

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: DISCOURSES, PERSPECTIVES, LESSONS FROM THE HISTORY OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

SUMMARY

This book is the result of scientific cooperation and research by a group of historians, legal scholars, sociologists and literature historians within a project entitled “Violence against Women: Discourses, Perspectives, Lessons from BiH History”. The project was designed with the understanding that, despite the persistent and multi-layered nature of violence against women in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), as well as numerous sources where violence can be observed, this theme remains marginalised in historiography. Knowledge of the issue remained fragmented and there was no study that offered a comparative view over an extended period of time. In order to remedy this shortcoming and provide a contribution to the wider understanding of socio-cultural history of BiH, the team of researchers gathered around this project identified, researched and presented, in ten chapters, different forms of violence against women across BiH history, as well as societal attitudes towards this phenomenon from ancient times until the modern era. As members of the academic community, we hold that understanding the historical background of the culture of violence – violence against women in particular, as well as the mechanisms that maintain and reproduce it, is an important precondition for establishing greater quality dialogue on the issue of violence against women. Namely, the elimination of violence against women is one of the priority goals of the UN today. However, this goal cannot become operational in an area if there is no insight into the historical dimension of violence against women and how traditionally rooted it is in human society. This book is a significant contribution towards filling that void and the conclusions reached through

research may serve as the basis for further comparison with similar studies that are currently on the rise across the globe. What are the conclusions? What is their significance in academic research and why are they important in social strategies for combating violence against women?

First, this study strived to establish the types of sources that offer information on violence against women. As this is a theme generally neglected in historiography, the first step by the research team was to demonstrate the existence of primary sources on violence against women in BiH. A significant contribution of this monography is that, in addition to known published sources, it presents numerous texts on violence against women that were previously unknown in historiography. The material used in the monography comprises a large set of sources with multilingualism as their key feature. Sources include texts in Latin, Ottoman Turkish, English, French, Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian, as well as their pre-standard idioms. Violence against women is found in narrative sources such as annals, travel journals and chronicles. Key data was found in documents produced by administrations of different states that included the territory of modern-day BiH, such as different court records, protocols, registers, reports, decrees, correspondence between administrative bodies etc. As for modern times, sources included the press as the basis for media discourse on violence, as well as interviews and ego-documents, i.e. personal testimonies by individual victims of violence. Legal reference sources and documents were an important source, ranging from discussions within pre-modern jurisprudence as well as modern documents related to international law. As for ancient times, artistic presentations of violence against women were used, as well as epigraphic monuments and other artefacts testifying to the culture of violence, such as shackles, for example. As for modern times, sources were further diversified, and authors of these chapters took into account literary works as well as manifestations of culture of violence in film, digital media and social networks.

It was important to identify sections on violence against women in these sources as it shows that this issue was recorded in historical sources. Reading traditional historiography, which places violence against women on the margin of interest, may lead to an impression that there is no wealth of information on this. However, this research shows that the opposite is true. Sources are indeed numerous. They are multilingual, though, and dispersed, and team effort is required to identify them. This team of researchers did that and individual chapters present specific sources on violence against women. It should be noted that there is a considerable misbalance in research potentials

of different materials. Older history offers a lot less information on violence against women. That is why every single piece of information is particularly important. As for the territory of BiH, a situation that may be described as a relative wealth of material on violence against women can only be detected as of the 18th century, particularly its second half. Circumstances of the period – the Ottoman – mean that there are numerous well-preserved court documents, protocols, registers, legal reference sources, as well as narratives that provide valuable data on violence against women. In terms of quantity and quality, it is, naturally, the modern era that provides the most in terms of data on violence against women.

Another important task was to identify the types of violence against women appearing in these texts. One of the first challenges was the problem of defining violence against women, in order to clarify the kind of data we are searching for in the material. The starting point was the decision that violence would include observation of different types of violent actions and behaviours leading to damaging consequences suffered by women, including different types of physical, verbal, psychological, sexual and economic violence. Team members were encouraged to start from identifiable forms of violence in the widest sense, corresponding to what is encountered in modern violence discourse, such as scholarly sources, definitions provided by UN and WHO bodies, but not to remain constrained by those notions, and to try and see ways in which specific cases where women were objects of violent actions were identified throughout history. This resulted from the realisation that, on the whole, different societies treated violence differently and that different forms of violence as we identify them today were not necessarily identified as such in different cultures that existed historically in the territory of modern-day BiH.

We confirmed that violence against women is a long-standing phenomenon that permeates all the historical periods examined in our research. It was not possible to establish each form of violence in the same way in each period, due to poorer preservation of primary sources from more remote historical eras, but despite that, we were able to confirm that discourse about physical and sexual violence is a phenomenon that has persisted for more than two millennia. Namely, this research starts from materials relating to violence against women in Roman times, and the oldest information about violence against women dates back to 3rd century BCE. This research found that violence was an important segment of Roman imperialism and that in Roman times, physical and sexual violence happened as early as during the conquest of the province of Illyricum, subsequent provinces of Dalmatia and Pannonia.

Women suffered violence during military campaigns, and as their result, many women were captured and encountered different forms of degradation and brutality. Harsh fate of conquered peoples and the enslavement they encountered is best illustrated by the fact that many women committed suicide or were killed by their closest male relatives, in order to avoid enslavement. This happened during conquests as well as during pacifications conducted by the Roman military. Moreover, it was found that women in antiquity suffered violence as slaves and as victims of looting attacks. Unfortunately, the state of sources is such that it does not allow for more specific conclusions regarding domestic violence.

Violence against women happened in medieval Bosnia as well. It is impossible to establish a continuous spiral of violence from antiquity until the medieval period, so the second chapter moves to examples from the Late Middle Ages. Scarcity of sources was underlined, but despite that, important examples were identified, indicating different forms of violence against women. This chapter presents examples of killing of women, those from the elite as well as those from underprivileged social groups. Bosnian medieval history thus includes a case of murder of a queen: she was killed in power struggles, following a period of captivity, as well as the case of a Bosnian princess killed in Hungary, after serving as regent for her underage daughters. Physical violence was established within the family as well as in different looting attacks. Women were often the ones to tend to the home and livestock, which made them particularly vulnerable in looting incidents. There is little information about verbal violence, which may indicate that it was not understood as serious enough to lead to any proceedings before the authorities. Violence against female slaves is reflected in their status of slaves but also in violent episodes of their enslavement. In parallel with this, slavery was shown to be a legal societal relation in the Middle Ages, both in Bosnia and elsewhere, and female slaves originating from Bosnia often ended up at different destinations across the Mediterranean. Analyses of primary sources also show that women also found themselves enslaved during Ottoman incursions, as well as on the basis of a decision of a male family member. In addition to this, the chapter discusses the possibilities for identifying and studying institutional and socio-economic violence in medieval Bosnia, as well as the limits faced by a historian in this regard.

Different types of violence against women appear in the territory of Ottoman Bosnia. This research shows that there are numerous primary sources that show that many women endured physical, verbal and psychological

violence within their families, and that there are data recorded in Ottoman judicial and administrative documents, largely unpublished and unknown to the public. This part of the book contains research results on rape as the most extreme form of sexual violence against women, abductions of girls and married women, data on physical violence women were subjected to in bandit attacks, both in their homes and in public spaces, but also cases of murder of women and girls. It has been shown that violence against women affected women from different religious, social, age and ethnic categories. Victims of violence were Muslim women, Christian women, Jewish women, local South Slavic population, Roma women, women of mature age, old women, young girls, members of families belonging to the elite, as well as those from production-engaged population, women from urban as well as rural areas. The violence they endured can often be described as gender-based, particularly regarding abductions, domestic and sexual violence, but there are also numerous recorded cases of violence where women were victims of violent incidents together with men, due to different circumstances, and not solely because they were women. This section of research did not focus on violence against women in wars, economic violence or violence against female slaves, but they are also evident in Ottoman sources. We assert that the presented cases of violence are just the tip of an iceberg and that it is clear that, in reality, there were many more.

Patterns of violence against women were also identified in the period when BiH enters the period of modernisation. The process started as early as in the late Ottoman period, and crucial phases happened during the Austro-Hungarian administration. This research presents important new findings about sexual and physical violence in the Habsburg BiH. It is established that violence against women and girls was often accompanied by outbursts of hatred and negative emotions, manifested in threat to life and body of the female population. Similar to the Ottoman period, most of the recorded cases of violence did relate to men, but women were the most vulnerable where they should have been the safest – in the family. A conclusion is made that the negative trend of abduction of girls noted in the Ottoman period did continue in the Austro-Hungarian one. This research shows that many women suffered at the hands of their husbands, unmarried husbands or lovers, and that victims of violence included young girls, who were a particular focus of this section. Girls were sexually endangered at ages younger than 14, and violators/rapists mainly used the opportunities when children were alone and unprotected.

Moreover, it was shown that a particular form of violence against women at the time was trafficking in girls, which was a serious social problem.

Forms of violence against women listed above can be documented in the period between wars. This part of the research presents several important cases of domestic violence that illustrate how women endured physical, psychological and sexual violence. The detected forms of violence were contextualised within socio-political practices in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. These forms of violence are found to be firmly linked to traditional gender roles and the subservient position of women in the society, with an important conclusion that the instances of violence against women analysed here do bear the markings of gender-based violence, presented in this chapter together with an indication of transgenerational transfer of violence against women, along with an elaboration of fundamental features of a patriarchal society. As for the place and circumstances where abuse happened, this section explains that women often suffered in silence, in the dark corners of their family homes, far from the public eye. This conclusion may also be applied to other periods analysed in this book.

Dramatic examples of violence against women are presented in the chapter on BiH in World War II. Although wartime violence is mentioned in earlier periods, this chapter focuses specifically on violence against women in an armed conflict, a particular one: it was a conflict of global proportions, where women were exposed to diverse forms of violence. The chapter presents examples of terror, violence and suffering that women were subjected to in the “times of suffering”, characterised as the time of unprecedented hatred and intolerance. In it, women were victims of rape, both individual and gang, of brutal physical violence, sadistic humiliation, and public shaming, which often ended fatally. Some executions of women were shown to be perpetrated with melee weapons as well as firearms, and there is data on burning of women or throwing them into swollen rivers. Data on suffering of women in detention camps is presented as a particular type of violence. Women suffered for different reasons, because of their sex, gender, religious, racial or national background, but also because of their political beliefs and active attitudes towards war. Violence against women was perpetrated by the occupying forces, members of the *ustasha* movement, *chetniks*, but also members of different militias. The war was an extreme distortion of social circumstances, and in such circumstances, women from different identity groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina were often the party that suffered different forms of violence, the scope and description of which remains shocking to this day. Even if some

reports were to be discarded as unreliable and figures as exaggerated, what remains is still sufficient to describe this period as the “great suffering”.

Violence against women continued to be part of everyday life in the socialist era. The ideological and political system changed yet again. BiH obtained a new appearance, but within it, or under it, the traditionally present phenomenon of violence against women persisted. The aim of chapter 7 was to research how violence against women was presented in print media, using the example of the republic-wide *Oslobođenje* daily. The starting point was the assumption that the media not only presented facts from the field, but also participated actively in creating social reality, which included reflections of certain traditionalist and patriarchal societal practices. The chapter shows that the claim that violence against women was not present in the public is inaccurate. Analyses of selected years of *Oslobođenje* found that editorial policies marginalised this issue as it was considered negative, and neither the editorial boards nor the authorities ‘favoured’ the kind of news that may have eroded the desirable perception of achievements of the socialist society of BiH. However rare, though, such news did exist, as confirmed by presentations of examples related to murders of wives or partners, attempted murders, rapes, domestic violence, kidnapping, violence against girls, incest, as well as physical violence outside the family. The violence perpetrated or endured would be reported primarily if the victim or the perpetrator died. This was ‘news’ with greater potential for attracting the attention of journalists.

Wartime events of the 1990s are the last traumatic episode of armed conflicts in the history of BiH that included women as victims of violence. This period is covered by chapter 8, presenting the suffering of women through two interlocking discourses – historiography and law. It has been proved that during this period in BiH large-scale systemic sexual abuse happened, with numerous forced pregnancies recorded. Many women were held captive, subjected to psychological and physical abuse, some of which ended in murder. Abuse was *en masse*, organised and executed systematically. Rapes sometimes happened publicly, in particularly cruel ways, and this bestial act often included different forms of violence and sometimes included numerous witnesses. For many women, torture was a daily event, and there is even evidence of hotels that were intended for ‘relaxation’ of soldiers returning from the front. The women were of different ethnic or religious background. Scholarly sources and reports present data on raped women with different figures, all in the tens of thousands. It is often underlined that the victims included a particularly high number of Muslim women, and that the crime of rape included a recognisable

pattern that was incorporated into war strategies. Certain reports from the time present indicative claims that some rapes were committed in 'particularly sadistic ways, so that victims, their families and entire communities were humiliated as much as possible' and 'as additional form of humiliation and a constant reminder of the abuse inflicted on them'. The US general W. T. Sherman is said to have stated that 'war is hell'. Reading reports about these and other experiences of women in BiH in the period 1992–1995, this is exactly the metaphor for what happened to them—hell.

The introduction of this book underlines that one of its fundamental aims is to establish the attitude of societies towards violence against women. It was crucial to establish the social structures' attitudes towards violence against women. However, it should be noted that this could not be done here in exactly the same way for all the different periods, and the phenomenon is thus observed diachronically from one era to the next. The reason for this is that authors of different chapters had diversified archival materials available to them, providing more information for understanding the multi-layered nature of violence and different societal responses to this phenomenon. Conclusions presented here are in accordance with that, corresponding to the content of individual chapters.

As for antiquity, the analysis showed that violence was an important factor of Roman imperialism and that this included violence against women. Namely, the authorities had no problem with presenting very cruel and savage scenes of treatment of the defeated 'barbaric peoples'. Violent treatment of such groups was considered legitimate to such an extent that Romans showed scenes of violence, including violence against women, in different types of monuments. Romans were not reluctant to include in such presentations individual scenes that showed physical and sexual violence and this is perhaps the best indicator that violent behaviour in such situations was considered legitimate. Moreover, the Roman concept of slavery was such that male and female slaves were considered 'tools that speak' and owners could dispose of them in any way they saw fit. Female slaves were thus in constant danger of different forms of violence, from physical to sexual.

Societal attitudes towards violence against women in medieval Bosnia is a theme to be understood with numerous limitations, particularly due to the absence of original sources that would allow for a more in-depth analysis of this phenomenon. However, particularly thanks to the materials available in the State Archives of Dubrovnik, certain conclusions can be drawn. When it comes to slavery, it is evident that it was considered legitimate in Bosnia

and that, moreover, certain individuals in medieval Bosnia were engaged in slave trade. This also opened possibilities for violence against female slaves. Violence was experienced particularly negatively by those who were the most vulnerable, and it should be noted that fear of enslavement and violence does appear in sources. This fear seems to relate to both men and women. Also, this chapter includes a practical presentation that medieval Bosnian history needs to be observed within the wider regional and European context. Accordingly, the chapter draws certain parallels on reactions to violence in the immediate surroundings of medieval Bosnia. For example, it is shown that in the territory of Dubrovnik, whose citizens were in constant contact with Bosnia, sanctions for rape were mild and symbolic, unlike some other countries in the same period. Additionally, the chapter provides a basis for discussion on discrimination and subservient role of women in relation to men, as well as gender-based violence. It is also indicated, on the other hand, that nothing is known about the attitude of women themselves towards violence. This is, at the same time, not the case only with medieval Bosnia; it is, in fact, a problem encountered in many other pre-modern societies. The perspectives preserved are predominantly male, and this should be borne in mind when analysing the perception of violence against women in Bosnian Middle Ages.

There is slightly more data preserved on the attitudes of authorities towards violence against women in the Ottoman period, particularly since the 18th century. This society was equally characterised by male domination of family and society. In the family, women were expected to be subservient to their husbands, to the extent envisaged by *Sharia* regulations. Women did appear in public, but there was evident inequality between men and women. Men occupied formal positions of power in the state and the society. Ottoman sources indicate numerous cases of violence against women, but all of this notwithstanding, it should not be thought that the Ottoman society, although patriarchal in its essence, did not have mechanisms to suppress violence against women. Namely, the principal function of government was to protect life, honour and property of its subjects and, accordingly, there are normative documents available that did protect women, and practical actions by government in judicial and administrative practices in order to operationalise those normative acts. The Ottoman rule strived to sanction physical and verbal violence against women and judicial documents contain data that the category of mutual guarantee (*kefâlet*) was used to prevent violence. Men who physically or verbally abused women could be imprisoned, reprimanded, but also beaten. In essence, the authorities saw this as a damaging phenomenon.

On the other hand, legal reference sources do offer information that ‘milder’ disciplining of women was allowed. This phenomenon is an indicator that specific forms of violence against women were tolerated, but also that many other forms were sanctioned.

The Ottoman government criminalised abduction of girls and sexual violence against women, seen as a damaging activity, but also as an offence against their honour. Sanctions were particularly harsh for violent banditry against women as well as killing of women, for which offenders could even be sentenced to death. Women who killed perpetrators in self-defence were not prosecuted. Ottoman case-law shows numerous cases where women fought for their rights in court, thus trying to achieve the justice promised by the normative framework. It was sometimes very difficult, though, since the evidentiary procedure was complex and violence could not always be proved. Despite all the measures to protect the victims, violence against women was repeated, meaning that there always those in the society who were ready to do so. Along with that, however, it is important to note that there were persons in the society who spoke out negatively about manifestations of violence against women such as, for example, abductions of girls or killings. As noted by Mula Mustafa Bašeskija, the famous 18th century journal and travel writer – ‘no one is fond of force’.

The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy also had a normative framework that provided that certain forms of violence against women covered in this book be sanctioned. Laws provided for sanctions for rape, abduction of girls, infliction of bodily harm, threat to life, trade in girls. The Austro-Hungarian authorities had the necessary state apparatus and developed procedures that allowed it to implement such legal norms. Of course, things did not always proceed smoothly, and proving a particular offence was of crucial importance. The state system dealt with these offences as this was a matter of issues that fall within the basic functions of government, i.e. issues that were of essential importance for stability of the state. Unlike this, when it comes to different forms of domestic violence, the state reacted far more rarely, and in the late 19th century there was a kind of implicit social tolerance for violence that men inflicted on their wives. This remains insufficiently known to this day, and the environment perceived different forms of violence that happened behind closed doors as far less serious, unless it led to serious injuries to women. An important conclusion of this chapter is that the criminal judicial system often dealt with consequences of violence perpetrated against women and girls. However, when it comes to psychological trauma it caused, no one dealt with it in an institutional or

organised manner. Victims were mainly left to themselves and their families, and we have no information about their lives or difficulties after the event.

The chapter on violence against women in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes shows that there was complex legal climate in BiH at the time and that, due to legal particularism which existed across the state, BiH still observed certain provisions of criminal law inherited from the Dual Monarchy. Any injury to honour and dignity of an individual was considered punishable and this included women. However, it was found that abuse of women was not recognised as a specific legal phenomenon. Sexual abuse of women was considered a crime, and any forced extramarital relationship was marked as fornication. It is important to note that sanctioning of sexual violence only applied to extramarital contacts and the issue of marital rape was not recognised as a crime. Of course, this perception of marital rape is not specific to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The situation was the same in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, as well as the Ottoman Empire and many other European states of the time. In addition to this overview of the legal framework, the fifth chapter also presents data on important problems in implementing these legal norms in practice. Moreover, it shows that reactions of the society to violence against women in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes continued to be shaped by the legacy of patriarchy and unequal distribution of societal power between men and women, which reflected directly on the attitude of the community towards violence against women. In other words, specific forms of violence against women were tolerated and acceptable, and reactions appeared only if there were serious cases of violence, particularly those that led to fatal consequences.

Violence against women that happened across BiH during World War II is also perceived in different ways. Its massive nature shows that disturbing wartime circumstances included the existence of an alarming number of individuals who practiced and tolerated violence against women. However, this research shows that the root of the problem was in the institutional framework that allowed violence. Namely, it was shown that human life of both men and women was of little value in collaborationist fascist creations such as the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), particularly in relation to cases of mass abuse and killing of women and men on the grounds of their racial, ethnic or religious affiliation, i.e. if they were defined as enemies of the regime. Violence against women was thus directly linked to the legal position of women, or rather the fact that they belonged to different discriminated groups. This chapter shows that perpetrators of violence against women received mild or

no reaction from their superiors. On the other hand, it was shown that there were individuals who condemned violence against women and men, even when perpetrated by persons from their own group. To understand violence against women in this period, as demonstrated, means to understand the multitude of parallel perspectives and opposing narratives about war, violence, victims and women.

Attitudes towards violence against women in the Yugoslav context was in a considerably different political and ideological climate. How did the Yugoslav authorities respond to violence against women? This is a very complex question and the answer cannot be articulated in full only on the basis of research presented in this book. Yet, it has been established that the elites did strive to improve the position of women, but that it was not enough to speak about full equality between men and women. The available data do provide grounds for asserting that, despite evident developments, the authorities failed to create an effective system to protect women from violence. When it comes to media responses to violence, their reports are noted as often suffering the burden of perceptions arising from patriarchal legacy and traditional understanding of men and women. In addition to condemnation of certain violent acts, there are also recorded instances of relativization of cases of gender-based murders by justifying them with jealousy, unhappy or unrequited love. Media response to violence was very important as it formed public opinion, and it would be important to compare, at a later stage, those reactions with attitudes towards violence against women in other discourses of importance for understanding societal structures, such as academic, political, literary-artistic and judicial-administrative ones.

Violence against women that happened in BiH during the 1992–1995 war is particularly important in terms of reactions it caused. Namely, in addition to local reactions to crimes and their consequences, thanks to global media culture development, it also appeared on covers of numerous news publications across the world. Particularly visible crimes were sexual and physical violence that ended with killings in many cases. Additionally, women suffered multiple forms of other types suffering, including economic and verbal violence, and their suffering in detention camps and mass organised crime stands out in particular. In addition to gender-based violence, understanding these crimes must take into account the religious and ethnic identity of the victims. Reports of these instances of violence found their way to the international community and an international court was established specifically tasked with prosecuting crimes committed in the territory of former Yugoslavia, which included

violence against women. It should be noted in particular that crimes against women committed in the territory of BiH during an international armed conflict marked a watershed in the treatment of sexual violence. Crimes against women in BiH thus became the basis upon which sexual abuse of women was to be legally qualified and sanctioned as a crime in its own right, separate from other qualifications of crimes. Finally, numerous convictions appeared for crimes of sexual abuse of women in BiH, based on individual as well as command responsibility. The work of national judicial institutions in this field is still ongoing.

The end of wartime events in BiH in 1995 marked the beginning of a new era that may be described by the period of transition, strongly marked by the results of the armed conflict of the 1990s. BiH society today is a post-conflict society marked by significant divisions and political problems that continue to threaten the very existence of BiH as a state and continue to upset its citizens. Violence against women is, as shown above, a traditional problem of BiH society and continues to be an open issue. It may be observed from different vantage points, but it would be very difficult to bring together all the perspectives relevant for understanding violence against women in a single book. This required a limitation, for purely practical reasons. In addition to historiographic and legal perspectives, it was decided that this study would include closing chapter on violence against women in social-cultural and literary discourse. They are, in a way, the link with important aspects of modern times and perspectives that complement the research presented in earlier chapters. Conclusions drawn in this part of the book need be presented separately.

It was important for the aims of this book to include the sociological and cultural discourse on violence against women, with insight into modern-day BiH, particularly the most recent period. After presenting fundamental ideas of patriarchal society and historical inequality between men and women in earlier chapters, we thought that it would be important to answer the question regarding ways in which the phenomenon of violence against women is situated within the wider societal structures of contemporary BiH, and how is this phenomenon linked with the culture of violence that we have shown to be traditional present in this region. The ninth chapter links the sociological and cultural theoretical approaches with an analytical insight into the cultural context of contemporary BiH. The result was the conclusion that patriarchal societal structures and the related discourse of gender roles are present in BiH today and that cultural factors such as the media, religion, language and tradition, along with popular culture, shape the perception of women and violence.

The violence encountered in BiH more and more frequently is not something that exists on its own, in isolation from other societal practices. Therefore, the violence that women are exposed to cannot be observed as separate from direct and symbolic discrimination, systemic invisibility, structural inferiority and subordination of women. Perpetrators of violence against women are often convinced of male power and superiority and female weakness, and such convictions are often linked to cultural norms and contribute directly to the spread of violence against women. De-humanisation and objectivization of women must be added to this, particularly present in popular culture. All these problems are challenges that BiH society is facing, and sociological and cultural approach to this issue is the one that allows us to become aware of the greater context, social links and factors that allow for perpetuation of violent behaviour, rather than individual acts. And identifying such mechanisms is the first step towards eliminating violence against women!

When this project was designed, it was agreed that the last chapter of this book would be dedicated to violence against women in literary historical discourse and that books included in mandatory reading lists in secondary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina would be analysed. The idea was based on the fact that presentation of violence against women is closely linked to the values of a society. Any individual voice, as much as we think of it as the voice of an individual, is never truly isolated from other historical voices and the socio-cultural context it was created in. Moreover, a literary text never comprises representations only, it also constructs and reproduces certain images of violence that may impact individuals quite strongly. In view of this, chapter 10 examines several canonical works of world literature from different literary and historical periods, and presents an analysis of the images of violence they contain. Applying the feminist method of reading with resistance, the selected narratives were found to be recounting patriarchal values and ideas that justified them, and that they sometimes enforced the culture of violence against women. Moreover, sections were identified in the analysed texts that support gender stereotypes and present violence against women inappropriately. It can be challenging to work on these excerpts in the classroom. This chapter points at the presence of neglected aspects or layers of literary texts, and suggests that the standard strategies of reading mandatory texts be complemented by new interpretative strategies. Part of the lesson may include, *inter alia*, discussions on gender relations, patriarchal societies, inequality, damaging effects of the phenomenon of violence against women, as well as its multi-layered manifestations.

Conclusion is the part of the book where it is common to indicate potentials for further research and we wish to indicate that such potential does indeed exist, and we do hope that this research will serve as a guide and a starting point in that direction. In view of the time span that this research covers and the wealth of original sources, new research may include the types of violence that could not be included here. For example, in some parts the focus was on sexual, domestic and physical violence, and thus new data may include economic and structural violence. Depending on what is the focus of individual chapters of this book there is room for further research of other forms of violence. There are also possibilities for including examples from more years in each of the historical eras covered here. New sources and new examples may lead to further development of hypotheses presented here, as well as their partial re-examination. In view of the time span, as well as the space available to us, we include here all the sources accessible to us, particularly in relation to the period from the early new era until today, for which there is a relative wealth of sources. New methodological patterns may be applied, i.e. different new strategies of quantitative and qualitative analyses. This book is dominated by qualitative methods, whereas the Ottoman period includes quantitative ones as well. In the future, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods may be applied to all the periods. As for literary historical discourses, a more focused insight into presentation of violence against women in South Slavic literary texts may be included. Moreover, it should be noted that in addition to those already included, other discourses and perspectives may be added. Namely, the primary focus of this book was on historiographic, literary, sociological and legal discourses, and philosophical, psychological, anthropological, ethnological and pedagogical discourses on violence against women may be added. There is also room for including literature in different languages, and an interdisciplinary, comparative approach may intensify the work even further.

The title of this scientific monograph announced that it would present certain lessons learnt from history. The issue of lessons cannot be treated universally, it is an issue that is re-examined and re-discussed, always in need of new definitions. This can only be done through open dialogue about this very important societal problem. Some of the conclusions we propose that may be important for initiating dialogue are as follows:

- Historically, violence against women was practiced and supported by some, but it is evident that there were always others who condemned violent actions and considered them damaging.
- Victims of violence against women, as well as perpetrators, were never from just one ethnic, religious, social, cultural or national group. None of the current identity groups in BiH may assign the burden of violence to just those groups in relation to whom it may feel certain antagonism. Violence against women simply transcends all such borders. Moreover, victims of violence include women of all ages, the elderly, mature women as well as young girls, those who are healthy as well as those with health challenges.
- Women are not necessarily and always just passive observers of violence. In addition to women who endured violence passively, in silence, there are recorded cases of women who actively sought their rights, within the parameters of socio-cultural systems they lived in. On that path, they encountered those who were emphatic towards their problems, but also those who tolerated violence. They also came across different helpers who tried to protect them, usually family members. Primary sources do show, however, that they were sometimes able to achieve justice, while it remained impossible in some other cases, in different situations and for different reasons.
- Men are far more frequently identified as perpetrators as well as victims of violence, but women primarily suffered violence where they were supposed to be most protected – in the family.
- There were visible forms of violence, recorded in public spaces, as well as different sources, thanks to which we are now able to discuss this problem. Parallel to that, though, it is equally possible to discuss violence that remained invisible. This problem cannot be discussed a-historically, which is what many theoreticians do today from the comfort of their offices; instead, this can only be done on the basis of insight into the wealth of historical texts and their analysis.
- Throughout the examined period, historical communities in the territory of BiH did bear the markings of patriarchal societies, with dominance of men over women, both in public spaces and in the family. Power relations between them were unequal. There are also evident gender roles and different expectations that historical communities had regarding what a man should be like, what is the role of a woman in the family and in society.

- It is possible to talk about gender-based forms of violence. There are also many other forms of violent situations recorded, where there is no simple way of proving that violence against women was perpetrated just because they were women, i.e. because of their gender, or just because there is not enough information.
- Women may have suffered violence due to several different factors at the same time. For example, in order to understand violence against women in certain situations, it is necessary to take into account the element of gender, as well as their ethnic and religious identities.
- Wartime circumstances increase the chances for the appearance of organised, massive and systemic violence against women. Violence against women may also appear as part of strategies of war. This is a historical phenomenon, particularly well documented in conflicts that took place in the territory of BiH in the 20th century.
- It is not possible to give general or stereotypical presentations of entire peoples, particularly not to characterise an entire people, and make it applicable to each individual, even when there are certain dominant features. There is always room for those who differ from the majority.
- Historical societies had social mechanisms of control used to try to limit or restrict violence against persons living in their territory, which included women. In that case, it is important to note that there were attempts to limit violence against women and to sanction some of its forms. In other situations, particularly regarding domestic violence, there are evident tendencies to tolerate certain forms of violence.
- Different societies in the territory of BiH treated violence differently, However, there are also analogous historical phenomena. Mark Twain is reported (though never proved) to have said that history never repeats itself, but it does often 'rhyme'. Whether he said it or not is less important – this statement is inspiring, because we do note that in different periods of time across history there are certain similarities in how violence is perceived and understood. On the other hand, in certain situations, one and the same act against a woman, such as domestic violence, for example, was considered to be violence, with some people seeing it as legitimate violence, while other societies criminalised it. Differences in perceptions of violence may be observed at both synchronic and diachronic levels.

- As for historical communities in the territory of BiH, primary sources do contain information about physical, sexual, verbal, psychological, economic and structural violence against women.
- Methodologically, images of violence against women should not be avoided, they should serve as the basis of dialogue. Slavery cannot be understood without freedom, light cannot be understood without darkness, and the idea of non-violence and peace cannot be understood without first understanding violence as a societal phenomenon, with all its historical variations and manifestations. This research is not trying to suggest that in order to read historical texts about violence, the interpretative key needs to be changed. History should be neither forged, nor embellished and romanticized. Presentations of violence against women are not just an opportunity to understand how communities in the past understood violence. They may also serve as an opportunity to open more comprehensive dialogue about the nature and the damaging consequences of violence, that may lead towards its elimination, or at least its reduction in the future.

These are just some of the conclusions proposed as possible lessons from the past. Naturally, we look forward to further dialogue on this issue. With this project, with the acronym See&Respect, research results presented in this book are to serve as the basis for organising workshops with university and secondary school students, as well as all other interested groups. Workshops will be based on work with texts about violence against women and building dialogue about its identification and multi-layered nature, but also about the values of our times and the future that leads towards equality of men and women and elimination of all forms of violence by men against women and girls. This is also the societal goal of our project, in compliance with the UN Sustainable Development Goals strategy. We hope that those workshops will contribute to better implementation of those goals and that we will be able to arrive at new, important lessons about violence against women and strategies to eliminate it. Moreover, we hope that this monograph will serve as an inspiration to initiate similar projects in other countries and that we will eventually have an opportunity to offer an international exchange on this important theme. Violence against women is a global problem and mutual cooperation and exchange of experiences is the only way to arrive to a time when violence against women will change from an 'epidemic' which it is at the moment, into a socially marginal phenomenon.