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## On Andrić's Bosnia

Ivan Lovrenović

These are the reasons why it is not possible to define Ivo Andrić's group identity exclusively by ethno-national standards. For the same reasons, it is, strictly speaking, impossible to define the ethno-national cultures in Bosnia in exclusive terms. The manner in which the ethno-national cultures are recognized as separate and the manner in which they at the same time overlap, enter into each other, and "borrow" from one another-I have elsewhere described these manners as the pattern of a rainbow. We can identify each color in the spectrum, but we cannot determine the exact border between the colors. Is the border a place of simultaneous separation and coalescence, a hyper-identity? Yes. Andrić was, in fact, giving a literary reformulation to this amazing and complex historical and cultural reality. Yes, he reformulated it in an artistically unique and masterful manner. Thus, Ivo Andrić, his literature - along with everything else that it is and that it "belongs" to - is, in fact, today the one solid and secure place for the complex Bosnian-Hercegovinian identity, a place in which this identity is deposited and from which it is clearly legible. And therein arises a dismal paradox: the political process of creating and distinguishing three separate and distinct national cultures in Bosnia-Hercegovina - which could soon prove to be irreversible - yields a cultural situation in which this very kind of identity is, in fact, undesirable.

Translated by Wayles Browne and Keith Doubt

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