformed Dizdar into a poet of Bosniak nationalism.

An example of such a reading is the book *Stone Speaker* by Amila Buturović, to which Jones contributed his translations of Dizdar's poems. Buturović (2002, 83) notes that in Dizdar's pre-1990s reception there were no traces of 'political and national concerns', but boldly postulates that Dizdar provides the 'sense of national history', and transforms 'the medieval burial ground into the cradle of national culture' (ibid., 84, 127). Throughout the book, Buturović manages to introduce many elements of current Bosniak mytho-history: the

notion of Ottoman multiculturalism, *Bogomilism* as the 'precursor to Bosnian Islam' (ibid., 155), 'unity of Bosnian culture' (ibid., 115), 'unified Bosnian nationhood' (ibid., 2002, 33), even Bosnian 'continuity in territorial terms' (ibid., 127). Even though Buturović is aware of the mythical character of the *Bogomil* theory (ibid., 60-63), she nevertheless proceeds with an analysis based on the assumption that medieval *stećak* graveyards were *Bogomil* and that Dizdar 'accepted this proposition, turning it into the very basis of his poetry' (ibid., 71).[5] In Buturović's reading, Dizdar's *Stone Sleeper* becomes a 'national epic' about Bosnian unity and territorial integrity. This may well be a legitimate and valuable political programme, but it has no connection with Dizdar's collection; all these political and national concems disappear as soon as Buturović begins to analyse individual poems, since a close reading of them cannot support them. Buturović's interpretation of Dizdar's poems is merely an example of political misreading: interpreting poetry is here used only as an opportunity to repeat, elaborate and fortify a national ideology. It is ironic that, although Jones (2009, 7) is well aware that 'the manipulation of literature often plays a crucial role in the process of ethno-national identity formation by generating "pseudo-histories" that create or reinforce national mythologies', he keeps repeating with reference to Dizdar's poetry this pseudo-history which reinforces Bosniak national mythology (Jones 2000; 2001; 2009; 2011).

Jones frequently discusses what prompted him to translate and promote certain authors, and to use his gatekeeping capacity to exclude others. He deserves respect for being consistently open about his partisanship and partiality in all his publications, and turns the justification of his bias into a scholarly theme. Yet Jones (2009, 16) also maintains that it is 'crucial to have an awareness of the ethical and ideological implications of one's acts', and this is where our respectful spectatorship ought to give way to a more scholarly approach. He presents himself as a cosmopolitan opposed to every ethnonationalism, who put his

professional skills to the service of the cosmopolitan forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Jones gave his support to the government led by Izetbegović's Party of Democratic Action, translated Latić and Mahmutćehajić, and, after translating Dizdar's *Stone Sleeper*, promoted an ideologically inspired interpretation of it. Yet we have seen that Izetbegović's government was hardly cosmopolitan in Jones's sense; it was ethnonationalist and Islamist, a fact recognized by all relevant literature on the Bosnian war. Jones's knowledge of the conflict is based on the media and personal accounts (Jones, 2011, 25), and if he refers to any literature on the war, it is to journalistic accounts like Silber and Little (1997), Malcolm (1996), and Judah (2000). The relevant, standard scholarly accounts of the war, written by professional historians and social scientists with appropriate language skills and a long-standing academic interest in the former Yugoslavia, in which Izetbegović's ideological platform is adequately presented, never appear as his sources: Burg and Shoup (1999) and Bougarel (1996) for the history of the Bosnian war, or Jović (2009), Hayden (1999) and Perica (2002) for the political, legal and religious aspects of Yugoslav dissolution, respectively. The standard history of Yugoslavia's dissolution, Woodward (1995), widely accepted as a non-partisan, non-biased, non-partial account of the events – such accounts are still possible, and not at as exceptionally as some may believe – in all of Jones's writing appears only once (2009, 8), and then he imputes something to her that she did not claim: namely that Dobrica Ćosić was a prime mover behind the 1986 draft memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (Woodward, 1995, 71, 78). In his promotion of Dizdar's poetry, Jones contributed to furthering ethnonationalist myths, and thus actually might have harmed Dizdar's reception in English. *Stone Sleeper* was published by Anvil Press only in 2008, and had no reception to speak of: if you introduce someone as a poet who constructs 'a Bosnian identity through the

country's medieval past' (Jones, 2009, 9), the reading public may be less inclined to read the author than if you introduce him as a great poet of existential situations that concern us all.

Presenting Latić and Mahmutćehajić as cosmopolitan writers is also incorrect, to say the least; both authors are ethnonationalists and Islamists from the extreme end of the political spectrum. The modifications we identified in Mahmutćehajić's translated prose amount to misrepresentation of the author's political and ideological position. A translator conscious of the ethical aspects of translating should abstain from mistranslating the source text or, where another translator is responsible for it, note that these 'improvements' drastically change the author's political and ideological position. Such a translator may even want to voice his concern regarding the morality and professionality of these changes – especially if analysing translators' decisions to alter or remove semantic features is one of his scholarly topics, as it is one of Jones's topics (Jones, 2016). Instead, Jones repeatedly presents as a cosmopolitan, anti-nationalist and tolerant advocate of multi-ethnicity an author who actually rejects tolerance, secularism, and democracy, and promotes ethnonationalist myths, the primacy of Islam as political ideology, theocracy and Bosniaks' hegemony in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a translator-as-ambassador, Jones accomplishes exactly what he explicitly opposes as a translator-as-gatekeeper: enabling the presence of ethnonationalist views in the lingua franca. 'Trustworthiness' is, as Pim notes (2012, 70), what translators exchange: it is the principal ethical value without which all talk about ethics, engagement and commitment, changing the world, but also about professionalism, makes little sense.

This case study points in two directions. The first concerns the limits of translators' ethics and the metaphor of ambassadors. In the complex web in which a translator must orient herself – the source text, its author and his background, the source culture, the translator's own politics and values, ideological and military struggles of this world, the ideal

of a peaceful planet and of multi-cultural understanding, etc. – her primary loyalty must be to the source text which she renders into another language, and the accuracy of information which she supplies about it. A translator may find himself torn between his professional ethics, with its imperative of trustworthiness derived from accuracy and faithfulness, and his politics, with its vision of a better world. It does not suffice to shrug and say 'the dirtier the situation, the dirtier our hands' (Jones, 2009, 20), for if we do, our hands are likely to be very dirty indeed. A part of this better world must be the idea of accurate translations and their *bona fide*, knowledgeable and faithful promotion, and every politics which promises a better future without them, or at the expense of them, is not worth the trouble. It is plainly untrue that we must remain forever imprisoned in the prior intelligibility through which we understand something in advance, in a specific perspective or specific vocabulary: all these – constituting our partiality and bias – are subject to revision and modification through the process of interpretation. A translator should, like her relatives the historian, the social scientist, or the literary critic, be judged by her success in overcoming her bias, not by the sincerity with which she confesses it. The metaphor of ambassadorship is inadequate here. Ambassadors are civil servants paid by governments to pass their views abroad; their independent thinking can only be exercised within the limits of policies set by their governments; it is to the government that they owe their loyalty; they need to achieve a political aim, and not necessarily be attached to truth. Translators should not pass on what governments want to be taken as their views – as occurred quite literally in the present case study – and should be independent, attached to truth and loyal to their source texts.

The second direction concerns the notion of intercultural dialogue and the gatekeeper metaphor. A gatekeeper does not facilitate a dialogue: he merely prevents some from entering and speaking. A translator as gatekeeper is engaged in the opposite of the

translator's task: in non-translating. That a translator can follow his bias and be wrong, by mistaking the Guelphs for the Ghibellines or the other way around, by now needs no further evidence. Or, perhaps, could they all be Guelphs? Or all Ghibellines? Instead of *deciding for us* who is who, the translator should use his linguistic skills to *reproduce for us* the dialogue of Guelphs and Ghibellines as faithfully and accurately as possible, without fearing that she might 'legitimize' the bad ones in the process. Agreeing to translate a text with which one disagrees does not imply complicity, as Baker (2006, 105) believes; translators are not responsible for the content of their translations, as long as they are accurate. Even if the content is detestable, their professional task is to present detestable contents to a wider audience accurately. The fear of legitimizing such texts is unfounded: their abhorrent Guelphness or Ghibellinesness – depending on your particular bias in this quarrel – will shine through even in translation. Here, the modesty of 'humble language workers' (Pim, 2012, 17) mirrors the interpretative humility of historians and social scientists; the latter do not hesitate to present all positions they discuss as accurately as they can, confident that their adult audience will be able to tell its Guelphs from its Ghibellines. If we claim that this confidence has become unfounded, and that no one can rely on an audience mature enough to tell one from another, then everything we do as historians, social scientists and translators begins to lose its sense. If, however, we claim to be able to tell one from another, we should generously recognize that our readers might still have the same ability. Translators from major languages may not have this task; there are many readers who can inspect this dialogue themselves, or there may be other translators who translate exclusively Guelphs, while we stick to Ghibellines. Translators from small languages, however, because there are so few, must take on this task. Only thus will they be able to facilitate a dialogue in which, it is to be feared, the reader will see that there are Guelphs and Ghibellines on all sides. This may upset our

ideological certainties, but will at least be the first step towards the intercultural dialogue for which, we all agree, translators are working.

Jones rightly claims that by translating or refusing to translate, a translator from a small language has the power to decide which writers and ideas can be heard in the target culture: publishers can easily make their own choices regarding which translations to commission from widely known languages, as they often read these languages themselves. With small languages, with as many translators as the fingers on one hand, publishers rely exclusively on translators to tell them what is out there, what should be let in and when the gates should be closed. In this way, translators from small languages have the power to create pictures of source cultures which become so hegemonic that trying to challenge them becomes a very risky and unpopular enterprise. This case study presents an extreme and perhaps exceptional example of misrepresentation, but its extremity and exceptionality point to an important aspect of the problem this collection deals with: when it comes to small languages, the translator's power and, consequently, their responsibility, are incomparably greater than in the case of widely spoken ones.

Footnotes

1. Jones is listed as translator or co-translator of five Mahmutćehajić's books: *Living Bosnia* (1996), *Bosnia the Good* (2000), *The Denial of Bosnia* (2000), *Sarajevo Essays* (2003) and *Learning from Bosnia* (2005).
2. Although the Army 'at least officially' claimed to be all-Bosnian, in reality it was a Bosnian Muslim force only. Filandra recounts commander general Rasim Delić's visit to the First Battalion of the Seventh Muslim Brigade on 9 September 1993: for this occasion, the Battalion had three flags, one with the state coat of arms, one green

'national' flag, and one black flag of jihad with an inscription in Arabic, representing Islam. To greet the commander, the unit shouted 'sebiluna al-jihad' (our path is jihad), and sang a modified version of a song sung in the Second World War by fascist Ustaša units. 'This aspect made this unit a prestigious and elite one in the whole Army', concludes Filandra (2012, 326). More on the Army's activities during the 1992-1995 war in Schindler, 2007.

3. I am quoting here from Marina Bowder's, Francis R. Jones's, Merima Osmankadić's and Oto Lukačević's translation *Bosnia the Good* (Mahmutćehajić, 2000). I will, however, also quote from the original (1997) to highlight the ways the translators modified the source text to soften its extreme edges. As the modifications are too numerous, only a representative sample will be included.
4. On the Bosnian Church see Fine 2007; a summary in Fine (2002, 3-6).
5. Dizdar claimed, however, that under these medieval tombstones there could be members of other religions as well (Dizdar, 1971, 30).

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