

**REAL FICTION AND FICTIVE REAL:
MOBILITY OF IDENTITY IN *DICTIONARY OF THE KHAZARS***

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
award of the Degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

SHADI FARROKHYANI



**Centre of Linguistics & English
School of Language, Literature & Culture Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110 067
INDIA**

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School of Language, Literature & Culture Studies
जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067, India

Scanner
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "REAL FICTION AND FICTIVE REAL: MOBILITY OF IDENTITY IN *DICTIONARY OF THE KHAZARS*", submitted by SHADI FARROKHYANI, in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** of the University, is to the best of my knowledge an original work and may be placed before the examiners of evaluation.

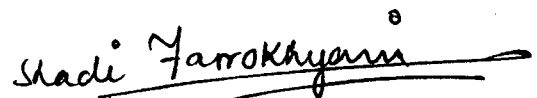
Prof. Vaishna Narang
(Chairperson)

Dr. Franson D. Manjali
(Supervisor)

Prof. Vaishna Narang
Chairperson
Centre of Linguistics & English
School of Language, Literature
& Culture Studies,
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067

DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

This dissertation entitled "REAL FICTION AND FICTIVE REAL: MOBILITY OF IDENTITY IN *DICTIONARY OF THE KHAZARS*", submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University.


SHADI FARROKHYANI
Centre of Linguistics & English
School of Language, Literature
& Culture Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067

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This work is dedicated to my wise father, sentimental mother and my understanding life partner.

Shadi Farrokhyani

Introduction

An Introduction to *Dictionary of the Khazars*

As an introduction to the text *Dictionary of the Khazars*, this section provides information about the novel, its author and his other literary works. The novel, perhaps the first dictionary-novel in the history of contemporary literature, is the first novel by Milorad Pavić, a Serbian writer. It was originally written in the Serbian language¹, which has now been translated into sixty-seven languages of the world². It was first published in 1984, and was selected as the best novel of the year in Yugoslavia (NIN Award). The English version of the text was initially published in the USA by Knopf (New York, 1988) and then in Great Britain by Hamish Hamilton in 1989. The present edition of the text, chosen for the purpose of this study, is published by Penguin Books; it was translated from the Serbo-Croatian language by Christina Pribičević-Zorić and was published in 1989.

The three later literary works of Pavić, *Landscape Painted With Tea* (Yugoslavia, 1988; English translation, U.S., 1990), the novella *The Inner side of the Wind* (Yugoslavia, 1991; English translation, U.S., 1993) and his last novel *Last Love in Constantinople* (Yugoslavia, 1994; English translation, U.S., 1998), are either presented in the form of language games or as a particular object. The literary critic and the author's wife, Jasmina Mihajlović, describes the construction of these four novels in the following manner:

“While *Dictionary of the Khazars* and the *Landscape Painted with Tea*, like a lexicon novel and a crossword puzzle, have for their

¹ In fact, the distinction of the ‘Serbian language’ from the ‘Serbo-Croatian’ as Pavić indicates, as the original language of the text, is impossible. Both Serbian and the Croatian languages belong to the Slavic family of languages. And both languages use the Cyrillic script for writing. Although, Serbian nationality at times has been defined as Yugoslavian (specially during and after the time of civil wars in 1990s), Serbia and Croatia (along with other states of the former federation of Yugoslavia) are now independent states.

² The novel has been recently translated into Japanese.

models a pattern arising from the tradition of the written word, *Inner Side of the Wind*, like a Clepsydra (water clock) novel, and the *Last Love in Constantinople*, like a tarot-novel, has for their pattern, one object.”³

Besides the corpus of the published works, including his novels (all four works that have been mentioned), poems and scripts for radio plays, Pavić also has written a number of short stories designed and prepared specifically for his web-site. *Damascene: A Tale for Computer*, one of his web-site short stories, appears in the form of a maze of forking paths.

In his literary works, Pavić mingles the two genres of the stereotypical love story and the detective novellas into a single form, and creates a new literary vehicle. The nature of this literary mode, structurally resembling the combination of the two genres; intentionally goes far beyond the singularity of each and plurality of the juxtaposition of the two. Employing the element of love in all his novels (and also in his short stories), Pavić attempts to undo the riddle of the traditional relation-patterns between the two genders (as the ‘biological genre’)⁴. To follow this hypothesis, the idiosyncratic metaphors of the ‘feminine and masculine keys’⁵ occupy central

³ Jasmina Mihajlović, *Last Love in Constantinople: A Tarot- Novel by Milorad Pavić*. <<http://www.khazars.com/hyperfiction.html>>.

⁴ The concept of gender as the ‘biologic genre’ is introduced by Jacques Derrida in, “The Law of Genre”, p.56.

According to him the logic of the genre has to be examined according to certain propositions that can be understood by the term ‘genre’, itself:

““Do,” “Do not” says “genre,” the word “genre,” the figure, the voice, or the law of genre. And this can be said of genre in all genres, be it a question of a generic or a general determination of what one calls ‘nature’ or physis (for example, a biological *genre* in the case of *gender*, or human *genre*, a genre of all that is in general.”

In fact, in the argument of ‘The Law of Genre’, Derrida attempts to deconstruct the essence of the concept of genre as an abstract, fabricated and constructed structure. The bottom line of the argument in this Derrida’s article indicates the fact that there is nothing natural inherent in the essence of the

position in deciphering the incidents of his stories. While the normality of the discourse of love, particularly in the case of Abu Kabir Muawia and Dr. Dorothea Schultz in *Dictionary of the Khazars*, is incorporated to communicate other than what it stereotypically indicates.

The detective theme in his novels, on the other hand, does not seem to follow the traditional model of 'what happened?', but it rather causes such a sense in order to add to the thematic and structural complexity of the body of his literary creations. In any of the descriptions of the incidents and the events of the story, the question of 'what happened?' seems to be ignored/forgotten by the surprising advent of other incidents. Not only the sequences of these occurrences do not help in the solution of the primary riddles, but also they add to the complexity of the incidents. Presenting this complex structure, Pavić seems to intentionally transgress the norm of the two genres and leave behind a structure, a form deprived of its normally accepted content. The body of this new genre, formed by the apparent juxtaposition of the two earlier forms, embodies the sense of a breakthrough to other than what it is supposed to indicate, and, therefore, a rupture towards a higher level of literary perception take place. The thematic structure of the novel in spite the simulation with the classical love-stories or detective novellas, never remains at the level of either of the two generic norms with a certain framework of interpretation and an ultimate conclusion, but instead it opens up to an infinite possibilities of interpretation and meaning-formation; and that way it liberates itself of the burden of the classical question of 'what happened?'. This model, in the Pavićian fiction seems to follow the logic of 'rupture' in Deleuze's essay *1874: Three Novellas*, or "What Happened?":

concept of 'genre' or any other law for that purpose. Genre in any form, the literary genre or the Bio-genre (the case with the gender and gender division) is only the case with the abstract, textual or (if that could be put this way) in terms of Foucault's definition (of power) 'discursive' form which does not imply anything beyond itself. A law, therefore, at the very most, implies the sense of being the law and nothing more. It is obvious that through the argument of genre, Derrida extends the function of deconstruction to the domain of the social concepts and practices such as in the case of the gender division.

⁵ Jasmina Mihajlović, *Last Love in Constantinople: A Tarot Novel by Milorad Pavić*, op. cit.

“In rupture, not only has the matter of the past volatilized; the form of what happened, of an imperceptible something that happened in a volatile matter, no longer even exists. One has become imperceptible and clandestine in motionless voyage. Nothing can happen, or can have happened, any longer. Nobody can do anything for or against me any longer. My territories are out of grasp, not because they are imaginary, but the opposite: because I am in the process of drawing them. Wars, big and little, are behind me. Voyages, always in tow to something else, are behind me. I no longer have any secrets, having lost my face, form and matter. I am now no more than a line. I have become capable of loving, not with an abstract, universal love, but a love I shall choose, and that shall choose me, blindly, my double, just as selfless as I. One has been saved by and for love, by abandoning love and self. Now one is no more than an abstract line, like an arrow crossing the void. Absolute deterritorialization”⁶

In the Serbian language, Milorad means “beloved”⁷. Milorad Pavić was born in Belgrade, “the white city”⁸ (in the Serbian language), on October 15, 1929. He currently lives in Belgrade with his wife and literary critic Jasmina Mihajlović. Mihajlović has critically reviewed most of Pavić’s fictional works. Her article on the postmodern aspect of Pavić’s fictions, “Elements of Milorad Pavić’s Postmodern Poetics” was presented at the XIX International Congress of FILLM in 1993 (see bibliography). Along with other critics, such as: Howard S. Becker, and Robert Coover, Mihajlović considers *Dictionary of the Khazars* as a new strata, the ‘hyperfiction’, in the history of the literary genres.

Hyperfictions — computer based fictions — are essentially designed for the computer and web-sites. They generally do not follow the conventional (linear) format of traditional texts. This new genre, “the fiction after the book”⁹, not only

⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, “1874: Three Novellas, or ‘What Happened?’”, trs. Brian Massumi. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. 199.

⁷ Thanassis Lallas, “‘As a Writer I was Born Two Hundred Years Ago...’ An Interview with Milorad Pavić,” *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, Dalkey Archive Press, Summer 1998. <<http://www.centerforculture.org/review/98.2.html>>.

⁸ Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History*, p. 72.

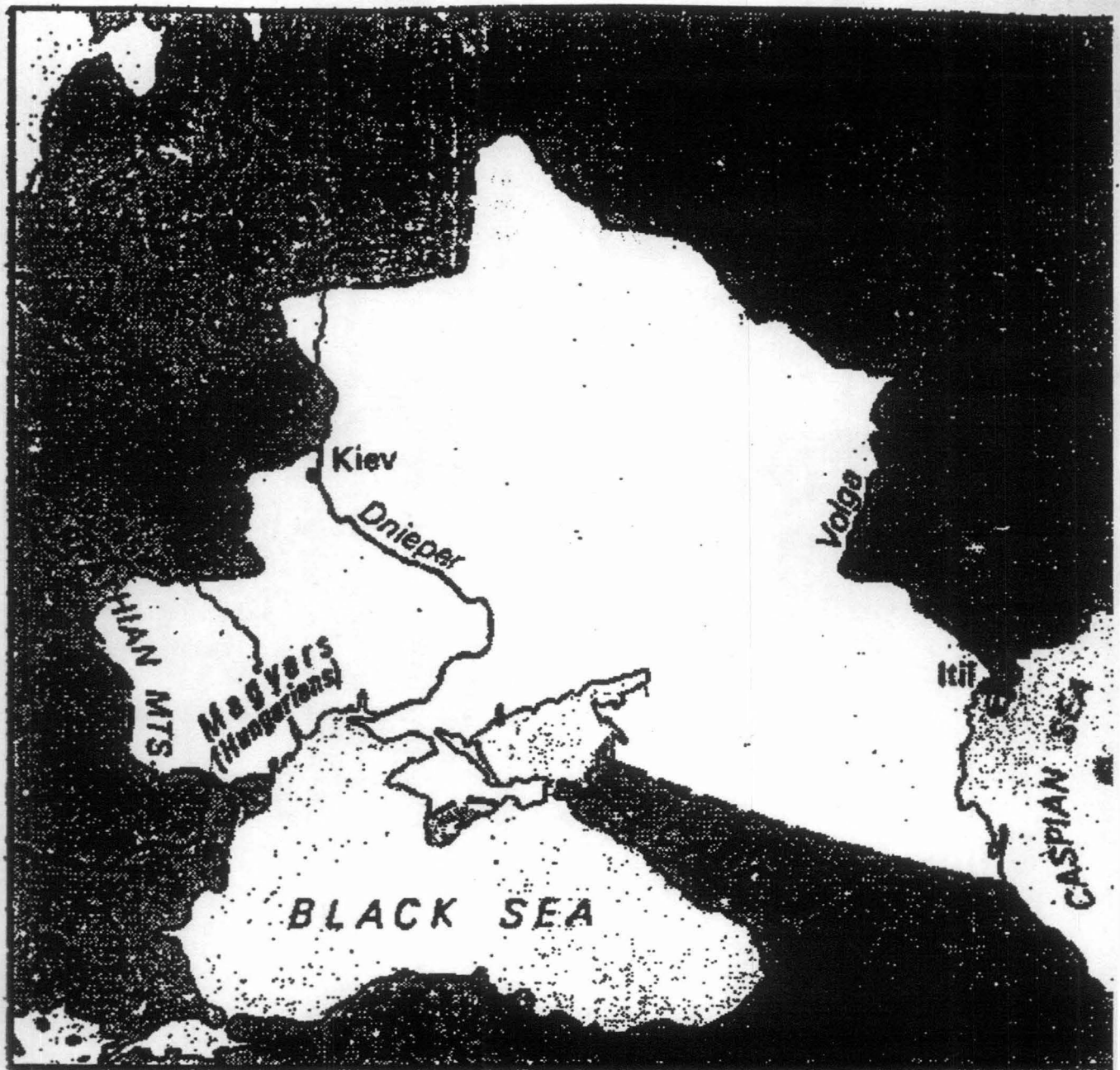
⁹ Jasmina Mihajlović, *M. Pavić and Hyper-fiction*. <<http://www.khazars.com/hyperfiction.html>>.

claims for an era after "The End of Books"¹⁰ and rejects the traditional printing technology, but also gives rise to the radical changes in the creation, publishing and reading strategies of a literary work. In order to fulfill the original intention of Pavić in preparing the text in a fragmented form and to complete the hypertextual nature of the text of *Dictionary of the Khazars*, a CD ROM version of the work has been recently prepared by Jasmina Mihajlović.¹¹

¹⁰ *ibid.*, Quoted from Robert Coover's text (titled the same).

¹¹ Milorad Pavić has a web-site of his own under: <http://www.khazars.com.html>, in which his autobiography, his short story *Damascene*, his interview with Thanassis Lallas, "As a Writer I was Born Two Hundred Years Ago...", and his electronic paintings are gathered. Some of the Mihajlović's articles on his novels and about his style and some of her critiques on his works can also be seen on this web-site.

Chapter One:
The Khazars:
From Reality to Fiction



The Khazar Empire in the 9th century

I. The Khazars: From Reality to Fiction

The Formal and the Thematic Structure of the Novel

The argument in this chapter has been divided into two parts. In the first part of this chapter, the historical and fictional (*HiStory*) evidences regarding the existence of the Khazars, their emergence and disappearance, their tribal and social life and the historical cause of the fall of the Khazars' empire are reviewed. As an attempt to see the historical/real aspect of the Khazars' existence in the fictional domain, the importance of this part lies in the reflections on the closeness of these historical facts in relation to the fictional accounts. Later, we discuss the reading strategy taken up in reading the novel, examining thereby the position of the reader's involved perspective that determines our reading strategy in the work. Finally, we present an account of the methodology employed for the purpose of the study.

The Khazars, were an ancient people who has been lost in the turns of history. The origin of the term 'Khazar' — in Chinese "K'osa" (Pavić, 142) and in Hebrew "kuzari", plural Kuzarim (Pavić, 251) — is not clear, but it is assumed to be from the same root as the Turkish "Qazmak", to wander, move. Priscus¹ (Pavić, 142) called the Khazars 'Akatzir' (Pavić, 72) and Theophanes² believed that the Khazars "appeared from the remotest reaches of Bersilia, the first Sarmatia, and ruled the entire area extending form the Black Sea...." (Pavić, 72) On the basis of historical records, the Khazars 'Turkic-Persian' by origin emerged around the second century AD. Giving

¹ Encyclopaedia Britannica mentions two different characters under the name of Priscus: Helvidius, Priscus and Attalus, Priscus. Though Pavić does not clarify the exact information about his source, from the period of the two characters life one can assume that Pavić's mention must have been Helvidius Priscus (died AD70, and 79) who was "a Roman stoic who forcefully upheld his principle that the emperor should act only with the consent of the Senate." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

² Theophanes the Confessor, Saint, was a "Byzantine monk (of the early 9th Century), theologian, chronicler, a principle adversary of the heterodox in the Iconoclastic Controversy (concerning the destruction of sacred images). The annals he wrote are the leading source for 7th and 8th century Byzantine history."

up the nomadic life they settled in the lands between the Caspian and the Black seas, set up a great empire and became an influential power in the region by the sixth century. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* introduces the Khazars as a:

“Confederation of Turkic and Iranian tribes that established a major commercial empire in the second half of the sixth century, covering the southeast section of modern European Russia.”³

In the course of time and due to the regional dominance over a vast area of the Eastern Europe and Asia (Eurasia) the Khazars intermingled with the Avars, Slavs, Huns and Magyars, and became a plural, multicultural ancient nation. The historical records about the Khazars’ tribal/social life defines their territory as follows:

“The Khazars controlled the Alani⁴ and other northern Caucasian peoples (dwelling between the mountains and the Kuban River), the Maghyars (Hungarians) inhabiting the area around the Donets River, the Goths, and the Greek colonies in the Crimea. The Volga Bulgars and numerous Slavic tribes also recognized the Khazars as their overlords.”⁵

The Khazars took part in the many different wars of their time and were engaged in negotiations with other great neighboring empires (Arab, Byzantine and Persian) and that way they marked their name on the annals of history. The Khazars spoke in their own native language (Khazarian) and wrote in the Khazarian script, they worshipped their own God or gods of the Khazarian faith and followed their own tradition that has remained unknown to the attempts of many studies of the past and the present centuries. The Khazars were ruled by a ‘Kagan’⁶ and by the “tribal Chieftains (each known as a beg)”⁷. The rank of Kagan/ ‘Kaghan’ (Pavić, 140) was

³ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, p. 788.

⁴ Also Alans, an ancient nomadic pastoral people that occupied the steppe region northeast of the Black Sea. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

⁵ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, p. 788.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 788.

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 788.

assumed to be higher than the king's (*beg*) except it was the beg — (“bek or bey”) (Pavić, 140) — who had the authority to appoint him. This internal system of power distribution was assumed to be preserved by the Khazars over the centuries, up to the time of the fall of the empire.

The Khazar people, as the other side of the analysis of the internal power relations of the empire, were a hybrid of different races and various religions, all co-existing in the vast empire of Khazaria. Among these religions Islam, Christianity and the Judaic faith were prominent. The hybrid inhabitants of Khazaria were organized along very complex lines: In the different states of the Khazaria, the population was divided into different groups based on their religion and each district was named after the religion of its population. The original Khazars, on the other hand, were called the “non-Christian population” of the empire⁸. The division of the state into the different districts should not be taken as a sign of social/religious segregation applied by the central ruling system of the Khazars. The followers of the different faiths according to historical records were free to follow their own traditions. This hybrid population — Persians, Saracens, Greeks and the Jews — who were originally from the different neighboring countries were even allowed to join the armies of their motherland in the advent of war and afterwards to return to Khazaria⁹. The only means to distinguish the Khazars from the non-Khazar population in the districts was a sort of ‘dyed bread’ (Pavić, 149-150) which the Khazars of the empire were not permitted to consume. The fictional record of this historical fact of the Khazar social engagements reads as:

“The dyed bread is the sign of the Khazars’ position in the Khazar state. The Khazars produce it, because they inhabit the grain-growing regions of the state. The striving populace at the foot of the Caucasus massif eats dyed bread, which is sold for next to nothing. Undyed bread, which is also made by the Khazar, is paid for in gold. The Khazars are allowed to buy only the expensive, undyed bread. Should any Khazar violate this rule and buy the cheap, dyed bread,

⁸ The information is from Milorad Pavić’s *Dictionary of the Khazars*, the entry on Khazars.

⁹ Based on the fictional references by Milorad Pavić.

which is strictly forbidden for them, it will show in their excrement. Special customs services periodically check the Khazar latrines and punish violators of this law.” (Pavić, 140-150)

The fall of the empire took place gradually with the decline of the Khazars' power after the Russian attacks against them (965 AD) and the fall of their capital 'Itil', the fortress 'Samandar' (on the western shore of the Caspian) and 'Sarkil' or 'Sarkel'¹⁰ (at the mouth of the Don River). Henceforth the ancient empire of the Khazars lost the earlier dominance over its vast territories, and “although the Khazars continued to be mentioned in historical documents as late as the twelfth century, by 1030 [AD] their political role in the lands north of the Black Sea had greatly diminished.”¹¹

Around the time when their power was on the decline, the ruler of the Khazars, the Kaghan, held a polemic — known as the 'Khazar Polemic' (Pavić, 78) — in which he chose a different faith (one or any of the faiths of the time) for him and his tribe. The historical records on the subject of this conversion, indicates that as a monotheistic Judaic faith. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* makes the claim in the entry on Juda ha-Levi ('Judah Halevi' as spelled in Pavić's *Dictionary of the Khazars*), a Jewish philosopher and the writer of the book 'Kuzari' or 'the Khazar', written in the “defence of the despised faith”¹². Ha-Levi's “narrative on the historical fact that the Khazars (a Turkic-speaking people in central Eurasia) were converted to Judaism...”¹³ forms a reliable account of the history of this conversion.

Shortly after the event of the polemic and by the time of the fall of the empire, any traces by which the Khazars can be recognized and demarcated amongst other

¹⁰ As spelled in Kevin Alan Brook's, *The Jews of Khazaria*.

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² “ha-Levi,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, p. 788.

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 788.

nations today remain blurred. All that has been claimed to be the historical record of the Khazars is the fragmented stories narrated about them by other peoples.

The nineteenth century, with the nationalist movements and the formation of various nations, witnessed the Khazars appear as a reclaimed nation. The Eastern European Jews, according to this claim, are assumed to be associated with and in fact descended from the Khazars, referred to in the context of the world Jewry as “the thirteenth tribe”¹⁴ of the ancient Israel. In the book *The Palestine Catastrophe: Fifty Years Since Al-Nakbah*, this argument has been presented as follows:

“The great majority of Russians, Polish and Galician Jews descended from the Khazars, a Tartar people of southern Russia who were converted in a body to Judaism at the time of Charlemagne.”¹⁵

Along with such a strong claim about the Khazars, it is assumed that there exists other less reputed arguments indicating the subject of this conversion of the Khazars to be any of the other two major religions of the time (Islam and Christianity) along with Judaism, or all the three faiths at the same time as the outcome of the Khazar Polemic. Yet again, the reliability of many such claims are to be evaluated with the credibility due to the fictional sources they have been quoted from. In other words no history book on the subject of the Khazars by now, has given any historical proof of the assumptions on the matter of the Khazars’ conversion. On the other hand, claims of this sort as the basis for the further assimilation of ancient tribes into the newly emerged nations are often denied. The ‘reclaimed’ Khazars are, therefore, considered to be real Jews according to one set of claims, while many others believe that the Khazarian Jews can never be considered to belong to a truly Jewish faith.

¹⁴ Arthur Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, < <http://www.biblebelievers.com.au/13trindx.html> >.

¹⁵ Khalid El-Sheikh, *The Palestine Catastrophe: Fifty Years since Al-Nakbah*, p.16.

The subject of the ancient Khazars, their tribal life, the internal power relations and their political engagements with the other empires of their time, until now has been the target of many historical, political and archeological researches. Many of these historical researches have studied the Khazars in the context of their conversion to Judaism (such as the earlier mentioned case in *The Palestine Catastrophe: Fifty Years Since Al-Nakbah*). Kevin Alan Brook in *The Jews of Khazaria*, a historical account on the Khazars, rationalizes the history of the Jewish Khazars (and Khazars in general) which has been long ignored or even destroyed under the depredations of the Christians, Moslems and “the Russian Stalinist ethnocentrists.”¹⁶ Synthesizing information from several sources, Brook reconstructs that part of the history, which until now has not been talked about in detail: the history of an unknown empire of the Khazars versus the other well-known empires of the Byzantine, the Ottoman, the Roman, and the Persian. The book, in the chapter “The Fortress of Sarkel”, covers the information from the archeological excavations on the ancient Khazarian city, Sarkel (one of the three prominent cities of the empire at the peak of the Khazars power). The study of the remains of the ancient Sarkel, has been taken as the basis for useful evidences on the existence, culture and communal life of the Khazars. Arthur Koestler in his article *The “Thirteenth Tribe”*¹⁷ reviews the claim of the conversion of the Khazars to the Judaic faith and attempts to view the connection of the Khazars to the Jews through folklore, anthropology and language. According to Koestler, the conversion of the Khazars to a faith that had no political support from the powers of the time, has been an interesting subject for later researches. This article, introduces the political role of the Khazars among the powerful neighboring empires of the time as a “gateway....protecting the Byzantine Empire from the invasions of the Barbarians.”¹⁸

¹⁶ Kevin Alan Brook, *The Jews of Khazaria*. <<http://www.khazaria.com/brook.html>>. Quoted from Samuel Kurinsky, Hebrew History Federation Ltd.

¹⁷ Arthur Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, op. cit.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

Dictionary of the Khazars:

The Case of Fiction with Historical Dislocations, and the Question of History

The Khazars, besides being the subject of historico-political and archaeological researches, has now entered the realm of literary constructions. Milorad Pavić, the Serbian author, brings the theme of the ancient tribal Khazars into the fictional construction of his dictionary-novel, *Dictionary of the Khazars* (1984). Pavić's literary Khazar, seems to have a truly historical approach at a first glance. Yet, the historical perspective does not go far into the fabrication of Pavić's story. The Khazars of Pavić, though, being real heirs to their historical background, are viewed in a very different manner within the construction of the story. *Dictionary of the Khazars* cannot therefore be considered a historical novel *per se*. Although the historical dislocations become the major tendency in the fabrication of the story in this particular work, the author attempts to go beyond the rigidity of a historical framework. The theme of the novel formed around the historical information about the Khazars includes the approximate or exact dates of the rise and the fall of the Empire, and of the conversion that took place under the reign of 'Kaghan Bulan'. These information join other historical facts indicated in the presence of the characters of Cyril (Constantine of Thessalonica) and his brother (Methodius) in the Khazar polemic and the event of polemic itself, and formulate the narrative style of the story within the segmented structure of a dictionary.

Pavić's employment of the element of 'history' follows a rather different pattern from the norms of 'historiography.' In the content of a proper work of history, the 'subjective discourse' organizes the sequence of the occurrence of events of the past in order to show the historical evidence of the existence of a particular event.¹⁹

¹⁹ According to Hayden White the traditional historiography has always been presented in the 'subjective' form with the mention of the author form himself as the witness or being aware of the truth of the particular event mentioned by him.

On the other hand, the fiction, as a work of imagination has always been presented in an 'objective' form, where the "events seem to tell themselves"²⁰ their own stories. Thus, the historical representations seem to be of a 'discursive' nature whereas the story telling relies on the method of 'narration'. In Pavić, the events seem to have been "chronologically recorded as they appear on the horizon of the story"²¹ in the fashion that they seem to tell themselves their stories. Pavić as the author, never appears in the context of the story but only in the primary notes, the appendix and the endnotes. This can, in fact, imply two things, first the 'absence' — here in the form of marginalization of the author and his confinement to the margins of the story — of the author from the content of the story and giving up the traditional position of the author, omnipresent in the process of narration and as the solemn authority in meaning formation. In the second place, the absence of the author (Pavić) seems to focus on the function of the "narrativizing discourse"²², a form of historiography in which the history of the events are presented in the form of a narrative. It is to be noted that this type of the historiography is not something new; it has been practiced by different historiographers and story-writers as well, but it has never been given the value of 'proper' history writing.

Pavić on the other hand, seems to employ three different methods (genres) of historiography in constructing the story of the Khazars: "the annals, the chronicle and the history proper,"²³ each forms a part of the story in its own style. Firstly, the corpus of the story is presented in the form of the 'annals' as a list of events and characters. The difference that Pavićian style of representation in the form of annals, has with the standard accepted method of annals recording, lies in the fact that Pavić's records are presented in an alphabetical order (and not chronological) within the context of the religious traditions. In this method, Pavić seems to keep the mode

²⁰ Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, p. 3.

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 3.

²² *ibid.*, p. 4.

²³ *ibid.*, p. 4.

of presentation of historical annals through the 'lack of narrative' caused by the fragmentary, dictionary style of presentation. In the second place, the historical dislocations seems to oscillate between the formation of a complete narrative and an incomplete form of a chronicle. The lack of the historical 'annals' in the narrative component, "since it consists only of a list of events ordered in chronological sequence"²⁴ in the case of Pavić's story seems to join its contrary in the choice of chroniclic representation of the historical events. Like the actual situation in the case of the chronicle, which "often seems to wish to tell a story"²⁵ the Pavić's historical account also "aspires to narrativity, but typically fails to achieve it."²⁶ This aspect in Pavić's fiction seems to address the mode of chronicle representation of history "marked by a failure to achieve narrative closure."²⁷ Thus, the failure of the narrative (!) to achieve a closure and the open-endedness of the text, owe its existence to the historical structure borrowed from the historiographical methods. The unresolved-ness of the events at the end of the story follows the pattern of the 'chronicle' that leaves things "unresolved in a storylike way"²⁸. The choice of the earlier two methods of historiography in constructing the story of the Khazars, seems to undermine the formation of a 'proper historical' record. In the first place, the lack of proper historical records on the existence and the disappearance of the Khazars seems to have been compensated by fictional constructions that fills up the gaps of the present historical records. An interconnected use of historical and fictional accounts form a network which oscillate between being either purely fictional or completely factual. Thus, the textual construction of the novel integrates the two contrary aspects of the story, 'fictivity' and 'reality' of the Khazars. According to his wife and literary critic, Jasmina Mihajlović:

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 5.

“In Pavić’s work this feature can, above all, be recognized as scorn and irony addressed to historical truth and historical experience. The compromising of factuality carried out by formal means in *Dictionary of the Khazars* at the level of the particular and the general, could be reduced to an aphorism complementary to Pavić’s joke *truth is just a trick*, and would read as — history is just a piece of gossip.”²⁹

The Formal Structure of the Text in *Dictionary of the Khazars*

The structure of the dictionary consists of a twin volume of almost identical textual material — except for one non-identical paragraph between the two texts³⁰ (Pavić 293) — presented in a ‘Male’ and a ‘Female’ editions. Each volume contains three section titled as a separate ‘book’. The three different books of the two volumes

²⁹ Jasmina Mihajlović, *Elements of Milorad Pavić’s Postmodern Poetics*, paper presented at XIX International Congress of FIILM (University of Brasilia, Brazil 1993), <http://www.rastko.org.yu.knjizevnost/Pavić/jmih....c_elements.html>. The emphasis is mine.

³⁰ Milorad Pavić, *Dictionary of the Khazars*: (The difference lies in the description of an event imagined by Dr. Drorthea Schultz while sitting with Dr. Muawia with the intention of killing him.) The passage in the female edition:

“As he passed them to me, his thumb brushed mine and I trembled from the touch. I had the sensation that our past and our future were in our fingers and that they had touched. And so, when I began to read the offered pages, I at one moment lost the train of thought in the text and drowned it in my own feelings. In these seconds of absence and self-oblivion, centuries passed with every read but uncomprehended and unabsorbed line and when, after a few moments, I came to and re-established contact with the text, I knew that the reader who returns from the open seas of his feelings is no longer the same reader who embarked on that sea only a short while ago. I gained and learned more by not reading than by reading those pages, and when I asked Dr. Muawia where he had got them he said something that astonished me even more.” (Pavić, 1989a, 293)

The passage in *The Male Edition*:

“I could have pulled the trigger then and there. There wouldn’t be a better moment. There was only one lone witness present in the garden- and he was a child. But that’s not what happened. I reached out and took those exciting sheets of paper, which I enclose in this letter. Taking them instead of firing my gun, I looked at those Saracen fingers with their nails like hazelnuts and I thought of the tree Halevi mentions in his book on the Khazars. I thought how each and every one of us is just such a tree: the taller we grow toward the sky, through the wind and rain toward god, the deeper we must sink our roots through the mud and subterranean waters toward hell. With all these thoughts in my mind, I read the pages given me by the green-eyed Saracen. They shattered me, and in my disbelief I asked Dr. Muawia where he had got them.” (Pavić, 1989b, 293)

are named after a different color (The Red Book, The Green Book, and The Yellow Book), each associated with the three religions that the Khazars are assumed to have converted to. Though the significance of the colors in the titles of the three chapters remain uncertain, the possibility of the association of red with the red robe worn by the Christians priests and green with the color of Mohammedan flag at the dawn of Islam (and now the background color of the Saudi Arabia's national flag) is highly probable. But no assumption can be made for the significance of the yellow color of 'The Yellow Book', associated with the Jewish tradition.

Following the alphabetical pattern of a dictionary, the incidents of the story are all presented under different entries of the three 'Books' narrated in the stories of the different polemic personae from the three faiths. The entries of the novel are, in fact, the names of these characters, under which their experiences and the content of their researches about the Khazars are indicated. Together the entries form the major events of the story indicating the historical fact of the Khazar Polemic. Each of the characters is directly or indirectly involved with the Khazar Polemic, as participants or doing research on the content or the consequences of that, which together form the 'Khazar Question'. The subject of the polemic is said to be the conversion of the Khazars from their traditional faith.

The Thematic Structure of the novel

The events of the story in *Dictionary of the Khazars* are formed around the 'Kaghan's dream' — explained under the title 'Kaghan'. The dream of the Kaghan, which can be claimed to be the central event or the motive of the entire incidents of the story, has been presented by means of fictional or historical sources on the 'the Khazar question'. The content of the story reads as follows,

The Khazar Kaghan — the ruler of the Khazars — dreamt of the God's angel inspiring him that God has been pleased with his intentions but not satisfied with his deeds. As the doctrine of the Khazarian faith has been taken from the dreams and is preserved by the sect of the “Dream Hunters”³¹— the priests of the faith as well as the interpreters of dreams — and taken as the material to write the Khazar holy Book, the Kaghan is determined to seek proper interpretation of his dream. Being disappointed by the dream-hunter priest’s interpretation, he decides to assemble the scholars and priests of other faiths in a dispute in order to get the best answer to his question. The best interpreter would also claim for the superiority of his respective faith to which Kaghan and his nation would convert in one body. The construction of the story at this point deviates from the historical framework: to each of the three accounts on the Khazar question belongs a claim that it alone has been triumphant in the polemic, and that it is the only religion Khazars have converted³² to. All these claims appear equally authentic.

The basic thematic structure of the story in *Dictionary of the Khazars* revolves around the arguments of the three accounts on one and the same subject — the ‘Polemic’ and the consequent conversion of the Khazars. Reading all different claims of the novel, the reader enters a state of uncertainty, unable to figure out the ultimate conclusion to the various arguments. In the final stage of reading, the reader instead of reaching any clear conventional conclusion is trapped in a labyrinth of questions. What could be the possible end of the novel? What is the significance of the murder of those who are involved with the ‘Khazar question’? These and many other questions present themselves in the closing scene of the story. The “Dictionary of the Dictionaries on the Khazars Question”³² thus, ends up with the same questions that the story of the Khazars started with: who were the Khazars and what caused the end of this ancient community? ‘A dictionary of the dictionaries’, therefore, as an allegory

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 67.

³² The subtitle of Milorad Pavić’s *Dictionary of the Khazars*.

for the 'question of questions', embodies the major possibilities of formation of a hypothesis and questioning the 'emergence' and 'disappearance' of the Khazars in the form of a dictionary. Being presented in the form of a dictionary, the text brings together the informative aspect of a dictionary, its neutrality of language, the segmented construction and open-endedness of structure with the intentionality and the closure of the structure of the novel. The two aspects of the work (being a novel and a dictionary at the same time), seem to confront each other, deconstruct the very essence of the other's existence in an oxymoronic playfulness. The idea of a dictionary with an intended theme, deconstructs the linearity of the presentation as well as the traditional concept of the cohesion of the text. While the latter (being a novel), delimits the borders of the border-less existence of the former and makes possible the impossibility of a dictionary with a determined theme. Yet, the very configuration of one within the limits of the other — a dictionary within the novel and a novel in the form of a dictionary — touches upon the questions of the 'reality' and 'fictionality' in which the fictive aspect of the fiction is brought into the domain of reality by being presented in the form of a dictionary. This feature of the work in its own terms adds another question to the numerous unresolved riddles of the story: what fiction and which reality are the themes intended by the author in creating a literary work in this particular form?

The traditional sense of 'reality' has always been conceived as the absence of any fictional element, and fiction is a distancing from the real world entailing a sense of pleasure in keeping away the harshness of reality. This traditional dichotomy of the 'real' and 'fiction' in *Dictionary of the Khazars* seems to be challenged by bringing the two dimensions of the work — dictionary and novel — together.

The Structure of Reading in *Dictionary of the Khazars*

The reading strategy implicit in *Dictionary of the Khazars* can probably be the most interesting aspect of this study. Reading this particular text is a different experience (from the traditional style of reading, following a particular linear format with a proper beginning and an end) in which the reader takes part actively through following his/her own creative style of reading. The reader, after getting brief information from the- "Priliminary Notes To The Second, Reconstructed And Revised, Edition" (Pavić, 1) - and through the 'paratextual play'³³ of the writer with the reader, enters a 'rhizomatic' network of information (the body of the story), interconnected across the different layers of the text. Beyond the preliminary notes, the reader of the dictionary is free to follow his own reading strategy: the reader could start reading the story from any point she/he desires and put an end to it whenever she/he wishes Pavić's formula for this strategy is as follows:

"No chronology will be observed here, nor is one necessary. Hence, each reader will put together the book for himself, as in a game of dominoes or cards, and, as with a mirror, he will get out of this dictionary as much as he puts into it, for, as is written on one of the pages of this lexicon, you cannot get more out of the truth than what you put into it. After all, this book need never be read in its entirety; one can take half or only a part and stop there, as one often does with dictionaries. The more one seeks the more one gets, and the lucky discoverer will ultimately have in his possession all the links connecting the names in the dictionary. The rest will be for others."³⁴

Involving his readers in this different experience of reading, Pavić seems to aim at the 'auto-thematization'³⁵ of his literary works or, to be more precise at:

"... the existence of metaliterary discourse which is most remarkable when it belongs to the domain of poetic expression.

³³ Ivan Callus, "Paratextual play in Milorad Pavić's, *Dictionary of the Khazars*" *EBR (Electronic Book Reviews)*, Winter 98/99 <<http://www.khazars.com>>.

³⁴ Milorad Pavić, op. cit., pp. 13 -14.

³⁵ Jasmina Mihajlović, op. cit.

Metapoetic speech directed towards the reader in Pavić's prose constitute an explicit application of this postmodern principle. Its goal is to establish a different manner of communication with a reader, and thus a changed aesthetics of reception. The formation of a creative reader enables a fuller realization of the plurality of meaning and sense characteristic of Pavić's literary work. On the other hand, the existence of numerous implicit autopoetic textual fragments makes this phenomenon even more complex. In this sketch-analysis of some possible elements in Milorad Pavić's prose which can be interpreted from postmodern point of view, my objective was to recognize, outline or generalize some problems which would demand a more profound and comprehensive analysis. In a number of postmodern studies of literature, of which most can successfully be applied to the analysis of Pavić's literary works, it seems that Deleuze-Guattari's term "rhizome" most closely corresponds to the structure and radiation of meaning in Pavić's novels."³⁶

Some of the references in the entries of different traditions (Islamic, Judaic and Christian) are marked with a different sign, of a cross in the Christian (the Red) Book, the Crescent in the Islamic (the Green) Book, and the 'Star of David' for references from the Judaic tradition in the Yellow Book. Many of these references introduced as the central figures or the prominent events of the story (and at times with a reference to the history of the Khazars) like 'Ateh', 'Kaghan', 'Khazars', and the 'Khazar Polemic', common among all the three traditions, are marked with the sign of a triangle. Some of the entries, on the other hand, give a reference to the entries in the same 'Book'. The opening entry of the Red Book reads as follows:

"ATEH[▽] (9th century) - The Khazar princess whose role in the polemic concerning the Khazars' conversion was decisive."³⁷

The terms of 'Ateh' and 'the Khazars' are marked with a superscribed triangle and thus indicating that they are to be found under separate entries with the same title in the same Book — and in this particular case, in the two other Books as well. In the

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ Milorad Pavić, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

same manner, some entries have cross-references to other entries (one or more) from other Books. These references at the other level, play the role of 'cross-cultural references'. Information in each entry is thus, inter-connected with information in other entries in no fixed order but in a 'rhizomatic' form. The structure of the novel is like of that of 'rhizome' in which

"... any point [of a rhizome] can be connected to anything other, and must be... rhizome connects any given point with any other given point..."³⁸

The reader, in order to follow the flow of information from one entry to the other, has to develop a strategy of non-sequential reading, moving back and forth from one entry to the other. Thus, the reader following this mode of reading goes beyond the linearity of the presentation which traditionally confines the structure of the novel within the limits of a beginning and an end of the text. The application of this new strategy, therefore, turns the novel into:

"... a dynamic model of an asymmetric knot of lines and dimensions, with several entrances, and without a central axis or the center itself; it is like an open living organism, continually growing and pulsating, where the spreading of entries engenders the multiplication of meanings; it is in a permanent relation toward itself, but also toward that which is outside it..."³⁹

Or as Peter Vansittart says⁴⁰:

DISS
0,597,3,N29,1:(P;4) P3

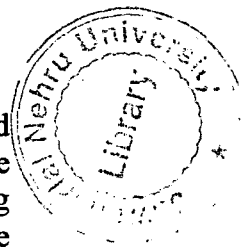
"Basically it [the novel] is a gigantic mass, an environment with ever-growing antennas, with mobile time and space, fact and guesses mobile as in dreams."⁴¹

³⁸ Jasmina Mihajlović, "Elements of Milorad Pavić's Postmodern Poetics," *Serbian Studies* vol.7, no.1, Spring 1993, <http://www.rastko.org.yu/knjizevnost/Pavić/jmih...c_elements.html>. Quoted from Gilles Deleuze and Guattari.

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Quoted from Peter Vansittart by Jasmina Mihajlović in the article "Elements of Milorad Pavić's Postmodern Poetics."

⁴¹ *ibid.*



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Owing to the 'rhizomatic' form of the presentation in *Dictionary of the Khazars*, where the structure of the novel and the story are not closed by neither a beginning nor an end, all the possible and the impossible events can be located somewhere 'in between'. This horizontal, non-hierarchical manner opens up a new scope for the reader. The present feature of the story can be seen in the structure of the rhizome as indicated by Jasmina Mihajlović:

“... rhizome is acentric, nonhierarchical and non-coding system.”⁴²

The entire effort of the author goes towards constructing a story which, like the history of the Khazars – always remains somewhere between an unknown origin (of the story, or of the Khazars, for that purpose) and an unpredictable end. Being so, the text can be entered and exited from any point chosen by the reader. Due to the infinite choices available, there exist an endless number of entrances and exits in and out of the text. The text, therefore, is a 'labyrinth' of all possibilities put together in a chaotic manner, a geometrical construction⁴³ with its numerous curving channels that one can “approach ... from any of their different sides.”⁴⁴ Thus, the construction of the novel prefigures itself to be 'reversible'⁴⁵. A textual construction that, according to Pavić, can be viewed and overviewed in multiple ways, and at times from the opposite sides.

This method of reading is affiliated to the Derridian notion of 'parasitic reading'⁴⁶ in which, each layer of the reading and comprehending during the reading

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ The labyrinth in its total shape after all is a geometrical form, even if an irregular one.

⁴⁴ Thanassis Lallas, “‘As a Writer I Was Born Two Hundred Years Ago...’ An Interview with Milorad Pavić.” *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*. Summer 1998, vol. XVIII, no.2, <<http://www.centerforculture.org/review/98.2.htm>>.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ Simon Critchley. *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas*, (1992: Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1997), p. 23.

process gets entangled into the other layers. Understanding each layer in this method, resists the process of reading and comprehending of the earlier layers. The corollary 'double reading', therefore, reinterprets the "dominant interpretation ... within and through this repetition, leaving the order of commentary and opening text up to the blind spots or ellipses within the dominant interpretation."⁴⁷ Beyond being about the historical rise and fall of the Khazar tribe — the blind spot of the text, in the Derridian sense — *Dictionary of the Khazars* is also about the reading of the readings about the Khazars in a truly deconstructive manner. The reader, according to his/her particular entry and exit points, can fabricate his/her own meaning. Each of these meanings realized by a particular reader could be taken as valid as the claims of the different entries of the dictionary and yet, it will not be equivalent to the overall intention of the author of the novel. Poly-vocality is, therefore, the inherent nature of *Dictionary of the Khazars*. This is pursued in two ways – first, by reflecting the traces of the other literary works in form and content. And the second, in employing the strategy of rendering its readers free to choose their desired reading style in order to prefigure their own area of meaning, and to have their own 'text in the mind',

The later development of the text, the CD ROM version of the work, prepared by Jasmina Mihajlović, in fact, facilitates the discontinuous reading maneuvers of the reader. And thus, it liberates the being and the existence of the text from the dominance of the publisher and the phenomenon of the 'print capitalism'. The present argument about the 'death of the publisher' and the liberation of the text from the dominance of 'print capitalism' can in fact be analyzed in two ways. Firstly, it signifies the end of the dominance of the 'publisher' (as a common 19th century phenomenon) and his influence on the choice of the theme of the novel and the ability to dictate that to the author. Milorad Pavić himself anticipates this death as:

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p.23.

“Break free of the conditions and laws of Gutenberg’s galaxy and emerge into a new galaxy... that has no more connection with a printed book.”⁴⁸

Secondly, it marks the beginning of the liquidation of the importance and prominence of the role of the ‘novel’ and ‘print capitalism’ in the formation of ‘imagined communities’⁴⁹. Thus, the ‘death of the publisher’ relates itself to the arguments of deconstruction of ‘identity’ and ‘nationalism’. The end of the prominent role of the publisher, therefore, is the key to ‘identity-formation’ in the context of the novel, which is discussed in the second and the third chapters. To substantiate from the novel — Jacob Tam David ben Yahya — better known as ‘Joannes Daubmannus’ — the Polish printer of the first published version of the *Dictionary of the Khazars* — the 1691 edition of the novel, destroyed in 1692 — dies on the reading of his freshly printed novel with the ‘poisonous printer’s dye’ (Pavić, 243). The scene of his death is attested by the novel:

“The more he read, the stronger the effect of the poison, and Daubmannus’ body became more and more crooked. Every consonant in the book seemed to strike at some part of his body.... And then he died. Through this blissful smile the last letters he had read in the book dropped out of his mouth: *verbum caro factum est*, “The Word became flesh.”” (Pavić, 243-245)

From this moment onwards the text, liberated from authority of the author and publisher turns into an entity, a ‘body without organ’⁵⁰. Existing in its non-existence (in terms of a traditional/conventional normality of a text), the text is capable of communicating with the other text(s) for which the existence of the second almost exact version of the same work is the best site. It may also be noted that the two

⁴⁸ Quoted from Milorad Pavić’s “The Beginning and the End of the Novel” in Lance Olsen’s “Architecture of Possibility.” <<http://www.khazars.com/postmodern-htm>>.

⁴⁹ This statement has a direct reference to Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*. Anderson believes that the phenomenon of ‘print capitalism’ at the end of 19th and the beginning of the 20th century has had a major role in the formation of modern nations.

⁵⁰ Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. 4.

human figures on the covers of the two texts — facing each other if they are kept side by side — seems to be involved in a silent conversation.

Hypothesis/Assumptions

As mentioned earlier, the geometrical forms or the religious icons, mark some of the entries of the novel. Putting them together with the entries for further clarifications,⁵¹ delimiting the novel in a numerical measurement — ‘*Dictionary of the Khazars: A Lexicon Novel in 100,000 Words*’ (Pavić’s title) — and the division of the novel into the three ‘Books’; all contribute to a hypothesis on the nature of the work. The division of the novel into different ‘Books’, can remind us of Walter Benjamin’s statement on the ‘origin of novel’, “which has from the beginning been dependent on the *book*.”⁵² This suggests that the novel attempts to deconstruct the entire tradition of ‘logocentrism’ since the early days of the emergence of the printed texts. Kaghan’s dream, upon which the Khazar polemic is held, has a reference to many similar cases in different religious systems which have been retold and narrated throughout the history of these religions. Many of these dreams are taken as the basis of the claim of prophecy or the foundation of the religious systems.

Among other assumptions to begin with, on the one hand, the idea of word count of the novel⁵³ (Pavić, title page) has a reference to the idea of bringing the novel and the dictionary (numerical measurement as one of the features of the dictionary) together. On the other hand, it could be seen as the ‘end of the novel’ in its implication of the absence of any logical conclusion of the story, but its formal closure is dependent only on the word-count. Delimiting the number of words in the

⁵¹ The inverted triangle as the sign for the term being common among the three traditions; the ‘cross’, the ‘crescent’ and the ‘star’ in order to make the association of the terms as appearing in a particular tradition.

⁵² Homi K. Bhabha ed., *Nation and Narration: The National Longing for Form*, p. 55. The emphasis is mine.

⁵³ The present feature has a reference to this title of the novel:

“A Lexicon Novel in 100,000 Words”

novel, therefore, sets up the boundaries of the story, imposing an arbitrary sense of closure (within 100,000 words). The closure of the novel assumed through the word count of the entries is, thus, itself an arbitrary concept. The concept of the closure in the earlier claim brings the problem of 'Inside' and 'Outside' of the novel ('interiority/exteriority') into view. Thus, the closure of the novel is conceived in terms of the logocentric concept of the Book (the representational form of a transcendental reality). However, this very mode of signification — that links the 'exteriority' and 'interiority' constituting the closure of the Book — depends upon the (de)construction of the significative system that differ and defer from what it attempts to refer as any transcendental reality beyond itself, and thereby making the closure of the Book forever open.

Each of the three books seems to follow a simple logic of 'one becomes two': "The law of the book is the law of reflection, the one that becomes two."⁵⁴ The theme of each Book in the *Dictionary of the Khazars* is related to the dialectic of enlightenment: the respective religious traditions in each separate Book come to enlighten the 'pagan', out-of-religion Khazars and to convert them into the right faith. Each tradition not only enters the dispute with the Khazarian faith but also attempts to undermine the validity of the arguments of the other faiths (of the participants in the Khazar Polemic) if not to deny the essence of their faith. In this way, each Book becomes the embodiment of 'one that becomes two'. The novel on the other hand, assembles all the different, opposing arguments on the subject that has long since disappeared (the disappearance of the Khazars in the turns of history) and thus, forms a rhizomatic structure whose 'pivotal taproot'⁵⁵ has never existed. All that exists is interpretation, the arguments on the arguments about the Khazars, without a center to which it is attached, with neither a beginning nor an end. In this regard Pavić contends:

⁵⁴ Homi K. Bhabha, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 5.

“The book is going through a period of decadence and crisis, but the novel is not. If there is something in crisis it is the way of reading. That is what I [Pavić] try to push the reader to be more active.”⁵⁶

The paratextual game of the author and the reader in the form of these primary notes — as mentioned earlier in the arguments of this chapter — besides supplying a reliable source of informative statements on the proper ways of handling the text(s), suggests the absence of the author from the processes of reading and meaning formation. The author of the novel on the one hand, is assumed to be absent from the body of the story, on the other hand, he seems to be pushed to the periphery of the main body of the novel. In the sense that the only places of the novel in which the influence of the author appears, are the primary and the concluding notes of the text. These notes under the title ‘Closing Note on the Usefulness of this Dictionary’ appear as the closing chapter of the novel (Pavić, 334-335). Besides, this paratextual game localizes the function of the deconstructive forces, within the textual construction of the novel. Thus, the text seems to critically review its own interiority from within. The title of the endnote on the ‘usefulness of the dictionary’, therefore, is a metaphoric playfulness and a self-critique strategy of the author involved in a self-commune, observing his imaginary readers as if looking down from another world. The internal voice of the author at this moment reflects the thoughts of his assumed readers-to-be in encouraging them to, “give the lexicographer a good scolding, but let them be quick about it in the name of what comes next is their affair alone, and it is worth more than any reading.”(Pavić, 334-335)

⁵⁶ Lance Olsen, “Architecture of Possibility: Reading Milorad Pavić Reading,” *The Writer’s Chronicle*, September 2000. Quoted from Pavić’s interview with Thanassis Lallas, the parenthetical addition is mine.

Intertextuality in *Dictionary of the Khazars*,

The interiority (the content) of the dictionary is a dynamic process of dialogues among the entries of the three accounts. The content of each account presented under its different entries, seems to be reaching out for the content of the other, along with the constant efforts of the characters in search of the 'other'. And finally, the mosaic picture of the story takes form by putting together all these present possibilities (and at times impossibilities); while the open ended-ness of the text could suggest the possibility of giving voice to all further related and even the yet-to-come arguments.

The construction of the story is not limited to the main 'body' of the text (the interior construction of the text); in fact, the fragmentary setting of the text would undermine the existence of a coherent, linear flow of the narrative. Many of the important incidents of the story are presented in the two appendices of the novel. This, not only emphasizes the dissemination of the fictional elements (involved in the process of meaning formation) into the periphery of the construction, but also deconstructs the very idea of assigning the text with a center according to which the incidents of the story are appropriated and in relation to which the meaning has to be formed.

Being poly-vocal in its dialogicality of various religious and linguistic identities, *Dictionary of the Khazars* carries an infinite number of traces and techniques that have already been undertaken in other texts. Recounting tales within tales it resembles structure of the 'Arabian Tales' ('The Thousand and One Nights'). The text also brings the traces of many contemporary literary practices into the context of the novel and that way marks itself as a postmodern literary work. It also, introduces its author, Milorad Pavić, as "undoubtedly the first writer of the twenty-

first century”⁵⁷. This ‘bricolage’, ‘pastiche’ of philosophical and literary construction would reflect the names and ideas of many other texts in every instance of unfolding the fictional twists, and reflects upon Pavić as “a writer who, together with Borges, Nabokov, Singer, Calvino, and Eco, composes the literary treasure of our half of the century.”⁵⁸ Thus, Lance Olsen says in his article, “Architecture of Possibility”:

“His [Pavić’s] is the craft of the quick, of continual and definitional investigation that finds easy company among a luminous constellation of European and European-influenced Latin American innovators. Among them one can locate Calvino’s dazzlingly self-reflexive and existentially comic intelligence in books like *If on a Winter’s Night Traveler*, and faux-American Nabokov’s in *Pale Fire*, with its ornate narrative hall of pseudo-scholarly mirrors invented by a genuinely scholarly awareness. Borges’ dense, resonant, acutely philosophical metafiction that sometimes read as five or six-page notes for the novels Pavić actually composes almost go without saying. Cortazar’s surrealist imagination and his proto-hypertextual novel, *Hopscotch*, which offers the reader various reading strategies from which he or she can choose, informs Pavić’s fictive understanding almost as much as Garcia Marquez and his magnum opus, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, instancing as it does both a stupendous unhinged ingenuity and a profound passion for a rich oral tradition shot through with deep mythological undercurrents. Behind them all, naturally glimmers the textual generating machine called *The Thousand and One Nights*.”⁵⁹

Jasmina Mihajlović, in an article about the postmodern features of Milorad Pavić’s writings, brings up for discussion, the intertextuality in his work:

“By using different genres, models of narration and styles, by use of a game of combinations, a hybrid structure and a polyphone text are being created. This gives rise to a doubt, (similar to the previous one), regarding the ways of knowing reality and the world, by insisting on the fact that the world can be known via text, in fact their fragments, excerpts and traces. This is analogous to psychoanalytic therapy, which through free connection of detail, and apparently

⁵⁷ Thanassis Lallas, op. cit.

⁵⁸ ibid.

⁵⁹ Lance Olsen, op. cit.

missing elements, wishes to enable a come back to the primeval forgetfulness and forgotten essentiality. This today classified as a postmodern feature, has been present in Pavić's literary work since his first poem collection entitled *Palimpsests* because the meaning and the stylistic stratification constitute the central characteristic of his expression and poetics. By using many literary-linguistic models: myth, legend, hagiography, apocrypha, tales history, etc. (in general old text as pretext), and at the same time using them also through reinterpreted or parodized forms, Pavić enriches his picturesque literary structure by all the achievements of the modern prose. Thus continuity and harmonization of different cultures is established and a synthesis between the old and the new is being accomplished."⁶⁰

Chapterization and Methodology

This section serves as an introduction to our dissertation: "Real Fiction and Fictive Real: Mobility of Identity in *Dictionary of the Khazars*". It gives a brief introduction to the theme of the study, objectives and methods of approach to the proposed subject. Firstly, this study is essentially an empirical work where the function and the role of the fictional elements are examined within a certain theoretical framework. The question, with which the nature of this study is involved, concerns the problems of 'identity', its formation, deformation and its 'mobility'. The question of 'reality' and 'fictionality' is attempted to be approached in a deconstructive manner of reading of the novel. A particular theoretical framework is employed in formulating the main focus of study in each chapter. The formation/deformation of 'identity' as the major focus in this study is the subject of more special attention in chapter II and chapter III.

Chapter II titled "Dream, An 'Other' in Discourse" focuses on the theme of individual identity-formation. The ground of identity-formation from Pavić's point of view, reflected in the story, examined with regard to the contemporary conception of 'identity'. The concept of 'identity' is central to many of contemporary studies,

⁶⁰ Jasmina Mihajlović, "Elements of Milorad Pavić's Postmodern Poetics," op.cit.

“reflecting a crisis that manifests itself in two ways.”⁶¹ The essence of the problematic of ‘identity’ according to Mervyn F. Bendle is as follows:

“Firstly, there is a view that identity is both vital *and* problematic in this period of high modernity. Secondly, while this awareness is reflected in sociology, its accounts of identity are inconsistent, under-theorized and incapable of bearing the analytical load required. As a result, there is an inherent contradiction between valuing of identity as so fundamental as to be crucial to personal well-being, and a theorization of ‘identity’ that sees it as something constructed, fluid, multiple, impermanent and fragmentary.”⁶²

The hypothesis in this chapter is based on the arguments of ‘identity’ in high modernity. It is informed by the understanding that ‘identity’ in any of its forms, individual or collective, is a discursive construct, and that it does not imply any inherent given-ness. On the other hand, any study of identity can not be undertaken without considering its ‘crisis’. In other words, the study of identity is also the study of its crisis. After a brief discussion of the hypothesis, this chapter takes into account the textual evidences in Milorad Pavić to identify his point of view in his story. For instance what could be the significance of the ‘peculiar textual haunting’⁶³ and the wonderment at the level of the plot, that “a woman can begin writing letters to a younger version of herself at her old address half way across the globe to feel a little less lonely in her new home[?]”⁶⁴, in bringing up the question of the crisis of ‘identity’.

The third chapter, “Architecture of (Im)Possibility: Question of Collective Identity”, can be considered as the continuation of the argument on individual identity-formation and the crisis of identity. In this section, the argument has been

⁶¹ Mervyn F. Bendle, “The Crisis of ‘Identity’ in high modernity,” *The British Journal of Sociology*, p. 1.

⁶² *ibid.*, p. 1.

⁶³ Lance Olsen, *op. cit.*

⁶⁴ *ibid.* The statement quoted from Lance Olsen is a reference to Dr. Dorothea Schultz’s story in Milorad Pavić’s *Dictionary of the Khazars*. The question mark is added by me.

formulated on the communal/collective identity with reference to the textuality of identity-formation in *Dictionary of the Khazars*. The approach which has been presented (similar to earlier chapters) in the beginning of the third chapter, aims to deconstruct 'identity' as essence and to show that the consolidation of identity (in any form, individual or collective) is im-possible. The argument in this chapter focuses on the theoretical concepts in the area of 'nationalism', 'nation-formation' and 'national identity'. I hope to reflect here upon the 'discursive' and imaginary construction of nation and the repressive nature of collective identity as the emblem of nationalist ideology. This chapter includes a textual analysis of the novel with reference to the supposed 'collective' or 'national identity' of the Khazars.

The concepts of 'reality' and 'fiction' come up for discussion in chapter four, "Real Fiction and Fictive Real: Question of 'Reality' in *Dictionary of the Khazars*". Here, the attempt is to reflect upon the traditional and classical dichotomy of 'reality' and 'fiction'. I wish to show what has been traditionally perceived as 'reality' is but a textual construct. The dichotomy that is assumed between 'real' and 'fiction' is based on metaphysical mode of thought. The two terms are not independent of the relation between them. In other words, the given-ness attributed to the concept of 'reality' is discursive. We then go on to examine some of the theoretical formulations reflected within the fictional construction of *Dictionary of the Khazars*. This chapter, in general, addresses the question:

'Could there be fiction without real, or a 'reality' deprived of fictional essence?'

And finally, the conclusion titled "Dictionary of the Khazars: Mobility of 'Identity'", present the following subject matter. Firstly, it critically reviews the modernist discourses of power and identity and then formulates the post structuralist/postmodernist points about the subject discussed. In the later part of the conclusion, it suggests a shift in employing the terminology used in the context of the Khazars and any other 'lost nation' or community in the annals of the history. The

Khazars, therefore, are not to be called the lost nation of history but *the-once-displaced and ever displacing* community.

In this study, I have attempted a deconstructive reading of the novel. These deconstructive readings include those of 'dreams', events, existing discourses (of Kazhan's power or the discourse of the 'nation') and non-existing, repressed discourses (pertaining to sexuality, gender considerations, and the unconscious structure).

Chapter Two:
Dream:
An 'Other' in Discourse

II. Dream: An 'Other' in Discourse

The Importance of 'Identity'

The question of 'Identity' is a central concern in many disciplines of social studies. There is no collective or individual aspect of modern life, which is not affected by the question of 'identity'. This question has become important to the extent that one can claim, "in [the] social jungle of human existence there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of identity."¹ That is to say, "history is the history of identity, [and] the question of who 'owns' or appropriates the past is a question of who is able to identify him — or herself and the other at a given time and space."² The formation of identities and the problem of subjectivity, within a politics of identity involve, "multiple intersections of race, class, and gender [with] ... nationalism and ethnicity."³

The concern with identity indicates a crisis that manifests itself in two ways. Firstly, the acquisition and maintenance of identity is regarded to be both vital and problematic in the modern era. Secondly, the concept of identity reflected in many different fields of contemporary studies, varies widely and is "often radically under-theorized and incapable of bearing the analytical load that contemporary situation requires."⁴ Thus, there is an ambiguity regarding the meaning of 'identity' as a concept. On the one hand, identity is perceived as something fundamental and crucial to personal well-being and collective action. On the other hand, it is the target of a theorization "that sees it as something constructed, fluid, multiple, impermanent and fragmentary."⁵ Thus, the modern concept of identity fails to give an unambiguous

¹ Mervyn F. Bendle, "The Crisis of 'Identity' in High Modernity", *The British Journal of Sociology*, p.

2. Quoted from Erikson (1991:38).

² *ibid.*, p. 4.

³ *ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 1.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 2.

definition of itself, its constitutive elements and its conceptual borders with other fields. The claims of the modern discourses in 'defining coherent identities' and 'constituting relationships with others' are, therefore, to be evaluated as a part of the discursive construct of the modern epoch – the focus of the postmodern critique of 'identity'.

This chapter in the first place, attempts to highlight the 'problem' of the modern concept of identity, and its crisis from a theoretical perspective. It then, attempts to reflect upon the theme of the novel, *Dictionary of the Khazars*, in which the concept of 'identity' and its crisis has been revealed as the main argument. The novel, in fact, seems to be in a dynamic state where all the characters are somehow involved in a 'self' or 'collective identity' quest. The characters of the novel are either in search of people they see in their dreams, to complete their sense of self-identification; or they seem to suffer from identity disorder-symptoms. What could be the significance of a woman – Dr. Dorothea Schultz — who writes letters to her own younger version at her old address in order to forget her lonesome life in a new land?⁶ How can one decipher the nature of the attachment of an old, lonely professor, Dr. Isailo Suk, to a young girl of seven, whose attraction for her seems to remain half way between a fatherly affection and a lover's passion?⁷

Why 'Identity Crisis'?

The concept of identity, as it has been discussed earlier in this chapter, embodies a range of complex, interrelated issues. These complex issues illustrate the conceptual ambiguity that is being carried by *identity*, and the reason why arguments uncritically built upon it, are problematic. Many of its fundamental yet contradictory issues propel the essence of identity-formation and destroy the idea of the unity of personality. Thus, the 'crisis' — by terminological consideration — does not refer to

⁶ See chapter I.

⁷ Critics believe the story of the character Isailo Suk in *Dictionary of the Khazars* is similar to V. Nabokov's *Lolita*.

psychological disorders. But it rather covers a wider range of signification. Although identity, conceptually defines itself with its roots in psychoanalysis, it is now the most widely used concept in social studies and the field of humanities. This demonstrates that “it is not possible to simply treat ‘identity’ unproblematically as a received concept from psychoanalysis or psychology — it has become far too integral to sociological analysis and therefore requires adequate critical analysis and theorization.”⁸ And if indeed there is a crisis in conceptualization of identity, it has to concern itself with the sociological aspect of analysis in different areas of studies. The subject of identity in fact, is:

“... profoundly weakened by an excessive and uncritical reliance on what has become a politicized, residual and undertheorized concept.”⁹

Consequently, the notion of ‘crisis’ refers to conceptual inadequacies, uncertainty of terminology and definition, and finally ‘the ambivalence of identity’ in the modern and postmodern era. ‘Crisis’ in fact, reflects upon, “a broader social trend in which the individual self has become a fascinating problem, [reflecting] how the self has actually changed in recent history to become more difficult, challenging and important to explore.”¹⁰

‘Identity’ and its Crisis

A concern with identity has become pervasive since 1950s and 1960s¹¹ when the notion of ‘identity crisis’ was popularized.¹² The earlier concern with identity was

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 5.

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 2.

¹¹ Based on Mervyn F. Bendle’s article: “The Crisis of ‘Identity’ in High modernity”, *op. cit.*

¹² It is in this period that the concepts such as “spoiled identity” (Erikson, 1968), or “stigma” (Goffman, 1963) were introduced for the first time. Based on Mervyn F. Bendle, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

mostly focused on the personal, individual aspect of the 'self', which has been studied and analyzed in psychological and psychoanalytical approaches. "This concern increased markedly through the 1980s and 1990s, to include not only individual but also collective forms of identity."¹³ Thus, the concept of identity has gradually been accepted as a 'policy', which had a profound impact on the cultural existence of the masses. The implications of this 'policy' have to be explored in order to constitute a comprehensive social theory.

The notion of 'identity', explicitly containing "the idea of subsisting self-sameness"¹⁴ and the closeness of the models to the original 'self', is the manifestation of the metaphysical concepts of 'reality' and 'truth' (see chapter IV). The implications of these metaphysical concepts could also be observed in the theoretical framework of identity in the modern era.

At the level of individuality, "identity is synonymous with the 'core' of personhood with which the actor [subject] is endowed. This core may be conceived literally as a deeply embedded, foundational and defining characteristic, or (more usually now) as something rather more superficial, plastic and manipulable."¹⁵ Accordingly, the discussions of identity at the level of individuality could be studied under two entirely different and yet, interrelated approaches. These two approaches, "essentialism" and "constructionalism"¹⁶ are in fact, the dominant modes of discussions of identity in modern and postmodern eras. Each of the two approaches defines the notion of identity according to the framework of its respective dominant mode of discourse. For instance, the different views of individual identity perceived and expressed either as the 'core of personhood', or as a 'superficial, plastic and manipulable entity', concern themselves with a different theoretical perspective on

¹³ Mervyn F. Bendle, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 5.

the issue. Thus, the first view can be characterized as the 'essentialist' and the second as the 'constructionist' mode of defining the concept of identity.

The modern concept of identity, more or less accepted as the essentialist mode, focuses on the irreducibility of the 'core' or 'kernel'¹⁷ (considered as the 'real') in constituting views about identity. According to this view, identities are inscribed, "something arrived at in a predetermined way and then sustained."¹⁸ From this perspective, identity being inscribed within a frame of tradition, involves a non-reflective, unquestioning understanding of 'self' as having its conceptual core. This particular view undertakes the notion of the 'self' as "the passive level of acceptance"¹⁹ to formulate the ground for individuation and subjectivity. Identity, thus, based on this model is defined as "a process 'located' in *the core of the individual* and yet also *in the core of his communal culture*."²⁰ This model understands the nature of subjectivity through the sense of sameness and continuity. The conception of the continuous self-sameness of identity is central to the entire stream of the modern thought. It recognizes "the essential need for a subjective sense of continuous existence and a coherent memory"²¹, without which, a person's self is found to be profoundly weakened and vulnerable. Thus, the idea of a self-identical, continuous 'self' provides the individual with bedrock confidence "that somehow in the midst of change one *is*, i.e., one has an '*inner sameness and continuity*' which others can recognize and which is so certain that it can unselfconsciously be taken for granted."²² This non-fragmented, continuous view of self, guarantees an 'ontological security'²³ on the face of chaotic ever-changing pace of existence, which endangers the integrity of 'self'. Central to this conceptual ontological security, there is a sense of trust delivering an "empowering confidence in the continuity of the self, the

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 8.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 11.

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 11.

²² *ibid.*, p. 11.

²³ *ibid.*, p. 7.

reliability of others, and in the surrounding social environment”²⁴. The “‘basic trust’ forms the original nexus from which a combined emotive-cognitive orientation towards the others, the object world, and self identity emerges”²⁵. This “emotional inoculation against the existential anxieties”²⁶ forms a basis of a stable self-identity for “ongoing interaction in a constantly changing unpredictable world.”²⁷ The ‘simple’ model of individual, modern identity at the collective level is also ruled by the pre-determined, and pre-given rules of the institution of society which guarantees the consistency of these individual identities. The social factors with which modernity defines the sense of a continuous identity, are introduced as the geographical, communal, and ethnical factors into the context of the social institutions of the society.

The modern concept of identity, in spite of all attempts to define itself as a rational unity, fails to define the multi-dimensionality of the issue. Defining ‘identity’ as ‘mental health’, the modern era faces the increasingly dual crisis of identity both in its institutional form and its cultural representations. “Increasingly identities are seen as stalled, with society’s ‘rites of passage’ failing and crucial transitions not being made. Depression, anxiety and stress increase, and identity increasingly breaks down to produce ‘dissociative identity disorder.’”²⁸ The central point of identity disorders in the modern time is “the *literal* splitting of identity into various parts and pieces (the *alters*), each displacing a distinct sub-personality.”²⁹ That, the breaking down of identity into “sinister ‘alters’”³⁰ spreads throughout the modern culture as ‘the idea of a second self’ within us, is a recent phenomenon. Thus, the modern ‘existential anxiety’ defined as the property of the ‘outside, now seems to have been transferred into the interiority of the ‘self’. The new vision of the ‘self’, with the source of

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 3. Bendle Quoting from Kult and Foote (1999).

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 3. Bendle Quoting from Stone (1998: 330).

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 3.

anxiety and disturbances from the within, goes against the idea of the continuity and the unity of the 'self'. Critique of the modern identity and its failure in defining the concept and handling its crisis gives rise to the theory of 'constructionism'. The crisis of modern identity and the rise of constructionism are "social fact[s] arising from the collapse of the Western Imperium and the subsequent collapse of its well-exercised theory of world culture."³¹ "Extreme versions of constructionism, associated with post-structuralism and postmodernism, reject the notion of a core altogether and see identity as entirely a discursive product and as inherently fragmented, multiple and transient."³² According to this dominant mode of thought, identity may be seen:

" (1) In terms of similarity and difference involving social, racial, ethnic or gender categories; (2) In contextual terms that vary with one's social situation, providing a multifaceted experience; (3) In cultural categories reflecting contemporary conceptions of identity; (4) In terms of subjective sense of self, possibly based on notion of an 'inner life'; (5) In terms of the social performance of self-hood; (6) In terms of 'narratives of the self', understood as stories one tells oneself about who one is; (7) In psychoanalytic terms, where identity and the self are felt to be constrained by unconscious structures of the mind."³³ This model of identity – as it can be observed – unlike the modern conception of the issue, grounds its definition on fragmentation and instability of the fundamental factors.

In general, the dominant mode of constructionism, defines identity within a pre-text of social flux and in terms of "hybridity, double consciousness and subalterity."³⁴ It reflects upon identity as "something constructed, fluid, multiple,

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 4. Bendle Quoting from Lemert (1997:125).

³² *ibid.*, p. 5.

³³ *ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 4.

impermanent and fragmentary.”³⁵ The element of identity, accordingly, is invoked significantly in discussions about the role of the narrative in society, nationalism, cultural pluralism, the body, intimacy, social movements, and social inequalities. The notion of identity, thus, comes to define many other social concepts and ideologies and in the process, it(self) is also re-defined. Social terms such as ‘displacement, flight, exile, and forced migration, not only have to be understood in the light of the concept of identity, but also in terms of its transformations. The conception of identity, thus, changes from a “passive level of acceptance and acquiescence to the meta-level of active reflexivity and critique.”³⁶ The nature of identity according to this new vision cannot reconcile the ‘simple’ model of early modernity. Thus, identity is perceived as a ‘reflexive’ concept, which gives room to the elements of risk and ambivalence and contingency caused and forced upon human society with the relative decline of institutions and organizations of this new age. Consequently, individuals must find the rules to use to encounter specific situations. These rules are to be innovated in a ‘bricolage’ of the individuals’ own identities.³⁷

Thus, identity in the post-structuralist/postmodernist form, is not a rational ‘given’. It is rather an ongoing project of construction, change and development. Identity, thus, in this era, is reflected on as “an elastic category that can be made to accommodate whatever requirements the overall argument demands of it.”³⁸ And indeed, “identity or identities are taken to constitute the self”³⁹. The strategic transition in defining identity causes a major change in perception of the ‘self’. Indeed, the constructionist substratum tends to assume an extreme plasticity of the self, which dissolves the views of ‘essentialism’ which propounds the existence of an ongoing core or substrate to the personality. Individual identity, thus, is not a

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 8.

³⁷ The notion of ‘bricolage’ was first introduced by C. Levi-Strauss. Quoted by Mervyn F. Bendle, *op. cit.*

³⁸ Mervyn F. Bendle, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p.12.

predictable phenomenon reflected from this pre-given, pre-determined source of meaning, the 'self'. But it is rather a construct of "cultural attributes that are given priority over other sources of meaning by the actor herself, and while dominant social institutions and social roles may be primary sources of meaning, they only form part of an individual's identity *when and if social actors internalize them, and construct their meaning around this internalization.*"⁴⁰ It, therefore, can be seen as an active process of construction — the ever-becoming nature of identity. On the other hand, this new conception of identity specifies that identity in any form, is a question of power relationships. Accordingly, identity can be categorized into three main types:

"Legitimizing identity, which supports systems of domination; resistance identity, which reflects the struggles of those marginalized by those systems; and project identity, which involves the construction of new identities that imply the transformation of the overall social structure."⁴¹

These three types of identity give rise to three corresponding modes of collectivity, namely: civil society with its market legitimizing institutions; communities formed through the collective resistance to the process of marginalization imposed by the market, and subjects, which seek to stand out of spheres created by market or communities, "while constituting 'the collective social actor through which individuals reach holistic meaning in their experience.'"⁴² Subjects, in this sense, thus:

"... are committed to the project of social transformation rather than just resistance. In these two sets of triads, the related notions of project identity and transformative subject appear as the superior

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 9. The emphasis is mine.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 9. Bendle Quoting from Castells (1997:10).

forms emerging out of the others, with their precise relationships reflecting the prevailing level of social development.”⁴³

The second form of collective identity-formation, the communal identity, has been projected as the most important issue in the postmodern context. The central hypothesis of the post-structural/postmodern identity is that “the constitution of subjects, at the heart of the process of social change, takes a different route to the one we knew during modernity, and late modernity: namely, subjects, if and when constructed, are not built any longer on the basis of civil societies, that are in the process of disintegration, but as prolongation of communal resistance”⁴⁴ to the dominance of a global market.

It is highly debatable that the post-structuralist/postmodernist concept of identity does not claim to put an end to the problematic issue. The fact that the issue of identity is introduced as an ongoing process of becoming, indicates the fact that postmodern concept of identity is nothing but the manifestation of this problem.

'Identity' in Pavić

This part discusses the formation of an individual identity as it has been followed in the story by Milorad Pavić. Discussion of this part should be able to lead us to the problematic of the collective sense of identity and nation-formation discussed in the next chapter.

One can argue that the modern discussions of identity, is farfetched considering the supposed historical period of the story. Responding to this argument

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 9.

we can propose that in *Dictionary of the Khazars*, Milorad Pavić follows a peculiar time - structure. In this time frame, the ancient time of the Khazar tribe, representing the past, is taken as the pretext in which theoretical formulations of the present epoch, such as 'identity' or 'nationalist ideology', are applied. The synthesis of this pre-textual past and the applied pragmatics, construct the futuristic views of Milorad Pavić in *Dictionary of the Khazars*. The views of the past and the present, applied in a visible fashion, are deployed to open to an unseen, unpredictable future. Future, perceived as the time yet-to-come, is thus, the open-ended mode of the narrative of the novel.

The formation of individual's sense of identity in the novel can be seen as a dialectic of 'power relationships' and 'psychic identity'. We will analyze this dialectical process in relation to the identity-disorder, with its reference to the modern discussion of 'identity crisis'.

Formation of Identity: Dialectic of Power and Individual Psyche

Formation of subjective identity in the context of the novel has to be studied on the basis of the analysis of the power relationships between 'Ateh', the Khazar princess, and 'Kaghan', the ruler of the Khazars. This analysis is also deeply integrated with the fictional indication of the doctrine of the Khazars' faith. The Khazars' faith whose authenticity remains a fundamental question — is assumed to have been based upon the dreams of the people of the Khazar tribe.

According to the fictional accounts, the Khazar people saw the body of 'Adam Cadmon', the third angle, in their dreams. Being told these dreams, the priests of the sect of 'Dream Hunters'⁴⁵ (Pavić, 67) are inspired to write the holy book of the Khazars. This fictional construction of the Khazars' faith at one level, explains the metaphysics of the fictive ancient nation-formation. At the other level, it reveals the

⁴⁵ See chapter I.

psychological affect of this – or any – metaphysical doctrine in the formation of the individual and collective identity. The fact that the activities of the sect of dream hunters — in impregnating people’s minds with dreams and then hunting those dreams as the material to inscribe a holy book – are all related to dreams and that dreams are the work of human unconscious/psyche, has an implicit indication of a dominating mode of power over the Khazarian subjects’ psyches. The Khazarian metaphysical system of thought has its relation with all the metaphysical systems and their fundamental assumptions regarding human identity. Thus, the dream factor has been introduced as the dominant mode of the metaphysical system casted over the unconscious part of the ‘self’. The two key points from the fictional world in supporting the present hypothesis are the ‘dream clinic’⁴⁶ (ibid, 197) and the performance of the ritual during which the priests of the dream hunter sect used to impregnate the mind of people with their intended dreams. The idea of a ‘dream clinic’ is introduced in the tale of Dr. Abu Kabir Muawia, one of the characters of the story.

Dr. Muawia, the twentieth century philosopher in search of the Khazar question, eventually comes across some old newspapers from the end of nineteenth century. To respond to the old advertisement from these newspapers, he collects a pile of old, strange equipments, which in a later search and according to the fictional accounts of the novel are described as follows:

“Some of his [Dr. Abu Kabir Muawia] acquisitions were obviously equipment for something that looked like a hospital.” (ibid., p.196)

⁴⁶ See chapter I.

And, in a conversation between Dr. Muawia and his colleague, we read:

“This equipment is too antiquated for a dream clinic, for recovering the sight used in dreams.”⁴⁷

The assumed equipments (according to the story) together, are used as:

“...protective equipment against blindness in dreams.”⁴⁸

To this point one could add the ritual of impregnating the minds of people with dreams by the priests of the dream hunter sect. The performance of this ritual can be read from the entry on Yusuf Masudi. Yusuf Masudi, according to the fictional claims, is one of the writers of the ‘original copy’⁴⁹ of the novel.

In search of the traces of the true dream hunters for his copy of *Dictionary of the Khazars*, Yusuf Masudi travelling from one corner of the world to the other, one day enters a small town. The story goes:

“Masudi walked down to the houses and stopped at the smell of ginger. A woman was sitting by the fire, her kettle of broth babbling like bursting boils. Children were standing in line with their plates and dogs, waiting. She ladled out the broth to the children and animals, and immediately Masudi knew that she was portioning out dreams from the Kettle. Her lips changed color, and her bottom up was the shape of an upside-down bench. She was lying on the remains of a half-eaten fish, like a desert dog on the bones of its prey, when Masudi went up

⁴⁷ibid., p. 197.

⁴⁸ibid., p. 197.

⁴⁹The 1691 edition of the dictionary according to the claims of the novel. See chapter IV.

to her, and she offered him a ladleful, but he shook his head with a smile. "I cannot dream any more", he said, and she left the kettle".⁵⁰

The two fictional scenes seem to complete each others' affect. While the ritual of 'impregnating the minds' of people with dreams is assumed to set the minds into the desired path by the dream hunters, the idea of a 'dream clinic' suggests an institutionalized level of care-taking of the performative effect of the ritual. Thus, the fictional element of dream clinic could be seen as having the function of 'asylum' in the modern, civil society. Together the two images — of the 'ritual performance' and the 'clinic'— imply the sense of formation of a 'dominant discourse' of power with its institutions in the (fictive) social life of the Khazars. This discourse of power, as it has been discussed, affects the conscious and unconscious levels of individual minds. The attempt to inscribe the holy book of Khazars, in fact, addresses the conscious part of individual existence allegorized by the story of the Khazar community. Thus, Dreams, on the one hand, are the basis of the doctrine of the Khazarian faith and the inscription of the Khazar holy book – a base, which could be analyzed for fictive power relationships. And again, on the other hand, they are the unconscious factors in the formation of identity.

The dream of the Kaghan of Khazars and his motivation to hold a polemic on the issue of the conversion of the Khazars' faith — undertaken as the major incident of the novel — can be seen as the point where an unconscious function of the mind/dreams has been deployed intentionally in the favor of the discourse of power. The Kaghan of the Khazars sees the angel of God in his dream saying:

"The creator is pleased with your intentions but not with your deeds."⁵¹

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 174.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 141.

Kaghan seeks the interpretation of his dream from the priests of dream hunters. Being disappointed by the manner of dream hunters' deciphering, he holds a polemic to which the representatives of other faiths — the philosophers and spiritual leaders of the other faiths — are invited. Seeking the advice of these representatives — the Muslim Mullah, the Jewish rabbi, and the Christian priest — the Kaghan is said to convert the faith of the tribe into any of the corresponding faiths.

The dream of Kaghan, implies three levels of signification. Firstly, it indicates the strategy of Kaghan to undermine the political and the religious position of the dream hunters. Secondly, it reflects upon the internal power-struggles of the characters of the story. Kaghan, according to the fictional indication on the one hand, is introduced as the ruler of the Khazars whose position as the king 'Khan', is overshadowed by the existence of a number of second ruler(s), ('begs', 'beys') who according to the story are assumed to be the actual poles of power in the political-power system of the Khazars. Kaghan, or the 'khan' of the Khazars on the other hand, is narrated to be selected in a strange manner. On the assumed election-day of Kaghan, the examiners are narrated to strangle the nominee until he is about to die. Then they ask him to predict the number of years he assumes his reign would last. If the particular Kaghan, who has passed through the examination would not die by the end of the time he had predicted at that particular day, he would be killed by his examiners. Thus, the power position of Kaghan has been projected as to be dependent and conditional. Kaghan could be assumed as the pole of power who deploys the doctrine and the ritual of the dominant religious sect of the tribe in order to preserve and extend his reign.

The third layer of signification refers back to the power struggles between 'Ateh' and Kaghan. It has been discussed earlier that Ateh, the Khazar princess, was the supporter and spiritual leader of the sect of dream hunters. The position of other

characters — Kaghan's, or begs'— seems to be subdued in comparison to the position of Ateh. The structure of power of the Khazar tribe that way has to be defined as a matriarchal society. The dream of Kaghan, the subsequent polemic and the conversion of the Khazars — these transformative events depict the transformation of matriarchal societies into mere modern patriarchies. Ateh loses her speech, poems and her feminine language after the polemic and is incapable of recalling her Khazar words except for the word 'ku'. *Dictionary of the Khazars*, narrates Ateh's situation after the polemic as:

“Sometimes, at night, you can hear the sound ku-ku! That is princess Ateh uttering the only word she knows and weeping as she tries to remember her forgotten poems.”⁵²

The indication that Ateh loses her feminine language and her sex, refer to the domination of the female figure through the advent of solemn patriarchy. Kaghan deploys dream hunters' methods of domination, by reducing the 'Other' to the level of the heteronomous, voiceless and sexless figure.

What actually has been depicted in the narrative of the story is the shift of dominant discourse of power from one 'form' to the 'other'. The shift in the discourse of power in the later parts of the story, has been shown to effectuate the change in individual identity. Without a doubt, Kaghan's initiation to convert the tribe into a new faith can be taken as an intentional act of a ruler in defining the communal identity in new terms. With the change in religion and the shift in the authority and the structure of power, Kaghan desires to inscribe his own name as the name of the tribe in the Khazar history. The disappearance of the entire tribe soon after the polemic can be seen as the counterpoint to this intention of Kaghan. The fictional disappearance of the Khazars, thus, explains the irreducibility of a nation into a

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 160.

subjectivity that defines itself by its authoritative power. Although, Kaghan initiates the major change in the tribal life of the Khazars, the result he is assumed to have been expecting from the polemic – that is, his own solemn authority – does not take place. The process of de-identification/re-identification of the Khazars – initiated with the denial of the original faith and conversion into a new religion – thus, does not lead into a unified identity of a new nation. This identity rather has to be defined in terms of ‘dispersion’ and ‘displacement’ than ‘uniformity’ and ‘unification’.

The impact of the discourse of power, within the fictional domain, on the formation of individual identity has to be studied in the context of the history of the people in search of the Khazar question. It is noteworthy to mention that from the time of ancient Khazars, except for the characters Ateh and Kaghan, much less is narrated about the individual people of the Khazar. This emphasizes the fact that the study of nations – even in the case of ancient ones – in fact, is the analysis of the power structure and ruling system through the emphasis on the character of the ruler. This general study of power structure does not consider the people of the nation and does not define the process of their daily lives.

The analysis of individual identity in *Dictionary of the Khazars* is related to the ‘Khazar question’. It has been mentioned that from the original times of the Khazars (according to the fictional accounts), almost nothing has been said about the Khazar people. The Khazar question – the question about which other nations are also concerned – seems to construct a ground for those looking for an answer to this question. That way, the quest for an answer to the Khazar question seems to relate these researchers to the people of the Khazars. Thus, the quest for the solution of the Khazar question at an actual level takes the form of a quest for self-identity of the characters by the story. Based on the historical periods in which the researchers of the Khazar question appear, they can be divided into two generations. Amongst the first generation, Avram Brankovich and Samuel Cohen are chosen for the study of their

characters and their common quest. These characters are those whose search for the 'truth' of the Khazars is assumed to have been recorded in 1691 edition of *Dictionary of the Khazars*. This version of the text, according to the story, is assumed to have been destroyed within a year after the publication, in 1692. The second generation of researchers on the Khazar question — amongst whom only one character, Dorothea Schultz, is taken to be studied upon — are those whose effort to collect evidences about the Khazar is assumed to form the basis of the present copy of the novel. The result of this quest aimed at solving the riddle of the Khazar question, like the earlier attempt (1691 edition) never takes the form of a complete 'book'. If the concept of 'Book' is seen as a completely defined form of an 'identity', the incompleteness of the process of formation of the book can be the indicative of the impossibility of defining 'identity'.

Avram Brankovich, one of the commanders of army in Austro-Turkish wars, is introduced as one of the main researchers of the Khazar question. Cohen, who lives at the same period of time as Brankovich, is a Jew from Dubrovnik's ghettos. Each of the two characters is in search of the remaining records of his religion on the event of the 'Khazar Polemic' (see chapter I). Cohen and Brankovich, who have never met one another, are aware of each other's existence and activities through their dreams. In these dreams each of the characters assumes himself to be the other. The two characters who have undertaken a journey to find each other, finally reach one another at the bank of the river Danube where they meet their death. Brankovich is killed by Turkish troops while Cohen at the same time falls into a coma from which he never awakes.

The relation of Brankovich/Cohen from the individual-identity (de)formation perspective can be analyzed at different levels. Firstly, the relation of the two characters can be seen as the relation of 'self' and the 'Other'. Each of the two characters in defining an individual identity for himself — for instance as being a

ghetto Jew or a Roman Christian elite from Wallachia — seeks the existence of the other. And thus, the two characters are in constant search for the ‘other’ to complete this personal individual-identity. This level of identity-formation embodies its own deformation. In the sense that each of the two characters assumes himself to be the other the moment he falls asleep. Thus, Cohen and Brankovich, each falls into the dilemma of personality. Neither of the two, is certain about his ‘real identity’. This confusion at the level of identity itself can be read as the focus of the story on the issue of personality disorders. Secondly, the mediation of ‘dreams’ in the process of each character’s quest for the ‘other’ can signify the internalization of ‘disorder’ that has ‘always been assumed to exist in the domain of exteriority’. Each of the two characters seems to be haunted by one’s dreams about the other. The idea of this ‘other’, though seems to exist in the outside world, inhabits the interior domain of the ‘self’, the unconscious. Thus, the quest for an outside ‘Other’ goes back into the deepest layers of interiority. Thirdly, the indication that the two characters fall dead at the sight of one another, signifies the fact that the reduction of any one of the two ontological concepts, ‘self’ and the ‘Other’, to the other is impossible. The process of identity of the ‘self’ with the ‘Other’ which is expected to happen in the scene where the two characters are about to see one another, remains incomplete due to the unexpected death of both characters. With the death of Cohen and Brankovich, the quest for ‘self-identification’, unity of ‘self’ and the ‘Other’ and any answer to the Khazar question, remains unsuccessful.

The issue of self-identity in the case of Dr. Dorothea Schultz — chosen from amongst the second generation of those researchers involved with the Khazar question — gives another turn to the question of individual identity. Dorothea Schultz is introduced as the Jewish researcher of the Khazar question. She, who is originally Polish, moves into Israel after her marriage where she lives with her husband. Dorothea’s husband who has participated in Israeli-Egyptian war, has been injured by an Arab defender Dr. Abu Kabir Muawia who in return has been wounded seriously.

Being touched by the husband's body, Dorothea senses the repressed desire of the Arab man whom she does not know in person. She, who can not bear the marital life due to the mentioned reason, moves to America where as a professor she can continue her studies on the Khazar question. This is where she receives an invitation to participate in a conference in Istanbul and to give a speech on the subject of her research. She accepts the invitation with the hope to meet the other participant Dr. Muawia, the other Khazar Scholar, and the intention to kill him.

During all her moves from the one corner of the world to the other, Dorothea keeps writing to the young Dorothea – herself – at her old address in Poland. This act of self-communication of Dorothea can be seen as the relation of the 'self' with its own interior 'Other'. This particular 'Other' does not exist somewhere outside the 'self', but it is rather located within the layers of the 'self'. The present argument can be assumed to follow the logic of the earlier claim regarding the internalizing the existence of a problematic 'Other' into the domain of the 'self'. Thus, the case of Dorothea suggests a 'split-self', a 'self' that has been divided, fragmented from within. This is to say that the problematic 'Other' does not only belong to the domain of exteriority, but also rooted in the 'self'.

The case of identity – individual identity to be more specific – in Pavić, as it has been discussed earlier, is defined in terms of power relationships and identity crisis. This method of definition on the one hand, would undermine the earlier definitions of identity which assumed a solidified 'core' for identification. On the other hand, it never provides any concrete definition of the subject itself. Thus, the case of individual identity in *Dictionary of the Khazars* never reaches any stage of concrete definition. It remains at the level of never-defining, ever-changing/becoming that can reflect all problems and crisis, ever existing in the field.

Chapter Three:
*Architecture of (Im)Possibility:
Question of Collective Identity*

III. Architecture of (Im)Possibility¹: Question of Collective Identity

'Identity' in Modern Nations, and Traditional Metaphysical Communities

As stated earlier, the main problem discussed in this dissertation is the problem of 'identity' in the context of Milorad Pavić's *Dictionary of the Khazars*. The underlying intention of Pavić in this particular work seems to be to thematize the centrality of identity-formation in a mythifying mode, and at the same time to demythify the entire process of identification. Each chapter in this work attempts to deal with the different aspects of identity. The objective of this chapter is to gather substantial arguments to illustrate that determination or consolidation of identity in any form is impossible and that the category of identity is essentially temporal. The two major poles of argument are the concept of collective identity in the modern nation and in the traditional (metaphysical) communities. The argument is further developed to demonstrate how and based on what factors the impossibility of monopolizing an/any identity has been argued by Pavić in *Dictionary of the Khazars*.

The idea of nation formation "as an ideology and movement is relatively modern, dating from the latter half of the eighteenth century."² Yet, there are many

¹ The title for this chapter is adopted from Lance Olsen's article, "Architecture of Possibility." Thematically, the argument essentially deviates from the Olsen's discussion on the post-modern possibilities of 'Other' literary constructions. Olsen's focus in his article is mostly formed around the 'mimetic' nature of structure in *Dictionary of the Khazars* and the cynical attitude of the mainstream American readers and critics toward this form of literary creation and consequently the marginalization of all such literature of the present literary epoch along with their authors. According to Olsen, the body of the literary construction in *Dictionary of the Khazars* in fact has been formed from rendering of the very many different other literatures of the present and the past centuries of different cultures.

The focus in this chapter on the other hand, is to reveal the impossibility of formation and affirmation of any possibility in bringing any immutable form of identity into the social, political and the literary domains. Rather than assigning a position to Pavić's work (unlike Olsen) in the world of massive contemporary literary creation, it concentrates on the thematic structure of *Dictionary of the Khazars*.

² *Encyclopedia of Nationalism*, p. 242.



scholars and historians who conflate the idea of nation with racial factors and ethnicity. They tend to assume that nations “were found throughout history.”³ Indeed these ‘Primordialist’ scholars regard nations as “components of the natural order existing, as Abbé Sieyès puts it, *outside time*.”⁴ If nation as an ideology may not be claimed to be ‘primordial’⁵, it can certainly be called ‘perennial’⁶. Perennialism in the case of the modern nations is generally used in two different ways: “as continuity and as recurrence.”⁷ In the first sense, it assumes a continuity and durability in the case of certain nations, with the earliest historical records to those of the present implying a sense of longevity of nations and their links to an immemorial past. In that sense the Armenians, Jews, Greeks, Chinese, Japanese and many other peoples can describe their modern status of being a nation in a perennial sense. This is despite all the changes that have taken place in the context of the social and cultural life of the people who make claim for these names and identities throughout history.

In the second sense — nation being taken as a recurrent phenomenon — the claim implies the sense of appearance and disappearance of the nations recurrently in history, nations come and go, emerge and decline, but they essentially live forever. And thus, the so-called modern nation in any shape, size or political form “is simply a recent embodiment and development of an age-old and wide-spread phenomenon.”⁸ Certainly there is an affinity between the modern concept of nation and that held by the traditional societies, although nationalism as a product of modernity claims a radical rupture with the earlier forms of social life and the corresponding ideologies. Modern nationalism, in fact, inherits vast territories of the old-world dynasties during the sequential revolutions of the 18th and the 19th century. Although it has always been viewed as opposed to the ideology of the metaphysical/religious traditions, it

³ *ibid.*, p. 242.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 242. The emphasis is mine.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 242.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 242.

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 243.

⁸ *Encyclopedia of Nationalism*, p. 244.

remains loyal to the basis of their assumptions in constituting the modern nation. Nation, thus, according to this ironical statement of Ernest Renan, "... is less metaphysical than divine right and less brutal than the so-called historical right."⁹

The concepts of nation and national rights, according to Renan, seem to be studied in relation with the concepts of the divine and the historical communities. To elaborate the basis of this affinity between the concepts of modern nation and traditional communities in the formation of the collective identity of their subjects, the essence of the metaphysical traditions in constituting the religious-communal identity has to be examined in relation to the modern nationalist ideology.

Firstly, the matter of identity in every metaphysical tradition is closely associated with the concept of 'Being'. Metaphysical 'Being' as the ground of all beings is defined as the absolute determination, standing outside the sphere of time and temporality. It is viewed as the atemporal source of determination in relation to which the being gets identified. Martin Heidegger in *Identity and Difference* defines the category of 'identity' as the characteristic of 'Being'. He goes on to write:

"Being is determined by an identity as a characteristic of that identity. Later on, however identity as it is thought of in metaphysics is represented as a characteristic of being."¹⁰

The doctrine of metaphysics states that 'Being' is the abode of the identity and that the identity essentially belongs to Being. In order to be identified with 'Being', the being has united with it and that this unification (to constitute the identity of being versus Being) is to bring back together the being and 'Being' which have originally belonged together. The category of identity is thus, the category of 'unity', becoming one and the same in the realm of metaphysics. Metaphysical identity, therefore,

⁹ Ernest Renan, "What is a nation?", Homi K. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration*, p. 19.

¹⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 28.

implies “ the relation of ‘with’, that is, a mediation, a connection, a synthesis.”¹¹

Identity in this realm, thus, is:

“The essential constitution of metaphysics is based on the unity of being as such in the universal and that which is the highest.”¹²

The means of the unification of the being with this universal and the highest in metaphysics is the medium of ‘thought’— the ‘thinking’— in the sense that the being with the mediation of thinking can reach, be unified, and identified with the Being. “ But how can ‘Being’ ever come to present itself as ‘thought’? How else than the fact that Being is previously marked as ground, while thinking — since it belongs together with Being — gathers itself toward Being as its ground, in the manner of giving ground and accounting for the ground.”¹³ Thought, in fact, is the manifestation of Being in metaphysics. It is with the mediation of thought (the mode of thinking) that the Being is represented in the being’s understanding. Therefore, the mode of thinking in metaphysics is the “representational”¹⁴ mode. The aim of being — in order to be identified with this Being — is that by means of this representational mode of thoughts, to go back to the presence of the Being. Being united with the ground of the beings, becoming one with this source of determination is, in fact, the key to the ‘presence of the Being’ in the beings’ thoughts.¹⁵

It is the manifestation of this metaphysical identity (in relation with Being) in the existence of man (the being) that becomes the basis for the earlier form of man’s communal identity. The religious communities, as the earlier form of man’s social existence, therefore, follow the metaphysical tradition in constituting the identity of

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 23.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 61.

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 57.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 73.

¹⁵ The main idea here, based on an argument from Martin’s Heidegger’s *Identity and Difference* is to show that the modes of thought are considered to be the first in uniting the beings with their ground of Being.

the community in relation to the position of the transcendental Being. Renan explains the importance of religion in constituting the earlier communities:

“Originally, religion had to do with the very existence of the social group, which was itself an extension of the family.”¹⁶

Transcendentality is, in fact, the inherent feature of any identity-formation-attempt of any religious system. Yet, there is an essential distinction between the earlier religious communities — ‘the cult of Athene’¹⁷ for instance — and others that appeared in later stages of history. This earlier conception of religion “implied no theological dogma. This religion was, in the strongest sense of the term, a state religion”¹⁸; and something equivalent to the “drawing lots [for the military service], or the cult of the flag.”¹⁹ Or it was, “fundamentally, the cult of Acropolis personified.”²⁰ Refusal to be a part of this cult (that is, the religious cult) was in its extreme form equivalent to not being a part of that particular community.

In the later religious communities, on the other hand, the base of religion takes the form of a dogma, though the problem of the recognition of the being as Being almost remains the same. Each of the earlier religious communities, the Christian²¹, the Muslim or the Jewish, for instance, was formed upon the basis of the relation between their members and their respective concept of Being (God). It is in this regard that all of these earlier religious communities (even up to the present time) used to be named after a certain relation with the transcendental Being. It is,

¹⁶ Ernest Renan, op. cit., p. 17.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, op. cit., p. 17.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 17.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 17.

²¹ Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* refers to this desire for a Christian Nation in the following statement:

“... in certain epochs, for, say, Christians to dream of a wholly Christian planet.” This statement which has been originally used to indicate that “no nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind” (Anderson, p.7) on the other hand is the indication of the dream for the establishment of a Christian nation.

therefore, for the same reason that the Islamic nation is named after Allah (the Islamic God) as the 'Allah's Ummah' (the nation of God).

The ultimate aim of the followers of any metaphysical/religious tradition is to be united with the source of determination and the transcendental truth through different means. The practices of torture and suffering as penitence for the contamination dogmas in the earlier periods become the practices of religious rituals in the later periods of human history. These practices ranged from all different possibilities of corporeal pain to the consumptive practices of the 'body of the God' (specially in Christianity). The consumptive rituals, for example, the ritual of taking the Bread and the Wine in the church, symbolically standing for the consumption of Jesus' flesh and blood, attributes a sort of physicality to God by imagining him in a corporeal figure and thus, rendering the idea of reaching the position of God (through consuming his flesh and blood) tangible. 'Consumption' by the same token seems to be the localized element and an important concept in many religious and metaphysical systems.

A question has to be posed at this point regarding the role played by the metaphysical thought in constituting 'identity'. How far the determination of 'being' with 'Being', presumed and practiced within the context of the religious systems, has been successful in defining an identity for the beings (subjects of these earlier systems of thoughts)? The possible response to this essential question could be sought in the actual establishment of any of the supposed religious nations. In fact, in spite of all the determinations assumed and fabricated throughout the history of the different religions in defining an immutable identity for their followers, the metaphysical/religious systems fail to constitute their assumed nations. With the advent of the Enlightenment, the destruction of "the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm"²² and the end of the dominance of the religious systems, the

²² Benedict Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

paradigms of identity go through certain changes. The position of the transcendental reality is replaced by Reason of the beings and, therefore, Man as the source of Reason becomes the center of the world. Thus:

“ The Enlightenment conception of the human subjects as that of a *fully centered, unified individual, endowed with capabilities of reason consciousness and action, whose ‘center’ consisted of an inner core, which first emerged when the subject was born, and unfolded with it, while remaining essentially the same — continuous or ‘identical’ with itself — throughout the individual’s existence.*”²³

The quest for identity from this stage of history thus, seems to be more anthropomorphic. ‘The Enlightenment conception’ of the individual subject can be applied to a collective identity as well. The emergence of the nation-states after the Enlightenment is, in fact, an indication of the demand for the definition of a collective identity that is deeply rooted in the outcomes of Enlightenment. Modern nations follow and extend the patterns of these earlier social constitutions in formulating a collective identity for their subjects.

The ‘modern traditions’, in spite of their denunciation of all affiliations to any of the former traditional-religious systems²⁴, seem to borrow the elements of their national-identity from the former traditions. The nature of modern nation’s ‘modernity’ thus, is:

“... to aver that nationalism creates the nation is at best a half truth; its validity depends on regarding the nation as by definition not only relatively recent but sociologically wholly *modern*, when the

²³ *Encyclopedia of Nationalism*, op. cit., P. 247. Quoted from Hall (1992: 275-77). The emphasis is mine.

²⁴It has to be noted that denunciation of the dominance of religious systems, can be claimed largely in the context of the Western Nations; amongst the Eastern traditions the formation of the nation by and large, seem to follow the idea of constituting a nation through a particular religion (Muslim in the case of Middle East Asia and parts of Africa, the formation of a Hindu/Muslim nations in the case of South East Asia and of the Buddhist nation in East and far East Asia). Adopted from Benedict Anderson’s “Cultural Roots”, *Imagined Communities*.

question of its modernity in this sense must remain open, not so much because either of the perennialist arguments may possess some validity, but because the so-called *modern nation* so often incorporates pre-modern features of name, memories, symbols, customs, language, territory, religious domination and the like, the kind of elements explored by *ethno-symbolists*. These make it perhaps less *modern* in the sociological and methodological senses than modernists tend to believe."²⁵

Essence of this affinity between the modern nation and the metaphysical-communal identity can be analyzed in the following manner. The obsolete and undefined idea of the origin of nations in the modern era seems to occupy the same position as that of the transcendental truth as assumed and believed in, within the context of any theological system. Modern quests for identity, in fact, follow the patterns of "enlightenment's practices of establishing universal truth"²⁶ in erecting the reason of man *vis-à-vis* the position of god(s) of the metaphysical systems. In case of any of the religious systems, the sacredness and indefinability associated with the matter and the origin of the transcendence seems to be the counterpart of the nationalists' unquestionable faith in the nation's origins. An ineffable 'origin' or the 'Being' in terms of the metaphysical/religious communities — though not covering the concept of the origin of nations — defines certain affinities of the two systems of thought. Both present the transcendental sources of determination of identity as standing outside the sphere of existence of the followers/subjects. Besides the considerations about the origins of nations in the modern form with regards to its traditional metaphysical counterpart, modern nationalism owes many of its existential factors and elements to the former tradition.²⁷

²⁵ *Encyclopedia of Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 244. The emphasis is mine.

²⁶ *Encyclopedia of Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 247.

²⁷ Timothy Brennan, "The national longing for form," Homi K. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration*, p. 59. According to Brennan:

"Nationalism was also messianic, modeled on the patterns of Judeo-Christianity. According to Kohn, modern nationalism took three concepts from Old Testament mythology: 'the idea of a chosen people', the emphasis on a common stock of memory of the past and of hopes for the future, and finally national messianism."

Looking into the essence of religious/metaphysical communities (for instance the 'Christian nation' or the Islamic 'Ummah'²⁸), "imaginable largely through the medium of a sacred language and written script"²⁹ would reveal a certain affinity of the modern nation's concept of a shared/common language with the transcendental concept of the sacred language. Yet, the modern nation, both theoretically and practically, attempts to deviate from the norms of the transcendental conceptions of metaphysical/religious communities. First, the 'Being' as the 'transcendental truth' gives way to the logic and the reason of Enlightenment in the context of the civil life of the nations. Second, the modern national language, as the factor and the means of communication in unifying the nation into one body, in its "linguistic homogeneous forms"³⁰ does not claim for any sanctity through establishment of a direct relation between the language and an assumed transcendental truth/reality of a god. The language of the modern nation prefigures itself in the body of an arbitrary sign, which has now left its period of silence behind.³¹ The arbitrariness of the language of the modern nation in breaking its sanctity through the rupture of the unity with the transcendental truth has been argued by Benedict Anderson:

"Yet if the sacred silent languages were the media through which the great global communities of the past were imagined, the reality of such apparitions depended on an idea largely foreign to the

²⁸ The first term is from Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities*, and the second is an Arabic term meaning 'The Islamic Nation'.

²⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, p. 12.

³⁰ *Encyclopedia of Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 245.

³¹ 'Silent sacred languages' in Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* are introduced through their non-communicability and the emphasis on the 'written script' of these languages. The statement of Anderson in this regard reads as follows:

"Take only the example of Islam: if Maguindanao met Berbers in Mecca, knowing nothing of each other's languages, incapable of communicating orally, they nonetheless understood each other's ideographs, *because* the sacred texts they shared existed only in classical Arabic. In this sense, the written Arabic functioned like Chinese characters to create a community out of signs, not sounds." (p.13.)

contemporary Western mind: the non-arbitrariness of the sign. The ideograms of Chinese, Latin, or Arabic were emanations of reality, not randomly fabricated representations of it.”³²

Besides the language element and the linguistic considerations as the unifying factor in the formation of nations, the modern concept of nation seems to have borrowed its other definitional elements from the metaphysical systems. In fact, territorial considerations and the ‘geographic location’ of the modern nation in demarcating the borders of nations and assigning them with the defined territories can be seen as the extension of the ancient world religions struggles for ‘territorialisation of faith.’³³ These territorial factors on the other hand, owe their existence to the ‘geographic location’³⁴ as the ‘locus of identity’³⁵ introduced by the nation-state ideologies. The geographical considerations, in fact, are rooted in the definition of the term ‘nation’.

“ ‘Nation’ as a term is radically connected with ‘native’. We are born into relationships, which are typically settled in space. This form of primary and ‘placeable’ bonding is of quite fundamental human and natural importance. Yet the jump from that to anything like the modern nation-state is entirely artificial.”³⁶

The roots of the racial factors and the “ideological discourse of purity (natural sovereignty ancestral home, firstness on land)”³⁷ of the modern nation can also be traced back to the earlier metaphysical and religious traditions. The concept of race in every context, traditional or modern, seems to follow a similar pattern of “generating a principle of innate, inherited superiority.”³⁸ Although the importance of the racial

³² Benedict Anderson, op. cit., p. 14.

³³ *ibid.*, p. 17. The original usage of the term in Anderson, in fact, is in reference to Marco Polo’s (who is a Christian) statement about Kublai Khan’s regards to ‘the faith of the Christians as the truest and the best...’ Here, on the other hand, this particular term has been used with reference to the medieval territorial struggles of the Christians and Muslims through the Crusades.

³⁴ *Encyclopedia of Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 245.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 245.

³⁶ Timothy Brennan, op. cit., p. 45.

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 45.

³⁸ Benedict Anderson, op. cit., p. 150.

factors and considerations in most religious systems remain less visible, such as in Christianity, or highly rejected by others (such as in the Islamic tradition), the essence of other religions remain rooted in racial considerations. Judaic tradition, by and large, is considered to be the traditional religion of the Semitic people, and that the Sons of Israel (Beni Israel) claim themselves to be 'the chosen nation'. Yet, in the recent decades, with the discovery and the addition of other Jewish communities from all around the world (from Eastern Europe and Asia, including India) to the Jewish nation the criterion for the purity of the race has been altered. East European Jews, on the one hand, are presumed to have been converted to the faith during the middle ages and are all considered to be the descendents of the *Khazars*, while on the other hand, the world Jewry claim they belong to the lost tribes of the Israel nation.³⁹

Racial practices (essentially rooted in this historically and religious specific usage) observed and applied in the context of the modern nations can also be divided into two different kinds. In the first, the concept has been adapted from the religious-racial ground, based on the claim of the 'Beni Israel' as the 'chosen people' implying a sense of superiority of a nation in being the object of 'God's' divine orientations. In the context of other nations, though the term carries the same meaning, it refers to the chosen nations other than the Jews (and not certainly chosen by a God figure, but by the superiority of racial factors). In this sense, "it is the Hebraic underdog, the sense of being an outcaste people,"⁴⁰ that the term characterizes. The massacre of the Jews during the Second World War by another race of 'chosen people' (the Germanic race) is perhaps the best example indicating the historical and social shift from the earlier usage of this expression. The second practice of determining the ethnographical factors of the modern nation seems to have been more related to the matter of color and the physical specifications than the religious concept of chosen nation. Therefore,

³⁹ In documentation, the Khazars are claimed to be the lost tribe of the Israel nation, that is, the thirteenth tribe. Arthur Koestler in the article *The Thirteenth Tribe* argues over the possibility of this claim about the Khazars. Amongst other similar cases, one can refer to the case of the tribal Indian Jews (Mizo-Kuki tribe) introduced as 'one of the ten lost tribes of Israel' to the world Jewry.

⁴⁰ Timothy Brennan, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

the racial issues in the domain of the modern nations (especially in the second form) are essentially different from the earlier religious considerations. These later ethnographical practices of the modern nation can be considered the essence of racism.

Racial considerations of the nations, accordingly, can partly be understood as the creation of the ideology and practice of nationalism and partly adapted from the religious concepts or from ethnographical factors. Nationalism in fact renders and modifies the old concept of religious race into a new form of use. Racial practices, therefore, cannot be thought to have been solely started within the domain of the nation-spheres, though they can be seen as forming the essence of the division of the nations into their interior and exterior spaces. These considerations, in fact, form the basis of the national distinctions of the 'self' (interiority) of the nation and the 'Other', which stands outside or in the margins of any nation. On the contrary, amongst the scholars working on the question of nations, "several confidently assert that it [nationalism] is derived from race."⁴¹ Looking back in history and examining the constitutions of earlier communities will reveal that the ethnographic factors in the formation of the 'barbarian' communities (or even the historical evidences on the existence of the Khazars), for instance, does not play a prominent role. The shape of the communities of these tribal and nomad people, "was determined by the might or the whim of the invaders,"⁴² and that these people essentially remained "utterly indifferent to the race of the populations which they had subdued."⁴³ Besides, even with the latest development genetics science, the matter of a pure race or the question of races remains unresolved. The truth is that the discussions of race are all interminable and there is no pure race to substantiate and justify the ethnographic-political considerations of the nationalist ideologies.

⁴¹ Ernest Renan, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 14.

'Nation' is, therefore, an identity of the collectivity of the people living its life and history. It is a collective identity of singular subjects, from which it takes its collective essence and existence. It defines this identity in terms of the most tangible and natural elements common to the subjects. Yet, it is essential to ask how far the ideology of the nation has been successful in defining this 'identity'. Could the national borders, languages or else the race of a particular nation (though imagining a nation of one particular race is impossible) or even a certain religion, define and demarcate a nation? Answering this fundamental question would clarify the nature of the discourse with which modern nationalism defines itself. If nationalist ideology, like that of the metaphysical communities assumes the origin of nation to be beyond the grasp of its subjects, up in the horizon of transcendentality, could that then possibly signify that the modern nation follows the trace of the metaphysical communities? Do the geographical borders mean anything beyond the arbitrariness of signs? Could they justify any violence in the name of violating the borders of some nation?

The case of the national languages, perhaps is the most interesting part of the argument. The national/official language of a nation is meant to be the factor unifying the nation into one body through the sharing of a common means of communication. However, by the same token could someone settling within the borders of a nation communicating in a language other than the official language of the state/country be claimed not to be of the same nationality? Or take the case of nations with the official language other than the mother tongue of the population and having many other local, or regional languages. Could any singular subject of the nation communicating in any of these local/tribal languages be claimed to be deprived of that particular nationality? Geographical considerations on the other hand, do not seem to add any more determination in the context of the nations' identification. The arbitrary signs and symbols demarcating the borders of nations cannot be "accorded a kind of *a priori*

limiting faculty”⁴⁴ either. The case of religious nationalism (for instance, devaluing of the nationalist ideology and patriotism and replacing it with the love of Islam in Iran) does not define the national/religious identity in a different fashion. The fact is that none of the above-mentioned elements, either in definition or in application, can bring the assumed determinations into the context of nations. These or any other factors, therefore, cannot define the identity of the nations. Identity is fundamentally indefinable and any attempt to define it would be futile.

According to Hugh Seton-Watson:

“Thus I am *driven* to the conclusion that no ‘scientific definition’ of the nation can be devised; yet the phenomenon has existed and exists.”⁴⁵

Taken from the studies of Seton-Watson, Timothy Brennan indicates the same fact into the following statement:

“There is no ‘scientific’ means of establishing what all nations have in common.”⁴⁶

What is the nature and the role of nationalism in defining the identity of nations? It seems that the roots of nationalism were formed at the time of the fundamental historical changes in human societies, resulting in changes at different levels of human consciousness, which together called for a different strategy in the constitution of human societies. The nature of the nationalist movements, therefore, has to be understood at the level of a social creation, the invention of a necessary construction at a certain time. Anderson says:

⁴⁴ Ernest Renan, op. cit., p. 18.

⁴⁵ Benedict Anderson, op. cit., p. 3. Quoted in Benedict Anderson from Hugh Seton-Watson.

⁴⁶ Timothy Brennan, op. cit., p. 47.

“...the creation of these artifacts [the nations] towards the end of the eighteenth century was the spontaneous distillation of a complex ‘crossing’ of discrete historical forces...”⁴⁷

The structure of these social artifacts, in fact, is nothing but a narrative strategy, a discursive construct and an abstract meta-narrative “similar to other Enlightenment meta-narratives.”⁴⁸ It is a narrative strategy for the standardization of identity, which, according to Homi K. Bhabha, is employed as an apparatus of power, “a form of institutionalized political rationality in which the real individual is anonymous.”⁴⁹ Nation, therefore, is an imaginary construction which “once imagined, modeled, adapted and transformed”⁵⁰ is made to fit other social contexts.

Discursive nature of the nation can bring together its glorious past and the perspective of the progressive future in a continuous manner.⁵¹ It can also cover up for the voids in this construction of ‘future in the past.’ The linearity of the discourse of the nation covers up the voids or the discontinuities in the real life of people by providing the unified skin of nationality. It is due to the linear nature of the language that the linearity of the discourse of nation is possible.

In the theoretical discussion of this chapter, we have tried to show how nations came to exist as such and as a source of identity at a certain epoch of history. We have also sought to show how nationalist ideologies and collective identities, once having imagined and constituted the existence of nations, seem to have become inadequate to hold a long-lasting dominance over human affairs in today’s world.

⁴⁷ Benedict Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁴⁸ *Encyclopedia of Nationalism*, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 248.

⁵⁰ Benedict Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

⁵¹ Timothy Brennan, *op. cit.*, p. 47. Timothy Brennan employing Foucault’s ‘discursive formation’ in the context of the nations, says:

“The ‘nation’ is precisely what Foucault has called a ‘discursive formation’ - not simply an allegory or imaginative vision, but a gestative political structure...”

Milorad Pavić's *Dictionary of the Khazars* is a literary construction where identity (both individual and collective) is constantly formed and transformed, constructed and deconstructed. Narrating the (hi)story of the historical/fictional Khazars, Pavić attempts to depict the transitional time in the life of the human, society moving from the traditional/metaphysical communities into the embryo of what that can be called the collective identity of a 'nation'. It is to be noted that the historical evidences about the Khazars and their disappearance (around the time of Emperor Charlemagne) fit the time-frame of emergence of the modern nations.⁵² In the following section, the argument, therefore, focuses on the content of the text, and the textual evidences supporting the hypothesis – nation (de)formation – in order to show how the literary construction of Pavić depicts this impossibility of any (collective) identity-formation.

Dictionary of the Khazars: The Impossibility of 'Identity'

The question of collective identity posed by Milorad Pavić in the context of *Dictionary of the Khazars* can be divided into three parts. First, the formation of the collective identity is presented in the description of the earlier form of the Khazars' traditional community. The structure of this earlier form of the community according to the content of the text and not unlike many other tribes from the same period of history (from a historical perspective), is defined in terms of the religious/metaphysical community. The essence of the Khazar religion (as it has been mentioned earlier) is defined in relation with a sacred language assumed to have a direct link with the source of divinity (the body of 'Adam Cadmon'). Second, the collective identity of the Khazars has been discussed under the rule of the Khazars'

⁵² The present claim borrows the statement from Ernest Renan's "What is a nation?" on Charlemagne's refashioning of the earlier communities into 'a single empire' as the starting point for the formation of the nation-states. This has been taken as the base for the assumptions on the formation of a national identity in the context of Pavić's dictionary of the Khazars.

Khan, Kaghan. This structure, with all the power struggles (fictionally narrated) between the Kaghan and Ateh, the princess of the Khazars and the head of their religious sect, has a reference to the power struggles of the old religious dynasties. And finally, we have the deconstruction/reconstruction of the tribal identity through the transitional time when the Khazars were to convert from their traditional religion to the faith that Kaghan would adopt for the entire tribe. The conversion of the Khazars and their new identity, together with the issue of the disappearance of the Khazars — shortly after the famous Khazar Polemic — remains as an essential question of the text. This is the point where the debates over the identity of the ancient tribe of the Khazars resembles the modern discussions of the national/collective identity.

Pavić's fiction portrays the Khazars in three different times: the time of the ancient Khazars, unknown to the present fields of knowledge, the medieval time marked by the rise and fall of the ancient empires and the formation of the collective identity of the Khazars under the rule of the empire, and finally, the modern time with the quests for the lost identities and the looking back into the immemorial past as an abode of these identities. Therefore, the events in the text stretch between the two times of an immemorial past (of the ancient Khazars) and a yet-to-come, unknown future. The mode of presentation of the two times at one level is the mode of 'simultaneity' in which both past and future times appear together 'in an instantaneous present'. The incidents related to the ancient time of the Khazars (the past), for instance, the event of the polemic and the discussions around the future faith of the Khazars, are presented together with the events happened in the time that can be called posterior to the time of the major events of the story. Through the juxtaposition of the incidents of the past and the future, the text forms its 'instantaneous present'. The two times of the future and the past, on the other hand, are the time frames in which the communal life of the Khazars, and their unknown future (the disappearance of the Khazars from history) have taken place. Khazars,

thus, lived a glorious past, waged the wars of their time and won the battles against their enemies (the great neighboring empires of the time) and finally converted from their original faith after the great polemic. After the event of the polemic their fate is unknown.

While constructing the history of the Khazars within the timeframe of the modern nations, Pavić does not seem to follow the normative discourse of a progressive future. The fact of disappearance of the Khazar tribe (which is the focus of the novel) and the impossibility of configuration of a nation out of an ethnic community (of the Khazars, as possibly intended by The Kaghan), suggests that Pavić does not follow the normative discourse of nation-formation. This also suggests that in spite of the presence of all elements of a nationalist novel, *Dictionary of the Khazars* cannot be considered a 'mainstream' nationalist text.

Besides, the two times of past and future, Pavić employs other types of timeframes in constructing the story. The calendrical time, as the first type of timeframe being employed by Pavić, is the most frequent time indicated in the text. Among the dates narrated, some have actual reference to real historical events. For instance, the calendrical dates of the rise and the fall of the Khazar empire are confirmed in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and in texts of political history.⁵³ Calendrical time is helpful in historical identification of the events in the text. The title of the text shows an affinity with an 'Original Text' bearing the same title published in 1691. It reads:

"Reconstruction of the Original 1691 Daubmannus Edition
(Destroyed in 1692) ... " (Pavić, title page)

⁵³ *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (15th Edition) mentions these dates under the entry Khazars. It indicates that the empire of the Khazars, which had reached the peak of its power by the 7th century, gradually lost the influence by the 12th century. The same historical facts are also indicated in *The Palestine Catastrophe: Fifty Years since Al-Nakbah*, Khalid El-Sheikh, op. cit.

The text, therefore, seems to identify itself with an origin (another text) in the past, locatable in calendrical time.

The second type of timeframe taken as the time scale for the occurrences of the events of the story is the cyclical time. This particular time-scale has been employed in the context of the death and the resurrection of particular characters in the story. Yabir Ibn Akshany a character in the story, for instance, is introduced as an Anatolian minstrel (lute and tambourine player) who “believed that Satan used his name for a while and that he appeared under it before one of the most celebrated lute players of the 17th century.” (Pavić, 125) According to the story of the life and death of this character, Akshany comes back to life after he is assumed to be killed and buried by the side of the Danube. In his new life, Akshany appears in a different time-setting from the one he has had his last experience of his previous life. The story of this character is presented as follows:

“... in Constantinople one morning in 1699 he [Akshany] tossed a laurel leaf into a pail of water and dipped in his head to wash his pigtail. It wasn't for more than a few seconds, but when he lifted his head from the water and took a breath, Constantinople and the empire in which he had washed were no longer there. He was now in Kingston, a luxury Istanbul hotel, the year was 1982 after [Isa [Jesus], he had a wife, a child, and a Belgian passport, he spoke French and all that was left floating at the bottom of the sink made by F. Primavesi & son, Corella, Cardiff, was the laurel leaf.” (Pavić, 130)

The change in the sequence of life and death, as death coming before life, is explainable only if we accept the idea of the cyclic timeframe. This time organization is a cosmological concept adopted by many metaphysical traditions. The core of this time-scale is explained according to the atemporal Being standing outside of the time, a scale of time which is the ground for all beings. The being then, comes into existence from the change in Being after the creation of time. Therefore, the essence of being is the Being which has entered the realm of time. Here, it is assumed that the beings essentially remain the same irrespective of all changes they have undergone in

different scales of time; difference, accordingly, is the property of time. This is how the riddle of death and the resurrection of characters in *Dictionary of the Khazars* can be solved. Character 'A' defined in the cyclical time, from a cosmological perspective remains the same 'A' in spite of the minor changes in appearance which take place when it is accepted in a different frame of time. Thus, Yabir Ibn Akshany can come back to the life-after-death in the body of the Belgian Van der Spaak who murders Dr. Isailo Suk in Kingston Hotel in Istanbul. The extraordinary physical similarities of the two characters Aram Brankovich and Dr. Abu Kabir Muawia can also be explained in the same way.

The different time-frames, associated with the different episodes of the story, the Khazar tradition and the structure of community, the polemic and the life of the characters involved in the 'Khazar question', are entirely shown within the frame of the calendrical time of the text. The numerical base for the measurement of time includes all other different conceptions and measurement of time, such as the cyclical time. Therefore, the base of all different ways of time measurement as the 'interior' time of the text, forms a part of this calendrical time. The calendrical time adopted as the temporal base of the text, on the other hand, has a similarity with the 'homogeneous empty time'⁵⁴ of nations. To define the nation-in-making, Pavić adopts a time-scale structurally very similar to that generally employed in historiography; the text thus, borrows the exact/approximate times of the historical events. On the other hand, he develops other time-scales within this timeframe. This could refer to the fact that the time of nations is an arbitrary, imagined category within which the 'social representation' of the nation is possible. This timeframe, in fact, localizes the other tendencies of time-measurement within the normalized frame in order to present a linear view of the nation stretching from an immemorial, glorious past into the future.

⁵⁴ Benedict Anderson, op. cit., p. 24. 'Homogeneous empty time', is that "in which simultaneity is, as it were, traverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfillment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar." In his original formulation, Walter Benjamin contrasts this kind of time with the medieval 'messianic time'.

Discussion of identity in Milorad Pavić follows certain steps. In the first stage, the formation of the collective identity (in the context of the Khazars) is portrayed in relation to the metaphysical nature and structure of the community. The early community of the Khazars, like any other metaphysical community is structured around a direct, unmediated relation between the beings and a transcendental Being. Pavić introduces this Being through the story of Adam Cadmon, the third angel. According to the accounts of the story, Adam Cadmon is a corporeal form in heaven, with which the earthly beings maintain a certain relation. On the one hand, the relation between this transcendental Being and the beings on earth (in this case, the Khazars) is mediated through their dreams of the body of this heavenly form:

“The Khazars saw letters in people’s dreams, and in them they looked for the primordial man, for Adam Cadmon.” (Pavić, 224)

The dreams, on the other hand, (and as indicated in this statement), are all manifested in the form of the letters of language. The function of the Khazar language in this respect (like any other language of the earlier metaphysical traditions) is viewed as a sacred medium; in story of Adam Cadmon once again we read:

“The letters of the language! Here we come to the bottom of the shadow. The earth’s alphabet mirrors heaven’s and shares the fate of the language.” (Pavić, 225)

The sacred language on the one hand, is the mode of relation between the transcendental Being and the beings, and on the other, it is the language of dreams and, therefore, have an imaginary base. Therefore, it can be assumed that by employing this imaginary relation, Pavić is undermining the authenticity of metaphysical claims regarding the relation between the beings and the Being. The sacred language of the Khazars, coming from the body of Adam Cadmon and taken as the material of the dreams of the Khazar people is used to reconstruct the heavenly/transcendental figure on earth. At this point, two levels of analysis seems

necessary: first, the corporeal figure of the transcendental Being (angel) and second, the idea of the reconstruction of this body on earth. The corporeal body of the god figure or the angelic form (in this case) can be viewed from a materialistic perspective.

Embodiment of an angelic form in a corporeal body indicates some sort of tangibility regarding the position of the transcendental 'god' for the perception of the beings while, on the other hand, it suggests the iconic essence of the faith. This pure iconic dimension of the faith according to the story is seen as follows:

“The Khazars can read colors like musical notes, letters, or numbers. When they enter a mosque or Christian place of worship and see the wall paintings, they immediately spell, read, or sing whatever is depicted in the painting, icon, or rather picture, showing that the old painters knew of this secret and unacknowledged skill. Whenever the Jewish influence in the Khazar Empire grows, the Khazars move away from the paintings and forget the skill they have, but it suffered most during the iconoclastic period in Constantinople and was never fully recovered again.” (Pavić, 145)

The angelic figure presented with a corporeal body also suggests a sense of spatiality and dimensionality of matter. If the identity of the beings in the metaphysical systems is to be determined in relation to the position of a transcendental Being taken as an abode of the identity of all beings, then, will the corporeality of this figure not be considered of a stronger credit for the purpose of this identification? On the other hand, the doctrine of this faith (the Khazarian) according to Pavić, shows that the mode of existence of the Khazars to be spatial. Khazars according to the story are born to the 'space', and their temporal existence takes place in the later stages of their life. Moreover the element of 'time' is also perceived in relation to the spatial existence. Khazars according to the fiction, “imagine the future in terms of space, never time.”(Pavić, 145) This spatial base of the existence, on the other hand, can be taken as a major shift in the essence of the metaphysical concepts, where the general

idea and the base of the doctrine is built upon temporality (as stated earlier in our discussion of the difference between Being and beings). Reconstruction of the body of the god-figure (Adam Cadmon) on earth has also a reference to other metaphysical systems. The Christian practice of consuming bread and wine in the church during the service, for instance, would signify the consumption of the body of the Christ as the representation of God on earth in order to reach and be unified with the transcendental entity.

The reconstruction of the body of Adam Cadmon, according to the accounts of the dictionary, can only be possible through the dreams of the people of this (Cadmon's) body in the form of the letters of language. This reveals the level of affinity and dependence of the metaphysical systems on language as the means of communication between the sacred transcendentality and the earthly beings. At another level, with the emphasis on the representational mode of this sacred language in the form of writing, the importance of the holy book and the representation of transcendence into the contents of the book come to the light. Therefore, the doctrine of this metaphysical system like that of any other, seems to consist of three parts: Language, transcendence and the holy book. For Pavić the existence of the Khazars' holy book is the representation of the body of Adam Cadmon. The sect of the dream hunters⁵⁵ (see chapter II), through the performance of the ritual of dream hunting, is assumed to be responsible for the gathering and arranging the letters of the Khazarian language from the dreams in order to form this heavenly body on the earth.

With regard to the formation of a collective identity of the Khazars in Pavić's work, we have, so far, focused on the linking of the bodies of the beings (the people of the Khazars) with the body of the heavenly figure. Pavić however, seems to follow a different route while reconstructing the ancient Khazar's faith. The entire effort of the sect of the dream hunters and their protectress, princess Ateh (see chapter II), in

⁵⁵ The priests of the Khazars' faith according to Pavić.

inscribing the holy book of the Khazars in order to reconstruct the heavenly body of Adam Cadmon, remains unsuccessful. Along with the failure in reconstruction of the body of primordial man, the construction of the holy book of the Khazars also remains incomplete. The incompleteness of their holy book, and the unsuccessful efforts of the dream-hunters in re-assembling the heavenly body can be said to signify the incompleteness of the process of the identity-formation by the means of pursuing the metaphysical practices and the rituals of the faith of the Khazars. This, in general, suggests the failure of all metaphysical/religious communities in establishing any immutable identity for their followers. Although the doctrine of this religious system (like any other doctrine in the history of the mankind) attempts to present the a temporal source — through the position of the transcendental — as the basis for the formation of a collective identity for the Khazars (and from there, for all beings in general), it fails to achieve any substantial result at the end. The supposed immutability of the source of this identity, the transcendence itself, therefore, is subject to temporality and an unavoidable change.

In the context of Pavić's novel, language occupies a prominent position as the means of identification. By employing the language element, Pavić seems to be attempting a reflection on the essence of identity formation. Language, as the means of identification in the *Dictionary of the Khazars*, has been introduced in the form of the sacred language of the religious system of the Khazars. With the affinity that Pavić tries to show between this religion (the fictional faith of the Khazars') and other metaphysical/religious systems, it would not be wrong to claim that the essence of this sacred language shares the 'silent' nature with other similar sacred languages. The fictional subjects of the Khazar Empire do not communicate in their language outside of the borders of the Khazaria:

“Curiously, once they [the Khazar subjects] are outside their state the Khazars are reluctant to reveal their Khazar origin, preferring to avoid one another and conceal the fact that they speak and

understand the Khazar language, hiding it from their own compatriots even more than from foreigners.” (Pavić, 254)

It is obvious that this voluntary ‘silence’ is different from the silence of the sacred languages of the metaphysical systems (as it has been explained earlier — section one of this chapter). Yet, one has to consider the fact that Pavić seems to undertake a change of strategy in this particular respect. The sacred language of the Khazars for that purpose is seen as being used to as the means of power by Kaghan and, therefore, the shadow of ‘Kaghanate’ seems to cast its influence on the original sanctity and the initial authenticity of the language. Therefore, language considerations for Pavić, besides the sanctity of the essence introduced by the religious system, imply a deconstructive sense with regard to the discourse of power. If one considers the fabrication of the episode of the ‘Khazar Polemic’ as Pavić’s intention to depict the peak of tension and the power struggles between the Kaghan and the sect of dream hunters; one possibly realizes the impact of the voluntary silence of the Khazars in not communicating the sacred language which has now turned into the language of power. Therefore, the initial intention of Pavić, for including the element of language in the various levels of the story-fabrication seems to be to focus on the manipulating features of the religious and the power systems which dominate the very local element of the social life of man through the case of the Khazars. From this point, Pavić, thus, seems to relate the construction of the modern nation (nation-state) to the structure of the religious communities. Kaghan’s intention in holding the polemic and the idea of the conversion of the community into any well-established religion of the time (Islam, Christianity, or Judaism — and with reference to history), therefore, seems to be a deliberate effort by Pavić to communicate the conspiracy of the old dynasties in replacing the religious communities with their own methods. Thus, the element of dream (the dream of Kaghan) and the change of religion can be understood at the level of the strategic change in the old dynasty towards the religious communities by ending their long dominance. Through the assumptions regarding the

dynasty replacement of the old religious communities Pavić, in fact, covers the entire argument on the formation Khazars' collective-identity under the reign of Kaghan.

The event of the Khazar polemic as the turning point in the process of identity formation (as Pavić's main intention), occupies the central position in the narrative. The function of this scene has to be analyzed with regards to the earlier discussion about language. The importance of the event of the polemic, therefore, lies in the discursive value of its nature. One possibility of interpreting Pavić's intention in employing the scene of the polemic as the turning point of the story (dislocated from the history of the Khazars) is to believe that the essence of the religious identity, that the assumed metaphysical system tries to establish, is nothing but a discursive formation. Only this way it would be possible to imagine the possibility of the drastic textual changes at the base of this (fabricated) identity after the polemic. In fact, the text indicates that soon after the polemic, princess Ateh loses her language, she forgets her poems and her feminine sex. Also, the disappearance of the Khazars is claimed (a textual claim and also a historical record) as having taken place shortly after the polemic. If the communal identity of the Khazars is claimed (as Pavić's hypothesis) to be an immutable factor constituted on the basis of the a temporal source of identification (the Being, body of Adam Cadmon), no discourse, such as the dispute on the nature of the faith in the polemic, can possibly undermine the roots of the Khazars' faith. Yet, the actual process of the assumptions undertaken by Pavić goes toward constructing the hypothesis that Pavić essentially recognizes the roots of the religious identity as something textually constructed and, therefore, a temporal subject to the discursive changes.

To return to the earlier subject of the discussion, the language element in Pavić (in the story of the Khazars), one can observe the traces of temporality of identity in a more elaborate fashion. In the first place, Pavić introduces the origins of the language of the Khazars in the following statements:

“The Khazars believed they know the boundary between the two languages and scripts, between the God’s word *daver* and our own human language. The borderline, they claimed, runs between verbs and nouns!” (Pavić, 225)

And,

“ The language we use is made up of two unequal forces, with radically different origins, because the verb, the logos, the law, the concept of good conduct and proper, correct behavior preceded the actual creation of the world and everything that was to act and communicate in it.” (ibid)

Therefore, the language prefigures its form through the difference between the languages of the Being and of that of the beings. The assumed language of the Khazars thus, is essentially formed through the difference and distinction of the two languages and not the essence of the latter being deeply rooted in the former. The latter (language) on the other hand, based on this assumption, can be viewed as the representation of the former. In this case, the failure of the attempts to reconstruct the language of Being, in fact, can be seen as the failure of the corporeal representation of the religious system assumed to be manifested in the body of ‘Adam Cadmon’. Thus, Pavić’s fictional sacred language of the beings (the Khazars), assumed to be a mere mode to link the earthly existence to the transcendental essence (the transcendental reality) through the reconstruction of a heavenly body on earth, does not seem to be an adequate means. The representational mode in fact is the mode of metonymy, the presentation of a part of a whole and thus, an improper vehicle to be employed in defining the holistic view of the original reality (the Being).

Besides, the language of the Khazars — based on the textual records — seems to be identified with the structural differences. The ‘sexuation of the language’⁵⁶ of

⁵⁶ ‘Sexuation of the language’ is the term used by Luce Irigaray in *Thinking the Difference: For a Peaceful Revolution*. This is the solution she suggests to liberate the female’s language from the dominance of the male’s.

the Khazars and the distinction of separate languages for the different genders, sexes, and even the sexless-ness, are all the examples of how the element of 'difference' has been localized into context of the language. The process of fictional sexuation of language reads as:

“The language has seven genders; along with the masculine, feminine and neuter, there are also genders for eunuchs, for sexless women (those whom the Arab Shaitan⁵⁷ blighted and robbed), for those who change sex, be they males who switch to female or the other way around, and for lepers, who along with their disease must adopt a new form of speech to reveal their malady as soon as they engage in conversation.” (Pavić, 254)

Accordingly, the language was distinguished between the different sexes in the different modes of speech adopted and practiced by different sexes of interlocutors. It is assumed (based on what can be grasped from the passage) that this language was formulated and originated from 'difference' and not from a unitary origin, which could normalize and unify the discourses of the different sexes under a unified language (the male's language based on the feminist arguments). The language pedagogical strategies of this particular means of communication, according to Pavić, also reflect this differentiated form and content. In the section related to the teaching of the language of the Khazars to the young members of the community, we read:

“Girls have a different accent from boys, and men from women: boys learn Arabic, Hebrew, or Greek depending on whether they live in a Greek-populated region, in an area where there are Jews mixed with Khazars, or the territory of the Saracens and Persians. Consequently, the Jewish “kamesh,” “holem,” and “shurek,” the big, medium, and small “u” and middle “a,” come through when boys speak the Khazar language. Girls, on the other hand, do not learn Hebrew, Greek, or Arabic, and their accent is different and purer.” (ibid)

⁵⁷ 'Shaitan' is the Arabic equivalent of Satan, as mentioned in the Islamic traditions.

The passage in the first place, reflects upon the difference between the sexes practiced in the different pedagogical strategies. It indicates the irreducible fundamental differences between the sexes reflected in the language as the constituting factor of gender differentiation. One possible way of reading Pavić, is to assume that language — in its proper function and practices — cannot be seen as a reducible element into a unifying factor (as assumed by the modern national ideologies). It implies that the language is not only formed upon the fundamental differences between the sexes, but is also practiced in a manner that can reflect upon this differentiation in every usage of its existence as a language. Language, thus, as an element of identification reflects upon its self-differentiation and reveals an identity, which is fundamentally differentiated. Bringing ‘impurity’ into the context of the Khazars’, in acquiring elements from other languages, in fact, intensifies this sense of self-differentiation. In another instance, the text refers to this voluntary act of the interlocutors, bringing impurities into the language of the Khazars, in the following statement:

“In the country itself, people not proficient in the Khazar language, which is the official language, are more highly regarded in the civil and administrative services. Consequently, even people who are fluent in the Khazar language will often deliberately speak it incorrectly, with a foreign accent, from which they derive a manifest advantage. Even translators- for instance, from Khazar into Hebrew, or Greek into Khazar- the people selected are those who make mistakes in the Khazar Language or pretend to do so.” (ibid)

The case of impurity of the fictional language of the Khazars, refers to the fact that any claim on the issue of the purity of the language – in the real world — as the means of identification and unification (that is in unification of nations) is no more credible than a myth. It is, therefore, the discourse of the purity of language and not the pure language itself that becomes the mode of unification of nations. The emphasis on the impure nature of the Khazar language in the official and administrative applications has a reference to the fact that in spite of all the rigidity of systems in application of power for purifying the language apparatus, it essentially remains impure. The

'impurity' of the language in this regard, implies a sense of the language being 'contaminated' with the elements from other languages.

Language is accordingly claimed to be an 'intertextual' phenomenon, constantly involved in the exchange of elements with other languages and thus, by nature, it is the subject to constant change. Language, in its very essence, can never be defined in terms of any determination or fixity, and thus, is a 'temporal' phenomenon. It is to be noted that Pavić tries to show the function of the language element in two different — and yet — interrelated contexts. First, it functions as the sacred language of the faith and the representation of the transcendental truth, the body of the earlier Adam, in which the position of transcendence can be achieved (the ultimate reconstruction of the body of Adam Cadmon on earth). The second application refers to the function of language as the apparatus of power. This function has been depicted in the narration of the polemic and the description of Kaghan's attempt to use the essence of the Khazars' faith for changing the base of the power balance in the tribe. To achieve this goal, Kaghan deploys the dream element as the ground of his claim for the conversion of the Khazars. The fictional fabrication of the relation of dreams with the body of Adam Cadmon at one level, and the close link of dreams with words of language on the other, intensify this assumption that the Kaghan's dream have close relation to the application of the language element.

The language of the Khazars that has been initially shown as a means of identification with the position of transcendence thus, turns onto be an apparatus of power, the means of identification with the Kaghan's Empire. This particular change of strategy in language application undermines the traditional conceptions of this language at two levels. First, it undermines the very idea of language as the representation of the transcendentality. With the event of the polemic and the undermining of the position of the religious sect, the referentiality of the language to the transcendental source seems to be no more of an essential value. On the other hand, by the same token, the fading idea of the language as the representational mode

of this transcendental reality can be taken as the proof for the hypothesis that the very idea of the sanctity of this (and in general any language) is the product of power relations, religious or social contracts. Therefore, the element of language in Pavić as a mode of identification is introduced through the essential differentiation in the form and content. *The language differs from its content by being presented in the script other than its own.*⁵⁸ Under the entry of the 'KHAZARS' in the Christian source (The Red Book) the case of the script of the Khazar language has been indicated through the following manner:

“ At the time the envoy has been tattooed, the Khazars were already using Greek, Jewish, or Arabic letters interchangeably as an alphabet for their own language, but When a Khazar converted he would use only one of the three alphabets, that of the faith he had adopted.” (Pavić, 73)

Thus, this mode of identification (the language) which itself remains un-identical with its own content can not be deployed to bring any unification in the context of the social life of the Khazars, or in that of any other community.

Textual-territorial considerations of the Khazars are the other factors with which Pavić once again attempts to define the instability of the formation of (any) collective- identity. This textual consideration in the first place, does not demarcate the territory of the Khazar Empire with precise definitions of the borders. The only textual indication of this vast territory introduces the Empire of the Khazars as the 'area in-between'. The Khazars, according to the textual assumptions, are said to have lived in the lands stretched between the two seas (the Caspian and the Black Seas). We read:

⁵⁸ According to the novel, the language of the Khazars is inscribed in the Hebrew alphabet.

“ The great Khazar people appeared from the remotest reaches of Bersilia, the first Sarmatia, and ruled the entire area extending from the Black Sea... .” (Pavić, see chapter II)⁵⁹

Also,

“[Khazars were] a warrior people who settled in the Caucasus between the 7th and 10th centuries.”⁶⁰ (Pavić, 251)

It is obvious that the text does not give any clear reference to the borders of the ancient Khazar Empire.⁶¹ One reason regarding this ambiguity of the borders in the textual construction — with the reference to historical records — can be assumed to be the nomadic life of the Khazar people and the fact that the shape of the earlier human communities has been highly influenced by the territorial expansions of these tribes. The second assumption regarding this ambiguity can be seen as a part of Pavić’s deliberate effort to deconstruct the identity-formation by depicting the temporality of the elements upon which the identity is defined. To support this hypothesis one can annex the definitions from Pavić for the Capitals of the Khazar Empire. The novel indicates the existence of two (and in other occasions three) capitals in Khazaria⁶², the summer capital (‘Samandar’- Pavić, 69), the winter capital (‘Itil’- Pavić, 148), and a ‘war capital’⁶³ (ibid). The locations of the capitals also reveal an interesting aspect of the territorial considerations of the Khazar Empire as indicated by Pavić. In this regard, the definition of the Kaghan’s capital reads as:

“ His [Kaghan’s] capital was Itil, and his summer residence located on the Caspian Sea, was called Samandar.”⁶⁴ (Pavić, 69)

⁵⁹ The emphasis is mine.

⁶⁰ The emphasis is mine.

⁶¹ It is to be noted that even the political studies of the status of the Khazar Empire and the accounts given on the Khazars in the Encyclopaedia do not clarify the ambiguity of the borders of the ancient Empire.

⁶² Kevin Alan Brook in his book, *The Jews of Khazaria*, calls the territory of the Khazar Empire as ‘Khazaria’. Kevin Alan Brook, *The Jews of Khazaria*.

<<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0765762129/ref=noism/thekhazariainfoc.>>

⁶³ The name of this particular capital is not mentioned in the novel.

⁶⁴ The emphasis is mine.

It is to be noted that Samandar in this particular statement has been introduced as the 'summer residence' of Kaghan, while in the other occasions such as the following statement the same city is introduced as the Kaghan's 'capital':

"In the summer capital of the Kaghan [Samandar], [located] on the Black Sea...."⁶⁵ (Pavić, 262)

The important factor in any of the statements is the location of the two capitals. They are narrated to have been constructed on the waters of the two Seas marking the outer borders of the Khazar Empire. This, in fact, implies a sense of mobility within the concept of the 'Capital' as the 'Center' of the Empire and abode and locus for the formation of the nation. Therefore, the sense of the Khazars being introduced as a nation 'in-between' (with reference to their inhabitation between the two Seas) would seem to be completed by this particular definition of the locations of the capitals. Putting together the indications in the text about the impact of the polemic on the borders of the Khazar Empire, in fact, joins the different parts of Pavić's geographical puzzle together. It is the detailed argument of the polemic (Pavić, 150) that indicates it:

"...during the polemic, which was to decide what confession on the Khazars were to adopt, there was great unrest in the land."

And,

"During the debate at the sumptuous court of the Khazar Kaghan, the Khazar state started to work."

⁶⁵ The emphasis is mine.

And the final mention of the text, in:

“It [the state of the Khazars] was completely in motion nobody could meet any body twice in the same place. A witness saw crowd of people carrying huge rocks and asking: Where should we put them? They were the frontier stones of the Khazar empire, the boundary markers. For princess Ateh had ordered that the boundary markers be carried, that they not touch the ground until it was decided what would happen to the Khazar faith.”

Pavić, in this argument, seems to break the normativity of the discourse about the borders of nations. The concept of determined, demarcated borderlines of nations, thus, seems to be undermined in the above-mentioned statement. In the first instance, the argument points out the nature of the territorial and geographical particularities of the nation (the Khazars). The indication in the text about the impact of the polemic on the Khazar empire at the time of the debate, the disturbance in the empire leading to the confusion of the borders, imply that the nature of the concept of the national (empire) borders is discursive. If the earlier assumption regarding the nature of the polemic as a discursive construct and its impact on the decline of the religious community is accepted, it will be easier to grasp Pavić's presumptions regarding the change in the national/geographical borders of the Khazars. In short, only a discursive construct could be disturbed, confused and finally be changed with the change of the existing discourse. And that way, if it is to be accepted that there is nothing natural or given about these factors – employed as the modes of determination – then, the mutability of all such factors can bring instability into the domain of national determination.

Fabricating the story of the ancient tribe of the Khazars, Pavić seems to re-circulate the elements of national-identity. Embedded in the context of the historical events are the conspiracies of the old dynasties to uproot and replace the traditional religious communities. Pavić attempts to re-examine the essence of the elements which later come to be an integral part of every nation. Therefore, the life of the

Khazar community is only a literary vehicle, and a machine to carry the load of Pavić's metaphorical-deconstructionist views. It is not too far beyond reality if the fictional 'HiStorical' construction in *Dictionary of the Khazars* is to be analyzed from this perspective. Although the historical period in which the major incidents of the text are assumed to have taken place (the mediaeval time) does not coincide with the peak of the nationalist movements (18th and 19th century); the text can be assumed to be a review of the historical context and plays with the raw material which came to form the nationalist ideology during the later periods. It is to be noted once again that the content of the story never remains at the level of fictional intentions. Pavić's fictional content endlessly reaches out for the factual world. The two factual relations which the story can be claimed to be related to, the claim of the world Jewry about the Khazars and the Balkan crisis⁶⁶, are not the only citations where the analysis of nation-formation is involved.

Thus, in Pavić the elements of language, religion and territorial considerations, unlike in the normative discourse of nations which construct determined identities, are deployed to show the process in which they deconstruct the ground of any determinations attributed to them. The question of identity for Pavić is not a question of 'determinacy' but of 'mobility'.

⁶⁶ The present claim has been formulated on the basis of the information presented in Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*. More arguments -- based on this book -- will be presented in the following chapter (chapter IV).

Chapter Four:
*Real Fiction and Fictive Real:
Question of 'Reality' in
Dictionary of the Khazars*

IV. Real Fiction and Fictive Real: Question of 'Reality' in *Dictionary of the Khazars*

This chapter argues that the traditionally defined concepts of 'reality' and 'fictionality', in accordance with their ontological import as understood in the Western philosophical tradition, are inadequate, and therefore, need to be understood in a different manner altogether. This chapter intends to show that these two concepts — organized in a oppositional manner — cannot be oppositional with their respective ontological grounding, that they are rather inseparable entities deriving their identities from their difference in relation to each other. This chapter would also demonstrate how the oppositional distinction between these concepts is organized in a hierarchical manner privileging one term over the other.

The Western philosophical tradition from Plato onwards understands the two ontological categories — 'reality' and 'fictionality' — as two oppositional categories. It organizes them in a hierarchical manner in which one of the two categories ('reality') is always privileged over the other, reducing the other to a mere 'representation' or a 'copy' of the former. This manner of treating ontological categories — that Jacques Derrida calls 'metaphysics of presence' or 'logocentrism'— where the relationship between the two ontological categories is understood in terms of representation, can be called 'philosophy of representation' or 'representational theory of meaning'. According to this traditional philosophy of representation, the signification of all aesthetic activity is derived from imitating the transcendental world of reality. In other words, 'mimetic' theory of meaning is based on a paradigm of 'transcendence' where what is to be represented as 'model', is transcendental in relation to the representative 'copy' itself. 'Copy' is thus, derived and secondary in relation to what is 'originary', the 'model' itself.

Postmodern philosophy is born out of the failure of such a representational theory of meaning, and it bears witness to the crisis of meaning and representation presumed by traditional philosophy. It also reveals the crisis of the concept of 'originary model', which cannot be distinguished from the fictionality of proliferating, simulating copies — not because they hide underneath the originary model, but that the 'originary' of the 'model' itself would be the effect of copies. The postmodern philosophy implies the fact that, copies do not represent, they rather reveal the limits of representation.

Certain novelists' experimental novels reveal the crisis of representation by showing the indistinguishability of 'models' from the 'copies', and of 'reality' from 'fictionality' by revealing the figurability of 'real', the ceaseless displacement and decentering of the very ground of ontological import. What we are interested in, is how in Pavić's novel, one can witness such a crisis of representation, the proliferation of irreducible differences where the boundaries between ontological categories are blurred. We will begin by examining how the traditional theory of representation has emerged with Plato, and how it has been upheld by the Modern philosophy and later, has been drastically changed in the Postmodern era. And then, we will go on to Pavić's *Dictionary of the Khazars*.

A Traditional Conception of 'Reality' since Plato

The concept of 'reality' or 'truth' in metaphysical thought is defined in terms of 'transcendence'. The understanding of reality as 'transcendence' in metaphysics, places the 'Real' somewhere out of the reach of sensuous existence. It creates the image of a system in which 'Reality' (in whatever possible form: 'Idea', God) is given at the highest possible status. 'Transcendence' thus, by placing the ontological status of 'Reality' beyond the sensuous apprehension, upholds the idea of 'atemporality' and 'apriori' of the metaphysical concept of 'truth'. Representation of

this transcendental reality – understood as ‘mimesis’ – defines the aesthetic expression in early metaphysics. The signification of the representational mode of artistic expression is believed to have been derived in relation to the transcendental ‘Reality’. The artistic mode of representation implies the sense of presenting a connection between the transcendental ‘Reality’ and the represented copy by means of signs. The existence and the sensible experiences of beings, as reflected in this artistic mode of representation are seen as the “reflections”¹ of the ‘Reality’. They resemble ‘what are’, but in fact, are ‘not real things’²; they are “shadowy thing[s] compared to reality”³. This shows that the concept of ‘representation’ or ‘mimesis’ describes “artistic creation as a whole, and is interpreted to mean a rather literal imitation”⁴. This artistic creation, thus, is conceived as “an extreme photographic realism both in theory and practice... .”⁵ Besides the emphasis on ‘referential’ and ‘representational’ mode of expression, this metaphysical concept of ‘Reality’ implies a ‘holistic sense’ and a ‘unity’ inherent in the concept of ‘Real’. Plato (as the major reference for the traditional definition of the concept of ‘Reality’) indicates the sense of unity and the holistic view of ‘Real’ in the example of the ‘carpenter’ in making ‘bed’ as the ‘shadowy image’ of the universal (real) idea of the ‘bed-in-itself’⁶. The argument in *The Republic*, Book Ten, reads as follows:

“God, then, created only one real bed-in-itself in nature, either because he wanted to or because some necessity prevented him from

¹ Plato, *The Republic*, Desmond Lee, tr., p. 361. The present argument is from the discussion of ‘carpenter’ and the essence of the artistic creation.

² *ibid.*, p. 359. The content of the original argument indicated in Plato’s *Republic*, Part Ten [Book Ten] is as follows:

“If, then, what he makes is not ‘what a bed really is’, his product is not ‘what is’, but something which *resembles* “what is” without *being* it. And anyone who says that the products of the carpenter or any other craftsman are ultimately real can hardly be telling the truth, can he?”

³ *ibid.*, p. 362.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 359.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 359. Taken from the information presented by the translator of the work in the footnote.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 363.

making more than one; at any rate he didn't produce more than one, and more than one could not possibly be produced."⁷

The relation between the 'transcendental reality' and the artistic expression, known as 'referential' and 'representational', which has been taken up and followed by all metaphysical systems of thought, indicates a sense of inequality and inadequacy in the act of 'representation'. Therefore, the representation of 'bed' or 'table' according to Plato, (in the example of 'carpenter' and 'painter') is not 'what is' but the images or the shadows of the bed/table-in-itself (the reality/the idea of these realities). Representation thus, at the very most is "the third remove from reality".⁸ In Plato's *The Republic*, we read:

"The art of representation is therefore a long way removed from truth, and it is able to reproduce everything because it has little grasp of anything, and that little is of a mere phenomenal appearance. For example, a painter can paint a portrait of a shoemaker or a carpenter or any other craftsman without understanding any of their crafts; yet, if he is skilful enough, his portrait of a carpenter may, at a distance, deceive children or simple people into thinking it is a real carpenter."⁹

Language as the means of representation of this higher 'reality' in artistic expression — as understood in the traditional metaphysical system of thought — is introduced as a 'transparent' means, a "faithful, nondistorting mirror"¹⁰ of this truth (reality). This supposedly transparent means of representation based on the assumptions of the metaphysical thought is seen as — in Nietzsche's words:

".... capable of bridging the gap between subject and object."¹¹

⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 362 - 363.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 365.

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 364.

¹⁰ John Gregg, *Maurice Blanchot and the Literature of Transgression*, p. 175.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 176.

The transparency of language in this regard implies that the mode of representation is capable of giving a direct reference to 'reality' of which it is only a reflection, a fraction of a whole. As paradoxical as it may seem, the 'reality' that is posed to be beyond the act of representation and its mode, language; is the very abode and the source from which language derives its meaning. Thus, the source of meaning, in the metaphysical sense (and even in the modern conception of reality), is posed to be transcendental in relation to the nature of language and the act of representation. Thus, the metaphysical thought presupposes:

"Two fundamental doctrines of epistemology, the correspondence theory of truth, which presupposes the conformity of mind with object, and the representational theory of meaning, which ensures this conformity by maintaining that language enjoys a relation of adequation with world."¹²

Representation is an attempt to make 'copies' of the 'reality' which is highest in its ontological status in relation to which the sameness (*identity*) of each of these copies is to be evaluated. It is in this regard, that the concepts of 'good models' and 'bad copies' become the major poles of the ontological system of 'reality'. The degree of sameness of each copy in relation to the model determines whether the nature of the supposed copy is close to 'reality'. The determination of the copy as being closer to 'real' in relation to the transcendental reality thus, is the reduction of 'difference' in the name of 'identity'. The copies of the 'models' in artistic production are considered to have more truth-value if the 'difference' between them is minimal. The difference is determined only as "... an after effect produced by a pre-existing, self identical plenitude."¹³ Accordingly, if the copies are "to be deemed good"¹⁴, "... difference must be kept to a minimum."¹⁵

¹² *ibid.*, p. 175.

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 183.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 183.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 183.

The bad copies ('simulacra'¹⁶) on the other hand, are traditionally considered to be the unfaithful models of reality, which stray far from the original 'Idea'. In this sense the 'bad, unfaithful copies' proliferate:

“... when their differences outweigh the similarities [with the original reality] to such a degree that they are no longer of any use as far as the representation of the truth, the preexisting idea, is concerned.”¹⁷

Thus, 'difference' seems to have been excluded in the metaphysical determination of 'reality' as 'truth'. In this way, the traditional determination of reality forms a closure by excluding difference.

In short, the metaphysical determination of 'reality' can be discussed in the following ways.

'Reality' conceived as transcendence:

'Reality' is posited beyond perception and sensuous understanding of all beings. This conception, is the basis for the formation of the hierarchical system in which the truth/reality is always placed as the highest in the metaphysical thought. It is by measuring against the originary model that any forms of human activity is determined as 'real', or 'unreal'. This, paradoxically, also implies the sense of incompleteness, or the sense of 'lack' in the nature of 'representation' as the mode of relationship between transcendental reality and sensuous existents.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 183. John Gregg indicates that the bad copies are perceived as 'simulacra' in the metaphysical tradition.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 183.

The paradoxical nature of representational mode:

While, on the one hand, the metaphysical thought introduces this representational mode – language in most instances – as the transparent means to re-present ‘reality’ yet, on the other hand, it emphasizes the inadequacy of this representational mode. That is the reason why the sensuous mode of representation in the history of metaphysics is considered as being lower than reality (never reaching the position of transcendence) for it addresses “the lower, less rational part of our nature.”¹⁸ Any form of artistic representation is thus, considered to be lower and even dangerous to the understanding of this metaphysical truth.

Referentiality of language as the means of representation:

The referentiality of language – the property rooted in its representational nature (introduced in the context of the metaphysical thought) – determines the constitution of meaning. The ‘referential nature’ attributed to language as the means of representing reality, in fact, is considered to be the very ground for the theory of meaning, according to which signification of any artifact points towards something beyond its own existence. In other words, the ‘interiority’ of the work of art, is considered to be incomplete in itself unless it is connected to a transcendental reality from which its meaning is derived. Reality, thus, is always already located beyond the borders of the interiority of the work of art. It is in its relation to this exterior reality that the artistic representation gets its determined meaning. The opposition between ‘interiority’ and ‘exteriority’ of the artistic representation is the determination of signification in the traditional concept of reality. Roland Barthes in his essay, “The Discourse of History”, shows the ‘discursive’ nature of reality/fact in this way:

“... fact never has any but a linguistic existence (as the term of discourse), yet everything happens as if this linguistic existence were

¹⁸ Plato, op. cit., p. 367.

merely a pure and simple “copy” of *another* existence, situated in an extra-structural field, the “real.” This discourse is doubtless the only one in which the referent is addressed as external to the discourse, though without its ever being possible to reach it outside this discourse.”¹⁹

Hierarchical system of ‘reality’ and the question of knowledge (epistemology):

The metaphysical system of thought defines the concept of reality in the dichotomy of the two realms of ‘Intelligible’ and ‘Sensible’ or ‘Visible’. The intelligible realm is the realm of ‘Form’, apprehensible only to the philosopher’s knowledge. The non-changeability of the ontological ‘Form’ is seen as having an adequate relationship to the subject that grounds equally permanent knowledge. This domain is understood by the two modes of ‘intelligence’ and ‘reasoning’ (as in mathematical reasoning according to Plato).

The domain of ‘Sensible’ or ‘Visible’ is the realm of ‘physical objects’/‘things’ and ‘shadows’ or ‘images’. The object of knowledge and the modes of knowing in this realm are ranked at a lower ontological/epistemological status in comparison with the earlier realm. Thus, the metaphysical system, not only defines ‘reality’ in terms of transcendence that is beyond the grasp of the sensible but also, structures a hierarchical system. In this system of hierarchy, each mode of knowing/understanding has been ranked according to the relation it has been assumed to make with the objects of knowledge in the two distinct realms. Thus, although certain modes of knowing such as ‘Belief’ or ‘Illusions’ are considered as valid modes of knowing; they are less privileged than certain other modes such as ‘Intelligence’ or ‘Reasoning’.

It is observed that the metaphysical system of thought privileges certain mode of knowing over others. ‘Idea’ is one such mode, which has been introduced as

¹⁹ Roland Barthes, “The Discourse of History,” *The Rustle of Language*, p. 138.

unchanging 'Form', apprehensible through philosophical knowing. The world perceived by the senses – the realm of change – though not unreal, has a lower ontological status than the realm of Form. This perception through the sensory experience, constitutes a body of knowledge (*epistēmē*) which is considered incapable of reaching the level of the intelligible. In other words, sensory knowledge has been posed as inferior to the position of the intelligible knowledge.

Postmodern philosophy is a critique of this philosophy that privileges a particular mode of being over the other. The critique of metaphysical determination of essence, attempts to show that the two oppositional terms – 'Intelligible' and 'Sensible' – do not have inherent ontological grounding within themselves. It also illustrates that this distinction and privileging of one term over the other is historically a discursive constitution.

The distinction between the two categories of 'Intelligible' and 'Sensible', as the ontological determination of 'reality', is a central problem throughout the entire tradition of metaphysical thought. It is to be noted that this metaphysical determination of being also constitutes itself as an 'onto-theology' that grounds the religious system of Christianity. In this way, the position of the transcendental Being is determined as the permanent Being called God. God, therefore, is considered as the highest being in a hierarchical system and the meaning and interpretation of each act, intention and the other aspects of existence have to be evaluated in relation to him. 'God' is in essence a transcendental Being beyond the sensuous representation.

The Concepts of 'Reality' and 'Fiction' in Modern Aesthetics: The Age of 'Simulacra' or 'Verisimilitude'

Modern concept of 'reality' understands itself through the *loss* of the 'origin'. It claims to detach itself from the concepts and practices of the metaphysical system of thought; it propounds the idea that reality perceived as 'intelligible' is not the

realm from which signification is derived. Yet, it remains highly attached to the 'Form' of the work of art:

"Modern aesthetics is an aesthetic of the sublime, though a nostalgic one. It allows the unrepresentable to be put forward only as the missing contents; but the form, because of its recognizable consistency, continues to offer the reader or viewer matter for solace and pleasure..."²⁰

Once the concept of the metaphysical transcendental origin is lost, the privilege of the 'models' over 'copies' is liquidated and "the age of simulation begins" ²¹ With the liquidation of the concept of 'origin' and 'identity', sameness with the assumed origin is replaced by the idea of "an imperfect copy of an original..."²² In other words:

"In fact, once the fetishistic desire for the original is forgotten, the copies are perfect."²³

The paradox of the modern concept of 'reality' lies in understanding the idea of the 'loss of the origin'. On the one hand, the modern concept of real claims the loss of the origin and the liquidation of all referentials; on the other hand, it remains highly attached to the idea of once existing 'origin'. In order to understand the past, the abode of the lost origin, we must have before our eyes "something that resembles as closely as possible the original model."²⁴ The modern sense of 'reality' thus, reproduces 'hyperreal', "a *real* copy of the reality"²⁵, in the place of the 'lost'

²⁰ John Gregg, op. cit., p. 179.

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 185. The original statement reads as follows:

"The age of simulation.... begins with a liquidation of all referentials."

This is originally a quote from J. Baudrillard's *Selected Writings*.

²² *ibid.*, p. 185.

²³ Umberto Eco, *Faith in Fakes: Travels in Hyperreality*, p. 39.

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 53.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 4. The emphasis is mine.

originary real. Hyperreal is in fact, an “overdose of a powerful referential in a society which cannot terminate its mourning [for the past]”²⁶ “...occasioned by the loss of the real which used to and presumably still could function as a guarantor of authenticity.”²⁷ In other words, the modern hyperreal product claims:

“We are giving you the reproduction so you will no longer feel any need for the original.”²⁸

Though inheriting the reason and the logic of the Enlightenment in constituting the concept of ‘real’, the modern dichotomies of the real and illusions are blurred, and “the logical distinction between the Real World and Possible Worlds has been definitely undermined.”²⁹ Thus, the “absolute unreality is offered as real presence”³⁰ and the “*completely real* becomes identified with *completely fake*.”³¹ Therefore, the authenticity that the modern era claims for is nothing natural or inherent, but visual, “every thing looks real, and therefore it is real; in any case the fact that it seems real is real, and the thing is real even if, like in *Alice in Wonderland*, it never existed.”³² “In the case of the works of art what is culturally, if not psychologically, hallucinatory is the confusion between copy and original, and the fetishization of art as a sequence of famous subjects.”³³

This makes clear that within the modern magic enclosure of reality, it is only the fantasy that has been reproduced. And that this (hyper)reality is but a textual construction and a discourse made by systems of domination. The fakeness —

²⁶John Gregg, op. cit, p. 187. Quoted from Baudrillard’s *Selected Writings*, p.181. The parenthetical addition is mine.

²⁷ ibid., p. 187.

²⁸ Umberto Eco, op. cit, p. 19.

²⁹ ibid., p. 14.

³⁰ ibid., p. 7.

³¹ ibid., p. 7. The emphasis is mine.

³² ibid., p. 16. It is to be noted that in the text *Faith in fakes: Travels in Hyperreality*, Umberto Eco suggests that Alice in Wonderland-like images are pervasive in American social life.

³³ ibid., p. 42.

textuality, and mythicity — of hyperreality “is not so much because it wouldn’t be possible to have the real equivalent but because the public is meant to admire the perfection of the fake and its obedience to the program.”³⁴ The fact is that the very concept of simulation is the enemy of power because instead of ‘identity’, the sameness with a source, it reflects upon an ‘original disparity’. The modern systems of domination thus, use ‘simulation’ in order to show that within their societies the forces of opposition still exist. Deploying the simulation factors, these modern systems attempt to destabilize the very ground of simulation. The power systems in fact, use the ‘simulation’ at two different levels as the general and the regional economy of the system. This particular power strategy in short indicates that:

“... the ruse that power must exercise in the general economy of the hyperreal is to conceal the fact the second order — the regional economy of power anchored firmly in the real — does not exist.”³⁵

The sense of modern reality is thus, a textual construction reifying the dominant power systems. The sense of the modern reality imagined in the frame of the hyperreal is, therefore, no more than the mythical and the fictional constitutions it claims to have been detached from.

The postmodernist concept of ‘reality’ defines itself in terms of the critique of the modern ‘real’ — or rather the hyperreality. It denies the privileged status of truth (over fiction, the unreal), and assumes truth to be the ‘product of error’. It defines the ‘real’ to be nothing but a ‘concept’ formed from the ‘congealed metaphors.’³⁶ The

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 44.

³⁵ John Gregg, *op. cit.*, p. 187. Taken from the Baudrillardian notion of the expenditure and power divisions in which the power systems are assumed to function within two frames of the ‘regional’ and ‘general economy’. The general economy, in fact, is the frame of the universal concepts. (This idea also goes back to G. Bataille.

³⁶ John Gregg, *op. cit.*, p. 175. Quoted from Nietzsche, the statement reads as:

“ Concepts are actually congealed metaphors, and the error of philosophy resides in its blindness to the fact that concepts succeed in passing themselves off as some thing they are not.”

nature of reality, 'truth', is what Nietzsche calls, 'a mobile army of metaphors.' He says:

"What is then truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms — in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer coins."³⁷

The structure of the 'conceptual edifices' erected by culture — according to Nietzsche — can be compared to the structure of "the beehive, the mediæval fortress, the Egyptian pyramid, and the spider's web."³⁸ These geometrical structures of the concept in the works of Maurice Blanchot are compared with the form of the 'tomb'. Being compared as such (with different geometrical forms), the various assumed structures of concepts share a single feature of preserving the reality (truth) from 'decomposition'³⁹. These structures also imply a sense of closure created by the very concept of 'reality' in order to preserve the homogeneity of the idea of 'real' and to exclude all undesirable, differential elements from it. It is to be inferred that there is no 'given' inherent in the nature of these 'concepts' waiting to be unearthed by any logic or reason. Concepts are, in fact, the reductive, subjective projections on 'reality'. They are the anthropomorphic illusions that tell us more about themselves than about the subject they claim to give information about. The constructed reality is the desired product of the self-fulfilling epistemological attempts. This, in its own terms, undermines the epistemologists' claim for truth as certainty. It reflects upon

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 175. Quoted from Nietzsche's *Philosophy and Truth: On Truth and Lies in an Extramoral Sense*, p. 84.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 177.

³⁹ It is a Nietzschean idea, as per which the concepts are the 'worn out', dead metaphors now accepted as reality. Therefore the specific structures attributed to the 'reality' attempts to preserve these dead body of metaphors from decomposition.

the nature of the human knowledge that, according to Nietzsche, is “nothing but working with the favorite metaphors.”⁴⁰ Knowledge accordingly, “puts a premium on stasis, freezes the dynamic flux of becoming, whether by reducing language to transparent medium of communication or by glossing over the metaphoric conversions upon which the concept-making depends.”⁴¹

Beneath this network of conceptual edifices, there does not exist any reality, any “brute phenomena which exists in pristine form.”⁴² This would imply that there exists no ‘reality’ outside the network of metaphoric interpretations. In other words, no brute reality can be imagined which is not untouched by the act of interpretation and yet it is impossible to identify where this act of interpretation has started. The exact point where the function of interpretation began “remains shrouded in mystery; no one can get close to the first case by breaking out of the web of interpretations which compete for legitimacy.”⁴³

Postmodern conception of ‘reality’, therefore, is the manifestation of the idea of simulacrum, which undoes the Platonic schema of ‘model’ versus ‘copy’. It undermines the metaphysical ground of reality, traditionally posited and accepted as an intelligible-transcendental origin. It shows that the very idea of the transcendental origin (reality) is a metaphorical, textual construction and thus, is deprived of the authenticity of origin it claims for and that the reality is essentially impossible ‘to be’. It implies “...that similitude and even identity itself are the products of an *initial doubling* (Blanchot) or a *deep disparity* (Deleuze). No longer simply a bad copy, the simulacrum is a groundless ground which both enables the restricted economy of representation to appear and subverts the pretensions of this economy to totalization. The regional economy must covertly appeal to this heterogeneous intensity in order to

⁴⁰ John Gregg, op. cit., p. 175. Quoted from F. Nietzsche’s *Philosophy and Truth: The Last Philosopher*, p. 51.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 176.

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 178.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 178.

exist. It must also overtly denounce simulacra as inauthentic and unthinkable so as to affirm its desired supremacy over them.”⁴⁴

The unreality attributed to the fictional existence is assumed to have been derived from the fact that fiction is only accessible through reading and due to the same logic, it is not accessible to the existential experience. Fiction is presumed to be ‘unreal’ because it does not exist and it does not exist because it presents the unreality. The sentence in any story puts us in contact with the unreality which is the essence of fiction. If we assume the unreal as the lack of reality, ‘the absence of the presence’, then, fiction presents this lack of reality. The aim of the fictional work is to distance the world of real by keeping this lack of reality as its essence. The nature of the fiction, thus, is:

“...not to give us what it wants to have us attain, but to make it useless to us by replacing it, and thus to distance things from us by taking their place, and taking the place of things not by filling itself with them but by abstaining from them.”⁴⁵

In other words, there exists a sense of ‘suspension’ in the fictional work/world, which functions to delay any determination of ‘reality’ or ‘fictivity’ in the context of the work. This sense of suspension defined as ‘suspension of disbelief’⁴⁶ is accepted to be the condition on which the success of every literary work depends, even if it is admitted to be within the realm of fabulous and incredible. This suspension, in fact, is caused, on the one hand, with the sense of the “word that has yet to wake up”⁴⁷, and on the other hand, with an “imagined ensemble that cannot stop to be unreal.”⁴⁸ And “for this double reason, the meaning of words suffers a primordial lack and, instead of

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 183-184.

⁴⁵ Maurice Blanchot, “The Language of Fiction,” *The Work of Fire*, p. 75.

⁴⁶ Italo Calvino, *The Literature Machine: Levels of Reality in Literature*, p. 105. The original term is attributed to (and quoted from) Coleridge as an attitude ‘matched on the reader’s part’.

⁴⁷ Maurice Blanchot, *op. cit.*, p. 76

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 76.

pushing away all concrete reference to what it designates, as in day-to-day relationships, it tends to demand verification, to revive an object or a precise knowledge that confirms its content.”⁴⁹ The meaning of the fictional work, its reference and attachment to any reality out of its borders, is thus, less guaranteed. The unreality of fiction is the factor that holds its meaning apart from things and places it at the border of a world forever separated. Therefore:

“... words can no longer be content with their pure value as sign (as if reality and the presence of objects and beings were all necessary to authorize this wonder of abstract nullity that is everyday talk), and at the same time take on importance like verbal gear and make evident, materialize what they signify.”⁵⁰

Fiction in its fictionality aspires to seem more real. It is “made up of a language that is physically and formally valid, not to become the *sign* of beings and objects already absent (since imagined), but rather to *present* them to us, to make us feel them and live them through the consistency of words, the luminous opacity of things.”⁵¹ Fiction implies an absence, a counter world outside the domain of reality as presence. It is thus, the collection of opposing elements, the real (the ‘presence’ of the unreal elements it tries to make possible), and the unreality of the unreal, the world of imaginary, that it attempts to depict. Fiction detaches itself from the world of reality to make the unreality of the unreal, possible. Being so, no reality can be assumed to have been existing outside the text, reality with which the context of the fiction tries to make connections. And thus, the fictional elements cannot be claimed to be simply the signifiers referring to a predetermined signified. The symbols of the fictional world signify nothing. It is not only the existence of any reality beyond the textual construction that is inaccessible. It is rather that they always surpass every reality, truth and meaning, and present us with the sense that fiction cannot be realized as

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 76.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 76.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 77.

'fiction'. The symbol is the narration of the fiction, the negation of this narrative, the narrative of this negation — this is the condition that fiction confuses itself between reality and fictivity in its inability to maintain itself as 'fictive', "for it does not accept being realized in a particular act of imagination, in a singular form of a finished narrative."⁵² Fiction is, therefore, outside of reality, first in the sense that it confuses itself with the imaginary, 'grasped in its absence as present,'⁵³ then, in the other sense that it shows the possibility of this particular imagined event and the totality of the imaginary and, "behind each unreal thing, the unreality that could reveal itself in itself and for itself."⁵⁴ Thus, the nature of this rigorously contradictory attempt is valuable only in its impossibility. Fiction is possible only as an impossible effort. It is this nature of the work of art (and fiction) that Hegel considers its principle fault as "*Unangemessenheit*"⁵⁵: The exteriority of the image and its spiritual content do not succeed in coinciding fully, the symbol remains inadequate."⁵⁶

Milorad Pavić's *Dictionary of the Khazars* — Reality or Fiction?

To start the discussion of 'reality' and 'fictionality' in the novel, *Dictionary of the Khazars*, it is necessary to discuss the title in the first place. A close look at the title and the subtitles of the novel reveals that Pavić employs different styles and terminology to introduce the novel. The title as printed on the cover of the text and repeated on the second page of the novel reads as⁵⁷:

A. " *Dictionary of the Khazars: A Lexicon Novel in 100,000 Words*"

On the following page, three more informative clauses have been presented. These subtitles are:

⁵² Maurice Blanchot, op. cit., p. 79.

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 80.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 80.

⁵⁵ German word meaning is "incomprehensible."

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 80.

⁵⁷ To facilitate the analysis, the subtitles are alphabetized.

B. "*Lexicon Corsi*"

Followed by,

C. "*(A Dictionary of the Dictionaries on the Khazar Question)*"

And finally ending (at the bottom of the page) with:

D. "*Reconstruction of the Original 1691 Daubmannus Edition (Destroyed in 1692), including its most recent revisions*"

The clauses A, B & C seem to indicate that the novel is in the form of a dictionary or else a dictionary has been presented in the form of this particular novel. The structure of the statement in D, the final clause, provides us with some clarification. It indicates that the present edition of the novel, Pavić's edition, is not the original version of the text. It is only a reconstruction of an original copy of Daubmannus' which had been destroyed within a year of its (assumed) publication. Thus, the novel seems to introduce itself in different ways through the claims of the four statements before the reader gets a chance to examine the story. The questions, which arise after reading all the titles, are:

'Why has the title of the novel been presented in the various forms of A, B, & C? And what could be the significance of each of these statements in introducing the novel?'

To respond to these questions, one has to analyze the structure of the title and the subtitles.

The structure of 'A' (which has been presented in the form of a statement), is constituted of three parts (phrases):

a) 'Dictionary of the Khazars'

- b) 'A Lexicon Novel'
- c) 'In 100,000 Words'

Analyzing the phrase (a), 'Dictionary of the Khazars', even before one can examine the content of the book, implies that the text is a dictionary written on a particular subject, the Khazars — independent of what the Khazars could be. The term 'dictionary' indicates two things. First, the text deals with that aspect of the thing, the Khazars, that can be assumed to be real. In this sense most of the dictionaries — no matter in what area of knowledge and on what particular subject they have been written — are the 'real' compilations of words. And to be so, they are the references of almost all serious (and not for the purpose of pleasure) everyday human-affairs. Secondly, it indicates that the text is presented in a fragmentary form.

It is in the phrase in (b), 'a lexicon novel', that the problematic of the entire argument takes form: a lexicon presented in the form of a novel or a novel presented in the form of a lexicon. Taking into account the earlier assumption that a 'dictionary' is generally accepted as a 'real' (serious) work of literature, the novel can be read as *a real literary work presented in an unreal (fictional) manner*. Followed by title (c), the limits of both novel and lexicon are imposed within 100,000 words. This implies a sense of arbitrary-ness of the 'closure' of the novel. It means that the end of the novel is not presumed to have been achieved where the incidents of the story end⁵⁸. It rather portrays a frame of limited words (100,000), as the borders of the text. To link this with the earlier assumptions, regarding the nature of 'reality' of the work and the arbitrary-ness of the end of the novel *Dictionary of the Khazars*, one comes to the conclusion that 'reality' has been attempted to be portrayed as a textual construct.

⁵⁸ The last entry of the novel is Judah Ben Tibbon (from the 12th century) assumed to be the translator of Judah Halevi's *Book on the Khazars* from Arabic to Hebrew. This person certainly is not the main figure involved with the Khazar question and the incidents counted to be associated with him are not the closing of the novel. Thus, the end of the novel is purely conventional.

The title reflects upon the nature of the work focusing on ‘reality’— inferred from the term ‘dictionary’. This reality has been presented in the form of a novel (indicated in ‘b’) and it is delimited – indicated in (c) – by the word-count of the subtitle. To put it simply, it indicates the ‘reality’ about an unknown subject, the Khazars, in the novel form (presented in a fictional mode) which ends within 100,000 words. Thus, in the first subtitle, the nature of the novel is introduced as *a fragmentary ‘reality’ presented in the form of unreality (fiction) with an arbitrary/numerical end*. Thus, in the first attempt the title of the text seems to bring all contradictory elements together. These contradictory elements can be enumerated as ‘reality’ and ‘fictionality’ of the content, ‘fragmentation’ and ‘linearity’ of the form, and conceptuality and numericality of the presentation, assumed by the juxtaposition of the two terms ‘lexicon’ and ‘novel’. The text, therefore, from the very beginning is involved with the question of ‘reality’ and the suspension and the ambiguity surrounding the subject. In the second title, ‘Lexicon Corsi’, the choice of words does not add any more ambiguity to the earlier argument. The second title thus, indicates the solidity of the sense of ‘reality’ as being suggested by the term ‘dictionary’.

‘A Dictionary of the Dictionaries on the Khazar Question’ adds further points to the discussion of ‘reality’. Firstly, taking into account the earlier assumptions about the realistic features of being a ‘dictionary’, ‘A Dictionary of Dictionaries’ could be read as, *The reality of the realities*. Followed by the phrase, ‘on the Khazar question’, the title links the position of the ‘reality’ (about the Khazars) with a ‘question’. Thus, the text identifies⁵⁹ itself with the being real and unreal about the subject, the Khazars, which is known and unknown at the same time.⁶⁰ In other words, the text seems to deal with the ‘reality’ whose origin is in question. The same

⁵⁹ Here, the assumption is that the title is the ‘identity’ of the text.

⁶⁰ The verbal construction (“the Khazars”) implies the sense that the subject of the discussion in the text is quite known whereas the content of the novel indicates that substantial information could not be found on the subject of the Khazars.

play could be observed in the last subtitle, 'The Reconstruction of the Original 1691 Daubmannus Edition (Destroyed in 1692), including its most recent revisions)'. 'Reconstruction of the original copy' in the first stance, implies the sense of the *loss* of the origin of the book. In the second place, it refers to the nature of the text — the present edition, on the one hand, and the 'Text' in general on the other — to be the 'copy' and the representation of a lost (destroyed) origin. The 'original copy' mentioned in this statement as the '1691 Daubmannus' copy' on the other hand, cannot be considered as the original version of the 'Dictionary' itself. It is to be noted that though this subtitle does not reflect upon the existence of any other original copy besides the 1691 edition at the syntactic level, there is assumed to be an original text according to the accounts of the novel. This original copy according to the textual records, is attributed to princess 'Ateh', the head of the cult of 'dream-hunters'. The record of the novel of this issue reads as:

"Ateh devoted herself completely to her sect of dream-hunters, Khazar priests who strove to create a sort of earthly version of that heavenly register mentioned in the Holy Book." (Pavić, 132)

Thus, the 'originality' and the 'reality' that this subtitle claims for, this way, seems to contradict the 'reality' indicated by the accounts of the story.

The four titles — including the subtitles — of the novel seem to indicate their association with the concept of 'reality'. The first title, with the feature of solidity of constructive elements implied in the terms 'lexicon' and 'dictionary' and the word limit of the novel, can be assumed to have been introducing a realistic mode, with the second title affirming it. The third and the fourth titles however reflect upon a different aspect of the text. 'A Dictionary of the Dictionaries' could possibly imply that the work is a *shadow of reality*, while in the fourth case, there is no mention of this original reality - the 'original text'. Thus, in the fourth case the indication can be interpreted as *the shadow of a shadow*, a text constructed not on the basis of an

'original text' but rather a reconstruction of a 'copy' of this unknown original book. The layers of the meaning of the titles, presenting the nature of the text at different levels, and at times in a contradictory manner, could be seen as a reflection upon the nature of 'reality'. The subject of the novel, the quest for the 'truth' of the Khazars, allegorically stands for the concept of 'reality' itself. This reality is, in fact, presented in different layers. Each layer of presentation implied by the title and the subtitles reflects upon a layer of this assumed-to-be reality. Being so, the text is a compilation and collection of all these layers representing the 'reality'. Not only each of these expressed layers defines the assumed meaning, from a different angle and reflects upon different aspects and features of it; but also, at times, expresses the contradictory aspects of this assumed 'real' (the meaning). Thus, each layer of presentation, being expressed in different titles of the text, constantly constructs and deconstructs the ground of the reality that has been undertaken as the quest of novel.

Besides the title(s), Pavić's choice of the historical dislocations in the story refer to the question of 'reality' and 'fictionality'. Historical elements can be considered as the major references *Dictionary of the Khazars*. Many of the incidents in the novel have references to historical records. Besides, taking the recurrences of the exact dates of incidents into the narrative of the story, historical geography and personality also seem to have been deployed in the narrative of the story. In general, the historical methods in Pavić can be divided into two different categories. In the first method of application, Pavić seems to take the frame of history, in the form of historical dislocation, in constructing the frame of the fictional work. Yet, the fictional narrative is the dominant mode of presentation covering up most aspects of the particular historical elements. As an example of this set of historical applications, one can refer to the case of the historical characters of 'Priscus' and 'Theophanes'. Under the entry 'Khazars' (Pavić, 72) the historical evidences of the existence of the Khazars are attributed to the two historians, Theophanes and Priscus, it reads:

“Theophanes wrote the following about the origin of the Khazars: *The great Khazars people appeared from the remotest reaches of Brasilia....*”⁶¹ (ibid., 72)

And about the ‘Priscus’ we read:

“In the 5th century, according to Priscus, the Khazars belonged to the Hun Empire and were known by the name Akatzir.”⁶² (ibid., 72)

Based on the records of historical sources under the two names, Priscus and Theophanes, there existed four different characters from different periods of time and with different personal histories and occupations. As the fictional construction of Pavić does not make it clear which of the four different characters are the actual references of his quoted statements, and the fact that the historical characters are dated such that they can well be the chroniclers of the Khazars’s history; the historical authenticity of Pavić’s records remains uncertain. Thus, the fictional construction employs the historical elements in order to build up the story, yet it does not aim to preserve the framework of history. In other words, the historical dislocations are not deployed to authenticate the fictional accounts but to *fictionalize* history. The historical accounts of the novel are, therefore, unique in their fictional application. If the accounts of history are presumed to have been the ‘real’ records of ‘real’ incidents (the records of ‘reality’), which now have been put together in Pavić’s fictional construction; it can be assumed that the dislocation of historical elements in *Dictionary of the Khazars* is the ‘fictionalizing’ of the ‘real’.

In the second method, the historical elements of the first set⁶³ have been taken into consideration as the ground of the assumptions for this peculiar style of application. Most of the historical applications — the direct application of the

⁶¹ See chapter I. The emphasis is mine.

⁶² See chapter I.

⁶³ The application of the historical elements in a sense other than the historical realities — the fictional claims of Pavić — as it has been discussed earlier.

historical elements as it has been explained earlier in this chapter — about the Khazars within the novel, have been taken into the construction of that part of history which has never been directly approached in the novel. The geographical inhabitants of the Khazars — introduced in the first chapter of this study — and their interbreeding with the ‘Magyars, Avars, Huns’⁶⁴ and Slavs — connects the history of this ancient tribe to the history of Balkan. Besides, the life and the personal history of the people involved with the Khazar question, intensify the interconnection of these fictional-histories with those of the historical tales from the Balkan region. This aspect of the historical perspective never comes to the surface of the fiction, but it rather remains as the hidden intention of the all the historical-games in the novel. Many of the incidents in the Khazars’ story address themselves to these historical ‘realities’. Amongst these references the case of Avram Brankovich is of prime significance in the story. ‘Kyr Avram Brankovich’, according to the fictional records, is the Serbian commander of the Austrian army in Austro-Turkish wars. He is “a polyhistor and a learned man”⁶⁵, who, according to the fictional claims, is “one of the authors of this [the original copy of the] book.”⁶⁶

The importance of the character of Brankovich in the story (in reference to historical realities) lies in the scene of his death at the hands of the Turkish troops. He, wearing coat of arms of a silk vest embroidered with the sign of an ‘one-eyed eagle’⁶⁷, is killed by being hit by the spear lunged at the embroidered bird. The one-eyed eagle in this particular usage can be assumed to have been taken from the idea of ‘crowd symbol’⁶⁸ of the ‘Grey Falcon’⁶⁹. The symbol of the ‘Grey Falcon’ (also recorded as the ‘Grey Bird’ according to the accounts of Robert D. Kaplan’s *Balkan*

⁶⁴ Huns were the nomadic people of central Asia who gain control over central and eastern Europe under Attila (450 AD). Avars had their own empire which was weakened by Bulgarians around 680 AD. Magyars are considered to be the dominant people of Hungary.

⁶⁵ Milorad Pavic, *op.cit.*, p. 24.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p. 24.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p. 56.

⁶⁸ Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History*, p. 15. A ‘crowd symbol’ according to Kaplan is something like the national-symbols (icons) with which the nationalist ideology has been upheld.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 4.

Ghosts: A Journey through History) in the historical application refers to the 'martyrdom ideology' in the Serbian tradition. According to it, in the Middle Ages and at the time of Nemanjic dynasty, Serbia and almost the major part of the Balkan region falls under the Turkish occupation for nearly four hundred years. During the war with the Turkish troops, the last king of the Nemanjic dynasty is betrayed by one of his commanders, 'Vuk Brankovich', and with his tragic death, the reign of Nemanjic dynasty comes to an end. According to the folklore narratives from this historical incident, the king opts to sacrifice his earthly power in order to achieve the heavenly kingdom. The concept of the 'Grey Falcon', as the martyrdom ideology, reads as follows:

"In a Serbian poem, the prophet Elijah, disguised as a falcon, gives a Serbian general the choice between an earthly or a heavenly kingdom. The general chooses the latter, erecting a church instead of positioning his army, so that the Turks defeat him."⁷⁰

And also:

"In Serbian legend [and history], the Nemanjic kingdom sacrificed itself to the Turkish hordes in order to gain a New Kingdom in heaven."⁷¹

Pavić's character, Avram Brankovich, seems to have been portrayed on the basis of these historical and fictional accounts. Yet, there is something that remains the crucial difference between this fictional character and the historical one. It is the fact that the fictional Brankovich himself is a martyr and not a traitor. Thus, in the characterization of Brankovich as an example, the "theme of the traitor and the hero"⁷² — as they are conceptually assumed and believed — is indistinguishable. The

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p. 4.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, p. 35. The parenthetical addition is mine.

⁷² The present reference is the title of a story, "Theme of the Traitor and the Hero" by Jorge Luis Borges in the collection of the short stories and the essays, *Labyrinth* (Penguin Classics, 2000). Borges' story, like Pavić's, is about the theme of historical hero. In this story, the captain of conspirators, Fergus Kilpatrick, after the successful revolution (Borges does not specify where) is found out to be the traitor to the doctrine of the revolt and the cult. Yet, as the historical obligations makes the revolutionary forces to keep the image of the hero as it is expected to be; they cannot

comparative-analysis of this fictional character with his historical rival reveals that Pavić, in this second method of historical applications, does not distinguish between the borders of history and that of fiction. Pavić thus, seems to have been employing the historical accounts, folklore narratives and legends interchangeably. The fictional accounts of Pavić, like his records of historical 'realities' seems to be all contaminated with the presence of the 'Other' in its very ground and, thus, the 'reality' of the novel is indistinguishable from its 'fictionality'.

The simple structure of historical applications in *Dictionary of the Khazars* can be put in the following pattern:

- 1) The historical dislocations (the discourse of history) have been employed to form the fictional frame of the novel.
- 2) The fictional-narrative structures the historical discourse that assumes to give true knowledge about a real existing past. In that sense the structure of the fictional and historical elements seems to be the same. But that is where the similarity ends: the content is a different matter altogether. This is what Hayden White implies by the term "narrativization of discourse"⁷³.
- 3) The historical element now turned into fictional, is employed to be the ground for other historical inferences. Thus, the fictive elements in Pavić seem to have references to the outside — of the text — world.

The last statement, about the nature of the fictive elements in Pavić (introduced in No.3), does not necessarily indicate any intended 'Reality' which the story attempted to represent. That the historical elements of Pavić are all twisted and turned into fictive accounts far from their 'real' nature as they are claimed to be,

condemn him. Instead, they, including the traitor himself, decide to assassinate Kilpatrick in the hands of an unknown opponent and preserve the image of the national hero. The theme of (de)construction of the concept of hero in Pavić seems to follow the Borgesian pattern in this particular story.

⁷³ Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, p. 4.

means that these elements are all localized into the fictional narrative. Thus, the real elements of 'reality' are figuratively constructed. Being so, in most cases, it is quite an impossible task to distinguish the fictional construction from the 'real' historical facts. Fictive interiority, in Pavić, simultaneously associates and dissociates itself with (and from) the 'reality'. It depicts the inseparable contamination of the essence of each with the other. It reflects upon its author's idea that:

"There are no definite borders between the real and imaginary world. A free man suppresses the borders between the two worlds."⁷⁴

And that:

"The truth is just a trick"⁷⁵ and that "history is just a piece of gossip."⁷⁶

And it consequently implies that:

"... The most important ability that a writer can possess is the ability to reach a certain point where reality and fantasy reflect as one and the same world."⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Lance Olsen, "Architecture of Possibility: Reading Milorad Pavić Reading," *The Writer's Chronicle*, September 2000, pp.34-42. <<http://www.khazars.com/postmodern.html>>.

⁷⁵ Thanassis Lallas, "As a Writer I was born Two Hundred Years ago...," *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, Dalkey Archive Press, Summer 1998, vol.XVIII, no.2. <<http://www.centerforculture.org/review/98.2.html>>.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

Conclusion:
*Dictionary of the Khazars,
Mobility of Identity*

Dictionary of the Khazars, Mobility of Identity

“ Strange is the book which becomes more coherent as it is more fragmentary...”¹

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'rhizome' defines Milorad Pavić's *Dictionary of the Khazars* quite well, not only due to the fragmented structure, in which each layer of information is connected to the others in multiple ways, but also because of its thematic intention of analyzing the concept of 'identity'. However, the essential question in this context would concern itself with the possible interpretation of the significance of this textual fragmentation. How can this fragmentation represent the thematic focus of the text, (that is) identity? The nature of such questions in fact, addresses the problem of identity, especially in relation to the modern nations.

Modernity defines the world, all existence, and sentient beings within the limits of a linear structure; it is the consolidation of closure imposed on the diverse face of the world of the living. In one of its major conceptual achievements — nationalism — it imagines nations within the defined closures of 'homogeneous empty time' and 'nation-space'. It employs language as the vehicle through which it constructs the linear discourse of its 'imagined communities'². Writing, thus, becomes a major means of hegemonizing and unifying the modern era in order to inscribe the history of all nations in the discourse of the winner, the triumphant one and remains ever-ignorant, of the very existence of the forever excluded/defeated 'Other'. Modern historiography engenders historicity to predict the ever-progressing advent of future. Its mode of representation is deeply rooted in the discourse of power within which it prefigures its form and content. This era delimits its borders in the

¹ Quoted from Deleuze and Guattari in Jasmina Mihajlović's *Elements of Milorad Pavić's Postmodern Poetics*.

² This is a reference to Benedict Anderson's idea that nations are in fact imagined communities.

dichotomy and subsequent dialectic of the 'self' and the 'Other'. It confines them both to the defined locus of the 'Inside' and the 'Outside', the center and the periphery.

Nation, the "many as one"³, of the modern epoch is, the subject and the object, the 'told' and the 'telling' of the modern discourse of identity. 'Nation' is the 'told', the object of the hegemonizing discourse of power. It is the product of a narrative system and a pedagogical strategy projected in a unified form, abstracted from its performative aspect. And yet, it remains the 'telling', re-embodying the social life of nations in their daily activities. 'Nation' is the 'object' of this pedagogical 'told' because its life has been formed through this discourse, its collective existence and identity is dominated by this discourse and its singular existential aspect is veiled up under the facade of projects of national unification. And yet, it is also the subject because only in the presence of the people of each/any nation, the modern discourse of power can be legitimized. It is based upon these daily activities of the nation-people that the discourse of modernity is formulated. Homi K. Bhabha indicates towards the same conclusion in the following statement:

"...where the people must be thought in a double time, the people are the historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin or event; the people are also the 'subjects' of a process of signification that must erase any prior originary presence the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principle of the people as that continual process by which the national life is redeemed and signified as a repeating and reproductive process."⁴

In the modern mode of representation, the nation (also the nation-state) is a "unit in which people cohere around a historical and homogeneous common core

³ Homi K. Bhabha, "Dissemination: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation," *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha, p. 209.

⁴ Homi K. Bhabha, *op. cit.*, p. 297.

which sets them apart from *others*"⁵. It is a space "that threatens binary division with its difference"⁶. The essence of modern nationalism has to be understood in terms of the discourse of power unifying 'us' against 'them', in a reductionist, separationist, exclusivist manner. The modern nation's 'us', the conceptual 'self', therefore, stands somewhere separated, far away from the existence of the 'other'. The language of this 'Other', thus, becomes an unknown language to *his* ears. 'His!' This self-construct certainly represents the masculine, the powerful and the triumphant side of the history of mankind with the female figure represented as being deprived of power, and her feminine language. Also, the female is imagined as the ever-lasting archetype of the margin and the central figure of this imposed periphery. The pious reason of the modern nation, the benign aspect of Enlightenment, goes beyond its borders in demarcating the colonized 'Other' outside the territory of its own self. It erects this particular Other to define its own 'self'; and thus, it fabricates the discourse of its self-identification. Finally, when it constructs itself, as the 'self' beyond the 'other', it looks upon itself and finds itself estranged and alienated in being so. Deprived of the closeness of the 'other', the modern man yearns for deliverance from his alienation in search of the other. Truly, this self imagines its being as the essence of the reality even in the depth of its alienation, and the Other has to reach this reality of the 'self' and to get integrated with the self.

Yet, this is, in no way, a solemn standard critique of modernity nor the modern nation, because modernity, after all, has been the 'today' in relation to 'yesterday', it is the modernity of the antiquity it moves away from, and yet sets its eager gaze upon. The 'Janus-faced'⁷ modern nation lives in the present time of the modern epoch yet, it fabricates the essence of its identity with regard to the antiquity it associates itself with. Any critique of modernity and its fabrications ('identity', 'nationality', and so on), in fact, reflects upon the cultural, historical, religious and

⁵ *Encyclopedia of Nationalism*, p. 247. The emphasis is mine.

⁶ Homi K. Bhabha, *op. cit.*, p. 299.

⁷ Homi K. Bhabha, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

political background that this epoch has been a successor to. The reflections upon modernity are the critiques of the religious undertones concealed in the assumptions of transcendentality, the critique of the many facets of the Enlightenment (including reason and logic) through which modernity prefigures its form and structure. Modern man, the product of the modern projections of 'us' and 'them', is yet another 'other' of what he assumes to be the 'Other' congealed in the image of the past. And this scene of the past is the mirror in which the 'self' first glances at itself as the image of the 'I'⁸. The self, in fact, is the Other of the other in an endless chain of the Others, with no 'self' as the point of departure, no base nor any origin, but rather a void, or 'lack', which the 'self', always, classifies with the existence of the 'Other'. Thus, far from the self's existence, the 'Other', is assumed to be the 'absence' of the 'self' presence. It is the unknown inhabitant of the known (present) 'self', residing in the very essence of the self as the language of its unconscious. This is the memory of the repressed 'other' (the subject of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis) which haunts the self in its selfhood. The logic of the self, thus bifurcated in the dichotomy of the 'self' and the 'Other', turns against its very own being, reveals its voids beyond the limits of the linearity of the frame-work it is assumed to be formed within, and opens itself up from within to its successors.

Jorge Luis Borges once mentioned:

"The fact is that each writer creates his precursors. His work modifies our perception of the past, as it will modify our future."⁹

Borges' statement could be a comment on the literary movements as well. And, since they have already, always had intimate relations with the socio-political aspects of a particular period — for instance the impact of the emergence of the novel (print capitalism) on the formation of the nationalist ideology — an analogy of this

⁸ The concept has been taken from Jaques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," tr. Alan Sheridan, *Ecrits: A Selection*.

⁹ Jaime Alazraki, *Borges and the Kabbalah and other Essays on his fiction and Poetry*, p. 10.

nature could be suggested in the context of the succession of the cultural/literary movements. It could suggest that each literary epoch, can prefigure its own earlier period. This might seem to be too absurd to be true given the dominant conception of temporality, the law of critical succession, and the deeply rooted notion of causality, yet, the very impossibility of the argument forms the basis of postmodernity. It is perhaps with the same token that Lyotard neither claims, postmodernity to have broken the bonds of the relation with the modern past nor introduces it as an outcome of modernity exclusively¹⁰. Rather Lyotard, expresses this concept of the succession — of the anterior in the posterior — through modernism's posteriority to the postmodern condition. Through the study of John Gregg from Lyotard's postmodern conception, we read:

“A work can become modern only if it is first postmodern. Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant.”¹¹

And,

“The postmodern is thus an alien temporality that in a sense precedes and constitutes *modernism*, always inscribing the possibility of a radical revision of modernism against itself, specifically in the thinking of the event.”¹²

Postmodernity is the ‘para-criticism’¹³, the criticism of criticism, of the modern methods of life formed upon the remaining traditions of the earlier epochs, emerging out of the opening up of the voids of the normalized, traditional linear

¹⁰ John Gregg in *Maurice Blanchot and the Literature of Transgression* presents the same argument from Lyotard:

“ For Lyotard, however, the postmodern does not consist of a subsequent break with modernism. On the contrary, it *marks a temporal aporia- a gap in the thinking of time which is constitutive of the modernist concept of time as the succession or progress.*”

¹¹ John Gregg, op. cit., p 180. Quoted from Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*.

¹² John Gregg, op. cit., p. 180. Quoted from Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*.

¹³ Taken from Roberto Caserio's "Paracriticisms, Postmodernism, and Prophecy."

discourses, inherited and cultivated by modernity. It reflects upon the existence of that ever-repressed part of history concealed under the face of unity, the history of the defeated; it does not imagine a glorious future but the possibility of the advent of all possibilities and impossibilities. The postmodern sense of identity is no “fixed essential or permanent”¹⁴ entity, but “ ‘a moveable feast’, formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us.”¹⁵ Therefore, it does not define any “unified, coherent completed *self*, or an inner core that is spatially and temporally linear”¹⁶, based upon, the existence of the ‘Other’ is viewed as separated, excluded and marginalized. Thus, even being textual, the ethics of this epoch are those of the ‘Other’, the “labile identifications with the images of *other* nations”¹⁷, of the tragic responsibility of the self for the Other.

One perhaps has to keep the term “ ‘discursive formation’ of the nation”¹⁸ in mind — certainly in the sense of the normalized modern discourse of the nation — in order to be able to imagine Bhabha’s concept of “DissemiNation”¹⁹, “the scattering of the people (that) in other times and other places, in the nations of others”²⁰. Reading about the concept of ‘nation’ through Bhabha, makes us aware that it is only the linearity of the nature of the human language, which projects nation in a linear structure. It is through the understanding of the nature of the modern discourse of the nation, “signified by its pedagogues”²¹, and the postmodern conception of nation signifying “itself in its performance”²², that the necessity of the conceptualization of double/multiple readings, and the signification of the “split national subject”²³

¹⁴ Homi K. Bhabha, ed., op. cit., p. 248.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 248.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 248.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 292.

¹⁸ Timothy Brennan, “The national longing for form”, *Nation and Narration*, op. cit., p. 46.

¹⁹ Homi K. Bhabha, op. cit., p. 291. Alluding to Derrida’s concept of dissemination.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 291.

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 249.

²² *ibid.*, p. 249.

²³ *ibid.*, p. 249

viewed and analyzed in a “double time”²⁴, comes to light. The very necessity of this double/multiple reading, that causes a ‘rupture’ in the linearity of the modern culture, splits its unified face and opens up its well entrenched voids. It is the moment when the non-linear, segmentary structure of this product of the power relations is revealed. That is the moment when the work of art is placed within the conceptual structure of society.

It is the impact of the fusion of the ‘discursive structure of the nation’ with the double fusion of Bhabha’s ‘DissemiNation’ with Derrida’s ‘dissemination’, that opens up the void(s) of discourse of modernity to the surface, in the context of the literary work *Dictionary of the Khazars*. The idea of the lost nation of the ancient Khazars becomes the context in the search for the ‘Other’; and the question that who this other is, becomes the allegorical question of the text and the quest of all its characters. Fragmentation, thus, becomes the mode of representation of the ‘collective identity’ of beings, which is fundamentally segmented. Depicted in this segmented structure, that ‘DissemiNation’— the formation of nations beyond Nations — and ‘dissemination’ – (de)constructing layers of meanings beyond the ‘Meaning’ through the dispersion of the component of the meaning — can be conceptualized. It is this ‘playful discontinuity’²⁵ of the segmented structure of the work which should “offer the reader empty spaces, silences, in which he can meet himself in the presence of literature”²⁶. Homi K. Bhabha indicates:

“To write the story of nation demands that we articulate the archaic ambivalence that informs modernity.”²⁷

Also,

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 249.

²⁵ Robert Caserio, “Paracriticisms, Postmodernism, and Prophecy”, *Postmodernism: Critical Concepts*, Victor E. Taylor & Charles E. Winquist, eds., p. 183, quoted from Ihab Hassan.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 183.

²⁷ Homi K. Bhabha, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

“... in the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society becomes the site of *writing the nation*.²⁸”

It is to articulate this ambivalence that the fragmented formal body and the chaotic thematic structure in the *Dictionary of the Khazars* become the vehicle to reflect upon the accumulative image of nation/meaning formation, which by nature are fragmented and disseminated. The Khazars, the subject of this act of ‘dissemination’ are therefore not to be viewed as the *lost nation* in the history but the ‘*displaced nation*’ disseminated amongst other people of today and displacing nations of tomorrow.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 297.

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