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**Bal-kan means penis**

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**Summary**

The character of alter ego of Ivana Sajko – croatian playwright – in the text a „Bomb Woman“, sends e-mails with a question “What would you do if you had twelve minutes and thirty seconds more?” to her friends and receives twenty-one replies. Among the answers there are eleven male and ten female voices. In my opinion, the proportion between male and female voices may be a significant interpretational clue. Does not it prove that the author aimed at maintaining political correctness in the text? The aim of this paper is to indicate gender inclinations of the contemporary Balcan authors basing on, among others, the following texts: „Bomb Woman“ by Ivana Sajko, „The other letter from 1920“ by Muharem Bazdulj and „Sahib“ by Nenad Veličković. Is not the protagonist’s detonation-refering again to Sajko’s text – on the symbolic level, an attempt to break with the myths of woman-mother and woman-mistress? Moreover, my goal is to demonstrate that the decisions concerning social interactions taken by the characters of the discussed texts, may be explained in psychoanalysis criteria, e.g. Oedipus complex.

How many boyfriends and how many girlfriends my fiancée has – I don’t know. What I do know is that there are far more women among her acquaintances than men. And I don’t suppose that by presenting this approximate combination I fall into my illusion. A
man, regardless of his being an alpha man or a metrosexual visitor to clubs, is invariably a father, husband, lover, but very rarely a partner or a friend. I am of opinion that this regularity can in a significant way determine the decisions concerning the choice of friends in this country of the followers of patriarchy.

Ivana Sajko – a Croatian playwright has also more girlfriends than boyfriends. This data can be drawn out from the text Bombwoman. The alter ego of the writer sends e-mails with a question “What would you do if you had twelve minutes and thirty seconds more?” to her friends and receives twenty one answers. From among them, the last one belongs to her mother and starts with “I would take the most beautiful, slender glass and fill it up” (By deduction and stylistic analysis of the statement I have determined that it has to be a voice of the mother; her presence announced in didaskalia, a expressis verbis in the text was not revealed). This reply I have excluded from the evaluation – the womanhood of the author is unquestionable and unchangeable and doesn’t depend on the acquaintances that Sajko makes or not. Among the twenty that are left, eleven are the male voices and nine female ones. Croatian language like Polish belongs to the family of inflectional languages and thanks to retaining by them different gender forms distinguishing the voices is not difficult. In the statements of the author’s friends we can distinguish the traces of sexes, i.e. feminine grammatical forms “pożegnalabym”, “patrzyłabym”, “rozebralały” against the masculine ones “pożegnalbym”, “ruszyłbym”, “uchłałbym”. Eleven to nine – this quantitative ratio got me a little anxious. Isn’t it by any chance the evidence for the fact that the author was willing to maintain political correctness in the text? – I asked myself. It was even more pervaded for me as Croatia, a Balkan country, in my opinion, is at least as patriarchal as Poland. And if my opinion about the author’s home country was right, the actual Sajko would have a different proportion of boyfriends to girlfriends than her alter ego. The number of e-mails from men, one more than the balance between sexes, made me sensitive like geographical directions for GPS to the feminist plot in the text.

The next feminist trail in Sajko – “because I have lips neck nipples healthy teeth red tongue stomach bottom legs hips” The bombwoman appears to the reader as a body abundant in womanly attributes. Her exterior emanates with eroticism but also motherly strength. Especially “nipples healthy” speak to the imagination of the person searching for gender inclinations in the text. Can a woman willing to affect a man present herself this way? More important than aesthetic value of the healthy nipple is its usefulness. The inflammation of the nipple, a common problem of women during the lactation period, makes it either difficult or impossible to breastfeed a baby and to a minimum extent – as I presume – weakens man’s desire.
The reflection on the plan of the text’s action framed in this way – internalized plan, I will add – provokes a question: Isn’t the detonation of the protagonist on the symbolic level an attempt to deal with the myth of a woman–mother and woman–lover? In the suicide terrorist attack together with the topical male, around whom political life of one of Balkan polis is focused, and tens of outsiders, dies the author of the attack – the bombwoman. Her gesture, from this perspective, could be perceived as a sacrifice of the first destructor of the patriarchal order, made on the altar of the cultural revolution on Balkans.

Unexpectedly, the horizon of these investigations is widened by a text of Bosnian author – Muharem Bazdulj – entitled *The other letter from 1920*. This short story enables to identify the elements which – however present in Sajko’s text – the reader, like me – not familiar with the culture and literary tradition of the region – could overlook. The protagonist of the postmodernistic story of Bazdulj wants to prove he is right with an antique letter (I do not hesitate to call this text postmodernistic for a few reasons, I will name three most important: decomposition – introduction of two space-times of the action, decontextualization – the letter as a parallel form of narration and intertextuality – subcutaneous hero of the action is Ivo Andrić, and, actually, his story *The other letter from 1920*). And however an accidental bullet prevents him from realizing the plan (and not only this one, but all the plans) on the level of the motifs used to create the plot of the story the mere fact of taking this act plays an important role. The letter is to be used in a dispute with an English soldier and serve as an argument for emphasizing the “normal” political and moral condition of the Bosnians. The soldier, as a subject of the discussion, is a symbolic figure and represents the voice of the Europeans (the author declares at the beginning of the text that she says what the foreigners definitely thought and very often said out loud”). But his appearance, looking at the problem from the perspective of the mechanisms of the story’s action, is of secondary importance. In fact, the action is dynamized by the referencesto Ivo Andrić’s writings present in the text. The works of the noble prize winner Bazdulj united with Balkan tradition and culture and pointed the blade of the letter in them. Paradoxically, the text idealizing the Bosnians, as a rethorical figure, is degraded by the bullet. Nevertheless, against the words ending *The other letter* “This is how a man who believed that Bosnia is a country of hatred, ended his life”, the text can be paradoxically read as a declaration of inability to raise a hand against your homeland. Towards this interpretation incline the conclusions after considering the motifs dynamizing the action of the story in the spirit of psychoanalysis. The relation of tension between the writings of the most famous writer from the former Yugoslavian countries, his literary output and the unfortunate letter, can be compared to the relations forming Oedipal triangle structure. Ivo Andrić on the symbolic level is Laius, the history
of reception of his works, both of his books and that related to the numerous awards he received, is Jocasta. Whereas for the conception of the letter the author – Oedipus – is responsible. He desires his mother and, in order to conquer her, he intends to dethrone his father. And in order to achieve this goal he opposes his father’s penis, with which creative power is identified, his own literary organ. His organ, however, fails him. Hymen, separating adolescent literary juvenalia from the mature creative activity, turns out to be a membrane through which the contemporary author – Oedipus – cannot break. The bullet, which – on the level of the plot of the story – kills the hero delivering the letter to the Englishman may symbolize unsuccessful erection and being covered with shame towards literary tradition – Jocasta. In this way, the words pronounced at the end of The other letter from 1920, lose their creative power and become only a testimony of the unfulfilled terrorist impulses of the author (Here the author, following Henryk Markiewicz, as a subject of creative activities).

Freudian Oedypal triangle mechanism is also present in Sajko’s Bombwoman. Its presence, in combination with Bazdulj story, is, however, more subtle. It was also modified a little and thus it is harder to identify. The feminist and gender motifs contained in the text of Croatian playwright are arranged along the line of tension that may be described with the categories of the combat between Oedipus and Laius for Jocasta. Looking at the text from this side, from among the characters and allegories of the characters appearing in the dramatic text, in the role of the king we should cast a politician representing native literary tradition of the writer, and as Jocasta – an assembly of people who celebrate the arrival of the dignitary. The bombwoman would represent Oedipus. Her goal would be to dethrone the masculine literary tradition substituting it by the works that expose feminist and gender values and, as a result, winning the mother – respect of the readers for this type of literature. Nevertheless, taking into account the self-destructive character of the actions taken by her (the protagonist’s suicide), there should be considered, on the level of unconscious motivations, the coexistence of two forces in the text – apart from Oedipus complex also the drive towards death (As evidence for the readiness to overtake the king-male creator of national literature role we can enumerate, among others, those “healthy nipples”, in other words the readiness to create (giving birth to, raise) literature, the arguments against this thesis are the bomb belting the heroine and her fixated suicidal tendency). The presence of Thanatos complicates the interpretation of the text in the spirit of psychoanalysis. It can be affirmed, however, that the bombwoman – Oedipus does not believe in the success of the attack on the father’s position. Her act of dethronement of the paternalistic picture of the national literature is doomed to failure or, actually, to a kind of extermination of both parties. Worth noticing is the fact that in the moment of the attempt the suiciderefers to the common sense. Its animal emanation in the
form of a worm orders her to stop and think for a while of what she is about to do. “Ventilate your brain! Open all the windows! Turn on your functions! Let me out! I don’t want to be blown up!!! [the emphasis as in Sajko’s text, editorial note]” appeals the worm.

And this dramatic appeal is for me the punchline of the text and the reason for the future, more thorough contemplation of the Balkan literature. The heroine, motivated by the Oedipus complex, in the moment of the attack on literary tradition symbolically represented by a man, refers to common sense as a counter-argument for her revolutionary actions. Strange.