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**THE WAR TRAUMA OF DISPLACEMENT IN THE POETRY OF JOZEFINA
DAUTBEGOVIĆ, TANJA STUPAR TRIFUNOVIĆ AND AMELA MUSTAFIĆ**

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Biography



Melida Travančić (1985) holds a PhD in Humanities, in the field of literature. She writes poetry, prose, essays, literary criticism and research papers. She has published five books of poetry: *Ritual* [The Ritual] (2008), *Svilene plahte* [Silk Sheets] (2009), *Sjenka u sjenci* [Shadow within Shadow] (2019), *Veo nad rijekom C* [Veil over the River C] (2022) and *Moja majka hrani mrtvog psa* [My Mother Feeding a Dead Dog] (2023). She has received five awards for her poetry: the Mak Dizdar Award (2007), the Anka Topić Award (2008), two Publishing Foundation Awards (2019 and 2023) and the international Ismet Rebronja Literary Award (2022). She has published two books of prose, *Smrt u ogledalu* [Death in the Mirror] (2019) and *Ulaz u prazninu* [Entering the Void] (2021), for which she received the Annual Book of the Year Award of the Bosanska riječ Publishing House in 2021. The book was translated and published in German. Her poems and short stories have been published in collections and anthologies in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region, and her works have been translated into Macedonian, English, Spanish, Persian, Hungarian, German, French and Slovenian.

She has published the studies *Ticket to the Heroic Cabaret: Literary Reflections of the Sarajevo Assassination* (2019), *Reconstruction of Reality: Reflections on Contemporary Literature of Bosnia and Herzegovina* (2021) and *Woman in the Text: Literary Observations* (2023). She has participated in several literary festivals in Bosnia and Herzegovina and abroad, taken part in literary residencies, and presented her papers on literature at a number of international academic conferences and symposiums. Her literary criticism pieces are published in the daily newspaper *Oslobođenje*. She is a member of the Writers' Association of BiH and the PEN Centre of BiH.

Abstract

The ways in which women poets have coped with the traumatic experience of the war that took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period from 1992 to 1995 is a topic that has not been thoroughly explored. The paper examines three generations of Bosnian and Herzegovinian women poets (Jozefina Dautbegović, Tanja Stupar Trifunović, Amela Mustafić), focusing on the reflection of the war trauma of displacement in their poetry. Each generation of female poets has been marked by a specific form of war trauma, but all share a common experience: leaving their home (during or after the war). The paper attempts to identify the individual and specific ways in which the authors transposed their traumatic experience into a poetic discourse: from surviving trauma and coming to understand it through writing to re-traumatisation. The objective of the paper is twofold. First, to dismantle the distorted social image of the position of women in war as inferior and marginal and of war as a “male” topic. And second, to show how the war keeps re-emerging as a major topic thirty years later and is transmitted to new generations, marking their lives as well. What this paper sets out to achieve in the long run is to contribute to the study of gender-based types of violence within the field of literature.

Keywords: *the trauma of displacement, the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnian and Herzegovinian women’s poetry of the 1990s and 2000s war, Bosnian and Herzegovinian women poets, Jozefina Dautbegović, Tanja Stupar Trifunović, Amela Mustafić*

*Only in exile did I realise
everything makes sense after all*

Jozefina Dautbegović

1. Introduction

Singled out as the motto of this paper, the verses from “Ovidijeva pjesma” [Ovid’s Song] by Jozefina Dautbegović introduce quite a present, but long suppressed, unaddressed and unexplored topic when it comes to women’s war literature. It is the trauma of displacement, persecution and the loss of one’s homeland and home brought about by war that shapes violent narratives visible in all forms of women’s artistic creation, particularly in poetry as one of the most powerful and intimate discourses. The paper deals with war and the trauma of displacement, which cannot be easily defined nor limited to a single relationship and/or relation, as the causes involved in shaping trauma are manifold and range from natural disasters to human factors such as persecution and war. They include different forms of societal pressures, the operation of repressive state apparatuses, and the creation of a hostile environment. Individuals are affected by displacement in different ways and what matters is how traumatic experiences of displacement are inscribed into the concept of everyday life, into language, identity, remembrance and memory, time and space. The paper aims to present contemporary Bosnian and Herzegovinian women’s poetry, predominantly referring to war and war trauma, through the examples of three poets: Jozefina Dautbegović, Tanja Stupar Trifunović and Amela Mustafić. Some of the poems to be analysed in the paper were written during the war, or in its immediate aftermath, and have an element of testimony to them. They represent an effort by the poets to speak about their inner state and the ways in which the war affected primarily themselves, and then to show the atrocities of war through poetic discourse, thus, as Zlatar puts it, constructing a great common story of history out of “small stories”. When speaking about testimony, however, it is important to bear in mind that

in the confessional discourse of the victims (refugees, traumatised, raped) there is a kind of imbalance between the two endpoints of the spectrum, between the point of our own experience, and the unconsciously adopted patterns and stereotypes which we rely on in expressing our personal experience. Although the authenticity

of personal experience is invaluable, personal experience—paradoxically—always borders on the anonymous: the “small” stories of individuals become no more than tiny pebbles in the mosaic of the “greater” story of history, the common history of the collective (Zlataar 2004: 112-113).

To explore this topic, on the other hand, also means to talk about certain aspects of the literary canon that “mask gender, racial and class-based bias under the guise of universal aesthetic value”, while literary works within the canon play the clear-cut role of “demonstrating socially desirable models of behaviour, desirable and undesirable models of femininity and masculinity, teaching us who we are and what our relationships to *Others* should be” (Đurić 2013: 8). Although there are numerous debates today regarding various aspects of the canon, it should be noted that, for the purposes of this paper, the focus will be on those associated with poetry¹ and war, as the formation of the literary canon takes place at the time of war² and its aftermath when specifically “ethnonational elites forcibly produce their versions of the literary canon based on a mythical and linear narrative of ethnic identity that is both endangered and natural”. (Arsenijević 2007: 128)

War is a destructive and disintegrative event that entails “a feeling of helplessness, a loss of trust in others and a sense of humiliation” (Kravić 2014: 101). As a rule, it leaves a traumatic imprint on the lives and work of artists, including women writers. The war also brings with it twofold gender-based violence against women: depersonalisation and dehumanisation, marginalisation of women in the literary canon, undervaluation of their work (especially women’s war writing), but also more immediate and evident forms of violence, such as physical and psychological violence suffered by women writers in war. War as the “‘toughest’ form of male discourse” (Moranjak-Bamburać 2004: 154) shapes violent discourses, and violence is defined as

¹ Which was best addressed by Dubravka Đurić and Damir Arsenijević.

² Katja Kombolt was one of the first theoreticians to write on the issue of female authors being neglected in war, stating why this was so and why one (male) experience of war had a greater value than the other (female) experience of war. The author argues that the reason for this lies in the fact that men “report of ‘heroic’ battles at the frontline”, while women speak of the “internal heroic battle”. (Kombolt 2006: 297) Ajla Demiragić observes this problem in a much broader temporal and territorial context, warning of the long-standing practice of “institutional neglect and negative evaluation of women’s literary creation on the territory of former Yugoslavia”. (Demiragić 2018: 37) The undervaluation and marginalisation were intensified during the war and in the post-war period, particularly of “that part of women’s literary production that had the ability to destabilise the ethno-national power relations established by the war.” (*Ibid.*: 38)

a way a primary human vulnerability to other humans is exposed in its most terrifying way, a way in which we are given over, without control, to the will of another, the way in which life itself can be expunged by the wilful action of another. To the extent that we commit violence, we are acting on another, putting the other at risk, causing the other damage, threatening to expunge the other (Butler 2007:73).

Physical violence leads to the complete dehumanisation of being, while violence within literature and the literary canon, embodied in the undervaluation and silencing of women's creation, is a form of psychological violence, in this case violence that society inflicts on itself, because by undervaluing women's successes, it also undervalues itself. The society of Bosnia and Herzegovina is shaped by a culture of male power and dominance in all discourses, including the literary. The way to first denounce and then question the validity and value of the canon is to expose/denounce the complex array of academic, literary and cultural models most often protected by institutions that set boundaries and shape literary values, leaving women on the margins or dictating what they can write (about). Nirman Moranjak-Bamburać wrote in 2004 that "dismantling the traditional paradigm of male and female gender roles is the only way possible to seriously undermine extremism and violence, as well as stereotypes of 'balkanisation' at large" (Moranjak-Bamburać 2004: 151). This paper therefore represents a contribution to the study and valuation of what women create through poetic discourse both at war and in peace.

During the war and in its immediate aftermath, women poets occupy, conditionally speaking, a large part of the space previously dominated by male poets, which – in a society unaccustomed to any possibility of change when it comes to women – comes almost as a shock. The war is a "trigger" for the female authors to step out of the box: they speak bravely and resolutely of the imprint left on them by the war. Later, empowered by the upheaval brought about in the literary world³ by feminist movements, they seek for their writing to be valued and unconstrained by the male perspective and rules. Thus, war becomes a topic that empowers and encourages women to share what they have experienced and survived, and to advocate for their

³ J. L. Herman concludes that only with "the women's liberation movement of the 1970s was it recognized that the most common post-traumatic disorders are those not of men in war" (as was believed and studied through psychoanalysis until then), but that their victims were in fact "women in civilian life", because "the real conditions of women's lives were hidden in the sphere of the personal, in private life. The cherished value of privacy created a powerful barrier to consciousness and rendered women's reality practically invisible." (Herman 1997: 37–38)

voice to be heard and to be equal to the voice of their male colleagues in the literary and cultural canon, arguing that the female experience is not only equally present, but by all means legitimate, and as such must not be silenced, ignored or censored any longer. This paper therefore intends to give special attention to the poetry of women during the 1990s war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in its immediate aftermath, focusing on the aesthetic and ethical values that are, as the study will show, undoubtedly embodied in the verses of Jozefina Dautbegović, Tanja Stupar Trifunović and Amela Mustafić.

2. War, trauma, poetry: a theoretical framework

The theme of war has been omnipresent in the literature of Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1992 until the present day, and the claim that authors keep returning to this topic may sound untrue because it continues to reappear in their works, or – in other words – it has, as yet, not been, and it seems it will for long not be, shifted into the background.⁴ The reason for this is to be sought in the trauma, broadly defined as “what disrupts these particular human lives” (Wood Anderson 2012: 6), in the context of the war experiences of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian women poets whose works are to be analysed in this paper, as well as in the fact that war trauma is associated with “transgenerational transmission; where victims choose an unhealed trauma to pass down to their children, thus keeping it alive for generations to come” (Kravić 2014: 101). When talking about literature and trauma, regardless of whether survived or transmitted, a literary text is not to be read as a process of healing because, according to La Carpe, “literature represents *a study* and the possibility of *representation*, and trauma is an exemplary case of a *crisis of representation*” (as cited in Zlatar 2004: 182). “The construction of one’s own story brings with it a cathartic effect”, and “putting trauma into words is part of a first step towards

⁴ Following contemporary Bosnian literature, we can see that war is a widely present topic in both poetry and prose. It is enough to name only a few female authors whose books have been published in recent years to see that they, either directly or indirectly, refer to the war: Magdalena Blažević, Amila Kahrović Posavljak, Tanja Stupar Trifunović, Radmila Karlaš, Mihaela Šumić, Melida Travančić, Selma Asotić, Amela Mustafić. We cannot agree with Maja Abadžija who argues that war “has shifted from the position of an almost indispensable, dictated theme and motif to the background of story or poetry writing, as new, alternative perspectives of its interpretation are emerging, and even marginal positions of the experience and perception of war are becoming more and more visible, especially in the last decade, from 2010 onwards, when we have been witnessing a recapitulation of the war experience in poetry, especially in that of female authors.” (Abadžija, 2018: 121) But what shows us that this is not quite right are the works of mid-generation and youngest-generation female authors, where war is still a very common topic. Many of the authors who write about the war belong to the youngest literary generation, which means that they were either not born or were children during the war, yet they feel the need to address war trauma through literature.

achieving inner distance, so that the traumatised people are less subject to the phenomena that overwhelm them psychosomatically” (Kramer 2004: 4). Furthermore, according to Kramer, literature should not be confused with therapy, because “as soon as a certain function is assigned to literature, it loses its autonomy and thus its essential innovative force” (*Ibid.*: 5). Literary works are a reflection of reality and have awakened us to many issues, detecting them and shedding light on human catastrophes and their consequences. Nevertheless, if attributed a therapeutic or cathartic role, literature could lose its intrinsic value, reflected in the creation of new forms of speech and meaning. Trauma is indeed a present theme in literature, but in a specific form. In this context, one must not ignore the relationship between an author and an anonymous audience, which Kramer draws attention to, arguing that an anonymous audience is incompatible with the special communicative situation and the confidential relationship between analyst or physician and patient, since, in the case of literature, trauma will not be diminished in the process of so-called cathartic talking or writing. Trauma creates a “blockage” in people who experience it on their life paths, and although this blockage isn’t dissolved through writing, writing does help in bringing traumatic experiences to the surface of one’s consciousness and in accepting them, making it possible for people to go on with their lives. Jasmina Husanović speaks of traumatic events that mark one’s being as a discovery of sorts, “because they make us feel called upon to testify about them”. After trauma, “there is a reckoning with it, through memory, and there is a struggle between the ways we remember it, the ways we inscribe and rewrite trauma into different narratives, both official and personal, dominant and marginalised” (Husanović 2007: 66).

The 20th century is the “century of trauma” (Felman 2007: 203), and so is the 21st. Although trauma is present and rooted in modern society, we often repress it, trying to forget that it ever happened because it is so destructive, both for the collective and the individual. This is why this paper, primarily, explores the ways in which literary texts “both speak about and speak through the profound story of traumatic experience” (Caruth, 1996: 4). Cathy Caruth defines trauma as “an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (*Ibid.*: 11). For the author, traumatised people are victims of history, and “history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other’s traumas” (*Ibid.*: 24). The author goes on to conclude that the function of literature in the entire

process of trauma survival may be to trigger the enactment of the survivor's trauma, which can only be recognised once the traumatised person is separated from the trauma, both in time and space, because "trauma is not simply an effect of destruction but also, fundamentally, an enigma of survival" (*Ibid.*: 58). Literature can be

defined (accounted for, and understood) as a specific mode of testimony and that writers often feel compelled to testify through literary or artistic channels precisely when they know, or feel intuitively, that in the court of history (...) *evidence will fail* or will *fall short*; when they know that other sorts of testimonies will, for different reasons, not come through or that events have taken place that will, for different reasons, not be evidenced (Felman 2007:120).

The power of literature in the process of remembering events and testifying about them is that it is, in a way, a precocious mode of "bearing witness and accessing reality when all other modes of knowledge are precluded or are rendered ineffectual" (*Ibid.*: 120).

The paper deals with literature, that is, poetry that talks about a specific period of time (1992-1995), as well as the state of (apparent) peace in which trauma manifests. In Adorno's words, in this context, we can speak of a work of art as a single moment, with the understanding that "the artistic moment also has its duration, its time span, but it delineates a framework within which time flows differently than outside of it" (Zafranski 2017: 150). Poets Jozefina Dautbegović, Tanja Stupar Trifunović and Amela Mustafić clearly document this moment of the authors' relationship with themselves, depicting both individual and collective suffering, the destruction and loss of one's home, the loss of past lives. What we encounter here is displacement or exile that "isn't only a matter of personal dislocation, it also presupposes a problem of a metaphysical state of duality and non-belonging that does not arise as a consequence of spatial displacement, but rather as its cause or foundation" (Marot Kiš, *Biti* 2021: 9). The authors share their experience of the war or its immediate aftermath using poetic discourse to speak (explicitly or implicitly) about the trauma of displacement, in an attempt to reconstruct their own past and identity from parts of the former self that now exists only in their memories, or in the memories of others, and in the present (i.e. the time of creation of their

poetry) which they are trying to adapt to and break away from.⁵ The first step after crossing the border is to face the new environment, the feeling of otherness (a consequence of the act of displacement) which is “that outside of us, what we fear and what we shy away from, but also the projection of that fear within ourselves, that what constitutes both our Self and our non-Self” (Marot Kiš, Biti 2021: 93).

The poetry analysed in the paper talks about the present, while everything is a constant reminder of the past, of the life brought to a halt by the war. It is an integration of two experiences and two periods of time, as a prerequisite to becoming aware of one’s trauma of displacement. The function of poetry is, in this case, twofold: it is a bridge between what was and what is now, a mode of creation of new meanings through which one seeks to rethink the position of one’s own identity by establishing ties between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia (Jozefina Dautbegović) or vice versa (Tanja Stupar Trifunović), Srebrenica and Sarajevo (Amela Mustafić)⁶, as ties between the past and the present, established through existing in two places, two states, and two cities.

In the poetry of Jozefina D., Tanja S. T. and Amela M., trauma is not only presented as a “record of the past”, but “registers the force of an experience” (Caruth 1995:153). It addresses the private trauma of the victims of war violence and history, which becomes public through writing in that, by writing about it, trauma as an experience becomes articulated, it becomes a collective trauma. “The private traumas have become the emblems or the icons of collective (publicly shared, unexpectedly common, unexpectedly omnipresent) traumas: the two cardinal societal traumas of racial persecution and gender persecution” (Felman 2007: 17). We could add to this list ethnic and religious persecution, such as the one that took place in the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1992 to 1995. The paper centres on a poetic discourse that speaks in the most representative way about war and the violence suffered by women. This

⁵ The authors Danijela Marot Kiš and Marina Biti base their study of exile and trauma on works of prose, but the conclusions they reach can generally be applied to the trauma of displacement, exile in literature, whether voluntary or forced, so we understand writing as “developing of a person’s image of oneself and one’s own identity, as well as establishing a meaningful reaction between oneself and the world. All this takes place as a dynamic, lifelong process throughout which each of these aspects is continuously updated in order for the past to be integrated – in the consciousness of the individual – with the present moment, and to continue to be integrated with it through time that brings changes, to derive from both the past and the present its relationship to the future.” (Marot Kiš, Biti 2021: 33-34)

⁶ The poets whose body of work is analysed in this paper will hereinafter be referred to by their first names and the first letter of their last names (Jozefina D. / Tanja S. T. / Amela M.).

is done through direct recording of one's own experiences of war (e.g. Jozefina D. writes as the war is going on around her) and through indirect recording of such experiences (e.g. Tanja S. T. was a child during the war), while in the case of Amela M., who was born during the war and writes about the war as an adult, mature woman, the trauma is a construct of sorts and, unlike the one of Jozefina D. and Tanja S. T., is not authentic. The poets are also involuntary exiles. They were forced to leave their homes, and "leaving one's home forever changes the subject's fate by directing it towards one of the tragic outcomes that result from temporary states of oblivion" (Marot Kiš, *Biti* 2021: 16).

The trauma of displacement and exile is a present theme in the literature of the countries of former Yugoslavia, especially the countries that were the venue of the 1990s war (Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia), regardless of whether the departure from the homeland was driven by fear for one's own bare life during the ethnically-based aggression on a particular "enemy" territory (Jozefina D., Tanja S. T.) or it was motivated by the desire and search for a better life in the aftermath of the war (Amela M.). The examples of three female poets, members of different generations, belonging to different ethnic corpora of the literature of Bosnia and Herzegovina, follow the literary representations of trauma and the female experience of war, as well as the ways in which trauma affects their identities and life, especially such trauma that is constantly renewed through their departures from and returns to the homeland.

A member of the first generation is Jozefina D., a poet who writes in the midst of war of leaving her homeland, and the focus shifts from the trauma to the representation of trauma. A poet of the second generation is Tanja S. T., who begins writing in the immediate aftermath of the war, while the youngest generation is represented by Amela M., a poet to whom trauma is transmitted. In the case of Tanja S. T. and Amela M., we can, in fact, talk about post-trauma, since the trauma is made conscious much later, and not at the moment of leaving one's homeland or city. What all three poets have in common is that their trauma is shaped by the war and by being exposed to the horrors of war. The traumas are made conscious at different points in time, so in the examples of poets Jozefina D., Tanja S. T. and Amela M., we can recognise two types of displacement. In the case of Jozefina D., we witness temporary displacement because

when we are dispossessed from a place, or a community, we may simply feel that we are undergoing something temporary, that mourning will be over and some restoration of the previous order will be achieved. But maybe when we undergo what we do, something about who we are is revealed, something that delineates the ties we have to others, that shows us that these ties constitute what we are, ties or bonds that compose us (...) When we lose some of these ties by which we are constituted, we do not know who we are or what to do (Butler 2007:70).

Unlike the temporary displacement of Jozefina D., who died in Croatia, never returning to her homeland, in the case of Tanja S. T. and Amela M., we are speaking about permanent displacement and adaptation in another space, in other cities where they permanently settled and started a new life.

3. The methodological framework of the paper

Observing poetry written by women today, with a special emphasis on the poetry of women who wrote in the midst of the 1990s war, as well as poetry created in the aftermath of the war, it is safe to say that this poetry has been silenced and ignored, often even forgotten, and rarely discussed in individual critical reviews, and even more rarely in literary theory reviews. It should be noted, however, that this is not only the case when it comes to poetry written by women, but that poetry as a literary genre has been marginalised. Within the framework of literary theory studies, the study of poetry is still largely neglected. Literary theorists often emphasise, when it comes to poetry, that it is a field in which authors express a subjective attitude, or in other words, poetry “has nothing to say to us about the social construction of the subject, identity, class, race, etc., and the study of prose (and possibly drama) is therefore placed at the centre of literary studies” (Đurić 2013: 7). Arsenijević makes a similar point, emphasising that poetry is considered “the least political, too abstract and the least socially engaged of all literary genres”, as it “touches on what is too traumatic in every culture to be expressed—the Real” (Arsenijević 2007: 140).

One of the paper’s main objectives is to explore how the traumatic experience of war has been presented in poetry written by women. The study centres on a specific aspect of traumatic experience, namely the war trauma caused by forced leaving of one’s home in the case of

Bosnian and Herzegovinian poets Jozefina D., Tanja S. T. and Amela M. It should be underscored, however, that their poetry has not been studied enough to this day and that their experience of displacement is, therefore, less known and neglected. The paper deals with displacement caused by direct events of war and conflict, where trauma is defined as a devastating event depicted in the form of leaving one's home and homeland due to the inability to establish life in the war-torn and forcibly cleansed ethno-geographical area. Expulsion and refugee life are war-inflicted traumatic experiences, that is events that "generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death" (Herman 1997: 47). The trauma of displacement, of forced departure is a psychological trauma⁷, because no person leaves of their own free will, no one is "expelled for a political crime or criticism of the government, but merely on account of a different ethnic or other affiliation, which the rigid contemporary ideologies perceive as the basis of their racial or any other 'purity'" (Kazaz 2013: 108).

The paper explores the trauma of displacement in women poets with a direct or indirect experience of the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Relying on theoretical interpretations of trauma and traumatic experience, the paper is positioned within the framework of feminist literary-critical poetry studies. Various methods were applied in preparing the paper: theoretical, combined, desk research (i.e. literature review) and case study method with elements of autoethnography. The primary technique used is poetry analysis, while the units of analysis are individual poems and verses by poets Jozefina D., Tanja S. T. and Amela M., in which their trauma of displacement, caused by the 1992-1995 war events in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the immediate effects of the war, is clearly indicated.

The research was conducted by examining the available theoretical studies on war literature, especially on women's war writing, by observing the social context and environments in which the poets lived (and still live), by analysing the entire opus of all three poets, and selecting poems that specifically address the war events of the 1992-1995 period, and the post-

⁷ "Psychological trauma occurs as a result of an overwhelming, uncontrollable and terrifying experience, usually a violent event or events or the prolonged exposure to such events. The emotional damage often remains hidden, as though the person were unharmed" (Felman 2007: 203). J. L. Herman argues that this type of trauma is "an affliction of the powerless. At the moment of trauma, the victim is rendered helpless by overwhelming force. When the force is that of nature, we speak of disasters. When the force is that of other human beings, we speak of atrocities. Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection and meaning" (Herman 1997: 47).

war events from the 2000s onwards. Through the study of the poetic body of work of the three Bosnian and Herzegovinian women writers, the paper also highlighted the unfavourable position of women writers and the still insufficient representation of female authors within the literary canon of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The paper sets out to show that the (either direct or indirect) experience of war triggered the trauma of displacement in the poets, as a response to wartime violence against women, making them (un)able to come to terms with the war's events thirty years later. The examples of three female poets, members of different generations, belonging to different ethnic corpora of Bosnian and Herzegovinian literature—Jozefina D., Tanja S. Trifunović and Amela M., are used to analyse the trauma of displacement, which in this context means a process of constant adaptation and self-questioning, sometimes even of crossing ethnic and geopolitical borders to return home, resulting in a representation of life in between two dichotomies: between the past and the present, between remembering and forgetting. The analysis seeks to show that the trauma of displacement exists and is very present in the writing of Bosnian and Herzegovinian women poets, who have been addressing it since the time of war and the events of the post-war period, from 1992 onwards (here 2023). The analysis and interpretation of the poetry examined reveal certain aspects of this type of trauma, reflected in the loss of one's home and homeland and the inability to adapt to another space, that lead the authors to write about their traumatic experience.

The analysis will primarily focus on how the poets depicted the traumatic experience and how their lives were transformed by it, exploring also whether the very act of writing helped them to survive or overcome the trauma. A further objective is to examine the potential impacts in terms of reception: how and in what way their poetry affects readers, exploring, in addition, how I myself, as a poet belonging to the generation that survived the war, was impacted by the experience of trauma in the poetry of other female authors.

4. The poetics of displacement: literary construction of war trauma

4.1. Jozefina Dautbegović

The trauma of displacement is most abundantly and most directly present in the poetry of Jozefina Dautbegović, who through the war and forcible expulsion from Bosnia and Herzegovina discovers a new dimension of Otherness, forcing her into a “violent” acquiescence to life in Croatia, where she will never stop feeling like a foreigner. Danijela Marot Kiš and Marina Biti speak of foreigners in terms of “the way they are attached to a place that no longer exists, that has been lost or abandoned” (Marot Kiš, Biti 2021: 95), going on to divide foreigners into two groups:

The first group includes those who live in the exhausting gap between what no longer exists and what will never be, and the second group are those who transcend the described void by living neither in the past nor now, but rather beside these categories in a state of longing for the Other (which is not necessarily a country, but any object of longing, such as a person, state or emotion) (*Ibid.*).

Jozefina D. clearly belongs to the first group of foreigners, which is reflected in the inability to (co)exist with the other and in another place, where nothing belongs to her and where she doesn't belong, a sense most poignantly conveyed by the poem “Domovina u koferu” [Homeland in a Suitcase]: “When I unpack my only suitcase // in any hotel // I put the clouds from my homeland // on the highest shelf//”. The author then goes on to enumerate things that are all reminders of the loss, from clouds from the homeland, old photographs, to shoes that carry the dust from the road, all of it happening as she cries “on the edge of someone else's bed”, while friends “who have a homeland // comfort me by straightening the ridge of the Dinara mountain between my eyebrows // damming the waterfalls of the Pliva river with handkerchiefs // I am not crying, it's just the salt from my homeland stinging // Beneath my eyelids//” (Dautbegović 2013: 25). In the context of the homeland in a suitcase and the destruction of war, particularly worth mentioning are the anthological poems “Zadnja bosanska zima” [The Last Bosnian Winter], “Na graničnom prijelazu” [At the Border Crossing], “Pjesma perača gradskih izloga” [A Window Washer's Poem], “Dan kad je samostan s Plehana selio na nebesa” [The Day the Monastery from Plehan Moved to the Heavens], “Izbjeglička” [Refugees' Poem], “Prizor s Putnikovog brda” [A Scene from Putnikovo Brdo], “Bosna II” [Bosnia II]. The process of mourning in Jozefina D.'s poetry begins at the moment of becoming aware of oneself in another country, because it is then that “one undergoes something outside one's control and

finds that one is beside oneself, not at one with oneself” (Butler 2007:73). Jozefina Dautbegović’s poems are “densely populated by the reality of war” (Kazaz 2013: 107), reverberating with the echoes of the war that are imprinted on the poet and her

homeland Bosnia, which becomes the real and symbolic topos of suffering, apprehension, and horror, only for the poetic image to then be universalised on a mythical, primarily biblical foundation, or on a metaphysical longing for the harmony of existence that becomes a kind of ethical spotlight shedding light on the horrors of war (*Ibid.*).

The poem “Prizor koji bi trebao zvučati utješno” [A Scene That Should Sound Comforting] speaks about survival, without the possibility of living, about the loss of one’s home, homeland, identity, about the tragedy of an individual, but also of the collective, expressing in a way the poetic credo of Jozefina Dautbegović.

Nothing really happened to me
 I managed to get out of the city before
 they took my yellow silk shirt hostage
 before they shortened my too-long skirts
 with a bayonet
 skirts you didn’t like anyway because they hid my knees
 Nothing happened to me, I say
 But
 I’m still shivering barefoot on the wet concrete
 of a prison camp
 And I will never be found again
 Far from everything, I do my chores
 completely free
 But
 in every dream, I am captured again
 while I fight try to get away cry
 Everything hurts so much that when I’m awake
 I can’t move

When no one is looking, I feel my skin for swellings
I count my fingernails as I clutch the grab handle
on the tram
I converse normally I laugh I write love poetry
I eat with appetite and regularly
But
I'm actually curled up barefoot in the corner of a prison camp
crying on the wet concrete
When the weatherman on TV predicts a drop in temperature
north wind and snow in the highlands
I shiver by a hot radiator
Because I'm standing barefoot over a pit in the frost
waiting for them to call my name
As I talk on the phone and make plans for coffee
that I look forward to
I very accurately draw prison bars on a piece of paper
No one will ever be able to set me free again
And you say to me sleep nothing happened

Zagreb, 17 September 1995

(Dautbegović 2013: 35-36)

The poetry of Jozefina D., written after leaving Bosnia and Herzegovina, speaks about the war, about the experience of being a refugee, crossing the geographical border, about non-belonging and isolation, the lack of understanding, the fear of the unknown and of what is other and different. Through poetry, she keeps returning to her primary homeland, thus establishing a dialogue both with her past and future self. These two persons often come into conflict, which the author turns into humour. Returning to Bosnia and Herzegovina, to Doboje, as the place of her former life, is not permanent, as she constantly crosses the physical borders of the two countries but fails to cross the borders that she perceives as imposed, or to overcome the territorial divisions she sees as artificial. This is a trauma born out of two sources: displacement and not belonging. The author writes about it from a double perspective – the past and the present, and thus, caught in between two times, two countries and two cities, the story unfolds

of the (in)ability to belong and the efforts to preserve one's past *Self*. The best example of this is the poem "Prilozi za nove biografije" [Enclosures for New Biographies], where the poet declares that outside the homeland one must learn everything anew: to walk, to laugh, to run, to look back, "to master fainting, orientation in space // to learn to speak in foreign languages during the day // to cry only in one's own language at night" (Dautbegović 2013: 97). The verses exude a palpable sense of not belonging, alienation and a kind of conflict with oneself in being torn between two homelands, the real one (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the possible one (Croatia). In the cycles of leaving and returning to both over the years, Jozefina D.'s illusion of return is gradually shattered, as she wistfully concludes in the poem "Na graničnom prijelazu" [At the Border Crossing]: "I'm returning from my homeland and I don't even know why I went in the first place // I constantly have the feeling that I have to // see at least occasionally // if everything is the way I left it" (*Ibid.*: 90).

4.2. Tanja Stupar Trifunović

Tanja Stupar Trifunović, much like Jozefina Dautbegović, speaks about war trauma, the loss of one's home, about being a refugee and about displacement, but this experience is manifested in her poetry in a completely different way, especially in the collections *O čemu misle varvari dok doručkuju* [What Barbarians Think About While Having Breakfast] (2008) and *Zmijštak* [The Snakes' Den] (2022). In them, she never speaks about the war directly. We know that the war happened, we know which war it was, but it is never explicitly mentioned, which can be interpreted as a kind of escape from the discourse of war and the loss of one's home region, and will later, in the moments of "confronting" herself and her childhood home, be transformed into poetry written in between two home regions. Tanja S. T., who was born in Yugoslavia, spent her childhood in Zadar, and now lives in Banja Luka, shared in an interview on the occasion of the publication of the collection *Zmijštak* that all of these places, countries and cities had formed her, but most of all:

Being split between two home regions. The one in which I was born and the home region I later acquired through war circumstances. Trying to reconcile them within yourself. Trying to make peace with yourself. (...) Loss of your house. Being a refugee. Not the house as a mere space, but as a child's space of safety. Nowhere outside this house was it possible to settle down in this way. All other places are

just temporary places of residence. Accepting the sense of “rejection” by your home region. Accepting that the new home region has its own perception of the newcomer. You neither feel wanted here nor there. And you want to belong, of course. You don’t accept being exiled (Stupar Trifunović 2020).

The author pays particular attention to her home region in the book *Zmijštak*, where we find a series of poems about the place once lived in, about the people, things, stone, water, the house. In the cycle titled “Zmijštak”, as the book itself, the home region is strongly present. A special place in this cycle is occupied by the family as a symbol of origin, that is, by family members who are no longer there, but a dialogue is opened with them through memories. *Zmijštak* (or *The Snakes’ Den*) is a twofold symbol: a symbol of the past life embodied in the house, the family, the figure of the mother, as well as a symbol of the present life depicted as *the Self* in front of the house. The loss of the house as a child’s space of safety shapes the trauma of war (because if there had been no war, there would have been no leaving home). In the beginning, it is an unconscious trauma that she carries as a teenager and is not able to articulate. She even likes living in the new city where she arrives—the author talks about this in the poem “Kuća” [The House]—but as the years go by, she returns more and more to the place she left behind. The poem’s verses are imbued with the possibility of displacing the omnipresent house from one’s (sub)consciousness and, according to Caruth, being traumatised means precisely to be possessed by such a haunting image or event. The feeling of being displaced from one’s primary space and facing another environment that represents a possible home is best captured in the poem “Mali i veliki varvari” [Little and Big Barbarians]: “Little barbarians constantly keep moving and this makes them sad // Wherever they go, no one loves them because they came from somewhere” (Stupar Trifunović 2008: 76). The home region is also “a knot of snakes // it bites in common places // the stone the sun // poisoning with the poison of expectations” (Stupar Trifunović 2022: 19). Singling out poems that refer to the past, to the home region, we see the poet’s attempts to adapt to and accept the present by “enduring” everything that is happening inside her and around her, trying to bring the world which she left, and which has ceased to be home, into harmony with the world she lives in today. By constantly returning to her home region both through writing and visits, the moment of forced leaving of home, this violent rupture between the past and present selves, is renewed in the memory. In the words of Danijela Marot Kiš, “exile implies a constant adaptation and questioning of one’s own identity:

the exiled person seeks to reconcile their otherness in the world they have left, and which has ceased to be their home, with the otherness in the new environment” (Marot Kiš 2021). To be able to face the trauma and our past, but also the new reality in which we find ourselves, we need to examine, as Felman says, the wound that the trauma has inflicted on us, but at the same time to enter this state of affliction and woundedness, only to then be able to leave it.

Poetry, in this context, is a confrontation with the past and serves as a testimony to the tragedy of this region and the violence embodied in the loss of one’s homeland, home, loved ones and the former way of life. To visit a place of loss contained in the noun *house* means to embark on a process of confronting one’s trauma and dealing with it and, ultimately, of liberation. Poetry is indeed a way of dealing with trauma, but keeping in mind that one should not expect, as highlighted in the introduction to this paper, writing to bring catharsis or healing. It does, however, represent a link between the past, present and future, and can as such be a way to establish a critical distance toward a traumatic event. A good example of this is the poem “Kuća” [The House], one of the most significant poems by Tanja S. T., which serves as a kind of return to the past and an opportunity for confrontation, even a reckoning with oneself.

I went to see the house
A critic once wrote that in wartime
Poets use the house motif a lot

In wartime, I was not a poet, but a child
left homeless
which didn’t make me sad at all
first, I was happy about the change
the new city and new people
I was puzzled by my parents’ despair
I thought there were other houses besides that one
I said stupid things

*Houses carry memories like stems a cherry
They ripen and you spit out their hard pit and eat the sweet flesh
Houses are just murky swamps dark corridors
spirits in a bottle*

*the real place of the soul is at the crossroads, in the whipping
wind of new beginnings*

As years went by, I thought about the house more and more
It came to my dreams
its corridors its doors its windows

it took me long to realise that I was unhappy
because of the house
and that I can't go on before I go
and have a good cry by its side

The house is big and white the sun blazes against its windows
it's scorching hot
I'm standing in front of the house crying

It's her house says my husband to some unknown people
they are puzzled and shrug their shoulders

*This is where she used to live, she just wants to see everything is alright
just to see the house*

I'm looking at the house

A yellow-haired boy runs by in front of me it's my brother
it's not my brother my brother is now a man and lives in
another city

the house is a maze I can't go inside I could

get swallowed by the void within
I just look at it from the outside it hugs me and pushes me away

it's my house

how all the memories can fit in just a few minutes

jumping over the fence

the sewage shaft by the wall the garage the drinking fountain

the plum tree has grown smaller I say through tears

everything has grown smaller

and I grew up without the white-walled house

I never want to have a house again

we're gonna buy a flat

(Stupar Trifunović 2008: 25-26)

Standing in front of the house and facing both it and herself, Tanja S. T. begins a process of mourning that “has adaptive value because it enables an organism to compensate for the imbalance brought by loss. (...) As a matter of fact, mourning is necessary if a person wants to move on after experiencing a loss” (Marčinko 2023: 6). Memories of being forced to leave one's house, the feeling of not belonging made conscious at its doorstep, and the feeling of otherness, are all manifested as a personal confrontation with trauma because it is only “when the truth is finally recognized [that] survivors can begin their recovery” (Herman 1997: 13), and one of the fundamental stages of recovery is “reconstructing the trauma story” (*Ibid.*: 15). Through poetic discourse, Tanja S. T. confronts her present *Self* with her past *Self*, building a bridge between two countries and two places called home, that cannot be brought back, but can be preserved through poetry.

5. 1. Amela Mustafić

Amela Mustafić's poetry talks about the impacts of the war and understanding war, first from a child's perspective, and then from the perspective of an adult. Moreover, her poetry showcases how transgenerational trauma is shaped and transmitted.⁸ Born in 1994, Amela

⁸ This type of trauma is also referred to as “intergenerational and multigenerational trauma. The term secondary traumatization is also used to make a distinction from primary, direct exposure to the traumatic experience. (...)

Mustafić has no direct experience or memories of the war but carries the trauma of war that was not only passed down from her parents⁹, but transmitted through the entire traumatised society we/she live/s in. The transgenerational narrative is

a “second-hand” account – an ancestors’ tale transmitted through storytelling and passed on by succeeding generations who were not directly exposed to the traumatic event. Transgenerational stories consist of fragments of memory of events that were not experienced directly, but are experienced subconsciously, both at the physical and emotional level, through being exposed to the atmosphere of a story (event). By collecting fragments of one’s own or, more often, others’ memories of past events, the narrator often unconsciously uses creative re-imagination, blending elements of the past with the present (...) (Bajs Janović, Janović 2023: 61).

Amela M. grows up in a community where traumas have not been overcome or healed. They are unprocessed and repressed, and as such (un)consciously adopted by the author to serve as a source and material of her poetry that is shaped by stories of the war and of Srebrenica. Through poetry, Amela M. conveys the memories of others, but not in such a way as to transform the experience of others into poetry, but by bringing her own understanding of the war, establishing not only a temporal and spatial relationship but also taking a critical stance. Through poetry, the author speaks about war and the trauma of displacement, which has become and, as yet, remains the focal point of her poetics.

My name is Amela Mustafić. I was born in Srebrenica in 1994. I grew up in exile (Mustafić 28 July 2002).

(...) I felt rejected because I came to the world, even though it was the world of my people, but I felt like a refugee, because of all that was happening and had happened in Bosnia and Herzegovina, because many had left their hometowns and moved to

Transgenerational trauma largely affects the formation of personality in the early development stage and thus has a significant impact on the subsystems of identity, character and other personality subsystems” (Marčinko 2023: 1-2).

⁹ “Through conscious and unconscious mechanisms, the family passes down values, myths and beliefs to the next generation, thus forming the identity of future family members. Studies of the second and third generations of genocide survivors’ descendants (...) point to feelings of identification, overwhelm and suffering associated with the family’s history of affliction” (Bajs Janović, Janović 2023: 64).

other regions... For these reasons, I felt rejected, so I found everything that I was missing in words (Mustafić 14 May 2022).

Amela M. is a perfect example of the female-traveller figure who “accepts all communities as her own, not feeling at home in any of them” (Marot Kiš, Biti 2021: 195). Her earliest childhood was marked by the horrific experience of surviving the atrocities in the Srebrenica enclave during the war, ending with the genocide committed in Srebernica in June 1995, and the forced exile of women and children that followed. From these events, the trauma of not belonging was born, not only to a particular place, but to a world in which one first gets to know (about) death and tragedy, as testified by a number of poems dominated by the symbol of the father as the family’s guardian, home, country, and the suitcase as a symbol of homelessness, constantly in one’s hand as one moves from place to place. All this is illustrated by the poem “Prvi susret s kućom” [The First Encounter with the House], which in a symbolic sense represents an encounter with oneself, but also with one’s past, family, history, the tragedy of a region and its people.

Like a forest
 after a fire,
 behind paths overgrown,
 it stood,
 like a skeleton.
 “That’s our house!”
 Father said.
 And I would have known even if he had said nothing.
 A strange encounter,
 the house and me. (...)

He took me by the hand and said:
 “We’re going to live here again,
 that’s where I’ll make a room for you.”
 He again,
 me for the first time.

(Mustafić 2018: 43-44)

Amela M. makes sense of her trauma through poetic discourse, and writing is at the same time one of the possible ways to survive as it involves a “positive processing of transgenerational trauma” (Marčinko 2023: 6), which “means that parts of the trauma have, through the narrative, been successfully integrated into elements of one’s personal, family or social identity, and that the negative shadow of the trauma has thus grown weaker” (*Ibid.*: 6). In this fashion, Amela M. will write one of the most unsettling and, undoubtedly, one of her best poems about Srebrenica titled “Putem moga doma” [Homeward Bound], in which she maps the places of suffering and those of people’s (futile) attempts to live again. Stigmatisation, the feeling of regret, even humiliation, victimisation by others, even by members of the same nation—trauma is manifested here both through conscious and unconscious meaning. The poem dwells on collective loss and a sense of helplessness as the dominant feeling.

They say
that there,
there, where I’m from
everyone is somewhat sick,
toothless,
they live in stench,
have no jobs,
are illiterate.

There, where I’m from,
people are buried
in the same grave,
even five times over:
half a head and seven ribs,
a leg, half an arm,
a hand,
feet.

Incomplete,
even the fifth time over.

There, where I’m from

in living bodies, living shrapnel
weave a web through the nerves.

There, where I'm from
one lays down in a bed
that was one's son's grave
only yesterday.

There, where I'm from,
people take down nooses from branches,
and use the branch to start a fire
to survive the winter
in a warm room.

There, where I'm from,
children have never seen their father,
not even in a photo.

There, where I'm from,
survivors dream of holes
in their dead comrades.

There, where I'm from.

(Mustafić 2023: 26-27)

Amela M. directly confronts the world inside and around her, all the while in search of wholeness within herself, the self that was shattered with her very birth. On this path, she encounters images of violence, death, killing, rape, genocide, loss, confronting both herself and the collective, balancing between the real and the desired, through which, ultimately, authentic poetic speech is created. In her three books of poetry published in the period from 2017 to 2023, we follow an upward path through which she constructs her unique poetic voice, shaped by the spatial trauma of displacement, the war and the genocide of Srebrenica. Her poetry is a “warning” of how much our lives are still marked by the war: it may have been officially ended with the signing of the peace agreement, but within the self, as the examples analysed in this

paper show, the war still goes on. Furthermore, the poet speaks about the visible impacts of the war, both on herself and those around her, the people she meets on the tram, in the street, in the supermarket, on whose faces she sees traces of struggling to survive, which is reflected in her own sense of existential insecurity in an unstable world that continues to be disfigured. Her poetry centres on the relationship between survivors, their experience and the community, or more precisely the (in)ability to go on with life in the wake of the 1992-1995 war. This relationship, particularly highlighted in the book *Mostovi i praznine* [Bridges and Voids] (2023), as her most mature and complete work, is the determining factor of the ability to go on with life. Amela M. cannot – but also will not – ignore the suffering of the people around her, the people who have survived war and genocide. She cannot ignore the raped women addressed in the poems “Silovana” [Raped], “Druga strana rata” [The Other Side of War], “Na putu ratovanja” [On the Path of War] and “Isakovica”, where she focuses on the war violence against women. Amela M.’s poetry is about growing up with stories of a monstrous crime, the genocide and the enormous loss, not only of one’s own home, but of an entire micro-community. It is through the influence of her surroundings and her own empathy that the poet becomes not only a victim of war, but also a survivor of genocide. This experience of hers distinguishes her from the other two experiences of war and makes her face another form of tacit social violence, in fact a double marginalisation. She is not only a woman and a poet, but is also from Srebrenica, displaced from her primary space, and therefore belongs to none of the places and cities she comes to live in.

Her poems are dedicated to victims, suffering, the loss of one’s home, homeland and origin. This, what she remembers from accounts of others and what she sees and lives today, is where Amela M.’s trauma lies—a trauma formed in early childhood and deepened further in the wake of the war, that continues to mark and shape both her life and poetics.

6. Conclusion

Instead of mitigating the effects of marginalisation, or of structural violence for that matter, literature often tends to reinforce them. An example of this is the exclusion of women from the literary canon and the undervaluation of women’s creation during the 1990s war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its aftermath. From 1992 to the present, female authors, literary critics and literary theorists, feminists and women activists have been making efforts to make

women in art more visible and to have their work adequately valued, to change the perspective of the academic, professional and general public, and to dismantle the models of the dominant traditional patriarchal discourse in literature. A certain progress is, however, discernible at the beginning of the 21st century: today, literature written by women is becoming the subject of scholarly study, and “a significant step forward has been made, a turnaround, both in terms of current critics who have started to positively review the depictions of war in women’s literary prose, and in institutional/academic research settings, where women’s war literature is beginning to be studied in whole or in part” (Demiragić 2018: 38-39).

What the poetics of these three authors have in common is that war as a cultural and historical theme becomes integrated into their life experience and is perceived as something that not only happened but is still happening. Jozefina D., Tanja S. T. and Amela M. deal with the trauma of forced displacement in three different temporal contexts (the time in which they wrote or are writing), addressing the effort to adapt one’s self to the framework of another culture (Jozefina D., Tanja S. T.) or to fit it into the framework of the same culture (Amela M.). Their poetics deal with the trauma of displacement as a direct consequence of war, exile, loss of home and geographical dislocation. As such, they also bear witness to the distance from one’s own culture and social community as a reflection of the more or less prominent personal or collective trauma that permeates their verses.

It is poetry that brings an intimate experience of a war that shook and changed one’s being to the core. For a woman poet, to break free from this kind of psychological violence is to write, to speak about it through art in a world of repetition: of new wars, refugees, new stops at border crossings and in detention centres, prison camps, new stories of the destruction of homes, the reshaping of memories, the uncertain future and attempts to forget the horrors that are only replaced by – new horrors. In such a world that sought – and still seeks – to deprive women of the right to express their opinions and feelings, women have suffered verbal, psychological, physical, war, canon-based and structural violence, some of them robbed of their lives and thus, forever, of the opportunity to live in a free world where women’s voices and lives would be respected. This paper sheds light on what women poets with a direct or indirect experience of the war have survived and written about: how they have coped with trauma and the traumatic events of exile, displacement and persecution (gender-based, racial, ethnic, religious).

The study has shown that the reason why the women poets have written about the trauma of displacement is that it was their way to portray and come to terms with the experience of losing their home and homeland and the inability to assimilate into another environment. They feel like foreigners in their new communities, they feel bad and write to mitigate the impacts of that experience, they write in order to survive. It is a trauma that destabilises from within, and they navigate the impacts of that experience by depicting through poetry the transformation of their selves and their lives, moving from one place to another or from the primary to the secondary homeland. The poets embrace the trauma as their most powerful experience and, through poetry, testify to the past, to the ways they survived the war (Jozefina D.) and to how they continue to live in its aftermath (Tanja S. T. and Amela M.). This poetry is indeed a “poetry of difference” as through it the poets “speak about their relationship toward loss and trauma, thus strengthening those alternative models of subjectivisation that directly threaten the norm established by the dominant ideology" (Arsenijević 2007: 138).

Starting from the idea that the topic of the war trauma of displacement in the work of Bosnian and Herzegovinian poets Jozefina D., Tanja S. T. and Amela M. has been marginalised and the importance of presenting this experience neglected, I argue that it can help new generations to which trauma is transmitted today. The voices of these poets cannot be ignored or silenced, as their writing is in no way destabilising, does not undermine, does not call for new conflicts, does not condemn—it simply testifies to the trauma inflicted by the war and the poets’ way of confronting this trauma and going on with their lives.

For me, as a poet belonging to the war generation, and writing about war trauma myself, this poetry of the war-inflicted trauma of forced displacement has had an emancipatory effect, showing how and to what extent women’s war experience has been neglected for thirty years and how female poets have dealt with the trauma. This is poetry that teaches us about the past, giving us a new perspective on the traumatic experience and ways to deal with it, and finally, bringing hope that it is possible to face and come to terms with trauma, and that as survivors of the atrocities of war, we are not alone. I find that these poets have been underrepresented in the literary canon and that it would be useful for new generations to read their poetry as part of the mandatory reading list, and for many more round tables, scientific conferences, promotions, festivals and workshops dedicated to the women’s experience of war experience to be organised. Writing, doing research and speaking about trauma means speaking in the name of

all those whose voices have been silenced or on behalf of all those who are not able to speak for themselves.

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