

Inheriting the Yugoslav Century: Art, History, and Generation

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy in the Department of
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

The dissertation examines the work contemporary artists, curators, and scholars who have, in the last two decades, addressed urgent political and economic questions by revisiting the legacies of the Yugoslav twentieth century: multinationalism, socialist self-management, non-alignment, and war. I conceptualize the work of contemporary artists as that of Yugoslavia's "surviving generation," and use it as a starting point for a reconstruction of what I argue is a decolonial twentieth-century Yugoslav aesthetics that has persisted into the present despite numerous and violent historical ruptures. I also seek analogies between this aesthetics and a number of theoretical frameworks, in particular those of Edmund Husserl, Frantz Fanon and Judith Butler, whose work similarly arose out of constellations of crisis, death, and survival. The worldwide strengthening of conservative and nationalist movements following the crisis of capitalism in 2008 reveals the violent break-up of socialist Yugoslavia in the 1990s as a precursor to global developments, rather than an exception, and my dissertation argues for a global import of the Yugoslav experience. From the anti-imperialist assassination of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914, the communist-led resistance during WW2, the anti-Stalinist socialist state and its prominent role in the Non-Aligned Movement, to the war-ridden, post-communist transition, the Yugoslav century is not only co-extensive with the dreams and disasters of the "short twentieth century" (1914-1991), but can be seen as this century's metonymy, or even, synecdoche. The engagement of contemporary artists, scholars and curators with the aesthetic and political legacies of the Yugoslav century, the dissertation argues, opens up the possibility to read Yugoslavia both as a proper name,

designating a particular history, and as a universally valid signifier for a number of unresolved and persisting questions of the past: the quest for social equality, ongoing forms of colonialism and decolonization, the return(s) of nationalism, and the crises of capitalism and democracy.

Dedication

To my parents, Ana and Stjepan.

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Preface

This preface is a brief chronological compass for navigating the otherwise often meandering turns taken by this dissertation, as it commits itself to the work of synthesizing “the Yugoslav twentieth century,” as well as what came immediately before and after it. It thus compensates for various threads in the dissertation that have “failed” to cohere into a single narrative or argument, in the same way that I argue Yugoslavism to always be failing as nationalism, but succeeding as that which opens the space for other conceptualizations of solidarity and belonging. I therefore hope that a set of art historical, historical and theoretical examinations of Yugoslav history and Yugoslavism presented in this dissertation will similarly have the function of opening up, rather than closing down the histories that I examine. At the same time, as I will elaborate in the introduction, I propose a constellation of keyterms that are employed throughout the dissertation and that serve as connective tissue for the kind of reconstructive and reparative art historical work that I am primarily focused on doing.

A Brief Overview of Yugoslav Twentieth Century

The twentieth century is the only time in history when “Yugoslavia” existed as a state formation. There were, in fact, two Yugoslavias: the first one, initially named the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, founded in 1918, immediately following WW1, and renamed in 1929 into the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. After the First World War, territories previously divided among the Ottoman Empire, Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Kingdom of

Serbia, were united in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, a constitutional monarchy governed by the Serbian Karadžević dynasty. The formation of the new state was the first political actualization of nineteenth-century ideas of “Illyrian” kinship of all South Slavic nations — or rather tribes, as the contemporaries referred to them — and the accompanying quest for their cultural and political autonomy. The Illyrian movement, named after the ancient Illyrian tribes who inhabited parts of the Balkan territory before the Roman conquests, was initiated by Croatian writers and intellectuals in the 1830s and 1840s, and was part of the evolving quests for political and cultural autonomy within the Habsburg monarchy. By the end of the 19th century, the emergence of multiple nationalist movements destabilized the Austro-Hungarian Empire that had come to be known as “the prison house of nationalities.” The annexation by Austria of the previously Ottoman-ruled Bosnia and Herzegovina sparked another bout of anti-Habsburg sentiment in the whole region, culminating with the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914 by the radical student group “Young Bosnia,” an event that became an immediate trigger for the First World War. During the war, members of the London-based “Yugoslav Committee” — mostly Croat and Bosnian-Herzegovinian émigrés, including sculptor Ivan Meštrović (1883-1962) — lobbied for the forming of the South-Slav state following the war. Serbia was seen as the natural political leader of the new Yugoslav union, as the only self-governed nation (having achieved independence from the Ottoman Empire already in the nineteenth century), as well as due to its triumph in the First World War. Despite this political and dynastic leadership, the idea of the common state implied the establishing of equality among its three nations: Slovenes, Croats and the Serbs, seen by Yugoslav ideologues as belonging

to a single “race.” These were the only three nations initially recognized to constitute the South Slav state. The sovereignty of other Yugoslav groups, such as the Macedonians, Montenegrins, Moslems, will be recognized only in the socialist Yugoslavia. The realization of the multinational unification following the war did not, however, result in peaceful coexistence; rather, the social and political spheres were marked by incessant conflicts and debates between different national and social groups vying for power, with Serbian hegemony perceived particularly by the Croats as a major stumbling-block to social and political equilibrium. The tensions culminated in 1928 when the leader of the Croat Peasant Party Stjepan Radić was assassinated in the Parliament. In January 1929 King Alexander Karađorđević abolished the parliament and the constitution, proclaiming dictatorship and renaming the country into the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The imposition of dictatorship was legitimized as a kind of *retour à-a-l'ordre*, and was accompanied by strict censorship and control of political opponents, as well as efforts at neutralization of particular nationalisms and a more forceful imposition of Yugoslav nationhood and culture, or of “state Yugoslavism.”¹

In 1941 the Kingdom of Yugoslavia disintegrated under the Nazi occupation and the establishment of several collaborationist fascist regimes, most notoriously the Independent State of Croatia, which consisted of parts of present-day Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and whose adherence to the Nazi persecution of Jews and the Roma was accompanied by

¹ Christian Axboode Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs: Identity in King Aleksandar's Yugoslavia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).

the persecution, religious conversions and mass killings of Serbs. After successfully launching and organizing a broad-based resistance movement against the Nazi and Fascist occupiers and local collaborationists during WW2, the Yugoslav Communist Party, led by Josip Broz Tito, assumed leadership in 1945 of the newly founded Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, one of the post-war, communist "People's Democracies," established not as dictatorships of the proletariat but on the broad basis of the Popular Front. The Party was particularly careful to accommodate the concerns about Serbian hegemonic and unitarist tendencies that were seen to have marked the failure of the first Yugoslavia, and the attention to the national question was among the key reasons that the new country was designed according to the federalist principle, comprising six socialist republics and two autonomous provinces.² Although there was significantly less, in fact almost none at all, top-down insistence on the idea of integral Yugoslavism in second Yugoslavia – in the late 1950s an idea of a supranationalist, socialist, and internationalist Yugoslavism was presented – it remained a relevant alternative identification for many citizens who did not identify with any of the particular nations. It also remained a continued object of reflection for many artists and intellectuals, who employed it in order to articulate ideas of autonomous and anti-colonial (cultural) politics.

Eric Hobsbawm's account of the "short twentieth century" (1914-1991) begins and ends in Yugoslavia: on June 28, 1914 the Austrian archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo, an event that would trigger WW1, and on June 28, 1992 French

² Initially the Kosovo autonomous province was defined as a "district."

president François Mitterand suddenly appeared in occupied Sarajevo to attempt to mitigate a war that was localized but that could be said to have signaled the break-up of Yugoslavia and of socialism and, by implication, of the dreams and disasters of the twentieth century.

1. Introduction

*Upal'te svjetlo, željni smo jedni drugih, nema razloga da se ne vidimo.*¹

It's dying, which means it's alive.²

The closer one looks at a word, the further it looks back.³

My task in this dissertation is to delineate a history of something that could be called Yugoslavia's claim, and at the same time see this claim as itself profoundly historical, that is, embedded in the very gesture of writing – whether in the form of historiography or art – a “Yugoslav” history. If the largest existing compendium of such history, *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije* (The Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia, 1955), edited by the Yugoslav writer, art critic, and essayist Miroslav Krleža (1893-1981), is a book that “speaks about a country in which we were born after many generations, and which we will pass on as our fatherland to those that are to come,”⁴ this dissertation is about those (art) historical and (art) historicizing generations, and about the passed-on inheritance. The opening sentence of the *Encyclopedia* contains a formula of Yugoslav history and at the same time hosts some of the key terms and issues that I will be concerned with: “we,” the subject of history, is born in “a country”

¹ “Turn on the light, we’re craving each other, there’s no reason to remain unseen.” A local folk singer during a performance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Youtube, misplaced source.

² Vanessa Place, “The Artist Is a Trout,” lecture delivered at CAA, Los Angeles, February 21, 2018.

³ An aphorism by Karl Kraus, cited in Wolfgang Ernst, “Dis/continuities: Does the Archive Become Metaphorical in Multimedia Space?,” in Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, Anna Watkins Fisher, and Thomas Keenan, eds. *New Media, Old Media: A History and Theory Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 115.

⁴ *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije* (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod FNRJ, 1955), n.p.. The introduction to the first edition of the Encyclopedia, from which the above text is quoted, was signed by the “editorial board of the Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia,” but both the style and content of the text point to the Encyclopedia’s initiator and main editor, writer Miroslav Krleža, of whom I will say more in what follows.

with a mission to turn that anonymous and unidentified piece of land into “our fatherland.” A certain (trans)generational protocol enables that transformation: it took “many generations” for the “we” to be born and to be able to, in turn, “pass on” the fatherland to “those to come.” At the same time, it is not simply the fatherland that is bequeathed but also the eight volumes of *Encyclopedia* that are to shed light on the centuries that both preceded and enabled the appearance of its object, our fatherland.

Who are all these generations and pronouns, and which is the country of birth and which the fatherland? There is great level of unease about naming in this entire passage: although one can infer from the title of the *Encyclopedia* that the name of the fatherland is Yugoslavia, the introductory text, as I will discuss in Chapter 2, insists on an unnamed, single historical “current” into which the “South Slav peoples” have for centuries coalesced. The unease certainly stems from the undesirable legacy of the first, royal Yugoslavia (1918-1941), and King Alexander’s dictatorship that attempted to resolve ethnic tensions between Serbs, Croats, Slovenes and other groups by imposing Yugoslavism as the only sanctioned national identity. The new, socialist Yugoslavia declared the right of self-determination of all the South Slavs peoples within the new federal structure, and it is this new, socialist Yugoslavia, and implicitly, a new kind of Yugoslavism, that the *Encyclopedia* is bequeathing to future generations.

The transfer did not go as imagined. By 1991 the anonymous birth “country” which the Encyclopedia’s generation turned into “our fatherland,” that is, into a sovereign, socialist

Yugoslav state, became a warring “no man’s land,”⁵ only to be reclaimed and partitioned along those same “conservatively particularist” lines, which the Encyclopedia’s introductory text deemed to be “in contradiction to the interests of the whole and to scientific truth.”⁶ As if to guarantee this partitioning, 40,000 copies of the Encyclopedia were shredded in 1995 by the new director of the Lexicographic Institute “Miroslav Krleža,” the very institution that had initiated the encyclopedic project.⁷ Two decades later the battle was far from over: “In 1991 against Yugoslavia, in 2014 against the Yugoslavs,” declared a protest banner suspended between two lampposts on a Zagreb sidewalk, where the Croatian Homeland War veterans had set up their 555-day-long “tent revolution.”⁸ [Figure 1] Who are these resurrected Yugoslavs? And are the Croatian warriors really sure that Yugoslavia did not return with them?

If the two iterations of Yugoslavia’s existence as a state formation arose following the bloodshed of two world wars, is there a formation in which Yugoslavia exists after the wars of the 1990s?⁹ I wish to argue that the veterans are not simply paranoid, and that the

⁵ I am echoing here the Oscar-awarded film, *No Man’s Land* (2001), directed by Danis Tanović.

⁶ “Particularisms” are evidently a euphemism for nationalisms in the text.

⁷ The institute was founded in 1950 and originally named Yugoslav Lexicographic Institute, with Krleža as its first and life-time director. In 1983, following Krleža’s death, the institute was renamed after him. On the destruction of copies of the Encyclopedia, as well as the coordinated destruction and removal from public libraries of books produced in Yugoslavia found to be undesirable and inappropriate in the new political and ideological set-up of the 1990s, see Ante Lešaja, *Knjigocid: uništavanje knjiga u Hrvatskoj 1990-ih* (Zagreb: Profil, 2013). The scope of the destruction is reflected in Lešaja’s neologism *knjigocid* (book-cide).

⁸ Appropriating the tactics of the global Occupy movements, the veterans installed a tent on the sidewalk in front of the building of the Croatian Ministry of Defense in Zagreb and claimed this space for the duration of 555 days, from October 2014 to April 2016.

⁹ Although it is more correct to speak, as Sabrina P. Ramet does, of “three Yugoslavias,” the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1992-2003), which consisted of the two remaining Yugoslav republics, Serbia and Montenegro, can no longer be considered a Yugoslav state as it no longer brought together the majority of South Slavic peoples. Sabrina P. Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State-Building and Legitimation, 1918-2005* (Washington, D.C.: Bloomington, IN: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Indiana University Press, 2006). In fact, Yugoslav history records three Yugoslav state formations, and six different names: Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1918-1929), renamed in 1929 as Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929-1941),

returned Yugoslavs constitute Yugoslavia's surviving generation. What this means, first of all, is the survival of the generativity of Yugoslav history, which, in contrast to the more prevalent identification of this history with socialist Yugoslavia (1945-1991), I view under the heading of the Yugoslav twentieth century.¹⁰ From the anti-imperialist assassination of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914, the communist-led resistance during WW2, the anti-Stalinist socialist state and its prominent role in the Non-Aligned Movement, to the war-ridden, post-communist transition, the Yugoslav century is not only co-extensive with the dreams and disasters of the "short twentieth century" (1914-1991), but can be seen as this century's metonymy, or even, synecdoche.¹¹ The engagement of contemporary artists, scholars and

followed by a novel state formation, Democratic Federal Yugoslavia (1943-1945), declared by Yugoslav communists in the midst of WW2, and territorially recognized and established in 1945 as the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (1945-1963), which was then renamed, in 1963, as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1963-1991/2). The already mentioned Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1992-2003) explicitly removed the attribute "socialist," but the term "Yugoslavia," as was mentioned, radically diverges from pre-1991 situation.

¹⁰ By more prevalent, I mean both in popular references and scholarship, where the post-WW2 Yugoslav state is a more frequent topic, or where the two Yugoslav states are examined separately. There are a number of exceptions to this rule, however, among which, in European and Yugoslav scholarship before the break-up Frederick Singleton, *Twentieth-Century Yugoslavia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976); Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918-1988* (Belgrade: Nolit, 1988); Stevan K. Pavlovitch, *The Improbable Survivor: Yugoslavia and Its Problems, 1918-1988* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1988), and later John B. Allcock, *Explaining Yugoslavia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); *New Perspectives on Yugoslavia: Key Issues and Controversies* (London: Routledge, 2011); Dejan Djokić, ed. *Yugoslavism: Histories of a Failed Idea, 1918-1992* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003); Hilde Katrine Haug, *Creating a Socialist Yugoslavia: Tito, Communist Leadership and the National Question* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012); John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was a Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias State-Building and Legitimation, 1918-2005*; Andrew Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998); Mari-Žanin Čalić, *Istorija Jugoslavije u 20. veku* (Belgrade: Clio, 2013); Tanja Zimmermann, *Der Balkan zwischen Ost und West* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2013), the last example extending both geographically and chronologically away from Yugoslav twentieth-century state formations, and into the early nineteenth century and a broader area of the Balkans. For the sake of simplicity, I will refer to the two Yugoslav state formations as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, or socialist Yugoslavia.

¹¹ Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 1995). The kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918-1941) and Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1945-1991) both arose in the aftermath of the two world wars, and its end coinciding with the end of the Cold War and the defeat of socialism, events that frame Hobsbawm's narrative. I use these stylistic figures in the sense proposed by Hayden White in his pioneering, metahistorical analysis of historiography as narrative, Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973). Branislav Stojanović has made a suggestion along similar lines, when he stated that Yugoslavia is "one of the names for the twentieth century," that is, a name for the impossibility to see the twentieth century other than a century "inherently divided, antagonized and inconsistent." Branislav Stojanović, "Politika partizana," *Prelom* 5 (2003), 48.

curators with the aesthetic and political legacies of the Yugoslav century, this dissertation argues, opens up the possibility to read Yugoslavia both as a proper name, designating a particular history, and as a universally valid signifier for a number of unresolved and persisting questions of the past that continue to inform the globalized horizon of the present: the quest for social equality, ongoing forms of colonialism and decolonization, the return(s) of nationalism, and the crises of capitalism and democracy.

What is at stake in these contemporary addresses to the past, of which Yugoslavia's surviving generation is part, is a particular conjunction of a global/planetary state of crisis and a renewed quest towards world-historical, or rather, globe-historical, totalization. If the postmodern period was, as Fredric Jameson has argued, characterized by a global spatialization of time,¹² the last decade marks a shift towards what could be described as a deep temporalization of the globe. Even beyond the prevailing academic imperative of "global (art) history," the currency in contemporary art and critical theory of concepts such as anthropocene, capitalocene, coloniality (and no longer simply colonialism), cosmism (an obscure Russian supplement of sorts to communism), big history, or ancestry, suggests procedures of temporalization aimed at historicizing (the catastrophe of) the now by identifying its singular, "deep" origin – the human, Capital, colonialism, death, or even, the Big Bang. What all these quests amount to is a return of History, although not really a triumphant one, as it might have appeared in 2012 when Alain Badiou announced "a rebirth

¹² Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (Post-Contemporary Interventions)* (Duke University Press, 1992).

of history” in “a time of riots.”¹³ Instead, in a scattered epistemological pursuit historical knowledge is summoned as a *deus ex machina* with which to address a state of urgency or emergency, and from which to then potentially derive, but also postpone, directions for future struggle.¹⁴

Despite the fact that its scope is (at least seemingly) less ambitious, I propose to view “Yugoslavia” as another conceptual, artistic and (art) historical framework that enables such urgency-driven quests to comprehend the “whole story,” especially since the very writing of the whole story of Yugoslavia has always been a scandalous proposition. Ever since the nineteenth century, Yugoslav history and, by extension, Yugoslav nation, art or literature, was embraced either as a utopian, emancipatory gesture, or rejected as violence against both history and the nations seen to thus be absorbed into a single, totalizing current (a view that was ultimately normalized by the nationalist “Reconquista” of the 1990s).¹⁵ Although the Croatian warriors defined their public outcry as a frustration with the social status of veterans and their families, their almost two-year-long occupation of public space was itself a battle for history. The Croatian left-leaning government and their non-governmental allies were perceived to have threatened the sanctity of the Homeland War (1991-1995), by

¹³ “I therefore propose to say that we find ourselves in a *time of riots* wherein a rebirth of History [which Badiou also sees as a rebirth of the idea of Communism], as opposed to the pure and simple repetition of the worst, is signalled and takes shape.” Alain Badiou, *The Rebirth of History* (London: Verso, 2012), 5.

¹⁴ However, even if the (implicitly capitalized) H of this return is not necessarily indexing Hegel, and by (revolutionary) extension, or inversion, Marx, it still stands in opposition to the now infamous declaration of the End of History, as well as the politics and aesthetics of memory that accompanied history’s departure. See Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?,” *The National Interest* 16 (1989). For a contemporaneous articulation of the relationship between history and memory, as well as an advocated “transition” from history to memory as a presumably more organic form of relating to the past, see Pierre Nora, “Between memory and history: *Les lieux de mémoire*,” *Representations* 26 (1989).

¹⁵ I will say more about this in what follows, and in the second chapter of the dissertation, in which I discuss the equally controversial idea of constructing a history (and the future) of Yugoslav art or literature.

seeking to portray it as merely a Civil War, thus relativizing the clear distinction between aggressor (Serbia) and defender (Croatia). The veterans, however, did their own work of revisionist history: instead of the usual identification of the “Great-Serbian” or “Yugo-Chetnik aggressor,” the 1991 enemy changed and was redefined as “Yugoslavia,” thus implying not simply Croatia’s defensive reaction against a “particularistically,” that is ethnically and nationally, defined aggressor, but its proactive role in the destruction of – to evoke Encyclopedia’s carefully laid out terms – “the interests of the whole.”

While still treated predominantly as a slur in public discourse – the historical fact of its existence reluctantly invoked by euphemisms such as “the former state,” and its remains referred to as the Balkans, the Western Balkans, South-East Europe, or “the region” – over the course of the last decade “Yugoslavia” and the “Yugoslav” have witnessed a comeback, both as a reference to a historical formation of the past and as a non-dissoluble ingredient of the era that followed it, now increasingly referred to as post-Yugoslav.¹⁶ This return testifies

¹⁶ One of the earliest occasions in which the attribute “Yugo,” or “YU” entered the popular sphere with a positive, even nostalgic, connotation – outside of Serbia and Montenegro, where the name Yugoslavia officially persisted until 2003, and where it was an integral part of Slobodan Milošević’s ethnonationalist appropriation of Yugoslavism – was the internet project *Leksikon YU mitologije* (Lexicon of Yu mythology), launched in 2001 (leksikon-yu-mitologije.net), and published as a book in 2004, Iris Adrić, Vladimir Arsenijević, and Đorđe Matić, eds. *Leksikon Yu Mitologije* (Beograd; Zagreb: Rende; Postscriptum, 2004). The project, which mostly consists of entries referencing Yugoslav popular culture, was initiated already in 1989, but was halted by the war. For a reading of the Lexicon not as a regressive idealization of the Yugoslav past, as its critics saw it, but as a critical intervention in contemporary postsocialist politics of memory see Aleksandar Bošković, “Yugonostalgia and Yugoslav Cultural Memory: Lexicon of Yu Mythology,” *Slavic Review* 72, no. 1 (2013). Another “Yugo” intervention came from abroad, from Tim Judah, the British reporter whose earlier books on the Yugoslav wars marked a trend of sensationalist historiography of Yugoslavia’s break-up in the aftermath of the 1990s, and who in 2009 coined the term “Yugosphere” to refer to the renewal of social and economic ties across the region. Judah, Tim, “Entering the Yugosphere.” *The Economist*, 2009. Although the term made a strong (both negative and positive) impact in the post-Yugoslav media and social space, as he later pompously reflected, “the idea of the Yugosphere bores me rigid,” and anyway, “[n]o one outside the area cares”: “Call it the Yugosphere, call it the “region”, the “zone”, the Adriatic or whatever. No one outside the area cares. [...] Look at the Yugosphere. Disastrous demographics, low productivity, comparatively poor infrastructure, suffering from a long-term decline in education standards. And a combined population barely the size of Shanghai.” Tim Judah, “Let’s Hear it for the Yugosphere.” *The Economist* (2011): <https://www.economist.com/eastern-approaches/2011/06/23/lets-hear-it-for-the-yugosphere>. Those left inside the area,

to a renewed generativity of Yugoslav history, which is not one-sided, as it constitutes both a renewed fidelity to some of the key claims of the (Yugoslav) twentieth century: multinationalism (brotherhood and unity), social equality (socialist self-management), and global equality (non-alignment), and the “veterans” defensive reaction against them. This reaction is itself part of the historical dialectics generated by what could best be described as an always shifting, yet permanently specific, Yugoslav positioning. Always shifting, because it is contingent upon changing social and political circumstances; permanently specific, because it insists on the potentiality of the (impossible) Yugoslav name. What does yet another (art) historical and (art) historicizing comeback of Yugoslavia want, notwithstanding its varying connotations across art, scholarship, activism, media, and social media? What is Yugoslavia’s claim? This is one of the key questions that the dissertation attempts to answer, while proposing that the answer cannot be approached without asking about the “wants” of the earlier, (art) historical comebacks of Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav. In the remainder of the introduction, I will attempt to summarize the dissertation’s engagement with this question, by looking further into what I propose to see as Yugoslavia’s three interrelated, conceptual and procedural facets: history, art/aesthetics, and generation.

A Yugoslav history

To write a Yugoslav – and not, say, Croatian, Serbian, Macedonian, or, more recently, Eastern European, Balkan, global, etc. – history, has presupposed a merging of

however, seemed to have really cared. The year 2009, as I will show, marks the beginning of the period when the term Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav, or alternatively, (post)Yugoslav will start appearing more frequently, primarily in the realm of art and scholarship, often with decidedly affirmative overtones.

aesthetic, epistemological and political utopianism that would irrupt into the prevailing modes of navigating both past and the present. The first public institution dedicated to the research of “South Slavic history” was founded in 1851 in Zagreb, following the failed 1848 revolution and the introduction of “Bach’s absolutism” in the Habsburg Empire, in which, as Ivana Mance writes, “all hitherto existing forms of autonomous political decision making and action were abolished.”¹⁷ Not only was the newly instituted Society for South Slavic History and Antiquities political in being the only one that retained (a version) of the previously banned “Illyrian” name, it was the historical knowledge itself that was “seen as an essential factor in future political development.”¹⁸ Moreover, its major outcome was Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski’s *Slovník umjetnikah jugoslavenskih* (The dictionary of Yugoslav artists, 1858), the first art historical compendium explicitly designated as “Yugoslav.”¹⁹

The attribution of a compensatory role to scholarship and art, seen to make up for the impossibility of political action, is a classic trope of histories and theories of cultural nationalism. However, as Yugoslav writer Miroslav Krleža, himself an obsessive historiographer, reflected in 1966, what distinguished the “Illyrian” nationalists from their

¹⁷ Ivana Mance, “Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski: Art History and Politics in Croatia (Second Half of the 19th Century),” in *History of Art History in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe (Vol. 1)* (Toruń: Society of Modern Art; Tako Publishing House, 2012), 82. Following the 1848 revolutions, in 1849 Emperor Francis Joseph I imposed a new constitution and censored all political dissent.

¹⁸ Mance, “Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski,” 82. *Ilirski pokret* (Illyrian movement), partly coextensive with *Hrvatski narodni preporod* (Croatian national revival), was a romantic-nationalist movement initiated by mostly Croat writers and intellectuals during the 1830s and 1840s, which affirmed Croatian language and culture within the Habsburg Empire, and advocated cultural unity of the South Slavs. The name “Illyrian,” which signaled a presumed origin of the South Slavs in the ancient tribes inhabiting the Balkans, and which the Greeks called Illyrians, was banned in 1843, and the movement died down with the 1848 revolutions.

¹⁹ See also Mance’s monographic study on Sakcinski’s art historical work, and his contribution to the institutionalization of art history in the context of historiography in Croatia of the nineteenth century, Ivana Mance, *Zrcalo naroda. Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski: povijest umjetnosti i politika* (Zagreb: Institut za povijest umjetnosti, 2012).

other romanticist peers was that they “renounced their national name and their language,” and that they did so “irrevocably,” in the name of a higher, supranational, and spiritualized South Slavic, or even, pan-Slavic synthesis.²⁰ While citing this view as Krleža’s acknowledgment to the Illyrian movement, despite his otherwise well-known animosity towards Illyrianism in particular, and romantic bourgeois nationalism in general, *Krležijana*’s encyclopedic entry warns that his views are out of synch with “contemporary historiographical studies,” and that Krleža evidently approached the problem from a “literary aspect.”²¹ What this implies, presumably, is that Illyrianism was more recently argued to have been a decidedly Croatian movement, for which the supranational was merely a means to a national end, a “literary” veil of sorts, and that therefore the choice of the name Illyrian was also purely “literary,” as it were, and of no great consequence.²² Even if all this were “historiographically” correct, it cannot be true, for what is the nationalist project if not a claim for a name, a claim that all be subsumed under one name? And if the recognition of this claim, or Krleža’s recognition of its partial subversion is to be understood from a “literary aspect,” this speaks more to both the “literary” and the “literal” constitution of

²⁰ Miroslav Krleža, cited in “Ilirski pokret,” *Krležijana*, <http://krlezijana.lzmk.hr/clanak.aspx?id=1625>. Krleža has in mind the renunciation of the Croatian national name, and the *kajkavian* dialect, which was native to most members of the Illyrian movement, and which they nonetheless rejected in favor of advocating the *stokavian* dialect, as the foundation for standardized Croatian language. The *stokavian* was at the same time closest to the dialects that most people of Serbian, that is, orthodox Christian origin, spoke, and was thus understood as another step towards a South-Slavic cultural synthesis.

²¹ “Ilirski pokret,” *Krležijana*.

²² On the other hand, Mario Badurina, sees precisely this as a potential “implicit” meaning of Krleža’s evaluation of the Illyrian movement’s idealist-driven, “self-negating audacity,” which could also be understood to be driven not by a quest for a South Slavic synthesis, but by a veiled, strategic approach towards Croatian national interests. 58. However, it seems that Badurina is driven to make such an interpretation mostly incited by exactly the “contemporary historiographical studies” of the Illyrian movement, which he cites, and by the fact that Krleža’s speech took place in 1966, when the initial optimism with regards towards the socialist-Yugoslav synthesis began dissipating, and the Croatian national question was once again coming to the fore. Marino Badurina, “Povijesnost percepcija hrvatskog nacionalnog pitanja u djelu Miroslava Krleže,” diss., University of Rijeka, (2014), 58.

nationalism than to one presumed to understand it as such. Not least of all, it speaks to the intellectual and poetic work that such a claim entails, the work, indeed, in which Krleža himself was deeply immersed.

My approach to both the past and present of Yugoslavia and Yugoslavism is informed by the attentiveness to the generative power of the name, and to the work of artists and intellectuals who applied themselves to the task of such nominal – as well as anti-nominal – generativity. While there exist, mildly put, radical breaks between the social and political circumstances that marked the work of different generations of artists and scholars that interest me in this dissertation, from the nineteenth century until today, I nonetheless seek to trace continuities that have survived those breaks, even if their survival be located primarily in the persistence of the Yugoslav name, and even if that name be “literary,” that is, one primarily situated in the field of art. In fact, as I will argue, the persistence of the Yugoslav name turns out to be none other than a persisting torment inherent in the very imposition of the Name, which is pithily summarized in Maurice Blanchot’s dictum: “The horror – the honor – of the name, which always threatens to become a title.”²³ In other words, those gathering around the Yugoslav name have been those who sought ways to irrevocably resign on other national, confessional, and societal titles, without, however, wishing to remain completely nameless. They were those who doubted the name, doubted even the Yugoslav name and its various versions; rejected it, returned to it, reverted to the more proper, national names, returned again to the Yugoslav name, redefined it, were

²³ Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 7.

disappointed by it, looked for a completely new name, found it in a mass grave, confessed – not unlike Leonard Cohen and the Jewish tradition echoing in his song²⁴ – that they do not even know the name.

As Renata Jambrešić-Kirin wrote, the logic that led the average Yugoslav citizen to identify as “Yugoslav” was informed by a “negative dialectics” exemplified by Josip Broz Tito who once, presumably rhetorically, asked: “My father is a Croat, my mother is a Slovene – so what does that make me?”²⁵ This “negative dialectics,” however, is not simply a matter of an (im)practical dilemma faced by those born in the so-called “mixed marriages,” but is the logic that has repeatedly been claimed as the very core of Yugoslav history and the proverbial Yugoslav exceptionalism. Yugoslavia is neither East nor West, or is, in a meeker version, “between” East and West, just as it is between – or doubly opposed to – Byzantium and Rome, Islam and Christianity, despotism and modernity, state socialism and liberal capitalism, First World and Second World. From this derive some of its key oxymorons, which have emblemized its exceptional status of threading a “third path,” for better or worse: market socialism, red bourgeoisie, socialist modernism, Coca-Cola communism. Although it marketed itself as the epitome of “third” variants – most famously, non-alignment and self-management – it was certainly not alone in its quest, and many of its oxymoronic constellations can be related to the analogous states of “inbetweenness” pertaining to the deeper history of the Balkans, Central Europe, or The Third World, in

²⁴ “You say I took the name in vein, I don’t even know the name.” Leonard Cohen, “Hallelujah,” *Various Positions*, 1984.

²⁵ Renata Jambrešić-Kirin, “Jugoslavenstvo osamdesetih: kriza višestrukih identiteta ili kriza dijaloga,” in *Religija, društvo i politika: kontroverzna tumačenja i približavanja*, ed. Bremer Thomas (Bonn: Deutsche Kommission Justitia et Pax, 2002), 70.

which Yugoslavia assumed the leading role through the Non-Aligned Movement.²⁶ Yugoslav exceptionalism is, moreover, not limited to socialist Yugoslavia, since the interwar state hosted its own set of contradictions and singularities, most of which were again co-extensive with Balkan history as an example of “special paths” to modernity, paths that revealed, ominously, a “transformation of the superstructure before the base.”²⁷ The idea of the “three-named people,” or the interwar Yugoslav discourse according to which Serbs, Slovenes, and Croats constitute a single nation that, however, bears three different names, is another oxymoron, which stems from the historical generativity of Yugoslavism as a specific kind of non-nationalist nationalism.²⁸

What most of these Yugoslav singularities have in common, however, is the fact that they are evidence of a certain kind of historical improvisation, arrived at in states best

²⁶ This thirdness could also be related to other political movements – such as, for example, the autonomist movement in Italy in the 1960s, or the Paris Commune – which also sought ways to bypass the hegemonic, binary choices of the day.

²⁷ Dušan Djordjević, “Clio Amid the Ruins: Yugoslavia and Its Predecessors in Recent Historiography,” in *Yugoslavia and Its Historians: Understanding the Balkan Wars of the 1990s*, ed. Norman M. Naimark and Holly Case (Stanford Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 2004), 11. and Gale Stokes, cited in Djordjević, 11. Djordjević is citing Gale Stokes’s argument according to which “political innovations came to the Balkans in the nineteenth century before the advent of social and economic change.”

²⁸ The idea of *trojmeni narod* (the three-named people) also implied the existence of a single people in the past, who were then divided by adverse historical circumstances. Such a version of *narodno jedinstvo* (national oneness) also became the basis for the imposition of what Christian Axbode Nielsen calls “state Yugoslavism,” that is the royal imposition of Yugoslavism as collective national identity in the period of King Alexander’s dictatorship between 1929 and 1929, Christian Axbode Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs: Identity in King Aleksandar’s Yugoslavia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014). I will nonetheless argue that Yugoslav nationalists in the period of the early twentieth century, who were gathered around the idea of the “three-named people,” do so from a position that acknowledges the specific work of construction that any nation-making involves, and especially the Yugoslav one, given its strong competition from individual South Slav nationalists, whose claims were politically and historiographically grounded. This (de)constructive, utopian attitude towards Yugoslavism, which defies the idea of pure identity, and embraces instead the notion of *sastavljenost* (composedness) is what makes the early variations of Yugoslavism – and not just its socialist version – into a kind of anti-nationalist nationalism. It should also be noted that during the 1920s the Yugoslav Communist Party, despite its illegal and oppressed status in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, supported the idea of “national unity” and the “three-named people,” Haug, *Creating a Socialist Yugoslavia: Tito, Communist Leadership and the National Question*, 20. For yet other concurrent, multinational ideas on identity and belonging in the nineteenth century, in the regions of Habsburg Dalmatia, Trieste and Venice, see Dominique Kirchner Reill, *Nationalists Who Feared the Nation: Adriatic Multi-Nationalism in Habsburg Dalmatia, Trieste, and Venice* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012).

described as conditions of “siege,” a word that Branislav Jakovljević aptly used to visualize the circumstances surrounding Yugoslavia’s expulsion from the Cominform in 1948, which, after significant panic, isolation, torment, and even, bodily perturbations, resulted in the invention of self-management, a novel form of state and economic organization.²⁹ The first Yugoslavia arose in similar conditions of pressure and uncertainty, as the unification between the former South Slavic Austro-Hungarian territories with the Kingdom of Serbia came more as a response to post-WWI territorial threats from Croatia’s and Slovenia’s Western neighbors, than a result of harmonized political goals.³⁰ In the beginning, then, there is always a negation of – or, less optimistically, a negation from – the outside, and only then follows the invention of a singular, Yugoslav (oxymoronic) politics: three-named people, self-managed socialism, non-aligned alliance, (br)otherhood and unity.³¹ This does not mean, however, that this novel politics is, to echo the earlier discussion, purely “literary,” that is, invented, fake, or even, that it is always a negative and never an affirmative politics, but it

²⁹ Writing about the intensification of socialist labor following Yugoslavia’s expulsion from the Cominform, which first resulted in the radicalization of the Soviet-model command economy and, following 1950, its abandonment in favor of the new model of socialist self-management, Jakovljević writes: “[I]n Yugoslavia under the siege conditions, the nascent self-management turned socialist competition into a festival of labor!” Branislav Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects: Performance and Self-Management in Yugoslavia, 1945-91* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 55. Even more insightfully, he makes an analogy between the Paris Commune, which Yugoslav communists identified as a historical precedent for self-management, and the establishment of Yugoslav self-management, both arising under “the state of siege.” (57)

³⁰ Arnold Suppan, “Yugoslavism Versus Serbian, Croatian, and Slovene Nationalism. Political, Ideological, and Cultural Causes of the Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia,” in *Yugoslavia and Its Historians: Understanding the Balkan Wars of the 1990s*, ed. Norman M Naimark and Holly Case (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).

³¹ I am renaming the Yugoslav “brotherhood and unity,” according to Edin Hajdarpašić’s concept of “(br)other,” with which he identifies the ambivalent position of Bosnian Muslims whom Yugoslav nationalists perceived simultaneously as (Slav) brothers and (Muslim) others. Hajdarpašić develops the concept further, in order to present it as a mechanism inherent in any nationalism, which functions as an ongoing (re)production of horizontal brotherhood at the same time as it also continuously marks the anxieties that at the same time identify “others” within that brotherhood, those found to be “backward, ignorant, hostile, disappointing, and otherwise insufficiently patriotic, yet at the same time acknowledged as indispensable to the national future,” Edin Hajdarpašić, *Whose Bosnia? Nationalism and Political Imagination in the Balkans, 1840–1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 16-17.

does mean that its “reality,” its affirmativity is decidedly contingent, and always preconditioned by a set of obstacles, a break-through in the face of overwhelming conditions of encirclement and siege. Understood as such, Yugoslav politics – and more broadly, Yugoslav history and aesthetics – can be understood as the embodiment of Aleksandar Flaker’s notion of “optimal projection,” which he defined as a signature procedure of the artistic avant-garde.³² Unlike utopia, optimal projection is always a result of a contingent “work of overcoming reality,” a decision for one choice among many.³³ This does not mean that there is nothing *but* the overcoming of reality but rather that its more-than-nothing is not a commitment to a predefined, utopian program. Instead, it is something that can, translating Flaker’s juxtaposition between project and projection, be best described as a *positioning*, one that entails a decided commitment while at the same time excluding a fixed position – a positioning precisely against the kind of position that would claim to know the right, or even its own, proper name.

In 1971, Marko Ristić wrote a brief letter to a political daily, in which he protested against the fact that in “our country (Yugoslavia)” (since it turned out that brackets were needed to remind readers of the country’s name), the national census had just interpreted the category “Yugoslav” as being equal to that of the “undecided.” I quote this letter as the best, or should I say, optimal – and purely occasional, and therefore oxymoronic! – manifesto of Yugoslavia’s optimal projection:

³² Aleksandar Flaker, *Poetika osporavanja: avangarda i književna ljevica* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1984.)

³³ Flaker, 68.

According to which dialectics, based on which lexical, terminological – or rather, linguistic, namely semantic, precisely semiological – logic, can my decision for Yugoslavism, that is, for belonging to the Yugoslav community, to the Yugoslav people, be classified in the category of, or rather be thrown into the dustbin of, the undecided, when it is, by definition, indisputably, an expression of a DECISION? [...] If we were not living in this particular moment, on this particular Planet, as it exists today, in this bloc-defined, violent, militarized, racist, nationalist, neofascist world, in which there is no survival, for us, the peoples of Yugoslavia, outside of Yugoslavia, outside of Yugoslavism – and no [individual] republican statehood cannot and will not save us – if all this were not the case I would then, perhaps, be consistently internationalist and declare myself a “citizen of the world,” that is, of Utopia. As things stand, Yugoslavia seems to be, and will be for a long time, our only reality, a reality at once minimal and maximal, unavoidable, and at the same time unavoidably relative.³⁴

It is not by coincidence that the author of the occasional manifesto of Yugoslavism is at the same time a leading Belgrade surrealist of the interwar period. Yugoslavism, after all, seems to have something to do with surrealism, as it is frequently relegated to the realm of ideas, or even, “failed ideas” and “artificial constructions.” As a form of failed and always failing nationalism, Yugoslavism requires a certain suspension of disbelief, but only in order to suspend the belief in the “really existing” reality, a procedure of estrangement that is the traditional province of artists and poets. In an issue of *Književni jug* (Literary South) in 1918, writer and critic Niko Bartulović staged the opposition between politicians, who have only stayed in the way of Yugoslav unity, dismissing it as a “poetic fantasy,” while “all of our best scholars, all our best poets, whether Serbs, Croats, or Slovenes, have been [...] the most passionate and the most convinced Yugoslavs.”³⁵ And yet, some of these artists, such as Ivan Meštrović, have at the same actively participated in the political processes of South Slav

³⁴ Marko Ristić, from a letter published in *Politika* on 27 April, 1971, available at: http://edicijajugoslavija.org/popis_je_završen.html

³⁵ Niko Bartulović, “Politička sloboda i kultura,” *Književni jug* 2, no. 10-11 (1918), 356.

unification, or held leading state offices, like Koča Popović, another interwar surrealist who became foreign minister in socialist Yugoslavia. Moreover, their “poetic” visions have greatly informed “official” ideologies of Yugoslavism. King Alexander’s dictatorial-Yugoslavist attempt in 1929 to “solve the national question by simply abolishing it,”³⁶ which included a reorganization of the country into nine *banovine* (provinces) that elided any ethnic references but were instead named after rivers, should itself be seen as a poetic act par excellence. In other words, while historiography indeed reveals Yugoslavism as a province most populated by artistic visions of alternative futures (and pasts), at the same time I do not mean to insist on any sort of moral, political, aesthetic, or any other purity which would separate these artistic visions from the dirty work of the state and its apparatuses.³⁷ Indeed, as I will argue in the third chapter in dialogue with Judith Butler’s reading of “Antigone’s claim,” Yugoslavia’s claim is itself one of impurity, of speaking, by means of a proper name, in the name of that which is below the threshold of signification and below the threshold of the nominal.³⁸ Or, as Pavle Levi has argued with regard to the “Yugoslavism without limits” of the 1980s satirical TV show *The Top Lists of Surrealists* – once again, surrealists! – Yugoslav “surrealism” arises out of an overflowing, incoherent excess of identity, which disturbs the stability and presumed reality of existing, coherent discourses of identification.³⁹

³⁶ Aleksa Đilas, cited in Haug, *Creating a Socialist Yugoslavia: Tito, Communist Leadership and the National Question*, 31.

³⁷ Or, as the insurmountable Yugoslav aphorist and conceptual artist Mladen Stilinović would say, “All money is dirty, and all money is ours.” Mladen Stilinović, in a round table in Galerija Miroslav Kraljević, Zagreb, misplaced source, quote from memory.

³⁸ Judith Butler, *Antigone’s Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

³⁹ Pavle Levi, *Disintegration in Frames: Aesthetics and Ideology in the Yugoslav and Post-Yugoslav Cinema* (Stanford (Calif.): Stanford University Press, 2007).

In socialist Yugoslavia, the category of Yugoslavs was officially introduced in the 1953 census in order to grant Bosnian Muslims the possibility to emancipate themselves from an imposed choice between Serbian or Croatian identification.⁴⁰ The Yugoslav self-declaration thus arose out of a search for the third option that could accommodate those who were unable, for legal or personal reasons, to identify with either one of the five constitutive South Slav nations or other nationalities and minorities, as well as those unable to identify with the category of nation as such. In fact, ironically, Yugoslav communists wanted to negate King Alexander's forced imposition of Yugoslav identity, only to realize that without it, they were themselves enforcing fixed identities. The Muslim identity, marked primarily by religious belonging, is itself a disturbance of the idea of nation, especially in the atheist Yugoslav state.⁴¹ As South Slavs, Muslims were nonetheless recognized as the sixth constitutive nation in 1968. However, by not recognizing a Bosnian or Bosniak name and by capitalizing instead the religious denomination "muslim" into a quasi-national proper name Muslim, the recognition was at the same time also a denial, which retained the distinction between "proper" constitutive nations and Muslims, who thus once again kept their paradigmatic nineteenth-century position that Edin Hajdarasic has named (br)other.⁴² With the recognition of Muslim nationhood, the number of Yugoslavs automatically plundered in the 1971 census, but in 1981 it rose to a number never seen before: 1,216,460 or 5.8% of the

⁴⁰ Neven Isailović, "Ko su (bili) Jugosloveni?" *Peščanik* (2011): accessed 17 July, 2015, <http://pescanik.net/ko-su-bili-jugosloveni/>.

⁴¹ Bosnian Muslims were predominantly South Slavs, who spoke the Serbo-Croat language, but their identity was at the same time marked by the Ottoman past and Ottoman occupation, the resistance to which is a strong foundational myth of Yugoslavism, as it originated in the nineteenth century.

⁴² Hajdarasic, *Whose Bosnia? Nationalism and Political Imagination in the Balkans, 1840–1914*, 16-17.

entire population. This rise remains somewhat unexplained in scholarship, but in his analysis of available statistic data, Neven Isailović concludes that, at this time, Yugoslavs comprised mostly urban population, who were the first generations to be born and grow up in socialist Yugoslavia (with no lived experience of the previous state or the war), and that their highest percentage could be found in ethnically mixed environments.⁴³

The economic and political deterioration of the country during the 1980s, as well as the appropriation of Yugoslavism for purposes of Serbian expansionist nationalism under Slobodan Milošević, contributed to the demise of Yugoslavism.⁴⁴ In the 1991 census, the numbers were reduced to 710,000, almost by half. Today, Yugoslavs are basically an extinguished species. There were 331 Yugoslavs in the 2011 census in Croatia, officially included in the “uncategorized” category, hosting all who were “impossible to categorize,” including 24 Marsians, and 20 Klingons.⁴⁵ In Serbia 23,303 were reported, much more than in Croatia; however, this is a significant decline from 80,721 in 2001. In the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (which forms only one entity in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina), the 2013 census revealed 881 Yugoslavs, and a small number of variously defined hybrids: Yugoslav Bosnian (8), Serbian Yugoslav (3), Swiss Yugoslav (2), Yugoslav

⁴³ Isailović notes that this cannot be confirmed by data. It is rather a stereotype, but one to which it is “not unfounded” to take into account. Bosnia and Herzegovina (especially Bosnia) was particularly marked by this mixed character, as the only republic not identified with, and not named after, a single South Slav nation. Its urban centers, in particular Sarajevo and Mostar, were popularly known as the hubs of so-called “mixed marriage” families, whose children, but also the parents, can be presumed to have favored the Yugoslav, versus an ethnically defined, identity, Isailović, “Ko su (bili) Jugosloveni?”

⁴⁴ Isailović, “Ko su (bili) Jugosloveni?”

⁴⁵ Statistics are available at “Dodatak:Popis stanovništva u Hrvatskoj 2011.”, *Wikipedia*, [https://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dodatak:Popis stanovništva u Hrvatskoj 2011](https://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dodatak:Popis_stanovništva_u_Hrvatskoj_2011), while the information about the numbers of “unusual” identifications found in census, including Yugoslavs, is taken from “Zanimljivosti iz Popisa: u Hrvatskoj žive 24 Marsovca, a 57 stanovnika vjeruje u - splitske bijele,” *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 17 December, 2012. <http://www.slobodnadalmacija.hr/Hrvatska/tabid/66/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/196912/Default.aspx>

Bosnian Herzegovinian (2), Bosnian Herzegovinian Yugoslav (1), Muslim Yugoslav (1), Yugoslav Bosniak (1), and Roma Yugoslav (1). Among these hybrids, it seems like the single stateless Roma is the best match for the Yugoslav, whose statehood – a failed statehood of a failed nationalism – was lost. Isailović interprets this continuous process of decline as a “silent genocide” of the Yugoslavs, who are, he also points out, not included as a category in any statistics of casualties of the 1990s wars.⁴⁶ Just as all major cities in Bosnia-Herzegovina were made ethnically clean as a consequence of war, Yugoslavs disappeared from its entire territory, and it is not likely to ever be reported whether or not most of them “emigrated to countries far away from their homeland, joined one of the sides and renounced their Yugoslavism, or ended up in mass graves.”⁴⁷

This conclusion, which reveals the “silent genocide” of the Yugoslav wars, a genocide that cannot find its expression in the statistical apparatus, stands in an uncanny but illuminating relation to Ugo Vlaisavljević’s metaphor of the South Slav “proto-Self” as a conglomerate of “bare bones.”⁴⁸ As I will discuss in the fourth chapter, it is exactly on the ground – and, literally so – of these unidentified, unnamed, and unclassifiable bones that Monument Group proposed, in 2010, to build a future political project, of which the name is yet unknown.

⁴⁶ Isailović.

⁴⁷ Isailović.

⁴⁸ Ugo Vlaisavljević, “The South Slav Identity and the Ultimate War-Reality,” in *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation*, ed. Dušan Bjelić (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).

From the perspective of both its historical generation and contemporary generativity, Yugoslav history can be conceptualized as precisely a claim arising out of “bare bones,” whose historiographical and forensic record does not add up to form a proper name and a proper national identity. This is also the reason why Yugoslavism abounds with the possessive signifier “our” – “our people,” “our art,” “our language,” etc. – as a way to compensate for this lack of name, for the discomfort and torment that the very imposition of name implies. The Yugoslav “our” is not a “Royal We,” but one that situates itself below the threshold of representation, seeking, as any nationalism, to represent a people (*narod*), but finding that this people lacks historiographical, philological and forensic “meat” that would cover the “bare bones” and thus successfully cohere into a nation. Yugoslavism, then, ends up articulating the claim of something like “a peoples,” an illegible, ungrammatical singular plural, in which the “South Slav peoples” merge into one but never quite merge.

Yugoslav aesthetics and (post)Yugoslav art

It has been the task of Yugoslav aesthetics to attempt to transcribe this ungrammatical claim of “a peoples.” This is evident also in *Encyclopedia’s* introduction, in which the vision of “South Slav peoples” merging into a singular historical torrent is presented as a decidedly poetic vision (accessible, as it is claimed, only to the eyes of “rhapsodes”).⁴⁹ Miles away from this ecstatic, poetic vision inspired by the novelty of Yugoslav socialism, in the post-Yugoslav *Four Faces of Omarska*, a “working group” gathered

⁴⁹ *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije*, n.p.

around a Bosnian iron ore mine that had served as a concentration camp during the 1990s wars, one nonetheless finds the same task. In the group's work with camp survivors and activists, artistic research becomes the space, and the institutional art context a frame, through which survivors' claims gain a level of legibility and legitimacy in a political and ideological environment that otherwise shuts down their testimony. In the process, the Yugoslav name is itself displaced; the new name, with which the new instantiation of Yugoslav aesthetics now tells the "whole story" – constituting a new encyclopedia, so to speak – is that of Omarska.

Why is, then, what I claim to be the illegible claim of "a peoples" named South Slav, or Yugoslav, in the first place? The multiplicity of variants of this name, "*jugoslavenski, jugoslovenski, južnoslavenski, južnoslovenski, odnosno južnoslovenski*"⁵⁰ itself suggests that that Yugoslavia compensates for the lack of a (better) name; it is itself an uncertain search for a name that works best when posited as negation. As Tanja Zimmerman has argued, the "aesthetics of the Yugoslav 'third path'" was constituted in Krleža's introduction to the 1950 Paris exhibition *L'Art médiéval yougoslave* (Yugoslav Medieval Art) as a "double negation," in which the medieval Bogomil heretical sect, and the "new vision" of their sculptural tombstones, was presented as an anticipation of socialist Yugoslavia, and socialist Yugoslavia, in turn, as a dialectical anticipation of future to come.⁵¹ Zimmerman reads such

⁵⁰ Miroslav Krleža, cited in Drago Roksandić, "Krležina Enciklopedija Jugoslavije između euroskepticizma i euronormativizma: prilog poznavanju početaka Krležina projekta Enciklopedije Jugoslavije." *Studia lexicographica : časopis za leksikografiju i enciklopedistiku* 8, no. 2 (2015).

⁵¹ Zimmermann, *Der Balkan zwischen Ost und West*, 232-35.

an aesthetics as generating also a “new conception of space and time,” in which Yugoslavia becomes an eschatological territory and the Yugoslav third path a timeless idyll, “a unity not only of peoples, but also of the past, present, and future.”⁵² And yet, whereas Krleža should certainly be taken as the key theorist of Yugoslav aesthetics, and whereas the moment of the historical, heretical “schism” with the Soviet Union was truly conceived by him as a moment of redemption, Krleža’s Yugoslav aesthetics, which had been formulated already since 1919 and which evolved in relation to analogous Yugoslav aesthetic frameworks that preceded his own formulation, was anything but a timeless idyll. Rather, as I discuss in Chapter 3, it is an aesthetics of blood, suffering, “pure existence of matter,” resistance, and struggle, an aesthetics of colonial difference that institutes itself through negation of the overwhelming encirclement of oppression and domination.

This is truly a constant that connects the past, present, and the future, but it is hardly an idyllic one, and it does not evolve in a straight line, but again functions according to the logic of Flaker’s “optimal projection,” which commits to the project, but only in so far as that project is always contingent on “working while overcoming reality.” The contingent determinant indicates that the fidelity is not to the work of projection but to the work of overcoming, the former being simply a necessary supplement to the latter. Not an idealist but a materialist aesthetics, then, and although the “work of overcoming” is formally the

⁵² “Indem einzelne Zeitabschnitte der Vergangenheit nicht nur an der Gegenwart partizipieren, sondern als Prophetien sogar die Zukunft vorwegnehmen, wird die Trennung zwischen Vergangenheit und Gegenwart aufgehoben. Auf diese Weise werden weit voneinander liegende Kulturen in ein Kontinuitäts- und Korrelationsverhältnis gebracht. Das jugoslawische Territorium wird so zum Ort des Eschatons — einer Einzeit nicht nur der Völker, sondern auch von Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft.” Zimmermann, *Der Balkan zwischen Ost und West*, 236, 238.

same, its content changes and the aesthetic changes. This is why, as I will argue, from the Illyrian movement's philological research, to Ivan Meštrović's energetic yet tormented sculptural bodies, from Vladimir Dvorniković's theory of the "mute tone" of Yugoslav folk song, to what I'll define as Krleža's triangulation between "vulgar materialism," "tormented Fanonism" and "drunken historiography," to Prelom's (post-)Yugoslav exhibition of Yugoslav art, Yugoslav aesthetics evolves as a series of negations, not only of immediate reality, but of the preceding Yugoslav aesthetics with which earlier realities had already been negated. This dialectical overcoming of both the present reality and of its earlier artistic transcription is what makes for the possibility to speak of Yugoslav aesthetics "as such," as both a theoretical and historical object. It is Yugoslav primarily by being positioned in this space which is always historicized through the figure of encirclement.⁵³

At the same time, there is something to the eschatological moment that Zimmerman identifies in the 1950s, when this ongoing historical encirclement is finally overcome, and the "work of overcoming reality" seems to halt and turns into the work of (both intoxicated and sober) historicizing (the work of encyclopedia), as well as into a work of art (exhibition). Liberated from the conditions of siege, the Yugoslav negative dialectics turns inwards, to displace its own center: central state planning is displaced with self-management (which will

⁵³ Speaking of Yugoslavism before Yugoslavia, and the historical position of South Slavs since the early medieval period, Drago Roksandić states that South Slavs inhabited the only European region in which "the epicenters of hegemonic power always lay elsewhere," and this power never came from a single empire, but was rather controlled by multiple empires for which, however, the region was always peripheral, and therefore, crucial for the maintaining of their borders, Drago Roksandić, "Yugoslavism Before the Creation of Yugoslavia," in *Yugoslavia From a Historical Perspective*, ed. Latinka Perović et al. (Belgrade: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, 2017), 32. This peripheral position, one surrounded by greater powers, is what most if not all elaborations of Yugoslav aesthetics have had in common.

continue to divide into smaller but ever-more bureaucratized organizational units); Yugoslavism as a common identity, even in its already de-ethnicized, socialist form, is abandoned, giving further legitimacy to republican/national decentralization; and culture, following the adoption, from 1945-1950, of Soviet-model socialist realism, is relegated, in Edvard Kardelj's pronouncement, to the "battle of opinions."⁵⁴ Yugoslav aesthetics, no longer in the midst of the historical battle against formidable conditions of siege, detaches itself from history-as-transformation, and turns into art-historical narrativization, embodied in the monumental modernist memorials to WW2.

Sveta Lukić's oxymoronic concept of "socialist aestheticism," with which he designated in the early 1960s the alienation of Yugoslav literature in the 1950s from the realm of the political, can be read as a mark of transition from Yugoslav aesthetics to (post)Yugoslav art. In the conclusion to Chapter 3, I will propose to read Lukić's general theory of aesthetics,⁵⁵ which includes practices as diverse as sports, oral history, and art, not in a synchronic but in a diachronic key. Such a reading reveals these various aesthetic practices as codes for the stages of Yugoslav history where sports (which, according to Lukić requires a lightning-fast response to contingent circumstances, and thus comes closest to being a "competition to life") could be seen as the stage of Yugoslav "acute revolution," as

⁵⁴ On cultural politics in the 1950s, see Ljiljana Kolečnik, *Između Istoka I Zapada: Hrvatska Umjetnost I Likovna Kritika 50-Ib Godina* (Zagreb: Institut za povijest umjetnosti, 2006). Andrew Wachtel attributes the break-up of Yugoslavia precisely to the inexistence of a common, Yugoslav culture, and the abandonment of efforts to institute culture on a federal level, Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia*. Similarly, Dejan Jović has proposed to see the break-up of Yugoslavia precisely as a result of the ideological framework of the "withering away of the state," which Yugoslav communists embraced as their credo, and which played itself out particularly in the period after 1974, when a new constitution, which enacted further decentralization, was implemented, Dejan Jović, *Yugoslavia: A State That Withered Away* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 2009).

⁵⁵ As most Yugoslav philosophy and politics at the time, his theory is inspired by the early writings of Marx.

Krleža called it, oral history (the still living, embodied and communal storytelling) is the stage of communicating to the “people” the meaning of their own historical, revolutionary agency (encyclopedia, WW2 memorials with their didactic and collective rituals). Finally, art, which Lukić describes as an imitation of the ideal “integral” state in which human life is finally freed of alienation, an imitation that nonetheless enables a captivating encounter with integral “essences,” is at the same time posited in opposition to life, because, as Lukić melancholically concludes, “after art, it is hard to live actively.” Art, as one of Lukić’s general, synchronic aesthetic forms thus diachronically matches his critical concept of socialist aestheticism, art that has broken the contract with active life and the acute revolution, and which thus marks the transition of Yugoslav aesthetics to (post)Yugoslav art.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ This does not mean that these are definitive historical stages, however, which would overdetermine the relationship between art and politics at a particular historical moment. On the contrary, as I will next argue, the return of the epistemological and aesthetic object “Yugoslav art” over the course of the past decade, has meant both a reactivation of Yugoslav aesthetics and a new instantiation of (post)Yugoslav art. My embracing of the notion of “aesthetics” in this dissertation somewhat echoes my understanding of Yugoslavism as a name adopted for lack of a better name. It is not that Yugoslav artists and writers did not use the word aesthetics, or aesthetic, and one could also write a dissertation on the specifically philosophical discourse on aesthetics in Yugoslavia. However, I am using it more in the sense proposed, or rather, most famously defended by Jacques Rancière, who sees its “confusing” significations precisely a starting point for its political potential. Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, trans. Steven Corcoran (Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009); Jacques Rancière, *Aisthesis : Scenes From the Aesthetic Regime of Art*, trans. Paul Zakir (2013). The sensory core of aesthetics, the liberation that it entails – or, what he calls, the (re)distribution of the sensible – is something that artistic practice is able to embody, as it were, but it cannot contain it. Aesthetics will always overflow the boundaries of art. This is how I understand the relevance of Rancière’s claim, but I also find that, in relation to contemporary art, Peter Osborne’s demarcation between aesthetics and art – although his argument is mainly to defend the notion of a philosophy of art and demarcate it from aesthetics – speaks to the overwhelming level of the institutionalization and commodification of art in the last decades, Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not At All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art* (London: Verso, 2013). And so, perhaps somewhat nostalgically, and despite the fact that contemporary art is also precisely another site of “confusion,” from the perspective of what seems its unstoppable breaking of medium-based boundaries, I see the Rancièrian framework of aesthetics as something that is in one way or another marginal, and perhaps even more applicable to the first half of the twentieth century, when it seems that divisions between the fields of art, politics, knowledge production and even, state building/dismantling, were less pronounced.

Those post-Yugoslav artists, activists and thinkers who once again today affirm the potential of Yugoslav history mainly align with the names of the Yugoslav legacies, such as self-management, multinationalism, non-alignment, without at the same time aligning with Yugoslavism itself – whether understood as a national, political or cultural identification. Precisely through their affirmation of Yugoslav history as the means with which to overcome, or at least position oneself in relation to, a constraining and oppressive reality, they nonetheless translate the “essence” of Yugoslavia’s claim, and the kind of Yugoslavism which Ristić defined as both minimal and maximal, unavoidable and unavoidably relative. Most typically, the oppressive reality is, just as in Ristić’s occasional manifesto, also doubly defined: as internal (the nationalist, conservative and corrupt regimes of the Yugoslav successor states), and external (capitalism, Europeanization, postsocialist ideology, etc).⁵⁷ In the 2009 introduction to the exhibition catalogue *Political Practices of (Post-)Yugoslav Art* – among the first to reclaim the signifier Yugoslav by at the same time bracketing and thus relativizing its “post-ness” in the neologism (post-)Yugoslav – Jelena Vesić and Dušan Grlja posit one such double negation as constitutive of the key aim of the project. This aim is to resist the dominant discourses that read the art of socialist Yugoslavia either through the paradigm of dissident resistance to totalitarian communist regimes of the East Bloc, whereby the specificities of the Yugoslav socialist project are ignored, and/or, through local constructs of national culture, by means of which

⁵⁷ See, for example, Tanja Petrović, *Yuropa: jugoslovensko nasleđe i politike budućnosti u postjugoslovenskim društvima* (Belgrade: Fabrika knjiga, 2012).

“Yugoslav art is chopped up and redistributed into a series of national histories of art, founded on the narrative of ‘liberating’ individual artistic contributions from the ‘communist repression’ and their simultaneous ‘return’ to the embrace of a particular national culture, thereby participating in the process of consolidation of the new nation-states.”⁵⁸

Evidently, even if this exhibition institutes a “(post-)Yugoslav art,” it does so only in order to begin anew the “negative dialectics” of Yugoslav aesthetics, to position itself once more in relation to the overwhelming conditions of encirclement and siege. Similarly, the 2008 student occupation of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb involved a reflection on the past, for example a reading group gathered around Susan Woodward’s economically grounded reading of Yugoslavia’s disintegration, with which students placed their protest against commodification of education both in opposition to global capitalism and in opposition to prevailing nationalist post-Yugoslav historiographies.⁵⁹ The long-term reverberation of this are a number of ongoing initiatives, such as BRID (Organization for Workers’ Initiative and Democratization, OWID, founded in 2012) in Zagreb, or the Center for Emancipatory Politics (CPE, founded in 2011 in Belgrade), which have connected the work of history writing with the “work of overcoming reality.” That this work is a true heir of what I termed the commitment of Yugoslav aesthetics to transcribe and provide legibility and legitimacy to the ungrammatical claim of “a peoples,” is evident in the statement on working methodology by the Tuzla-based Workers’ University (*Radnički Univerzitet*, RU):

⁵⁸ Jelena Vesić and Dušan Grlja, in Jelena Vesić and Zorana Dojić, eds. *Political Practices of (post-)Yugoslav Art: Retrospective 01* (Belgrade: Prelom, 2010).

⁵⁹ Susan L. Woodward, *Socialist Unemployment: The Political Economy of Yugoslavia, 1945-1990* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

Our work is primarily connected to the struggle to reorganize life—which is, in a sense, what the Dita workers’ struggle is all about. Our approach follows feminist research and methodologies [...] Our grouping and pulling together as the Workers’ University (RU) grew out of this struggle: some of us consider workers’ occupation of Dita the act of founding the RU, some hold that this was the first plenum in Tuzla (February 2014). Our research is our political work and our theory spreads from our practice. To say “our” means to envisage RU as an open structure with only one condition for joining: “commitment to the people” (Freira, 1994) as learning together politically.⁶⁰

This methodological manifesto contains so many elements of what I attempted to delineate as Yugoslavia’s claim and its aesthetics that it may, together with Ristić’s occasional manifesto of Yugoslavism, be extrapolated as its theoretical and historical abstract. It is agonistic: the founders of the Workers’ University cannot agree on when the foundational act took place, just like, as I will show in the second chapter, the members of the *Encyclopedia’s* editorial board could not agree on the “use of the word Yugoslav.” Its founding document is a methodological and not a programmatic manifesto, and it arises only after the fact, after the project of the University had already been founded, and after this project had itself already been grounded in the workers’ struggle. The methodological manifesto is, therefore, a prime example of optimal projection, a gathering around a program, but only as a conditional set of propositions that are ultimately grounded in the work of overcoming reality. Furthermore, the work of overcoming is defined by that quintessentially Yugoslav word “our,” the word explicitly defined as “a commitment to the people,” to the life of the disenfranchised workers of the Dita factory, whom the post-Yugoslav social, economic and ideological life-death-world has turned from socialist workers and owners of Yugoslav social

⁶⁰ Radnički Univerzitet, “What Happened and How Do We Work with This Question?,” September 2016, retrieved from <http://radnickiuniverzitet.org/kako-radimo-skupa>.

property once again into an illegible and illegitimate “a peoples.” Finally, just as one should not be surprised that Ristić’s occasional manifesto of Yugoslavism is a manifesto written by a surrealist, so should it not come as surprise that the Workers’ University contingent, methodological manifesto is written by a group that also includes two members of Monument Group, with whose own transcription of the claim of “a peoples” I will conclude the dissertation.⁶¹

In the post-Yugoslav context, the institutional frameworks of art and the university become, as socially sanctioned and representative frameworks, those under which the otherwise delegitimized Yugoslav claim can once again be provided with meaning and readability. In the process, the term Yugoslav (Yugoslav art/history) has also reached a certain level of normalization through the global circulation of art and knowledge. This is why artistic and activist practices, such as Tuzla’s Workers’ University, which do not directly label themselves as Yugoslav or post-Yugoslav, could perhaps be said to inherit Yugoslavia’s claim without at the same time claiming it and without accepting Yugoslavia’s own entanglement in the torment of the proper name. I will discuss such works in the third and fourth chapters of the dissertation.

(Surviving) Generation

In his aesthetic treatise, Lukić himself historicized the place from which his theory is enunciated by referring to his generation as a “reserve generation.”⁶² This is a generation of

⁶¹ Jasmina Husanović and Damir Arsenijević.

⁶² Sveta Lukić, *Umetnost i kriterijumi* (Beograd: Prosveta, 1964).

those who were too young to fight in WW2 (too young to be participants of the acute revolution), and too old to forget it, which made them into “eavesdroppers of their time, instead of heroes.” Moreover, they proved themselves in art, and not in some “more important, bigger stories.”⁶³ Art is itself here theorized as some form of “reserve,” a reserve of revolution, that which is left of it – revolutionary eavesdropping. If the earlier twentieth-century generations of Yugoslav artists and writers, who were at the same time activists and revolutionaries, defined their relation to the past in the form of decisive negation – which at the same time makes them a “true” generation, in the sense defined by Karl Mannheim – the “reserve generation” is ambivalently tied to the revolutionary past just as much as it escapes it by proving itself in art.⁶⁴ A reserve generation is alienated from the revolutionary instantiation of the new social order, from both its heroic and its dark side (war, conflict, violence and trauma), yet is too close to it to “forget it.”

I propose to see the present-day post-Yugoslav generation in analogy with Lukić’s reserve generation. The historical event that they place themselves in relation to is the event of the 1990s wars and Yugoslavia’s break-up, which was instantiated by the generation of their parents, who were the “true” generation that brought a novel social order. Unlike their parents, the majority of whom were fully absorbed by the nationalist “Reconquista” of the late 1980s and the 1990s, and even more unlike the cohorts growing up following

⁶³ Lukić, *Umetnost i kriterijumi*.

⁶⁴ Karl Mannheim defined the generation as a historical cohort, which derives its identity in relation to a major historical event, such as WW1, and which imposes itself as the negation of the past and a bearer of a new social order, Karl Mannheim, “The Problem of Generations,” in *Essays* (Routledge, 1972).

Yugoslavia's break-up, generations born in the late 1970s and early 1980s experienced something like an arrested social, ideological, and "historiographical" development, which left them too young to confront the new ideological and political make-up, and too old to embrace it without reserve. This "reserve" was the reserve of Yugoslav history, and not wanting, or not being able to rid themselves of this reserve is what necessarily turned them into Yugoslavia's unreliable witnesses. Unreliable, because of the "immaturity" of their lived, Yugoslav experience, yet witnesses nonetheless. This unreliability of their lived experience, its decidedly childish nature, was exacerbated by the overall overwriting of Yugoslav history with the new national and nationalist narratives, and working through it necessitated a (re)turn to history and historiography (and not memory).⁶⁵ By reanimating the subjugated epistemological and aesthetic object "Yugoslav art"/"Yugoslav history," they have positioned themselves as those who survived both Yugoslavia and their own (post)Yugoslav generation/gestation. Through such positioning Yugoslav history itself survives, and is itself revealed to be constituted through survival, an ongoing dialectics between Yugoslav generativity and its negation by anti-Yugoslav "veterans." Surviving generation is thus at once a name for a specific age and historical cohort, as well as a name for Yugoslav history.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Although perhaps only implicitly and also by necessity, that it, by this generation's lack of "reliable" memories – this turn to history entails also a turn against the prevailing and increasingly pacifying "culture of memory." The discourse of memory has been prevalent in the post-Yugoslav space also within the framework of the work of numerous NGO initiatives that have focused on so-called transitional justice, and on programs aimed at "dealing with the past."

⁶⁶ This is also what distinguishes my understanding of surviving generation from similar, generationally defined concepts of the "post-Yugoslav," with which I otherwise share the attempt to define a relationship between contemporary artistic and activist practice and Yugoslav history. In the introduction to *Post-Yugoslav Constellations*, Vlad Beronja and Stijn Verwaet refer to Marianne Hirsch's concept of "post-generation" in order to define their usage of "post-Yugoslav" as a way "to mirror both the (violent) break between socialist Yugoslavia and what came after it, as well as a certain continuity of its cultural, political, and social legacy," Vlad Beronja and Stijn Verwaet, eds. *Post-Yugoslav Constellations: Archive, Memory, and Trauma in Contemporary Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian Literature and Culture* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), 5. Whereas my own

The above argument quivers somewhere between a history/theory and my own, unreliable and childish, testimony of the post-Yugoslav, post-war transition. At the same time, its validity is corroborated by the fact that this personal experience has been shaped by, and shared with, other art historians, curators, artists, writers, and scholars, with whom I worked in what were, at the time of late 2000s, still frameworks defined as either national and nationalist, or “Western Balkan,” “Eastern European,” or more broadly, those of “global contemporaneity.” This was a predominantly “contemporizing” set-up, which tried to drag the Balkan people out of the mud of their past, including their obsession with their past – as well as their anomalous obsession with the hyperbolized, communist future – and which offered, in return, contemporaneity, an oxymoronic promise of nothing but the present. It is from such a contemporizing set-up that this work then shifted in the direction of historicizing itself within a reclaimed continuity with Yugoslav history. Even beyond the networks with which I am directly familiar, over the course of my dissertation research, which I began in 2012, and which is a continuation of the curatorial research I had done before, I have encountered moments of “elective affinity” with the same historicizing move,

approach is similarly defined as an acknowledgment of both violent breaks and continuities, I do not see the break-up socialist Yugoslavia as *the* event that determines the “postness” of surviving generation, but I instead see the “postness” as itself already historical, and itself part of the dialectics in which Yugoslavia’s claim always posited itself as a matter of surviving generation – of breaking through conditions of siege. This structure of traumatic survival is much closer to the way Kristine Stiles has conceptualized “destruction art” following WW2, as art immersed in the very problem of survival in the overall historical climate of what Robert Lifton defined as “genocidal mentality,” rather than in a specific event, such as the Holocaust – or the break-up of Yugoslavia – which then, in Marianne Hirsch’s generational framework, defines a “post-generation.” See Kristine Stiles, *Concerning Consequences: Studies in Art, Destruction, and Trauma* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015). and Marianne. Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory : Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012). Still, their particular position in which they no longer have to tie Yugoslavia’s claim to an existing state-formation, that is, the fact that they speak from a place that makes “Yugoslavia” into an illegitimate framework and the “Yugoslav” as the extinguished species, nonetheless enables them to take the position which more closely resembles one of “postness” and which also enables the work of (art) historical totalization.

in research similar to mine, by members of own age cohort, most often without direct connection.⁶⁷ What is more, the authors of this research often explicitly position themselves generationally, and in relation to the lost country of their childhood. Brought together, the bulk of this research is evidence of a return to Yugoslav history, as in the proverbial return, in Elie Kedourie's account of postcolonial nationalism, of the alienated intellectual from the metropole to his troubled – and in our case no longer “really existing” – homeland.

That generations belonging to other age cohorts do similar research means, on the one hand, that surviving generation is not overdetermined by a specific age cohort, but is rather a historical cohort, one that defines itself in relation to a historical event. Nonetheless, even here, one finds traces of the particular age cohort's generativity, where the transmission goes from younger to older generations, instead of the other way around. For example, in Darko Suvin's 2014 “x-ray” of Yugoslavia, the author localizes his own physical and intellectual return to the (post-)Yugoslav space, after decades of emigration, in an encounter with “somewhat or greatly younger colleagues” from Zagreb and, later, from Germany.⁶⁸ It is only after witnessing (what I see as) their “unreliable, childish” testimony on the

⁶⁷ Jasmina Tumbas, “Decision as Art: Performance in the Balkans,” in *Performance Art in the Second Public Sphere : Event-Based Art in Late Socialist Europe*, ed. Katalin Czirak Cseh-Varga, Adam Taylor and Francis, 2018); Bojana Videkanic, “Non-Aligned Modernism: Yugoslavian Art and Culture From 1945-1990,” diss., York University, 2013); Marina Antić, “(Post)yugoslav Identities and East-West Paradigm: Empires and Imperialism on the Margins of Europe,” diss., University of Wisconsin - Madison, 2013); Beronja and Vervaeck, *Past-Yugoslav Constellations: Archive, Memory, and Trauma in Contemporary Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian Literature and Culture*; Hajdarpašić, *Whose Bosnia? Nationalism and Political Imagination in the Balkans, 1840–1914*; Sanja Horvatinčić, “Spomenici iz razdoblja socijalizma u Hrvatskoj - prijedlog tipologije,” diss., University of Zadar, 2017., to name just a few.

⁶⁸ Darko Suvin, *Samo jednom se ljubi. Radiografija SFR Jugoslavije 1945.-72., uz hipoteze o početku, kraju i suštini* (Belgrade: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 2014). Among the names he lists are those who – like Ozren Pupovac, Slobodan Karamanić, Srećko Horvat, Gal Kirn – belong to the surviving Yugoslav generation both as an age group and by the fact of being among those who have most explicitly claimed allegiance to Yugoslav “singularities” and their contemporary political potential.

emancipatory potentials of the Yugoslav project that Suvin decided to expose Yugoslavia – and in fact his own body! – to an “x-ray,” in order to find out whether his very own, reliable, mature and embodied testimony of the dissolution of the revolutionary ideals of his own youth (of the revolution in which he actively participated, and from which he then removed himself, as its refugee), was, in fact, true. He wished to see once again whether there was after all an emancipatory core at the origin of the Yugoslav socialist project.⁶⁹ In other words – and as Vlado Martek said of his generation of artists, whose activities in the late 1970s motivated a group of older artists to publicly “come out” with the aesthetically analogous work they had done a decade earlier, but had never shown – Darko Suvin, as a “father” of the Yugoslav surviving generation, was, in fact, “born” after his “children.”⁷⁰

Ironically, the return of the post-Yugoslav generations to Yugoslav history has to a great extent been enabled by the frameworks of European, as well as corporate-humanitarian, funding that attempted to reconcile and integrate the Balkan nations, as well as by the contemporary artistic and scholarly market, eager to map and absorb the newly discovered global avant-gardes and modernities. Today, even more ironically, the core organizations of the Balkan “transitology,” such as the local branches of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, are dedicated to none other but the writing of Yugoslav history, one product of which is the website *yuhistorija.com*.⁷¹ Indeed, in opposition to the still

⁶⁹ Suvin, *Samo jednom se ljubi. Radiografija SFR Jugoslavije 1945.-72., uz hipoteze o početku, kraju i suštini*.

⁷⁰ Vlado Martek, documentation of a discussion organized within the series of student workshops titled “A History of Curating: Self-organized and Institutional Practice,” Galerija Miroslav Kraljević, Zagreb, May 2009.

⁷¹ <http://www.yuhistorija.com>. One of the outcomes of the project is also the book *Yugoslavia From a Historical Perspective* (Belgrade: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, 2017).

prevailing academic institutes named variously as Balkan, Eastern European, or South Eastern European studies, it seems that the object “Yugoslav history” – and concomitantly, “Yugoslav art,” etc. – today stand as stable epistemological objects, which they, paradoxically, never were in “Yugoslav history.” Since my own dissertation research has crossed exactly the path from claiming the “Yugoslav” as a marginal, barely legible claim of a minority of post-Yugoslav artists and thinkers, to seeing it grow over time into, as Ugo Vlaisavljević would say of Balkan reality, a “sign in good ‘metaphysical’ condition,”⁷² my research has necessarily grown from an “expressive” claim, towards a more reflective historicization. From writing a (post-)Yugoslav history, it has turned into an attempt to answer the question of what “Yugoslav” writing might mean in the first place – the “first” also being the place of its historical origin.

Seen in this way, Yugoslav history has itself always been surviving, it has itself always been a matter of a surviving generation, and its present-day “return” is simply another historical instance of claiming a particular generativity constitutive of this very history of survival.⁷³ This continuity of a surviving generativity is among those that I wish to trace in the dissertation, even if it is not always explicitly defined as “Yugoslav,” and even if it is, instead, left nameless.

⁷² Ugo Vlaisavljević, “The South Slav Identity and the Ultimate War-Reality,” In *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation*, edited by Dušan Bjelić (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 195.

⁷³ Indeed, somewhat dramatically, but truthfully, one book named Yugoslavia an “improbable survivor.” Pawlovitch, *The Improbable Survivor: Yugoslavia and Its Problems, 1918-1988*.

Structure and method

The dissertation consists of four chapters, each of which is an attempt to narrate, by different subjects and means, “the whole story” of Yugoslavia, and each of them engage with artistic, literary and critical works that themselves attempt to do so.

In the opening chapter, “Gavrilo’s Shot and the Debris of Juvenescence,” a sentence from a novel by Miljenko Jergović, *Sarajevo, plan grada* (Sarajevo, City Map), which declares that “we were all born as children of Gavrilo’s shot, we are an echo of Princip’s bang” is used to introduce the theme of storytelling, generations, and inheritance. It is also used to stage an ambivalence between the Yugoslav and the universal dimension of “Gavrilo’s” legacy, itself directly tied to the irruption of WW1, that is, the first “world” war. This ambivalence will later be played out in the juxtaposition of two films made in the 1970s, a Yugoslav *The Train in Snow* and the British *Murder on the Orient Express*, both of whose narratives take place in a train arrested in a snowdrift in (interwar) Yugoslavia, and both of which are stories driven by solving a crime that involves social injustice, and which ultimately brings the two trains to the scene of the violent break-up of Yugoslavia. In the rest of the chapter, I examine various ways in which post-Yugoslav artists, mostly belonging to the “surviving generations” have themselves engaged with storytelling in relation to Yugoslavia’s disintegration. While most of these attempts to narrate “Gavrilo’s inheritance” end up in the failure of narrative coherence, what is constituted through this “failure” is precisely their own historical position as members of surviving generation, or, as I extrapolate from the *Four Faces of Omarska* working group, their position as “children of Omarska.” Besides *Four*

Faces of Omarska, among the artists I discuss here are: Slaven Tolj, Milica Tomić, Bojan Fajfrić, Adela Jušić, Srđan Keča, Gordana Andjelić Galić, Borut Šeparović, Ivan Grubanov, Igor Grubić, the exhibition *Exception*. In seeking historical and contemporary analogies with the concept of surviving generation, I enter into dialogue with two other claims for survival: Judith Butler's reading of "Antigone's claim," an account itself embedded in Butler's generation's dealing with the AIDS crisis in the US, and Walter Benjamin's position of a Jewish-German thinker whose youth activism was cut by the onset of WW1, following which he increasingly embraced Marxist thought but also became the thinker of survival, that is, a thinker of the past, storytelling, and of resuscitating the history of the oppressed. "Gavrilo's shot," immediately followed by WW1, set Yugoslav history on an analogous path: the interwar generations rejected "Gavrilo's" pre-WW1 youth nationalism, in favor of internationalist socialism but have at the same time, as I will examine in the third chapter, continued "Gavrilo's" quest for South Slavic cultural and political sovereignty, which included a reactivation of history and of past struggles.

In the second chapter, "Similar Singing: A (South Slav) Peoples," I discuss the historical background of twentieth-century Yugoslavism, by presenting the work of the Illyrian movement of the 1830s and 1840s, as well as by introducing a general theoretical and interpretive problem of the relation between art and nationalism. I argue that, despite historical breaks, there is a continuity that connects early-twentieth-century attempts to define a singular, Yugoslav art and aesthetics, most notably in the work of sculptor Ivan Meštrović, with both the Illyrian work on language and oral poetry in the nineteenth century,

and with Miroslav Krleža's work, which constitutes itself precisely through (a communist) negation of these earlier (romantic-nationalist) traditions. Vladimir Dvorniković's interwar theories of what I translate as South Slav "similar singing," his psycho-ethnographic research which results in a discovery of the "muted tone" of Yugoslav folk song, which results from centuries of oppressive history, will help me to articulate Yugoslavism and Yugoslav aesthetics as precisely the research of "similarity" grounded in dispossession. Each nationalism constitutes itself through an analogous claim of affirming the previously disenfranchised people. However, the fact that Yugoslav nationalism always "fails" in competition with contemporaneous, individual South Slav nationalisms, whose claims of sovereignty are presumably historiographically more grounded, brings Yugoslavism and Yugoslav aesthetics in relation not to a people, but to an illegible plural, what I name "a peoples." In this way, Yugoslav aesthetics subverts its own nationalist origin, and opens itself to a transcription of other, not necessarily national/ethnic claims, which similarly cannot find their representation in existing societal titles and denominations.

In Chapter 3, "Krleža's Fanonist Aesthetics and Its (Post)Yugoslav Generation," I focus on the literary, critical, essayistic, and historiographical work of Miroslav Krleža, whom I at the same time posit as the connecting point between the nineteenth, the twentieth, and even, twenty-first century. The centrality of his own historiographical and programmatic investment in Yugoslav history and Yugoslav aesthetics is – even beside the fact that his lifespan is almost commensurate with the duration of the two Yugoslav states – is paralleled only by the equally intense attention given to him by Yugoslav and post-

Yugoslav critics, and the “science” of “Krlležology,” instituted by such century-long investment.⁷⁴ I thus argue that, if Yugoslavia is at the same time a proper national name and a signifier for the twentieth century, Krlleža is at once a proper authorial name and a signifier for Yugoslav history and Yugoslav aesthetics, the different facets of which are presented by Krlležian “figures.” The first is the “vulgar materialist,” and under this heading, I discuss Krlleža’s manifesto “Foreword to Krsto Hegedušić’s Drava River Motifs,” which became the central text around which Yugoslav leftist aesthetic debates in the 1930s exploded. In contrast to predominant interpretations of the “Foreword,” which single out Krlleža’s affirmation of subjective creation and talent, I read this text as a manifesto of what I propose is an aesthetics of “our realism.” Such aesthetics at the same time links Krlleža with previous attempts to define a Yugoslav art and literature, such as that by Ivan Meštrović, as what it shares with them is an enunciation of what Walter Mignolo has called “colonial difference.”⁷⁵ This is explicit in Stanko Lasić’s famous reading of the “conflict on the literary left,” where he defines Krlleža’s vision of Yugoslav culture as “Fanonist,” which is the source for another Krlležian figure, “the tormented Fanonist.” Finally, since Krlleža was intensely involved with history and historiography, not least through his work as editor-in-chief of the *Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia*, and since Yugoslav history following the 1948 break-up with the Soviet Union itself came to be read through his “heretical” position in the interwar conflict, the two

⁷⁴ Stanko Lasić, *Krlležologija ili povijest kritičke misli o Miroslavu Krlleži: Kritička literatura o Miroslavu Krlleži od 1914. do 1941.* (Zagreb: Globus, 1989).

⁷⁵ Walter D. Mignolo, “The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101, no. 1 (2002).

former figures are joined by that of a “drunken historiographer.” These figures, in turn, come to stand for different stages and facets of Yugoslav history, and Stanko Lasić’s melancholic history of the aesthetic conflict, with Krleža’s unrealized Fanonist vision in its center, can be said to inaugurate the “post-Yugoslav.”

In the final chapter, “The Living Presence of the *Körper*: Monument Group and Phenomenology of Death,” I juxtapose the work of Monument Group, the (vaguely defined) post-Yugoslav collective consisting of artists, theorists, and scholars, and Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology. My aim here is to see what Husserl’s phenomenology, which evolved as a “philosophy of life,” as Jacques Derrida protested, only to itself end up with the question of history and death, can do for the work of Monument Group, who ask about the possibility of life in the aftermath of Yugoslavia’s disintegration and, in particular, in the aftermath of the Srebrenica genocide. The resulting proposition is an oxymoronic – and thus perhaps typically Yugoslav – phenomenology of death, grounded in the life-death-world. Although Husserl wrote about the “crisis of the European sciences,” his book of the same name was written during a much more acute crisis, that of the Nazi takeover of Europe, which, as a German assimilated Jew he gradually became part of his own embodied experience of alienation and rejection. What he shares with another such figure, Walter Benjamin – who is more often evoked in contemporary art and critical theories that address the past – is not only the fact that they are both assimilated German Jews, but that they both, during the same period, embark on projects that attempt to resuscitate history as a totality. In this sense, Husserl and Benjamin – but also Judith Butler, Emanuel Levinas, and

Jacques Derrida – are non-Yugoslav figures committed to “the work of overcoming reality,” a work that ultimately constitutes their lives as those standing beyond the legitimate frameworks of statehood and identity, in relation to which they position themselves as a surviving generation – the survival of that, which “reality” violently tries to annul. I think this is one meaning behind Benjamin’s reluctance to leave for the United States, and his insistence that “there are still positions in Europe to be defended.” This is also what brings the historicizing/surviving positions of those non-Yugoslavs with the historical positioning of Yugoslavia’s claim and Yugoslavia’s surviving generation.

Each of chapter engages a different method. The first chapter is based mainly on original art historical research and interpretation, as well as a dialogue with theories of trauma and critical theory. Both the art historical research and the theoretical engagement are, however, placed in the service of my key method here: storytelling, which is, in turn, also one key topic of the chapter. The fusion of the two – the method and the topic – takes places on yet another level: the fact that I am writing about the kind of surviving generation, which my earlier work as a curator and writer, as well as the work of the dissertation itself, at the same time represents. In other words, there is significant slippage between the narrator and the narrated, even if this slippage is not explicit in the text and remains untold. The first chapter at the same time opens up some of the key topics and conceptual frameworks that the dissertation examines: surviving generation, Yugoslavia’s claim, Yugoslav twentieth century. Since I argue that surviving generation is what enables the telling of the whole story

of Yugoslavia, this chapter also serves as introduction to the historical reconstruction of Yugoslav aesthetics that I engage in the following two chapters.

In the second chapter, and working mainly with existing literature, I am providing a synthesis of the 19th- and early-20th-century attempts to define a shared, Yugoslav aesthetics. From this synthesis, I derive the basic problem that imposes itself, as it does in any peripheral attempt at modern cultural authenticity: the conflict between the local, the “authentic” – in nationalism primarily the “people” – and the modern tools of art, as well as statehood. I also develop the concept of “a peoples,” Yugoslav aesthetics as a response to the claim of an ungrammatical, singular plural which is thus beyond the coherent structure of nation.

In the third chapter, I am focusing on one major attempt to solve this conundrum, Miroslav Krleža’s literary, art-critical, and encyclopedic work, from the select reading of which I construe and analyze the framework of Krleža’s Fanonist-Yugoslav aesthetics. This framework is at the same time seen as not just a single instance of Yugoslav aesthetics, but the very paradigm that underlies its capitalized version – Yugoslav Aesthetics and Yugoslav History. Krleža thus becomes a signifier for the Yugoslav twentieth century, and the historiographical engagement with Krleža’s work, that is, the engagement of those who historicized Krleža, which concludes the chapter, becomes at the same time the mark that separates Yugoslav from post-Yugoslav.

The fourth chapter explicates the slippage, implicit in the first chapter, between myself as narrator and the artistic practices that I write about, but only in order to develop

what is now primarily a theoretical argument. The theory, moreover, stems from both philosophy and art. The segment of storytelling that grounds, both literally and metaphorically, this chapter, is subordinated to the larger theoretical argument that interrogates the possibility of a phenomenology of death.

By proceeding in this order: storytelling, historical survey, individual case study as a synecdoche of the whole, theoretical argument, I am not trying to claim any sort of teleological unfolding, which would, from the perspective of epistemic value, place storytelling at the beginning/bottom and theory at the end/on top. Just the opposite, the theoretical argument is one that (re)affirms the place of history, which I understand both as historiographical research and as a quest to tell the “whole story” and also propose its continuation. Having squeezed out the “matheme,” that is, the theory, from historical matter, the matter both living and dead, one must start anew from this very matter. In the process, however, this same matter changed. This living and ever generative matter is the reason why the dissertation does not operate by, or propose, a circular method – from history to analysis to storytelling to theory to back to history – as could be inferred from just looking at the abstract categories by which it proceeds. The method of the whole is, rather, the Husserlian zig-zag, the one which at the same time governs the last chapter. The zigzagging stops there, however – with the inarticulate claim of “bare bones,” which constitute the post-Yugoslav life-death-world; death, but also life – and with a hope to be resumed in the future.

Chapter 1. Surviving Generation: Gavrilo's Shot and the Debris of Juvenescence

My soul, sit thou a patient looker-on;¹

“We were all born as children of Gavrilo’s shot,” declares the autobiographical hero of Miljenko Jergović’s novel *Sarajevo, plan grada* (Sarajevo, City Map), as he guides the reader through the Sarajevo street in which Gavrilo Princip, a seventeen-year-old member of Young Bosnia, shot the Austrian archduke Franz Ferdinand, on June 28, 1914.² Over the course of the preceding 198 pages, the narrator’s voice was plunged into a dramaturgic and historical rift between “I” and “you,” between a voice narrating, and a voice narrating to no other but itself – a(nother) self that perhaps no longer remembers or understands, as the two have been irrevocably, although by no means neatly, separated by the moment when the author escaped occupied Sarajevo in 1993 and became a refugee in Zagreb. On page 199, however, an unexpected introduction of the pronoun “we” temporarily relieves the text of the drama of uncertain identity: “We were all born as children of Gavrilo’s shot [...] we are an echo of Princip’s bang.” If you could have “punched him in the arm and changed history,” asks the narrator his (other) self, “would you have done it”? Everything would be different then, and “other people would be born in our place.”³

¹ Francis Quarles (1592-1644), epigram from *Respice Finem* (1635)

² Miljenko Jergović, *Sarajevo, plan grada* (Zagreb: Fraktura, 2015), 199. This, and all other translations of original texts are my own unless otherwise noted.

³ Jergović, 199.

Who is this “we” or, even more unwaveringly, “we all,” who were born as children of a gunshot, and what exactly is this place, “our” place that we occupied by the event of this birth? Is this a Yugoslav we/place, one begotten by the history of South Slavic nationalist, anti-imperialist, and socialist activism, a space formalized in the aftermath of WW1 by the borders of the first Yugoslav state? After all, the very fact that the archduke’s assassinator and Jergović’s narrator are standing in the same spot, and yet on two different streets – the Street of Franz Josef I (assassinator), and the Street of the Yugoslav Peoples’ Army (narrator) – proves that the child of Gavrilo’s shot, the echo of Princip’s bang, is no other than the Yugoslav twentieth century, which came to displace centuries of foreign imperial rule in the Balkans.⁴ Could not Jergović’s we, however, at the same time be read as a European, or even, a universal we/place, which unites citizens of the world as children of the very first “world” war, a war “triggered,” as it is often conveniently said, by the Sarajevo assassination?⁵ After all, the fact that Eric Hobsbawm’s account of the *Short Twentieth Century* opens with the “sudden, unannounced and unexpected appearance” of French President François Mitterrand in occupied Sarajevo on June 28, 1992, the same city and the same date, as Hobsbawm notes, on which the Austrian archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in 1914, is evidence that the “age of extremes” began and ended as a child of Gavrilo’s shot, an echo of Princip’s bang.⁶

⁴ The street was renamed in 1946 into the Street of the Yugoslav Peoples’ Army, the army of the newly established socialist Yugoslavia. Ironically, the assassination spot today is located on the Street of the Green Berets, a volunteer brigade formed in 1991 order to defend the city from the Yugoslav People’s Army, whose shelling of Sarajevo, Dubrovnik and Vukovar in the early 1990s at the same time sounded the end to the Yugoslav century.

⁵ This frequently circulated metaphor is used as the title of a centenary, journalistic account of Gavrilo Princip’s life: Tim Butcher, *The Trigger: Hunting the Assassin Who Brought the World to War* (New York: Grove Press, 2014).

⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 1995), 2-3.

The Yugoslav century is thus once again revealed as both a particular history and a universally operating signifier for a number of unanswered questions of the past, a past that Hobsbawm in 1992 lamented had been forgotten in the era of “permanent present.”⁷ As I have argued in the introduction, in the course of the last decade this past, together with the very notion of History, has been reclaimed both through artistic and intellectual engagements that have renewed the quest to grasp history in its (variously defined) totality, and through global social movements whose struggle to not only reminisce and interpret, but also change history, burst open the veil of the global-capitalist present. Jergović’s novel, which utilizes a prewar map of Sarajevo as a blueprint for telling the story of the Yugoslav century as well as centuries of Ottoman and Habsburg rule that preceded it, is a prime example of such a quest for historical totality, articulated from the position of a lived experience of a violent historical break. In this chapter, I will explore artistic and cultural practices that similarly position themselves, in one way or another, as heirs to the Yugoslav century and, in particular, as storytellers of its beginning and end. Rather than a comprehensive overview of artistic practices involved with Yugoslav history, I engage with a limited number of historical accounts, films and artworks made both before and after its violent destruction in the 1990s, in order to delineate a speculative, (trans)generational protocol by means of which the storytelling of Yugoslavia has evolved. The speculative nature of this account stems from the fact that it is intended as a proposition, rather than a confidently and comprehensively laid out argument. In other words, it is itself an attempt to

⁷ Hobsbawm, 2.

tell a story and open up the space for its continuation, by posing at the same time the question of the very relationship between history, storytelling and inheritance.

In the process of examining this question, I arrive at the notion of surviving generation, which I define as the generation that survived Yugoslavia's break-up and in whose reactivation, that is, re-generation of Yugoslav history Yugoslavia itself survives. By inviting into the discussion a number of "non-Yugoslavs," such as Agatha Christie and her crime novel *Murder on the Orient Express*, or Walter Benjamin and Judith Butler, whose own theoretical reflections stem from analogous constellations marked by history, death, and survival, I once more wish to activate the transnational import of the Yugoslav experience, and introduce the question of "Yugoslavia's claim" and its inheritance, which will be examined in the following chapters.

Insurgent baptism

In order to further introduce that question, and its contradictions, another invocation of Jergović's declaration of "us" as children of Gavrilo's shot, as an echo of Princip's bang, is needed. As may already be evident from my insistence on using the above phrase as a refrain in the opening of this chapter, its own inherent duality is not located only in Jergović's splitting of the narrator into the before and after (the 1990s wars, i.e., before and after the twentieth century), or in the geopolitical multivalence of the "we"; even more significantly, the refrain's enumerative diagnosis of historical origins splits the "we" into "children" and "echo," at the same time as it duplicates the originary event into "Gavrilo's shot" and "Princip's bang." The shot is evidence of Gavrilo's agency, the ability to take his own, and the world-historical, destiny in his hands; if we are children of the shot, there must

be some kind of plan, or even meaning, in our becoming, whose purpose we then might choose to inherit and actualize, thus asserting our own historical agency. If we are an echo of a bang, we inherit nothing but the curse of blind repetition of the principal narrative; and if Princip's bang is itself the principal echo of Gavrilo's shot, to echo a bang means to exist as echo of an echo, haunted and overdetermined by a historical legacy which we cannot even reproduce in its entirety, bound as we are to the sounding of only its last words.⁸

Then again, even when (and if) we are children of Gavrilo's shot, a shot of a minor, orchestrated by the fervent nationalist activism of *Young* Bosnia, we are still trapped inside an echo-like structure, because we are, in fact, children's children. If Gavrilo Princip is the name for the juvenile progenitor of the (Yugoslav) twentieth century, a "primitive rebel," as Vladimir Dedijer called him,⁹ then what "we all," who are living through the first decades of the twenty-first century, are inheriting, is the imperative to survive the historical process of our own pre(im)mature generation. And because there is something unripe, unsaid and undone in our historical gestation, we can only survive it without overcoming it; we can generate new history, but never fully detached from the echo of the partially recalled script of the past. To survive one's own generation thus means to survive history, and at the same time, paradoxically, to enable history itself to survive through the very attempt to leave the past behind.

⁸ In Greek mythology, the talkative nymph Echo is cursed by Hera and made to be able only to repeat the last words of others, without being able to say anything on her own. The etymology of the word *bang* itself signifies imitation, or "imitative," which was its meaning in mid-sixteenth century, and which the dictionary also compares to Old Norse *bang* for "hammering." See "bang," in *New Oxford American Dictionary*, ed. Angus Stevenson and Christine A. Lindberg (Oxford University Press, 2010),

http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195392883.001.0001/m_en_us1224735.

⁹ Vladimir Dedijer, *The Road to Sarajevo* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966), 175.

Gavrilo Princip's name embodies this dialectic between the quest for the radically new and the persisting, or even disabling, shadow of the past. Gavrilo is the South Slavic Orthodox-Christian version of Gabriel, the Biblical angel deployed by God as messenger of the New Testament, one who announces Christ's virginal birth. But the South Slavic translation of the archangel's name could also be (mis)read as a merging of *gavran* (raven) and *crnilo* (blackness), or its correlate, *mastilo* (ink, which again calls for a bird). Such phonetic (mis)translation of the Holy Script activates the very opposite of Gabriel's angelic, white-feathered annunciation: Gavrilo appears as the messenger of darkness, ending and death, a black-feathered raven of "Nevermore."¹⁰ The historical record of Gavrilo's last name, Princip, is also marked by duality and (mis)translation. As reconstructed in the classic account of the Sarajevo assassination by the Yugoslav communist historian Vladimir Dedijer, the Princip's were a peasant Serbian family inhabiting the Bosnian border region ("Krajina"), where they protected the Ottoman border from Austria, Venice, as well as from local brigands and smugglers.¹¹ Since they specialized in ambushing the enemy, they were nicknamed "Čeka" ("lying in wait"), which was adopted as a family surname — the word family here indicating not a nuclear family, but *zadruga*, the South Slavic "family communism," as one English visitor to the region described it.¹² In the nineteenth century, however, the family's headman Todor — "a big, strong, evil-tempered man, always armed," always riding a white horse, in a "brilliant costume" and a "cap with peacock's feathers" —

¹⁰ Edgar Allan Poe, "The Raven," available online at *The Poetry Foundation*, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48860/the-raven>, last accessed on September 21, 2018.

¹¹ Dedijer, *The Road to Sarajevo*, 27-41.

¹² Dedijer, 36.

inspired the Bosnian beys to nickname him “Princip,” most likely appropriating, and mispronouncing, the Italian word *principe*, for prince, or chief.¹³ Adopting this honorific title as the new family name, the Principis underwent yet another conversion and became, following the 1875 Herzegovinian (and later Bosnian) uprising, insurgents, and no longer protectors of the Ottoman Empire. The local base of the uprising, the camp at Crni Potoci (Black Brooks), was situated in the immediate vicinity of the Principis’ home, and the insurgents’ leader was a priest who “some twenty years later christened and chose the name for Gavrilo Princip.”¹⁴

Dedijer notes that “princip,” the vernacular Bosnian version of the Italian aristocratic title, is not a word that exists in Serbo-Croatian, but this is not really the case.¹⁵ A T-shirt that circulated in Belgrade in 2014, during the centenary of the Sarajevo assassination, declared its own interpretation of history by combining a Che-Guevara-like portrait of Gavrilo Princip (a black figure on a bright red background, with a red, five-pointed star on his beret) with the text: “SVE JE PITANJE PRINCIPA / IT’S A MATTER OF PRINCIP” [Figure 4] Although the approximate English translation – the literal one would be: “It’s all a matter of principle” – could not retain the full phonetic coincidence of Princip as a surname and *princip* as the (Latin-derived) South Slavic word for “principle,” it syntactically pointed to it, while the use of uppercase script eliminated the distinction between proper and common

¹³ Dedijer, 30. I am here combining Dedijer’s description of Todor with that of Božidar Tomić, whom Dedijer cites on the same page. As Dedijer notes, the *c* in the Italian word *principe* is pronounced as “ch,” and not “ts,” which it became in Princip, its South Slavic version.

¹⁴ Dedijer, 34, 38.

¹⁵ Dedijer. Of course, what he meant is that it does not exist as a word with the meaning intended by the beys who had given Todor his nickname, that is, the meaning “prince.”

nouns. This intervention, which thus “commoned,” commemorated, and commodified¹⁶ the originating event of the twentieth century, recast a history of proper names – Princip, Ferdinand, Austria, Serbia, etc. – into a matter of common concern, a matter of principle.

What principle? Preceding the 1914 event, the Princip’s family history comes to stand for Southern Slavs’ historical transformation from “lying in wait” under foreign rule and oppression to rising to the occasion and embracing the principle of political and economic liberation, or self-determination. As such, it is positioned symbolically, genetically and baptismally as a precursor to Young Bosnia’s assassination of the Habsburg archduke, especially since the 1875 peasant rebellion was by no means a local event. Just the opposite, it drew volunteer insurrectionaries from throughout Europe, and spurred further international conflicts whose geopolitical ramifications necessitated a redrawing of the balance of power among leading European nations at the 1878 Berlin Congress. The principle of national sovereignty, the new “*nomos* of the Earth” invented by these very European nations to maintain their economic, colonial, and geopolitical power,¹⁷ was now claimed by the *kmeti* (serfs) of Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as their fellow Southern Slavs in Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia. Put differently, if the word *slave* derived from a misunderstanding, brought about by the historically subordinated position of Slavs, of the Old Slavic autonym *Slověninъ*, from *slovo* (word) and *slava* (glory),¹⁸ now the Slavs again

¹⁶ The T-shirts were sold as attractively packaged souvenirs in a Belgrade bookstore.

¹⁷ Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum* (New York: Telos Press, 2006).

¹⁸ “Slavs (ethnonym),” *wikipedia.com*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavs_\(ethnonym\)#cite_note-21](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavs_(ethnonym)#cite_note-21), last accessed on September 24, 2018. This is one theory of origin of the word. See Jakov Bačić, “Slav: The Origin and Meaning of the Ethnonym,” *Slovene Studies Journal* 9, no. 1 (1987): 33-42; Aleksandar Loma, “*reč, *slovo, *beseda - etimologija i semantička praistorija,” *Južnoslovenski filolog* 64 (2008): 199-216; Ferdinand Uličný, “Etnonymy Sklávoi, Sclavi, Slovieni, Slováci, Slovania,” *Historický časopis (Historical Journal)* 60, no. 2 (2012): 301-330.

sought to speak and act in their name. After all, the principle of sovereignty is a princely principle, and Gavrilo's last name, Princip, aptly merged the two words originated from the same root, a root denoting primacy.¹⁹

The primacy of what? The five-pointed star inserted onto Gavrilo Princip's beret on the T-shirt is evidently claiming a primacy of communist struggle. However, the principle of self-determination was chiefly associated with the sovereign nation-state, which is also how Princip's act was predominantly read – with variations as to the attribute, Yugoslav or Serbian, chosen as the determinant of that quest for sovereignty. And so, while both at the time of the 1875 uprising and of the Sarajevo assassination the question of national liberation competed, and to some extent coincided, with that of religious and class-based emancipation, the “primacy” of the Principal echo of Gavrilo's shot is that of a sovereign nation in a sovereign state.²⁰ As Jörg Fisch notes in his history of the “self-determination of peoples,” this concept, which originated in mid-nineteenth century, has never been complemented by the actual definition of “people,” due to “reasons of power,” not for lack of definitions.²¹ As a result, the consensus on who or what constitutes a people is always a question of power structures, whose shifting would emancipate a particular people, while inevitably leaving another (potentially sovereign) people behind in a position of subordination. Due to the paradox inherent in the right for self-determination, this central

¹⁹ Both words derive from Latin *princip-*, *princeps*, leader, initiator, from *primus* first and *capere* take. See entries for *principle*, and *prince* at Merriam-Webster's online dictionary, www.merriam-webster.com.

²⁰ Gavrilo Princip's act was, in fact, legitimized by the outcome of WW1 and the formation of the first South Slavic state, which coincided with Woodrow Wilson's 1918 speech that rhetorically cemented self-determination as a key ideological framework of the “short” twentieth century.

²¹ Jörg Fisch, *The Right of Self-Determination of Peoples: The Domestication of an Illusion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 11-12.

political concept of modernity is, as Fisch concludes, is “a promise that cannot be redeemed.”²²

The 1875 insurrection of the serfs in Bosnia-Herzegovina already contained all the elements that would define the history of the problem of self-determination during the twentieth century in Yugoslavia, and beyond: the socialist volunteers, who joined the peasant revolt as a step towards social revolution, were disillusioned, as they allegedly witnessed nothing but “religious fundamentalism and a love of looting.”²³ The liberation of Southern Slavs from the Ottoman rule following the Berlin Congress left open the question of those Slavs, namely, the Bosnian Muslims, for whom the Ottoman rule was not foreign in the same way as it was for others (Orthodox/Serbian and Catholic/Croatian Slavs), just as the Bosnian Catholics applauded the Congress’s decision to place Bosnia-Herzegovina under the administrative rule of Austro-Hungary.²⁴ Finally, there were those who continued to pledge for the overcoming of historical conflicts and differences under the banner of a united Yugoslav people, and those who continued to fight for a people united by a communist revolution. Both of those quests (Yugoslav and communist) proved victorious during the twentieth century, but were not, as is well known, able to overcome the paradox inherent in the principle of self-determination, a paradox profoundly sharpened by the long history of imperial and colonial conquests of the region, as well as the role of the “international community” in the wars of the 1990s.

²² Fisch, 13.

²³ Dedijer, *The Road to Sarajevo*, 53.

²⁴ Dedijer.

If, then, Gavrilo is at once the winged messenger of both agency and of paralysis, Princip is at the same time the principle of freedom and of oppression. This is the “echo of Princip’s bang.” Indeed, its structure is reminiscent of the ancient myth about Echo and Narcissus, with the fear-inducing headman Princip, on his white horse, in a brilliant costume, and a peacock feather in his hat, embodying Narcissus’s inability to acknowledge the petition of another, just as Echo, this other, is deprived of the power to sovereignly articulate her claim.²⁵ Edin Hajdarpasic devised a brilliant name for this structure, “(br)other,” which he grounds in the ambivalent position of Bosnian Muslims in the history of South Slavic nationalism, namely the fact that Croat and Serb activists saw Bosnian Muslims simultaneously as brothers (as Southern Slavs, sharing the same genetic origin, language, and partly, culture) and others (as Muslims, or rather, Christians converted to Islam, who were thus seen as co-extensive with the Ottoman occupation).²⁶ At the same time, Hajdarpasic proposes this term as a conceptual device that enables him to frame nationalism as a never-ending process, dependent on constant (re)production of both antagonisms and slippages between brothers and variously construed others:

Having (br)others for co-nationals exposes a peculiar quality of nationalism: its relentless and impossible drives to “finally” consolidate relations among co-nationals. Since the nineteenth century, countless patriotic projects have

²⁵ My account here is informed by Ranjana Khanna’s discussion of the myth of Echo and Narcissus, on the basis of which, and in dialogue with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, she develops an account of the relationship between nationalism and colonialism, as well as the critical agency of melancholia, which she articulates through the figure of Hamlet. “We could think of this failure of narcissism through the mythological language of psychoanalysis, and call this critical agency Echo [...] Whereas narcissism is a derogatory term usually applied to women, Spivak sees masculinity inscribing itself and once again failing to hear the distinction of Echo, fated at once to repeat and also be out of synch with the voice she repeats. Thinking of Echo as both a mythological figure and as one who shows how “the time is out of joint,” she manifests as the spectral once again who gives a different sense of the temporality of nationhood. If Narcissus could exist through Echo alone, the narcissism of European nationalism and of the consolidated ego could perhaps give way to a discrepant temporality of nationhood sustained through the intellectual work of melancholic Hamlet and his ghosts,” Ranjana Khanna, *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 22-23.

²⁶ Edin Hajdarpasic, *Whose Bosnia? Nationalism and Political Imagination in the Balkans, 1840–1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 16-17.

claimed to have “finally” settled who is a Serb, or a Croat, or a Muslim, and who is not, to have “finally” established a lasting sense of unity among “our people.” Nonetheless, the (br)other reappears, undoing any permanent sense of closure of nation-making and unsettling proclaimed bonds of national unity.²⁷

Each brother, defined as member of the same ethnic or national group, always at the same time contains an other, and Hajdarpasic cites peasants, women and children among the most evident examples.²⁸ The children of Gavrilo’s shot, the children’s children, together with their sisters and mothers, are thus very specifically positioned within the structure of Princip’s echo, the echo of (br)otherhood, which constitutes itself primarily through paternal ties. It is this specific position that will concern me in the remainder of this chapter: the positioning of “children,” in relation to the wreckage of the Yugoslav claim to ground political sovereignty in none other than the ideal of *(br)otherhood and unity* – for this is the truly radical concept behind the Yugoslav slogan of “brotherhood and unity.”²⁹ In the conclusion to this chapter, I will define such “positioning” with the concept of surviving generation, and will argue that history is both what a surviving generation survives, and what at the same time survives through the very generativity of those who choose to position themselves as

²⁷ These are, Hajdarpasic elaborates, “people continually depicted as backward, ignorant, hostile, disappointing, and otherwise insufficiently patriotic, yet at the same time acknowledged as indispensable to the national future,” 17. It may be added that while the peasant is a central figure of the nationalist imaginary, nationalism is itself a process of converting these primitive “seed” carriers of the nation into secular, enlightened citizens. In that sense, Gavrilo Princip’s peasant origin, and his conversion into a youth nationalist during his study in Sarajevo and his contact with urban culture, itself epitomizes this shift. On Princip’s circle in Sarajevo and his peers from *Young Bosnia*, see Dedijer

²⁸ Hajdarpasic, 16.

²⁹ What I mean by this is that the politically radical nature of socialist Yugoslav statehood derives precisely from the fact that it is not based on the idea of forging the nation of “Yugoslavs,” which would equalize all “(br)others” into the “brothers” necessary for fulfilling the idea of the nation-state. Instead, Yugoslav sovereignty (that is, “unity”) depends on the imperative of working with difference. In other words, and as I will elaborate in the following chapters, Yugoslav unity does not naturally follow from brotherhood, but is a goal to be achieved despite (br)otherhood. In this sense, Yugoslav nationalism itself performs the above cited task of Hajdarpasic’s figure of (br)other, that is, the task of “undoing [of] any permanent sense of closure of nation-making and unsettling proclaimed bonds of national unity.” Hajdarpasic, 16. Evidently, women are by definition excluded from this differentiated ideal of community. Although Hajdarpasic’s bracketing-out intervention derives from English, it could just as well be translated into South Slavic languages, in which case the otherness would receive a directly antagonistic shape – *(b)rat*, brother and war (from *brat* = brother, and *rat* = war).

children, that is, as those who both involuntarily receive, actively claim, as well as challenge their legacy.

Arrested tracks

In order to visualize the site of the wreckage at which the position of surviving generation is articulated, I propose to bring together two films, whose productions and storylines are not in any obvious way related, except for the fact that their spatial, titular and metaphorical setting is the train. More precisely, a train halted by a snow blizzard, somewhere along the tracks connecting the eastern and western part of Yugoslavia, or rather, the East and the West. Both films were made in the 1970s as cinematic adaptations of novels written in the 1930s: the Yugoslav children's film *Vlak u snijegu* (The Train in Snow), directed in 1976 by Mate Relja, is based on Mato Lovrak's 1931 novel, and the British detective film *Murder on the Orient Express* is an adaptation, directed in 1974 by Sidney Lumet, of Agatha Christie's crime story first published in 1934.³⁰ [Figure 5]

In the first film, the passengers of the arrested train are a group of rural children returning home from their school trip to Zagreb. [Figure 6] While help is awaited, the film's hero, a boy named Ljuban, tells his story to the train conductor and to the viewers, whom he at one point addresses directly: "Children, listen to my story, and make your own judgment. It is possible that Mr. Conductor will not understand me, just like the grown-ups sometimes

³⁰ Mato Lovrak, *Vlak u snijegu* (Zagreb: Mladost, 1989); Agatha Christie, *Murder on the Orient Express: A Hercule Poirot Mystery* (New York: William Morrow an imprint of HarperCollins, 2017). Kindle edition. The first edition of Lovrak's book was published in Belgrade in 1933 and was titled *Deca Velikog Sela* (The Children of the Great Village), and the second edition, published in Zagreb in 1946, was renamed as *Vlak u snijegu: djeca Velikog Sela, pripovijest za djecu*, Kornelija Kuvač-Levačić, "Identitet subjekta u književničkoj autobiografiji i 'biografija djela'. Primjer romana Mate Lovraka Pero Kvržica među ljudima objavljenoga 2014. godine." *Libri & Liberi* 5, no. 1 (2016): 81.

don't understand us, forgetting that they too were once children."³¹ Although the rest of the film proceeds without recourse to this first-person voice, its initiatory narratological intervention frames the film as the story in which children are at the same time narrators, protagonists, and viewers; it is a story of children addressed to children, whom a certain manner of "understanding" or "judging" separates from the world of forgetful adults. Ljuban's story is about growing up in a rural environment, where everything seems idyllic, except for the rivalry between him and his schoolmate Pero. Initially the rivalry concerns sympathies of a girl, Draga, but soon also the leadership of a newly founded *zadruga*, the kind of peasant cooperative in which Gavriilo Princip's family lived. Inspired by their teacher and the idea of Old Slav solidarity, the children initiate the cooperative and name it "Sloga" (Harmony), electing Ljuban the leader, or "host."³² Unlike the beloved Ljuban,³² son of a poor peasant, Pero is the selfish and unpopular son of a rich landowner; implicitly, but rather obviously, the conflict between the two boys stands for the opposition between capitalism (or its precursor, feudalism) and communism. As food supplies decrease during the halt of the train, Ljuban orders everyone to give him their food so that he can govern and distribute it; however, with a small group of adherents seduced by his abundant stash of sweets and fruits, Pero refuses this process of collectivization, and is consequently excommunicated to a separate wagon. His ultimate repentance pushes the narrative to a reconciliatory and triumphant ending: the reunited children realize that there will be no moving forward unless they take matters into their own hands, which they do literally, by using their hands to

³¹ All transcriptions and translations from *The Train in Snow* are my own.

³² Ljuban's name derives from *ljubav*, love. In the book, the commune is, in fact, named "Ljubanova," after Ljuban.

remove the snow. “When little hands join together,” the film’s theme song insists, “everything is possible.” The snow is cleared away and the train proceeds, with harmony once again thriving in the community.

The train in *Murder on the Orient Express* also gets stuck in snow, on its way from Istanbul to Venice, and almost at the same location:

- Where exactly are we?
- We are between Vinkovci and Brod.
- But in what country?
- In Yugoslavia.
- The Balkans! What else can you expect?”³³ [Figure 7]

You can expect, then, that Yugoslavia, once renamed the Balkans, would be the stop on the Orient-Express itinerary where the central crime of the narrative will take place: the murder of Mr. Ratchett, himself a criminal who bribed his way out of a death sentence for kidnapping and brutally murdering a child, Daisy Anderson. In an astonishing resolution of the case, Monsieur Hercule Poirot presents two solutions: a simple one, according to which an unknown murderer escaped the train, and a complex one, which unveils the murder as a collective act of twelve passengers, who are all – albeit a remarkably international group – related to the murdered child through family ties or employment. Left to choose between the two solutions and with Poirot’s apparent approval, the director of the Orient Express line decides that the Yugoslav police should be presented with the simpler, and obviously false version, according to which a single perpetrator escaped and remains unknown. What sets the train back in motion is therefore a consensual legitimization of collective, justice-

³³ Excerpt from the conversation between the passengers and the Orient Express director, after the train ran into a snowdrift.

seeking retribution, committed in the name of a child and accompanied by an “international” vow of silence as to the actual complexity of the story.

Written in 1931, eleven years after the Communist Party was officially banned in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the book *Vlak u snijegu* (The Train in Snow) articulated a desire for a more just social and economic order, and could therefore be read as a promise and annunciation of the (socialist) future to come. It is children who are posited as bearers of this future; although their teacher is instrumental in transmitting the tradition of “Old Slav solidarity,” he falls ill in Zagreb and the children must return home without him, proving that they truly are a cooperative. This generational transfer, in which the trip is posited as a test of maturity, is hinted at already at the beginning of the film, in a conversation in which a villager complains about the absurdity of the children’s cooperative, while his interlocutor disagrees: “Let the children be, neighbor. This is not so bad. Maybe they will succeed where we have failed.”³⁴

From the perspective of almost half a century later, when the film was made, the same narrative had aged enough to grow from a desired future into a history lesson: it seems as if it had been precisely those rural children experimenting with solidarity in the 1930s, who grew up to lead the socialist revolution and the partisan, anti-fascist struggle in the Second World War, during which the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia was formed, under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito.³⁵ *The Train in Snow* could thus

³⁴ Conversation between two villagers, *Vlak u snijegu*, film transcript.

³⁵ Democratic Federal Yugoslavia was proclaimed in 1943, and renamed to Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia in 1946, governed by the Communist Party, headed by Josip Broz Tito, and comprising of six federal republics, one autonomous province (Vojvodina) and one autonomous district (Kosovo), later to also become a province. In 1963 it was renamed into Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (until 1992).

retrospectively be read as a myth of origin of socialist Yugoslavia, and Ljuban a prefiguration of Tito whose own rural childhood, and his evolution from a son of poor peasants to a revolutionary leader, was well known and mythologized. What is more, Lovrak, who was himself a teacher, wrote the book according to an actual event that involved his students, among whom Ljuban later died as a partisan in WW2.³⁶ The prefiguration could go even further: does not Tito also have a teacher, a mentor who “gets ill” and abandons the journey, and is it not then up to Tito to compensate for the “illness,” that is, the corruption of socialism, in order to impose himself as an autonomous leader?³⁷ The 1976 film viewers – the children whom Ljuban addresses at the beginning of this film – represent the postwar generations whose task was to guard the legacy of the socialist revolution and Yugoslavia’s authentic path to socialism, as well as to remain alert to the threat of capitalism, and keep up with the project of building a just, communist society.³⁸ This is the “judgment” that they are appealed to make in the beginning of the film, and this appeal came, symptomatically, in the midst of the constitutional and economic crisis of the early 1970s, when the Yugoslav program of workers’ self-management began its steady downward path.³⁹

³⁶ Lovrak recalled a class reunion in which the school desks were filled with now grown-up people, his former students: “Only at one [desk] sat an old man... Ljuban’s father. Ljuban was namely killed as a partisan in war.” Mato Lovrak, cited in Sanja Ercegović, “Mato Lovrak – Pisac kojeg obožavaju sve generacije,” 8 March, 2013, <http://www.buro247.hr/knjige/prijedlozi/12021.html>, last accessed 18 October 2018. That Lovrak’s novels were themselves seen as politically engaged and threatening the fascist ideology is evidenced by the fact that Lovrak’s novel, “Družba Pere Kvržice” (The Gang of Pero Kvržica), written at approximately the same time as *The Train in Snow*, and first published in 1933, was banned in the Independent State of Croatia, a Nazi puppet-state installed during WW2. See Kuvač-Levačić, “Identitet subjekta u književničkoj autobiografiji i ‘biografija djela,’” 87.

³⁷ I am referring here, of course, to Stalin, and Yugoslavia’s expulsion from the Cominform in 1948, which the Yugoslav communists resolve by reinventing what they claimed was an authentic path to socialism, free of Stalinist deviations.

³⁸ In socialist Yugoslavia, this role was embodied precisely in the figure of children, through the institution of pioneers. See Igor Duda, *Danas kada postajem pionir: djetinjstvo i ideologija jugoslavenskoga socijalizma* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2015).

³⁹ See Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects: Performance and Self-Management in Yugoslavia, 1945-91*; Dejan Jović, *Yugoslavia: A State That Withered Away* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2009); Darko Suvin, *Splendour, Misery, and Possibilities: An X-Ray of Socialist Yugoslavia* (London: Brill, 2016).

The lesson could also be understood as an aesthetic one: Lovrak was a pioneer of realist children's literature in Yugoslavia and during the 1930s he engaged in debates with proponents of the children's fantasy genre.⁴⁰ This literary "conflict" in the field of children's literature could be seen in analogy to the "conflict on the literary left," which exploded during the 1930s in parallel to international debates that pitted realism and modernism, and which left an enduring mark on Yugoslav aesthetic debates, as I discuss in Chapter 3. Lovrak's novels, in which he embraced the realism of the German children's writer Erich Kästner but replaced Kästner's urban settings with the countryside, focused on the themes of collectivity, class differences, and the value of work.⁴¹ A similar translation defined the work of the artist group *Zemlja* (Land), who in the late 1920s took the German painter Georg Grosz as a model of realist art, while substituting the examination of the Croatian village life for Grosz's critique of the modern city. As I will show in my analysis of Yugoslav aesthetics in the following two chapters, the figure of the peasant informed a central contradiction in the quests of artists to construe a modern Yugoslav art in the predominantly rural pre-WW1 and interwar Yugoslavia. Rural origins characterized also Gavrilo Princip and his peers in the Young Bosnia movement, whom Dedijer therefore described as "primitive rebels."⁴² In order, therefore, to join both the artistic (modern art) and political modernity (sovereign nation state), Yugoslav artists and rebels had to travel, or at least take into account and work with, the distance that separated the "primitive" from the "modern." In Lovrak's story, the

⁴⁰ Ines Biškić, "Filmske ekranizacije Lovrakovih i Kušanovih dječjih romana." *Hrvatski časopis za teoriju i praksu nastave hrvatskoga jezika, književnosti, govornoga i pismenoga izražavanja te medijske kulture* 13, no. 1 (2015): 16

⁴¹ Jasminka Brala Mudrovčić, and Nikolina Pavličić. "Romani Mate Lovraka u lektiri za razrednu nastavu," *Magistra Iadertina* 9, no. 1 (2015): 163–78.

⁴² Dedijer, *The Road to Sarajevo*, 175.

train, the very symbol of modernity, takes the children from Veliko Selo (Great Village) to Zagreb (a city of humble proportions in the 1930s), and thus itself functions as a signifier for the modernization of the region and a transition to capitalism, which, according to James B. Allcock, was basically nonexistent on the territory of Yugoslavia before the twentieth century.⁴³ Significantly, however, the children not only return to their village, but also reaffirm the *zadruga*, a form of rural, “primitive communism” that is placed in opposition to private ownership. Lovrak’s aesthetic lesson, then, is not only that art be a realist investigation of existing social relations but that it should propose an alternative or, as Walter Benjamin would say of the task of the storyteller which I will discuss in the conclusion to this chapter, to propose “the continuation of a story which is just unfolding.”⁴⁴ This lesson was, furthermore, highly relevant in the context of the crisis of socialist self-management 1970s in Yugoslavia, when the question of “continuation,” or the future, once again became acute, and when a number of artists responded to the Yugoslav crisis by enacting, often by means of artistic or institutional grouping, their own forms of what Branislav Jakovljević has called “integral self-management.”⁴⁵

⁴³ John B. Allcock, *Explaining Yugoslavia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

⁴⁴ Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller,” in *Illuminations*, translated by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 86.

⁴⁵ Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*. Jakovljević uses this term to refer to the claims made during the 1968 student protests in Yugoslavia, and their refractions in artistic practice, in particular, within the newly-founded Student Cultural Center in Belgrade. On the Student Cultural Center as a performative “institution-in-movement,” whose “ambivalent combination of horizontal and vertical forms of organization” challenged the distinction between official and alternative culture, see Jelena Vesić, “SKC (Student Cultural Centre) as a Site of Performative (Self-)Production: October 75 – Institution, Self-Organization, First-Person Speech, Collectivization,” *Život umjetnosti* 91 (2012): 30-53. See also my text on self-organized artistic and curatorial practices in Zagreb, in which I propose to see those forms of self-organization as artistic responses to the failure of the promise of socialist self-management, and an attempt to implement self-management on the level of the organization of artistic labor, Ivana Bago, “A Window and a Basement: Negotiating Hospitality at La Galerie Des Locataires and Podroom – the Working Community of Artists,” *ARTMargins* 1, no. 2-3 (2012): 116–46. To a great extent, all these proposals for the “continuation” of the Yugoslav story take place within the realm of art, and thus also represent the moment of separation between art and revolution, or the abandonment by critical artists of active participation in the building of socialism.

Although the central narrative of *Murder on the Orient Express* has nothing to do with Yugoslavia, I propose to zoom in on the subtextual trace left by the suggestion of the Balkans as a location where trouble is to be expected. Just as *The Train in Snow* moves back and forth in time, simultaneously announcing and historicizing the socialist Yugoslav revolution, so the comment about the Balkans frames both the history and future of the region as “the land of blood and honey”⁴⁶ [Figure 8] The train gets stuck in the Balkans as a transitional zone between East and West, where Europe is simultaneously charmed and threatened by the Orient, and where ephemeral worldly pleasures mix with eternal intercultural and interethnic conflict.⁴⁷ It is precisely in such a zone that the twentieth century was launched as a century of world wars, the first of which is still fresh in the passengers’ minds. After all, in his last annunciation to the world, engraved with his nails in the walls of his prison cell, the raven-archangel Gavrilo Princip prognosticated the enduring echo of his shot: “Our shadows will walk around Vienna / roaming through the court, startling the gentlemen.”⁴⁸

The motif of legitimized revenge is another clue from *Murder on the Orient Express* that leads to the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. The calls to retaliate for variously articulated historical evils became the benchmark of the nationalist discourses of the late 1980s and 1990s, including the oppression against non-Muslims during the Ottoman occupation,

⁴⁶ *In the Land of Blood and Honey* (2011), title of a film directed by Angelina Jolie – a love story between a Serbian soldier/war criminal and a Bosniak girl. The marriage of blood and honey as metaphor of the Balkan wars first appeared in 2000, in the book that gathered photojournalist Ron Haviv’s images of the Yugoslav wars, Haviv, *Blood and Honey: A Balkan War Journal*. In 2003, it was used in the title of a group exhibition project, *Blood and Honey: the Future’s in the Balkans* (Sammlung Essl, Vienna, 2003), which explored the Balkan contemporary art scene, beyond the borders of Yugoslavia, and which was curated by the famous Harald Szeemann. I am not aware of any direct connection between these three acts of naming.

⁴⁷ For the history of stereotypes and ideas about the Balkans from the sixteenth century to the present, see Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁴⁸ Cited in Jergović, *Sarajevo, plan grada*, 199.

against non-Serbs during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, against non-Croats within the Independent State of Croatia during WWII, against non-communists during socialist Yugoslavia, etc. Ultimately, these calls for retribution served to legitimize war as a means of self-defense, whether conducted pre-emptively or reactively, but always in the name of justice. What is left hidden in this myopic – one could also say narcissistic, or “Principal” – version of history, is precisely the “more complex” story, which would situate Yugoslavia within the system of global geopolitical and economic relations, as well as within global history. Told in a conspiratorial mode of the film’s ending: it is the version of the story deliberately hidden from Yugoslav organs of law and order.

The resolution of Christie’s plot is not, however, a metaphor that functions purely structurally (along the lines of simple/complex, disclosed/hidden, local/international) when transposed to the Yugoslav context. *Murder on the Orient Express* is an allegory of justice or, to be more exact, an allegory of international justice, with clues pointing towards its geopolitical constellations.⁴⁹ The film opens with Hercule Poirot being escorted from the Middle East by a British officer (in the book, a French lieutenant), who thanks him for saving the honor of the British army in Jordan (in the book, the French army in Syria). Likewise, the detective’s intention to spend some leisure time in Istanbul is interrupted by an urgent call to London “on a matter of international importance.”⁵⁰ Hercule Poirot is, namely, not only “a detective of international fame,” as Signor Bianchi presents him in the film, but also, as one learns from the book, “an international detective”:

⁴⁹ See also a different reading of *Murder on the Orient Express* as a narrative on justice in Merja Mäkinen, “Transforming Justice? Murder on the Orient Express 1934-2010,” *CLUES: A Journal of Detection* 34, no. 1 (2016).

⁵⁰ Signor Bianchi, *Murder on the Orient Express*, film transcript.

- “I thought there were no detectives on the train when it passed through Yugo-Slavia – not until one got to Italy.”
- “I am not a Yugo-Slavian detective, Madame. I am an international detective.”
- “You belong to the League of Nations?”
- “I belong to the world, Madame,” said Poirot dramatically. He went on, “I work mainly in London. You speak English?”⁵¹

The “international,” which ideally stands for the ironically referenced League of Nations, that is, a non-hierarchical coming together of all nations for the sake of world peace, is collapsed here into the “world” headquartered in London and communicating in English. Christie is evidently playing with the ambiguity of the concept, which stems – to recall Fisch’s reflection on the “sovereignty of people” – not from lack of definitions, but from the geopolitics of power. In the same way, the even more evasive concept of the “international community,” although greatly informed by the processes of decolonization following WW2 and the role of the “developing countries” within the United Nations, is in practice often equated with the hegemonic interests of the United States and its allies.⁵² The postwar hegemonic position of the US, which, significantly, never officially joined the League of Nations,⁵³ can be retrospectively read into Christie’s 1930s plot. Not only does detective Poirot conclude that a culturally and socially diverse group of people, such as the

⁵¹ Exchange between Countess Andrenyi and Hercule Poirot, in Christie, *Murder on the Orient Express*, 123 (Location 1587 of 3705).

⁵² The NATO intervention in the Kosovo conflict was, for example, justified with the recourse to the “political aims of the international community,” but was, in fact, opposed by China, Russia, and India, countries that represent “half of humanity,” as noted by India’s permanent representative at the United Nations, Kamlesh Sharma. Cited in Andreas Paulus, “The Influence of the United States on the Concept of the “International Community,”” in *United States Hegemony and the Foundations of International Law*, ed. Michael Byers and Georg Nolte (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 58-59. See also Pemmaraju Sreenivasa Rao, “The Concept of “international Community” in International Law and the Developing Countries,” in *From Bilateralism to Community Interest: Essays in Honour of Bruno Simma*, ed. Fastenrath Ulrich et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Edward Kwakwa, “The International Community, International Law, and the United States: Three in One, Two Against One, or One and the Same?,” in *United States Hegemony and the Foundations of International Law*, ed. Michael Byers and Georg Nolte (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁵³ Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, 34. US president Woodrow Wilson was an enthusiastic proponent of the League of Nations, which partly derived from his 1918 speech “Fourteen Points,” in which he promulgated the creation of a lasting peace in Europe, but joining the League of Nations was blocked by opposition from isolationists in Congress.

twelve passengers whom he suspects of committing the crime – a widowed American, an English manservant, a Russian princess with her German maid, a Hungarian diplomat, a Swedish missionary, etc. – could have come together only in the US, he also realizes that they stand for the twelve members of the American jury, which originally pronounced a death sentence for the murder of a child; not any child, but that of a US colonel.⁵⁴ What would in the eyes of the “Yugo-Slavian police” represent a crime is thus merely a satisfaction of the American system of justice, which, albeit corrupted (the criminal bought his way out of punishment), is legitimized as international law by the “international community” on the Orient Express line, including the “international detective” himself.

The work of justice thus reached is, furthermore, fully privatized: while Poirot initially claims that he cannot take on the case, because this is “the duty of the Yugoslavian police,” Signor Bianchi – who had earlier treated his friend Poirot to all the luxuries of first-class travel – insists, revolted by the idea of the involvement of local police: “Oh, what, monsieur, to question *my* passengers on *my* line? Never. When we get to Brod [...] we present the police with a *fait accompli*.”⁵⁵ The *fait accompli* is both commissioned and adjudicated by Signor Bianchi, who, “as the director of the line,” chooses the “simple” version that protects his first-class customers – and, implicitly, the international-American law for which they stand – while the complex version, which “involves many questions and,

⁵⁴ The link between the twelve jury members and the twelve retaliating passengers is evident in the film, but the novel makes Poirot’s thinking more explicit: “I remembered a remark of Colonel Arbuthnot’s about trial by jury. A jury is composed of twelve people—there were twelve passengers—Ratchett was stabbed twelve times [...] Ratchett had escaped justice in America. There was no question as to his guilt. I visualized a self-appointed jury of twelve people who condemned him to death and were forced by exigencies of the case to be their own executioners.” Christie, *Murder on the Orient Express*, 257-258.

⁵⁵ Signor Bianchi, *Murder on the Orient Express*, film transcript. Brod refers to Slavonski Brod, the nearest stop to the place where the train was halted by a snowdrift. Emphasis added.

of course, considerable scandal,” remains sealed inside the first-class wagon.⁵⁶ It is too easy to see in this parable of international justice instances of its actualization during the wars in which Yugoslavia disintegrated: the controversial NATO intervention in Serbia, the failure of the United Nations to prevent the Srebrenica genocide, the prominent role of Western leaders in peace negotiations, the still-standing Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which oversees the implementation of the ineffective Dayton Agreement, and, finally, the embodiment of “transitional justice” in the region, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia at the Hague. However, it is not my intention to claim such “internationality” as the key that opens the secret door to the etiology and the process of Yugoslavia’s breakup. After all, Poirot is probably right that the “police in Brod would prefer the simplicity of the first solution,”⁵⁷ as it is indeed simplicity, or what I have called “Principal” history, that has informed the majority of local war narratives which depend on a national distribution of innocence and guilt, even if the normative ratios of innocence and guilt are still measured by the total number of years to which each of the warring sides was sentenced by the Hague Tribunal.⁵⁸ What is gained by hyperbolizing the subtextual traces of Christie’s plot into an image of Yugoslavia’s disintegration is the idea of its complexity, which, as Poirot put it, involves many questions, and considerable scandal.

⁵⁶ “But in which of the two ways that I have suggested? In the simpler way, by the Mafioso disguised as a wagon-lit conductor? Or in the more complex way that I have just outlined, which involves many questions and, of course, considerable scandal? Signor Bianchi, it is for you, as a director of the line, to choose the solution that we shall offer to the police at Brod.” Hercule Poirot, *Murder on the Orient Express*, film transcript.

⁵⁷ Hercule Poirot, *Murder on the Orient Express*, film transcript.

⁵⁸ In that sense, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) has truly left a “legacy,” as was proposed in the conference organized on the occasion of the closing of the Tribunal in 2017. See “ICTY Legacy Dialogues Conference - Sarajevo 2017,” 22-24 June 2017, Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, <http://www.icty.org/en/features/legacy-conferences/icty-legacy-dialogues-conference-2017>. Accessed: October 5, 2018.

Just like the twelve separate stabs at the corpse of the murdered criminal, for which twelve different perpetrators need to be identified, Yugoslav history needs to be seen in relation to at least three separate “perpetrators” whose clues are provided by the film: the local authorities, the international community, and privatization, that is, capitalism. *The Train in Snow* explicitly identifies the crime of social inequality, which the children solve by reclaiming the history of Old Slav agricultural “communism,” a precursor to workers’ self-management. Although Christie’s plot is not resolved by a social rebellion – the collective act of revenge is a confirmation of an existing legal order – her decision to halt the train in “Yugo-Slavia” is by no means accidental, as is revealed by her fascination, in an earlier novel, with an imagined “Herzoslovakia”: a race of “brigands,” whose hobby is “assassinating kings and having revolutions.”⁵⁹ This fascination with the struggle between autonomy and dependence, starring the world’s former serfs and slaves, and the European nobility, informs the backdrop of the novel, which revolves around plans by British politicians, nobility and swindlers to restore monarchy in the now republican Herzoslovakia, after oil had been discovered in the region. Although counter-factual,⁶⁰ the novel is uncannily predictive of the future: in March 1941, Yugoslav resistance to fascism would begin with a military coup and the expulsion from the country of Serbian prince regent Paul, and end with the communist-led anti-fascist resistance and the establishment of a socialist republic.⁶¹ Not only that, but

⁵⁹ “It’s one of the Balkan states, isn’t it? Principal rivers, unknown. Principal mountains, also unknown, but fairly numerous. Population, chiefly brigands. Hobby, assassinating kings and having revolutions. Last king, Nicholas IV, assassinated about seven years ago. Since then, it’s been a republic. Altogether a very likely spot.” Agatha Christie, *The Secret of Chimneys* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1983), 9-10. The book was originally published in 1925.

⁶⁰ The assassination of Franz Ferdinand did not result in a republic, but in a monarchy in which the Serbian house of Karađorđević expanded its rule in the Balkans.

⁶¹ In March 1941, of the Serbian prince regent Paul the Karađorđević, who had earlier signed an agreement with the Axis powers, was expelled from Yugoslavia after a military coup, which included public demonstrations that protested the collaboration with Nazi Germany.

also the way in which the “restoration of monarchy” is envisioned in the novel, with an English swindler falsely assuming the identity of expelled Herzoslovakian royalty, mirrors the process of “transition,” or the restoration of capitalism following the 1990s wars, when the privatization of social property proceeded according to the interests of war lords, local swindlers, and multinational capital.⁶²

Such is, then, the site of the wreckage: the snow blizzard that interrupts the regular traffic makes possible to view Yugoslavia’s destruction as a scene of crime, whose resolution requires a disturbance of established habits of thought and judgement. The image of this regular traffic is the train, the classic symbol of modernity and of its flipside, the Holocaust.⁶³ In the South Slav territory, the train is also the symbol of the period of Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman rule, when the first railways were built and in a way which reflected the imperial interests that clashed in the region.⁶⁴

The Orient Express line is no longer operative, but the westward-pulling tracks persist, as can be seen in projects such as TRAIN (Tink Tanks Providing Research and Advice through Interaction and Networking). [Figure 9] A postsocialist iteration of a school trip, TRAIN brings together young researchers in order to foster “policy dialogue in the Western Balkans.” For the 2014 workshop, the researchers were asked to draft “a policy paper relevant to the EU integration process of his/her respective country or the region as a

⁶² In Christie’s novel, this ending is decidedly satirical: Anthony, the usurper of the Herzoslovakian throne, promises his “pal” Jimmy a job, or “gold prospecting in the rocky fastnesses of Herzoslovakia” and to his new wife Virginia he announces: “We’ll go to Herzoslovakia and pretend to be king and queen. Jimmy McGrath once said that the average life of a king or queen out there is under four years. I hope you don’t mind?” – ‘Mind,’ cried Virginia, ‘I shall love it!’” Christie, *The Secret of Chimneys*, 221-222.

⁶³ Adorno & Horkheimer, Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).

⁶⁴ See Allcock, *Explaining Yugoslavia*,

whole,” in keeping with the general theme of “*the rule of law* in the candidate countries and potential candidate countries of South Eastern Europe.”⁶⁵ Another train, then, and another training for justice, which now recruits what Boris Buden ironically called “the children of postcommunism,” in need of “education for democracy.”⁶⁶ The infantilizing ideology of “transitology” that informs this education, Buden argues, congratulates the former socialist societies for liberating themselves from communism, while at the same time instructing them on how to now properly enjoy this freedom.⁶⁷ The instruction also involves, as Jasmina Husanović has argued, a lesson on “reconciliation and reconstruction, peace and development,” especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has become a “stand-in for a community in need of intervention,” an intervention that presumes “various ‘gifts’ handed to the country by the ‘international community’ – democracy, capitalism, justice, peace, and so forth.”⁶⁸ Husanović’s critique is directed in particular towards the “‘transitional justice’ industry” and the post-war, post-atrocity management of trauma and affect whose depoliticized, scientific, and bureaucratized procedures and terminology, such as the “mapping of genocide” and identifying the “missing persons,” ultimately aligns with both

⁶⁵ See Figure 9 Original emphasis. The project is organized by the German Council for Foreign Relations (DGAP) and funded by the Federal Foreign Office (Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe). The details of the call for applications for 2014 are available at: <http://www.mladiinfo.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/train-call-for-applications20140.pdf>. For general information on the project, see https://dgap.org/en/search_en/TRAIN.

⁶⁶ Boris Buden, “Children of Postcommunism,” *Radical Philosophy* 159 (2010).

⁶⁷ Buden, “Children of Postcommunism,” 18-19. Transitology is the term used in the study of the process of change from one political regime to another, mainly from authoritarian regimes to democratic ones. Christie’s novel, interestingly, contains also a satirical prefiguration of “transitology” with its reference to the civilizing mission that Anthony’s swindler usurpation of the Herzoslovakian throne entails, and which could be said to prefigure the mission “transitional justice” in the post-conflict Balkans: “‘We’ll have a lot of fun,’ said Virginia. ‘Teaching the brigands not to be brigands, and the assassins not to assassinate, and generally improving the moral tone of the country.’ – ‘I like to hear these pure ideals,’ said Anthony. ‘It makes me feel my sacrifice has not been in vain.’” Christie, *The Secret of Chimneys*, 222.

⁶⁸ Jasmina Husanović, “Resisting the Culture of Trauma in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Emancipatory Lessons for/in Cultural and Knowledge Production,” in *Narratives of Justice in and out of the Courtroom: Former Yugoslavia and Beyond*, ed. Dubravka Žarkov and Marlies Glasius (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2014), 148.

the ethno-nationalist identity politics and the neoliberal ideology and amounts to what she calls “*terror as usual*.”⁶⁹

I am here interested in those who refuse this kind of management and training.⁷⁰ They are also children, since they cannot be fully disentangled from either transitology or the histories that precede it. More importantly, however, they are children who position themselves as new generations who question both the paternalistic, nationalist imperative of their “respective countries,” and the patronizing, neocolonial pull of the EU policies that define their “region as a whole.” The fact that the name these policies give to the region quivers somewhere between the “Western Balkans” and “South East Europe” – it is indeed the Balkans, but rest assured, it is Western; it is indeed Europe, but merely a *South East* Europe – is itself a sign of the deep anxiety that marks the process of “EU enlargement,” an “integration” which requires a marriage between European nobility and the race of brigands. One of the ways to resist such “regionalization” and renaming has been through reclaiming the name Yugoslavia, even if only as part of the designation (post-)Yugoslav, as was done in 2009 in the exhibition *Political Practices of (Post-)Yugoslav Art*, which confirmed, as much as it negated, the Yugoslav “postness” by placing it in brackets.⁷¹ To describe as (post-)Yugoslavia the space which is formed or, better yet, which remains, following Yugoslavia’s violent disintegration means to invoke another snowdrift. It means to halt the TRAIN whose conductor has once again lost the capacity to understand the “children’s story,” that is,

⁶⁹ Husanović, 149.

⁷⁰ Husanović, too, in her article, discusses practices that position themselves in opposition to the target of her critique. See also Damir Arsenijević, Jasmina Husanović, and Sari Wastell, “A Public Language of Grief: Art, Poetry, and Transitional Justice in Post-Conflict Bosnia,” in *Post-Yugoslav Constellations: Archive, Memory, and Trauma in Contemporary Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian Literature and Culture*, ed. Vlad Beronja and Stijn Vervaeke (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 259-277.

⁷¹ Jelena Vesić and Zorana Dojić, eds. *Political Practices of (post-)Yugoslav Art: Retrospective 01* (Belgrade: Prelom, 2010).

Yugoslav history, and who is merely a functionary of a vague ideal to finally reach, or return to, “Europe.” Between 2009 and today, an increasing number of curators, artists and scholars have returned to the topic of Yugoslav history, forming a diverse and disperse field of “Yugoslav Studies” understood both as an aesthetic, scholarly and political intervention into the dominant modes of discourse and knowledge production.⁷² However, getting to the point of addressing the common history in an affirmative way, following Yugoslavia’s break-up, to then normalizing it in both artistic and academic production, which is what could be said to be taking place today, was a process whose outlines in the field of contemporary art production I will delineate in what follows, by adopting the framework of generation, which I embrace in its double connotation: of socio-historical belonging and of poetic, political, narrative, and historiographical generativity. I will organize this outline chronologically by means of standard tropes that denote familial and generational ties, most of all that of fathers, mothers, sons, daughters and children. This narrative will take me from war recruiting posters in the early 1990s and the individual artist’s body art performances made in response to war to the practices of “grouping,” exemplified by the *Four Faces of Omarska* Working Group, in which the narrative on war is no longer the focus but merely a starting point for telling the “whole story” of Yugoslavia, which is here told as a story of “Omarska,” an iron ore mine turned into a death camp and now existing as a multinational company. In this crucial shift from articulating an individual experience to grouping in order tell “the

⁷² Rather than an established academic field, “Yugoslav Studies” have existed primarily as independent, politicized and transdisciplinary initiatives and forms of agitation that posited the study of Yugoslavia as a form of political intervention into the present. See, for example, the thematic issues of the magazine *Aktiv* under the title “Jugoslavenski studiji,” (Yugoslav Studies), the exhibition of Grupa Spomenik / Monument Group at g-mk | galerija miroslav kraljevic, titled “Monument Group: Yugoslavia Studies.”

whole story,” a shift enabled also by the social and historical changes in the last three decades, the story of war is inseparable from the story of economy, and local history can only exist as part of world history, that is, the history of global capitalism, or, in a decolonial version – which is well-equipped to address the marginal, post-imperial and post-colonial Yugoslav twentieth-century experience – the history of what Anibal Quijano has called the “colonial matrix of power.”⁷³ The notion of “working group,” symbolically also stands for the implicit grouping of artists and researchers constituted by the growing number of those who dedicate themselves to “Yugoslav studies” and to narrating, in reparative and non-paranoid ways,⁷⁴ the story of Yugoslavia. This shift could also be articulated as one in which the “children of Omarska” overcome the “Father,” or the figure of Principal paternal injunction, which governs the 1990s.

Father

A poster circulated in Croatia during 1995-1995 perfectly encapsulates the Principal injunction: “My father, too, is a Croatian soldier.” These words are presumably uttered by a boy faintly smiling while raising his hand in a V-sign, and dressed in an oversized military garb, with the Croatian emblem on his headband clearly indicating the identity of his army.

⁷³ In Walter D. Mignolo’s summary, Quijano’s notion of the “colonial matrix of power” encompasses “four interrelated domains: control of economy (land appropriation, exploitation of labor, control of natural resources); control of authority (institution, army); control of gender and sexuality (family, education) and control of subjectivity and knowledge (epistemology, education and formation of subjectivity).” Walter D. Mignolo, “Introduction,” *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2-3 (2007): 156. In this introduction to a collection of writings of participants of the coloniality/modernity workshop, involving a group of Latin American scholars, Mignolo also elaborates on the difference between Marxism, “a critical and liberating project dwelling in the local history of Europe, in a fairly homogeneous community where workers and factory owners belonged to the same ethnicity,” and decolonial thinking, which “relies on racial discrimination (the hierarchy of human beings, since the sixteenth century, that justified economic and political subordination of people of color and women) and of course also in class exploitation,” Mignolo, 165.

⁷⁴ I am here referring to the framework of reparative vs. paranoid reading, suggested by Eve Kossofsky Sedgwick, and which I cited in the Introduction. Eve Kossofsky Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You’re So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay is About You,” in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 123–51.

[Figure 10] Elaborating on the true meaning of the boy's declaration, beyond familial ties and conformity with the collective, another poster asks – “Do you love Croatia?” while a ghostlike outline of a naked male body clutches a hanger with the military uniform, pushing it in the face of the viewer. [Figure 11] The poster's design could be best described as naïve, as it works too hard to merge all its elements into one message. It merges the text and the “ghost,” whose hand gestures the V-sign, which simultaneously merges into the “V” with which begins the survey question on love (*Voliš li Hrvatsku?*). It then merges the text, the “ghost” and the viewer, whose identity is interrogated by the question mark, another sign with various functions: a question mark that closes the question on love, the hook of the hanger with the uniform, and as a future index of the viewer's head, once he pledges his love and puts on the uniform. Who is the “ghost” emerging out of the black background to hold the hanger? Did he already die for the homeland and is the viewer summoned to take his place and insert his head in place of the question mark? Is the smiling boy of the previous poster, from whose white background he emerges in full contours, also there to take the ghost's place in some future war and then also recede into the black background? And how does one think, visualize, or narrate this “taking of place,” always the same place to which young men are summoned in a continued repetition of the Principal, paternal narrative?

In 1993, the space of art, or more precisely, of a contemporary art exhibition, imposed itself as a space in which to initiate this work of thinking and visualizing, beyond the existing “design.” Summoned to participate at the “Youth Biennial” in Valencia, Slaven Tolj, twenty-nine at the time, arrived in Spain directly from the frontline, the place that defined his own youth in Dubrovnik. In this strangely immediate encounter of youth, war and art, laconically titled *Dubrovnik-Valencia-Dubrovnik*, Tolj performed the act of denuding

himself by shedding off twelve layers of clothing, including his uniform. [Figure 12] To each layer a black button had been sewn, a button traditionally worn by men in Dalmatia as an expression of mourning, and with which Tolj now mourned friends lost to war along with his own war experience. After tearing off a black button from the final layer of discarded clothing, he sewed it directly onto his chest, at the place that matched the location where it would usually be worn, but also the location of a medal, which a volunteer soldier like him would be likely to earn in the war. In the midst of the heroic Croatian war propaganda and posters that recruited new volunteers, Tolj denuded the war of its emblems, and encapsulated, in the form of a black button, the future marked by mourning, loss, and the sight of disoriented war veterans whose experience, earlier summoned by powerful words, such as love, homeland, defense, enemy, and victory, was now reduced to a psychiatric abbreviation: PTSD, post-traumatic-stress disorder.

Tolj's performance also enacted the state of loss of control, war as a state of exception, and the state of exception as a state of mobilization, occupation, and siege; a summoning – performed doubly, by the enemy's declaration of war and the homeland's call for defense – which leaves its subjects little to no choice. The title *Dubrovnik-Valencia-Dubrovnik* charts the course of this deployment by registering a jargon of command which determines the young soldier's initial position ("Dubrovnik!"), and in which the invitation to participate at a "youth biennial" becomes little else than another such call ("Valencia!"), an injunction followed by the final command to return to the original position ("Dubrovnik!"). The laconic title of Tolj's performance at the same marks the maximum of symbolization that a subject is capable of in the midst of the state of mobilization, and upon being called to temporarily assume distance to it. Although Tolj would return to war, the invitation for a

temporary geographical displacement functions as the signifier for the future temporal displacement, when, following the war, Tolj would become a survivor, a subject defined, as Robert Jay Lifton argued, by a traumatic encounter with death: “The survivor is one who has come into contact with death in some bodily or psychic fashion.”⁷⁵ There are, Lifton further writes, “five characteristic themes of the survivor: the death imprint, death guilt, psychic numbing, conflicts around nurturing and contagion, and struggles with meaning or formulation.” The invitation to participate at an exhibition, then, could be said to represent a call to “formulation,” and Tolj’s performance an attempt to narrative his experience, to engage in a struggle with meaning and translate individual experience into history, even as this history is still unfolding in the present.

As an artist survivor, Tolj employs the visual and performative language that de-specifies his experience and aligns it with the ubiquitous language of what Kristine Stiles has called “cultures of trauma.”⁷⁶ Elaborating, in her pioneering work on the visual representations of trauma, upon clinical research that showed that the heterogeneity of traumatic causes nonetheless results in a homogenous set of posttraumatic symptoms, Stiles argued further that this “homogeneity of symptoms equally may produce a heterogeneous body of images and actions that can function as homogeneous representations of trauma.”⁷⁷ One such image, a “marked body,” which Stiles originally theorized as in her analysis of the

⁷⁵ Robert Jay Lifton, “From Hiroshima to the Nazi Doctors: The Evolution of Psychoformative Approaches to Understanding Traumatic Stress Syndromes,” in John P. Wilson and Beverley Raphael, eds., *International Handbook of Traumatic Stress Syndromes* (New York and London: Plenum Press, 1993), 16.

⁷⁶ Kristine Stiles, “Shaved Heads and Marked Bodies: Representations from Cultures of Trauma,” *Strategie II: Peoples Méditerranéens* 64-65 (1993): 95-117, reprinted most recently in Kristine Stiles, *Concerning Consequences: Studies in Art, Destruction, and Trauma* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 47-66.

⁷⁷ Stiles, 48.

work of Romanian artists Lia and Dan Perjovschi, is exactly the language used in Tolj's performance. A succinct account of the way in which a marked body serves as a representation of trauma and its survival is also found in Stiles's analysis of Marina Abramović's "star" performances, such as *Thomas Lips* (1975) in which the artist cut a five-pointed star her belly:

In whichever orientation [whether a five-pointed star, as it appeared from the perspective of the artist, or a pentagram, as it appeared from the vantage-point of the viewer], the testimony of the star on her body was bleak, signifying a marked body, enunciating the silence that is a rudiment of trauma and a source of the destruction of identity, and offering a sign of a visible wound and a mark of honor, a symbol of resistance and an icon of marginality, and a signature of capture that both designated and disguised identity.⁷⁸

The above analysis could almost literally be transposed to Tolj's performance, in which the black button is at the same time a "visible wound and a mark of honor," and a medal with which Tolj awards himself – for what? For surviving, perhaps, for surviving survival guilt, for following and surviving the order "Valencia!" which commanded him to articulate a testimony on "Dubrovnik!" however "bleak" and rudimentary his testimony may be, consisting of little but a denuded body and a round, black shape.

Is there something generational about this kind of testimony, not simply in the sense that Tolj, as an artist born in 1964, belongs to a specific social and artistic age cohort, but that this and his other performances at the time were generated within, as well as by, a specific historical moment, a moment when the immediacy of the traumatic events disabled any kind of narration that would be more coherent, more articulate, as, for example, the comprehensive and totalizing narration which *Four Faces of Omarska* will set out to

⁷⁸ Kristine Stiles, "Cloud with Its Shadow. Marina Abramović (2008)" in Stiles, *Concerning Consequences*, 225.

accomplish in 2011? The work of Milica Tomić, an artist who belongs to the same age group as Tolj, reveals that the generational framework should not be taken as an essentialist one, that is one through which an artist work would be determined by a fact of her birth, but instead as a conceptual and historical tool that enables us to detect broader social, ideological and aesthetic shifts that inform the production of art. In 2011, Milica Tomić will be the initiator of the totalizing narrative of *Four Faces of Omarska*, which, as I announced and as I will further elaborate, marks the ambition to “group” with others in order to tell the “whole story” and thus provide a maximum of meaning and formulation that stands in opposition to the minimum that Tolj’s performance offers. At the same time, her 1998 artistic testimony matched that of Tolj and similarly used her own body as the sole means of narration.⁷⁹ In the video *I am Milica Tomić* (1998/1999), made in the same year of the NATO intervention in Serbia, the artist is shown standing against the dark background and wearing a light, sleeveless white gown which partly reveals her body. Unlike Tolj, she speaks, and she enthusiastically introduces herself to the viewer: “*Ik ben Milica Tomić, ik ben Nederlands*” (I am Milica Tomić, I am Dutch) and, right after: “*Io sono Milica Tomić, io sono italiano*” (I am Milica Tomić, I am Italian), until the same is repeated in 64 languages and the video begun anew. [Figure 13] By the second identification, she begins to turn on what appears to be a rotating platform, and the camera zooms out to display her luminous body which seems only barely human, resembling instead a store mannequin, or a computer hologram. As the still smiling “hologram” continues to repeat the sentences, claiming different identities in different

⁷⁹ Of course, one must take into account also the artistic possibilities available at each particular time, as well as general artistic trends that define a particular moment.

languages, bloody marks begin appearing on her face and her body until, by the end of the video, she is almost completely covered in wounds.

While on the most immediate level this work speaks to the violent consequences of “Princip’s echo,” namely the paternal historical claim for national sovereignty and the always potentially violent insistence on identity, on the formal and structural level, this is a work about the collapse of narrative. Only seemingly a testimony less “bleak” than that of Tolj’s – for, here, a subject now speaks – the only testimony that “Milica Tomić” can offer is of the conditions that had made testimony impossible, even on the most banal level of introducing oneself.⁸⁰ Tomić’s performance can also be read as a minimized version of what Branislav Jakovljević’s has called “syntactical performances,” which employ both the text (discourse) and bodily gestures but in a way in which the two stand “next to” each other without cohering into a single unit.⁸¹ Such decomposition of the coherence of meaning does not point only to the performing subject who enacts it, but also to the set of coherent, that is, hegemonic meanings from which this subject detaches herself. Tomić’s video performance, in which the identity-claiming text violently fails to cohere with the decomposing body, is in stark contrast with the war-recruiting poster in which the speaking body, the text, the uniform as identity marker, and the viewer, all cohere into one. Or at least, this coherence is attempted, but the poster’s “naïve” design is unable to conceal the stitches necessary to

⁸⁰ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1996); Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, eds. *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

⁸¹ “Here, the nondiscursive is not anterior to discourse. It does not belong to a presumed prediscursive or ‘preverbal’ domain. It does not precede or produce discourse. Instead, its place is next to it – around discourse, not in addition to it. [...] Instead of signifying, it establishes symbolic, or to use Pluchart’s locution ‘modular’ chains. These sequences always have a body as their point of origin, and always remain oriented in relation to it.” Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 160.

successfully accomplish coherence, the accomplishment of which would requires a suturing of gaps.⁸²

As I have indicated above, the (im)possibility of speech enacted in Tolj's and Milica's performances is generational, not simply in the sense of their shared age and the shared historical and traumatic experiences shape the identity of the subject, but also in the sense of the different social and ideological conditions that generate anew at each particular moment a hierarchy of what is sayable, a hierarchy that determines both the legitimacy and the legibility of speech, and the conditions of its coherence. In fact, Tomić's work of the 1990s is a truly convincing example of this formal "minimum" of available narrative means, precisely due to the fact that the content of what her work articulates goes beyond the form of the bodily mark, and presages themes and strategies that will become more prevalent during the 2000s, both in her own work and that of other post-Yugoslav artists. For example, in her 1997-1998 video installation *XY Ungelöst XY... Reconstruction of a Crime*, she appropriates the title of a German TV program about crime, and invites members of the Belgrade art scene to join her in embodying the anonymous Kosovo Albanian victims, who were killed by the Serbian authorities in retaliation for protesting the abolishing of the autonomous status of Kosovo within the Socialist Republic of Serbia. This work, made in the midst of the Kosovo crisis and the ensuing armed conflict (1998-99) provocatively invoked the repressed memory of state terror and, even as importantly, made this invocation into a group effort, one in which the Belgrade artist scene was invited to unite in a common

⁸² Suture is a term from psychoanalytic theory which Jakovljević uses in his analysis of the post-1968 syntactic artistic performances in Yugoslavia, Jakovljević, 168-170.

cause. Similarly, Tomić's 2001 decision to use the photo-shoot invitation by a popular magazine to pose as a 1941 member of anti-fascist resistance, publicly hung in Belgrade by the Nazis, is an early example of art that affirmed the partisan legacy of WW2. In yet another example, her video "Portrait of My Mother" (1999) is an example of the thematization of the parental figure, which I will suggest is typical for the work of artists during the 2000s. Despite all these explicitly articulated themes, however, the form of all these works remains decisively tied, as Jakovljević says of the syntactical performances, to the "body as a point of origin," which remains outside signification, and next to discourse,⁸³ which is in this case represented by the explicated "content" of Tomić's works. During the 1990s, Tomić and Tolj testified against the war-recruiting command that then governed the limits of the sayable, and the "bleakness," or rather, the symbolic opacity of their testimony stems in one part from the structure of the individual and collective traumatic experience, and in part also from the very fact that their testimony is exceptional, without a chorus to constitute its refrain, only a scattered network of analogously made "marks."⁸⁴

Igor Grubić's intervention, *Black Peristyle* (1998), should be counted among these analogous marks. Regardless of the fact that the large, black circle that he secretly and illegally painted on the surface of the ancient Roman square in Split in 1998, is not a mark made on the human body, but one inscribed in the public space, it still enunciates what pace

⁸³ Jakovljević, 160.

⁸⁴ This is not to say that there were no explicit protestations to the war-recruiting discourses during the 1990s. There were, and some of them were collective efforts, such as the *Feral Tribune* and the *Arkezin* magazines in Croatia, or the various anti-war associations, protests and movements, in particular, feminist ones, which worked across the newly established national borders. See Bojan Bilić, *We Were Gasping for Air: (Post-)Yugoslav Anti-War Activism and Its Legacy* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2012). However, this collectivity could again be said to be exceptional and thus an enlarged form of overall isolation. Furthermore, I would suggest that satire, as the form embraced by the *Feral Tribune* magazine, could be read along the same lines that would detect in it a tortured struggle with the impossibility of articulation, which expresses itself in visual and textual hyperbolization, joke as a defense mechanism, and instant signification as the only way to imagine meaning.

Stiles described as a “silence that is a rudiment of trauma and a source of the destruction of identity,” while at the same time acting as “a symbol of resistance and an icon of marginality.”⁸⁵ [Figure 14] *Black Peristyle* could also be understood to represent a kind of magnification of Tolj’s black button, an act of enlarging that forces the button out of the individual and onto the public body, and that declares that the dark medal of deployment and repetitive body-cutting executed by the refrain of the Principal, identity-and-sovereignty-asserting command is not something that simply effects the bodies on the frontline, or the civilians murdered or expelled from their homes, but also the collective body.

By pinning an enlarged “black button” to one of the major sites of cultural heritage, the Diocletian Palace in Split, Grubić also identified the “button” as a historical mark and by the same token marked his own intervention as a historicizing gesture. Similarly to the “bleak” testimony of the marked individual bodies, the history Grubić tells is also “bleak,” an immediate history that merely registers and locates the existence of a state of exception. This siege of a small piece of public space records the mass siege of cities and bodies during and following the war, but such recording can in no way be cohered into a narrative, and presented as knowledge, or rather, it cannot be presented as the kind of knowledge defined by dominant epistemic regimes. The black mark performs the same function as the break-down of systems that guarantee knowledge, which Tzvetan Todorov identified as the key theme of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*; a break-down marked by the bleak, yet heavily

⁸⁵ Stiles, “Cloud with Its Shadow,” 225.

signifying, information that Kurtz provides after he is finally reached by the narrative designed to find him: “The horror, the horror!”⁸⁶

During the early 1990s, Sanja Iveković (1949) and Mladen Stilinović (1947-2016), artists that belong to generations preceding that of Tolj, Tomić and Grubić, made works that similarly staged a minimum of signification, but by using different means. Instead of the bodily or spatial inscription of marks, as immediate traces of survival in the face of death and destruction, both Stilinović and Iveković, two conceptual and performance artists who began their careers in the 1970s, created installations filled with objects, but only in order to signify emptiness and absence. Known for his poetic, playful, anarchic, and red-infused collages, photomontages, paintings and drawings, during the war in the early 1990s Stilinović made a series of “white” works (1990-1995), a series of everyday objects, whose isolated, injured, incomplete and defunct status was further emphasized by the bland, white paint covering their surface, such as in *Spectacles* (1992), eyeglasses whose function of “vision” is precluded by the painted surface, or *Protected Nothing* (1995), in which a transparent, white canopy covers an empty, white plate. [Figure 15] Gathered in an exhibition installation, instead of cohering into a meaningful narrative, the “nothing” of these works intensifies; the poetic, perhaps even metaphoric signification that they may have as individual objects dissolves by their conspicuous yet random distance and disjointedness from one another, which

⁸⁶ Tzvetan Todorov, “Heart of Darkness,” in *Genres in Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 103-112. “Thus not only does the process of coming to know Kurtz dominate Marlow’s narrative, but the knowledge sought is unattainable [...] The heart of darkness is ‘Nowhere,’ and it cannot be reached. Kurtz fades away before it is possible to know him [...] His name, Kurtz, “short,” is only superficially misleading [...] Kurtz is not small, as his name might suggest; it is our knowledge of him that falls short, remains forever inadequate, and it is no accident that he resists the whites’ efforts to drag him out of obscurity [...] Kurtz is the heart of darkness and his heart is empty. One can only dream about the ultimate moment, at the threshold of death, when one acquires absolute knowledge (‘that supreme moment of complete knowledge’). What Kurtz actually utters at that moment are words that express the void, canceling out knowledge: ‘The horror! The horror! An absolute horror whose object we shall never know,’” Todorov, 109.

hyperbolizes isolation and thus subverts the coherence that an exhibition installation by definition implies [Figure 16] Unlike the works of Tolj, Tomić and Grubić, which rely on the artist's body, even if only as a trace of illicit action, such as in Grubić's case, Stilinović's installation is conspicuously body-less, absence particularly foregrounded in the series of white, black and red mattresses that he also made during this period, under the title *Pain*, and that signaled death and burial.

Iveković's installation *Resnik* (1994), whose title referenced a refugee camp with approximately 2000 refugees near Zagreb, presented a dark room filled with houseplants, whose only source of light came from a projection screen showing a video of a barren landscape, which then switches to a black screen on which appear isolated words: "Exotic" "Mistake" "Strange" "Dangerous" "Other." [Figure 17] The absent bodies of the refugees are present in the form of plants, which fade away in the dark and claustrophobic gallery space, illuminated only by the anonymous and futureless open space and the flashing words whose overdetermined attributes overwrite their precarious and, from the perspective of the "host," burdensome existence. Significantly, even when the body appears in Iveković's work in this period – the work of an artist otherwise known for the performative and photographic examination of the representations of the female body – it literally melts away, such as it does in the installation *Frozen Images* (1992/1994), in which an image of a naked woman who is trying to fall asleep, is projected on a "bed" made of dry ice, which is gradually melting. In the 1994 version of this installation, presented at Transmediale, Berlin, the audio segment of the installation included a reading from an Amnesty International Report on women raped during the war in Yugoslavia.

During the 1990s, Iveković also collaborated with a number of feminist initiatives in Croatia, for which she designed posters, magazines, and public campaigns, such as those against the violence against women. By 1997, Iveković also began making art that appropriated the form of posters and magazine ads, such as in her *Gen XX*, when she used representations of famous supermodels to illustrate short biographies of Yugoslav female WW2 partisan heroes and fighters, including her own mother. This work which, in the artist's words, articulated her own "act of resistance at a moment when Croatia was infected with nationalist ideology in its fight against the so-called leftist cultural hegemony,"⁸⁷ opened up the space for the reexamination of history, not only through referencing WW2, but by establishing a transgenerational protocol from the generation of Iveković's mother via Iveković to the "younger generation," whom the artist identifies as the "target audience" for this work.⁸⁸

Could it be said, then, that the 1990s are characterized by storytelling that takes place by means of monochromous marks, repetitive cuts, incoherent discourse, emptiness, and absences, and that these, at the time, the only remaining gestures of resistance to the Principal narrative of the Father – embodied by the names Franjo Tuđman, Slobodan Milošević, Alija Izetbegović, etc.? Iveković's *Gen XX* and Tomić's photo-session in which she decided to "pose" as an executed anti-fascist fighter, go further and conjoin the embodied figuration (fashion models) with an explicit, biographical-historical narrative, thus

⁸⁷ Roxana Marcocci, "Dolze Violencia," Interview with Sanja Iveković, <https://www.flashartonline.com/article/sanja-ivekovic/>. Accessed October 15, 2018.

⁸⁸ Iveković, cited in Marcocci. Indeed, I recall seeing this work as a cheap, A4 print pasted on the columns of Zagreb's Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, which I had just enrolled in at the time. It truly had an estranging effect, clashing as it did the ultra-famous supermodels with the obscure, repressed history that no longer represented desirable historical knowledge.

opening up the space for the narration of history. Importantly, as Iveković has noted in the case of her own work, this breakthrough was facilitated by the existence of activist networks and the evolving civil society, which is evidenced also by the parallels between her work as activist-designer and artist in this period.⁸⁹ The year 2000 is a turning point in Croatian and Serbian politics, with the first defeat of the ruling Croatian Democratic Community, following the death of Tuđman in 1999, and the mass protests against Milošević in Serbia, and his subsequent extradition to the Hague Tribunal, under charges of war crimes and genocide.

If the works made by the two different generations of artists during the 1990s negated the paternal authority obliquely, by means of bodily and spatial marks and absences, as well as, as is the case in Tomić's and Iveković's work, by reestablishing matrilinear ties – by means of which they enacted, pace Hajdarpasic, one central figure of the co-national (br)other⁹⁰ – the social and political changes of the following decade will enable storytelling attempts by new generations that explicitly interrogate the Father. In these works, made by artists born in the late 1970s and early 1980s, another co-national (br)other, children, articulate their position which “unsettle[s] proclaimed bonds of national unity,”⁹¹ the work that I will later propose to be seen as constituting Yugoslavia's “surviving generation.” For now, I am interested in the particular subset of narrative procedures that inform this

⁸⁹ Sanja Iveković, in a conversation with the author, April 16, 2018.

⁹⁰ Hajdarpasic, *Whose Bosnia?*, 16.

⁹¹ Hajdarpasic, 17.

generation, namely, the fact that they take a step that extends the gesture of mark-making, instituted by the previous generation, namely, they begin asking questions.⁹²

Ivan Grubanov's *Visitors* (2002-2003) is an early example of such "extension." In 2002, twenty-six at the time, Grubanov was accepted as a student at Rijksakademie, the prestigious art school in the Netherlands. In the same year and in the same country began Slobodan Milošević's trial for war crimes at The Hague Tribunal. Milošević faced sixty-six charges in the categories of crimes against humanity, genocide, and war crimes committed during the Yugoslav wars of the nineties. Having just freed himself from both the nineties and from the nineties in Belgrade characterized by social and media isolation of Serbia under Milošević's regime, Grubanov found himself literally stalked by the very thing that he thought he had left behind. Instead of a new experience that was to be launched by a two-year-long visit to the Netherlands, he was led to become a visitor to Milošević's trial. After acquiring a journalist pass, Grubanov attended the trial for two years, and made 160 pen and ink drawings, fashioning himself into a "courtroom artist." [Figure 18] The drawings of the *Visitor* series include a mix of sketches of the courtroom environment, persecutors, the defendant, sentence-long excerpts from court proceedings and interrogations, and short notes and observations that Grubanov made, including dates, descriptions of guards talking, files being handed over, judges entering, etc. The gallery installations of the work also

⁹² Surely, as I have indicated above, there is a form of continuity of this questioning, and it would certainly be possible to say that the kind of work done by artists and intellectuals, who detached themselves from the paternal narrative in the 1990s, is one point of origin of the questioning that takes place in the 2000s, especially in the case of works such as *Gen XX*, in which the transgenerational transmission of such questioning is explicit. In this sense, those artists of the previous generations are embraced as alternative parental figures, the legacy of whose work can be preserved, extended, and regenerated. This extension by the new generations, however, is different because it assumes a different form and turns into an attempt to narrativize what was earlier a single, isolated mark, but ends up, as I will show, not narrating the past but instead articulating a specific generational position in the present.

included his visitor pass, and a mute video documentation of the courtroom, which registers his own presence there. Given the emphasis on what could provisionally be called purely forensic material, Grubanov's sketches hardly form a metanarrative of the trial. Instead, they are a work of diligent recording, and even the notes that he inserts perpetuate the forensic narration of the entire series: the man is wearing a blue shirt, the secretary is leafing through a large folder, the other secretary's hair is still somewhat pressed from sleeping, etc.

In essence, visitor Grubanov is not able to tell the war story any more than his predecessor, soldier Tolj. The story he does tell, however, is of his own relationship to the war story: a story of "fusion." Grubanov describes the work as an "introjection of the subject [that is, the trial] until you incorporate it to the point that the fusion of the subject and your own cognitive apparatus starts coming out of your hand and your pen."⁹³ This fusion, paradoxically, does not happen in Serbia, during the events that Grubanov was already old enough to witness, and was actively participating in as a young activist rebelling against the regime, but in The Hague, where, as Grubanov writes, "[y]ou need to present your national identity card at the entrance, as though you were entering sovereign territory; it is then taken away from you and replaced with the 'Visitor'-badge, your new identity in this transnational, superficial non-place," in which formal identities "merge into the notion of 'international, i.e. United Nations, international justice, and international tribunal.'"⁹⁴ At the same time, however, he cannot simply assume a disinterested "visitor" position within this tribunal of justice; instead, his two-year presence in the courtroom becomes what he

⁹³ Ivan Grubanov, cited in Raluca Voinea, "A Conversation with Ivan Grubanov," *Deutsche Bank ArtMag* 66, <https://db-artmag.de/en/66/feature/a-conversation-with-ivan-grubanov-by-raluca-voinea/> Accessed 22 September, 2018.

⁹⁴ Grubanov, in Voinea.

describes as “a performative act of exercising the responsibility that an artist carries in relation to his circumstantial involvement in the course of history,”⁹⁵ and “a process of coming to terms with the contradictory aspects of my involvement in this troubling chapter of history as well as my implicit involvement in the trial.”⁹⁶

Although Grubanov does not say what makes for the “contradictory” aspects of his involvement, contradictory, that is, to those that are spelled out in his self-identification as an anti-regime activist in Serbia, his reference to “memories and labels that haunted me” suggest that the contradictory identification might be precisely the identification with the label “perpetrator.” It is, then, an identification with Slobodan Milošević or, more abstractly, the Father. Coming to terms with this identification precisely at the sovereign territory of international law – the law above all laws, whose processes of identification are able to annul other existing legislations of identity – is exactly what makes Grubanov the “courtroom artist.” The encounter with the courtroom, and the judgment that it entails, confers upon him the identity of “artist” to the extent that the artist is one, who, as he states, assumes responsibility for his participation in history, which necessarily also includes a decision for a narration of history, a narration that however must begin with existing historical narratives, or, as he calls them, labels.

The encounter with the label will be explicit in the Grubanov’s *G-series*, another series of drawings, in which the “fusion” that he described as the central feature of the work, finds its essential expression in the letter “G”: G for genocide – or rather, the charge and the

⁹⁵ Ivan Grubanov, “Visitor,” <https://grubanov.wordpress.com/visitor/>. Accessed 22 September, 2018.

⁹⁶ Grubanov, in Voinea, “A Conversation with Ivan Grubanov.”

verdict of genocide – and G for Grubanov, his own name whose root, ironically, signifies roughness. [Figure 19] This fusion is by no means accidental, as personal and family names act as another index of difference among the Yugoslav nations, a difference that, while not consistent or reliable, could be enough to take a person's life.⁹⁷ Grubanov's drawings, then, are marks of this process of confrontation, analogous to the marks that artists made on the surfaces of their cities and their bodies in the 1990s. Just like those earlier marks, they do not tell a story; however, unlike the earlier marks, they clearly position themselves within historical time, such that they become marks not only of this time, but of a certain generation, whose existence is unimaginable without the generativity of their fathers. Including the artist's own father, who endowed him with the G-name, Grubanov.

By contrast, Tolj, Grubić, and Tomić, do not have a father. Or, more precisely, they have one epitomized by the figures of Tuđman, Milošević, and others, but they also had another one, epitomized by Tito, and now as a consequence, they have none.⁹⁸ They detach themselves from the paternal law, and become simply “(some)bodies,” utterly isolated, and searching for ways to articulate this family-less state, deprived of the comforts of the chorus refrain. Grubanov's generation was either too young, or not yet born, to truly remember Yugoslavia's father, which is one reason why the command generated by the new paternal law determines, even if it doesn't overdetermine, their generation. This paternal generativity is, furthermore, “contradictory,” because the “G” of this generativity simultaneously reveals

⁹⁷ Here, again, Hajdarpasic's (br)other could define the simultaneous divisions and slippages among Yugoslav names. Ugo Vlasisavljević

⁹⁸ Stilinović's and Iveković's generation, by contrast, is further removed from the new paternal authority of the ruling figures of the 1990s, and, although I have argued for an analogous lack of narrativization in their works, signaled by the tropes of absence, withering away and emptiness, these at works at the same time do not reveal a drama of subjectivity and identity, which is present in the work of Tomić, Tolj, and Grubić.

itself as the letter of law (in Serbia, Croatia, Republic of Srpska, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo) and as evidence of crime (in the void space of international justice). It is all the more contradictory since each of the separate, national laws do not coincide, and it is not possible, as in the case of the Holocaust, for example, to draw with any sense of confidence a straight line dividing victim from perpetrator-nations.⁹⁹

However, the division is still made, not least by the “international community” symbolized by The Hague, and it is symptomatic that most artists from Serbia approach the narration of war from a default position of inherited guilt, whose examination involves a direct or indirect interrogation of the Father – or simply, a father. Bojan Fajfrić’s *Theta Rhythm (while my father was sleeping)* was made between 2008 and 2010, after the artist recalled a TV footage that he saw as a child. [Figure 20] This TV footage was of the Eighth Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia, held in September 1987, which ended with Milošević’s take-over of the Serbian League of Communists and thus marked a starting point of the legitimization of nationalism in Serbia. The moment that Fajfrić remembered, and which for him represents an entry point into a “place of traumatic experience,” is the moment when the TV camera caught his father as he was falling asleep during the session.¹⁰⁰ Fajfrić’s father was deputy head of one of the departments of the Belgrade city committee of the League of Communists and was involved

⁹⁹ This is also the reason why the theory of historical trauma, which is to a great extent founded on the examination of the Holocaust and its legacy, is only relatively helpful in the case of Yugoslav history and Yugoslav wars, in addition to being predominantly focused on victim-, not perpetrator-nations. Among the exceptions is Gabriele Schwab, *Haunting Legacies. Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), which focuses on transgenerational transference of trauma in textual production, and draws from her own personal history of a child belonging to a “perpetrator-nation” growing up in Germany after the Second World War and the Holocaust.

¹⁰⁰ Bojan Fajfrić, “Theta Rhythm 2010,” <http://bojanfajfrec.net/TR.html>. Accessed September 23, 2018.

in multiple administrative tasks that needed to be accomplished in relation to, and prior to the Session. The artistic research, inaugurated by the artist's involuntary memory, resulted in the retrieval and editing of this TV footage, and in interviews with people who could help him "reconstruct the circumstances of [his] father falling asleep."¹⁰¹ He also interviewed his father "reminiscing on the actual make-up of the office in the building in which was once the Belgrade Committee of the Communist Party."¹⁰² If it seems that the interviews with other people were to provide a more meaningful reconstruction, which would go beyond the "actual make-up of the office" that his father was asked to provide, the extensive research – which Fajfrić in an astonishing slip in a description on his website calls "extinctive research"¹⁰³ – does not result in a "meaningful reconstruction," one that would truly account for this pivotal historical event that fused the Father of the nation with the artist's own father. In a similar move to that of Grubanov, Fajfrić makes a video, *Theta Rhythm* (2010), in which his "extinctive research" is literally used to make himself extinct: he fuses himself with his father, assumes his father's role, and reconstructs his day, from the dream of riding a horse, to getting dressed, buying newspaper, arriving to the office, greeting his colleagues, going through an extensive – and, as it turns out, once again extinctive – list of tasks for the day, including what seems to be a highly sensitive report that is unfinished due to circumstances only partially under his control, and that is in some crucial way related to the session. [Figure 21] Finally, the session begins and after a while – and amidst speeches

¹⁰¹ Wall label in *Theta Rhythm (while my father was sleeping...)*, installation at the 2009 October Salon, Belgrade.

¹⁰² Fajfrić, "Theta Rhythm 2010."

¹⁰³ "Prior to the film, I have made extinctive research which resulted in great many findings displayed in different constellations. It consists of documentary sources - interviews, recollections, video and photo archives and documents," "Theta Rhythm (While my father was sleeping...), 2008-2009," <http://bojanfajfric.net/TR2.html>.

marked by such loaded words as “Goli Otok”¹⁰⁴ (a forced labor camp in Yugoslavia) and “revenge” – Mirko Fajfrić, Bojan Fajfrić’s father, and Bojan Fajfrić himself, now fused with his father, both fall asleep, drifting into the hypnotic state of the theta rhythm that gives the film its title.

If dissociation is one symptom that occurs in the midst of and, even more pronouncedly, in the wake of traumatic experience, then Fajfrić’s father Mirko – whose name, incidentally, connotes quietness and peace – may be said to have preemptively dissociated from (the slaughterhouse of) History. By doing this, he implicitly placed himself in the position of those who accepted the Principal command, although they might not have understood its illogical claim. Similar to Grubanov’s drawings, Fajfrić’s video is unable to tell a story of the war or the break-up of Yugoslavia, but is only able to assume the exploration of his own position in relation to that story, a position of trying to “meaningfully reconstruct,” that is, understand, the hypnotized position that his father had assumed in the face of history in the making. However, the only understanding that is gained is of the extensive/exhaustive/extinctive list of administrative tasks and pressures with which the father was faced and that naturally caused him to fall asleep during the very long party session, in which many of his other comrades are similarly seen bored or on the verge of sleep. In the same way, the interviews made with other actors, such as the restaurant chef at the official cantina where politicians ate, resulted in similarly “forensic” information on what politicians liked to eat, which excluded soups and included a list of variously prepared meats.

¹⁰⁴ Goli Otok was a forced labor camp set up on the Goli Otok island in Dalmatia, a correctional facility initially intended for those suspected to still be faithful to Stalin, following the Tito-Stalin split in 1948.

Even, then, as Fajfrić willfully seeks to be fused with this familial and historical knowledge, even as he courageously strives to confront it, the “extinctive research” also puts himself to sleep, and he inserts his own head in the documentary TV footage, in the place of his father’s head.

However, it was misleading to say, as I earlier did, that Fajfrić fused with his father in order to fall asleep. In fact, just the opposite is true: the digital rendering of the original tape, by means of which Fajfrić inserted his face in the found footage, shows him awake, serious, and looking on. Here, digital technology enables precisely that which Mark Hansen argued the new media, paradoxically, to be capable of, a new type of embodied aesthetics.¹⁰⁵ The digital protension of Fajfrić’s embodied existence is precisely what enables him to grasp the retentional dimension of that existence, the presence of what he, via Sigmund Freud, calls the “screen memory” that involuntarily irrupted and which he cannot but attend to.¹⁰⁶ And he does so literally: the digital screen enacts a peculiar embodiment of his traumatic “screen memory,” by fusing the digital footage of his face with the analog – as well as analogous, that is, “similar” – body of his sleeping father. Such fusion enables him to perform, again in Hansen’s terms, a kind of mourning that he would otherwise not be capable of, a “bearing witness to life” by means of a digital time-travel directly onto the scene on which his father had once become paralyzed and had thus failed to prevent the looming catastrophe, which, in turn, gave new meaning to the artist’s already traumatic “screen memory” from childhood of seeing his father doze off on live, public TV.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Mark Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

¹⁰⁶ “Theta Rhythm, 2010.”

¹⁰⁷ Mark Hansen, “The Time of Affect, or Bearing Witness to Life,” *Critical inquiry* 30, no. 3 (2004).

Yugoslavia's Antigone

A number of other works could be included in this rubric of the attempt to narrativize a contradictory inheritance, and to do so by addressing a father. However, in the two concluding examples that I discuss, the “label” that such inheritance entails is unclear, because the paternal command that the author is confronting is either ambiguous, or left unidentified. The first such work is Srđan Keča’s film *Letter to Dad* (2011), which also takes the artist’s father as the object of documentary investigation, a necessarily forensic inquiry, since his father had just died. [Figure 22] It was a sudden and lonesome death, as he was separated from his wife, the author’s mother, and as he also did not wish to inform anyone of his terminal illness. The exploration of this death that summoned the filmmaker revolves around the father’s decision to join the Serbian army in the early 1990s, despite the fact that he had not been drafted – a fact that Keča’s mother, a Croat from Dubrovnik, as the film later reveals, does not know or denies. Unlike Fajfrić’s father, Keča’s father can no longer provide a testimony and, even if he could, the question is whether it would be any more informative than what Keča manages to discover from his immediate family and from two of his father’s friends.

All the male characters in the film have either also gone to war or identify themselves, as does his father’s work partner, as people with “a great Serbian soul.”¹⁰⁸ His uncle freely speaks of the war and his father’s involvement, but since he is a veteran affected by post-traumatic-stress disorder and alcoholism, Keča can hardly hope to gain from him any kind of understanding. His story is all chopped up, and accompanied by contradictory

¹⁰⁸ All transcripts from the film are my own translations from the original.

affective states, including tender affection towards his nephew, followed by an allegation that, due to his “mixed” origin and his Croatian mother, he might as well be positioned on the “wrong side.” At the same time, the uncle professes not to hold any grudges against his mother, nor even, against Croats in general, all in a sequence of only conditionally connected statements: “No-one is against Croats... Croats on this side, Hungarians on the other... that’s just how it is that’s the politics no one understands... oh, man, what have I have experienced.” In this incoherent, “weak” testimony, punctured by breaks and non-sequiturs, an entire history of the Yugoslav wars, or even of Yugoslavia, emerges told from the perspective of a soldier, or a mere pawn of history. There is a story of times of peaceful co-existence, of Yugoslavia’s multicultural character, of the moment when “politics” strikes in the 1990s (as if no-one had heard anything about it before), of the acceptance of the fact by the majority of the population that “that’s just how it is,” the acceptance of politics, which, however, “no-one understands,” and finally, the story of the aftermath of this confused deployment, in which one is made to live in a schizophrenic state of both love and hostility towards one’s “mixed” kin, all the while incessantly stalked by memories of one’s “experiences,” that is, memories of a traumatizing encounter with death.

Keča’s position in relation to the story is pronouncedly neutral and distanced. The viewer learns, through his uncle’s testimony, that he controversially considers Ratko Mladić a war criminal, a fact that “gives him away” as the true progeny of a “mixed marriage” who is therefore potentially on the “wrong side.” At the same time, the authorial narrative – the letter to his father, which he reads and which structures the film – is calm, composed, at times playful, and somewhat nostalgic, but never gives away a trace of a possibly passionate attachment to the story, not to mention to any particular “side” of the story. The nostalgic

aspect arises from the family video footage included in the film, which shows the happy days of the 1980s, the decade in which the author was born, and which his father recorded on camera. Despite the obviously large volume of this footage, the narrator professes to know nothing of the past indexed by it: “I went to the Museum of Yugoslavia. A Japanese guide explained to a group of tourists everything about Yugoslavia in only two minutes. I don’t know what I would tell them.” Similarly, at the end of the film – not any kind of film, but a documentary film, required by definition to provide knowledge – he concludes: “I have finished the film, but I still don’t have a single answer. I guess it doesn’t matter anyway.” In an analogous declaration of ignorance combined with denial, the author’s mother refers to her two family members, presumably brothers, who have died in Dubrovnik during and immediately after the war: “Mato died of tuberculosis after the war; Cvijeto was killed by a bomb that he himself had set up. Defending I don’t know what from I don’t know whom.”

Defending, of course, her lawful (Croatian) “brothers” from her lawful (Serbian) “husbands”! Stuck in the midst of these two Principal commands, the only defense left to her as a woman, a prime example of the nationalist (br)other, is narratological and historical relativism. Surely, her position could also be seen as one of resistance, but it is a weak resistance, weakened forcefully, by the very solidity of the contradictory Principal command. If she were a Yugoslav Antigone, which of the dead bodies would she choose to bury against the Principal command, that of her husband or of her brothers? Unlike Sophocles’ Antigone, who faces a clear choice, defined by the law of her uncle, King Creon’s, between the legitimate and illegitimate burial, that is, between a legitimate and illegitimate brother, the choice that Keča’s mother would have to make is always simultaneously right and wrong, because there are two competing and contradictory commands which determine the

legitimacy of that choice. Yet, she *is* a Yugoslav Antigone, precisely because she makes neither of the two Principal choices but instead, albeit in an act of “weak” defiance, rejects both of them, by claiming that she does not know who they are, or which is which: aggressor or defender. The detail of her brother killing himself with the very bomb he had set up only corroborates this “ignorant” rebuttal of the command for sovereign identification. Instead of brothers and others, in her weak narrative defiance, the brother killed the brother.

Two works by Gordana Anđelić-Galić occupy an analogous position by staging a presumably sacrificial female figure who, precisely by the excess of her national sacrifice, enacts the betrayal of the patriotic and patriarchal law. In the video performance *Mantra* (2006), Anđelić-Galić walks alongside an abandoned road carrying the Bosnian-Herzegovinian flag. On the way, other flags are handed out to her, all historically related to Bosnia-Herzegovina or its constitutive nations (Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks), until the artist stumbles and is barely able to carry the weight and juggle the gravitational forces of various and conflicting pasts and ideologies. However, although the video targets this trope of historical weight, the absurd and necessarily grotesque nature of the task that the artist assumes at the same time takes the weight away and the woman figure emerges as a treacherous, promiscuous carrier of “all flags,” not being in any way specifically tied to one or a group of them. This effect is amplified in the performance of washing the flags that Anđelić-Galić performed five years later (*Washing*, 2011) on the bank of the Neretva river in Mostar, on the occasion of the Abart project *Recollecting Mostar*.¹⁰⁹ By carefully and dilligently washing all the flags that she had collected and carried in the 2006 video, and by hanging

¹⁰⁹ “Recollecting Mostar,” <http://abartrecollecting.blogspot.com>

them to dry, all under the gaze of what seem to be a few casual and accidental local observers seated in a coffee shop, Anđelić-Galić again, with its promiscuously docile washing, both affirms and subverts the woman's designated role as the one whose labor services and reproduces the nations.

A similar, and also female, refusal to identify with a side in the war marks Adela Jušić's video *The Sniper* (2007). Twenty-four at the time when she made it, Jušić also embraced the task of reconstructing a narrative about her father, who was killed during the war in Sarajevo. Unlike all three examples previously discussed, whose extensive research – whether in duration, the material uncovered, or people interviewed – nonetheless proved to be extinctive, that is, resulting in the closure of access to historical reconstruction, Jušić's story takes the very form of such closure, and works with a limited set of documents, and with a rudimentary, statistical narrative. The only visual elements of the video are a white surface on which the artist's hand-draws a red dot that gradually merges with a close-up photograph of her father, which then zooms out to show him armed and in uniform. [Figure 23] The narrative, spoken by the artist, consists mainly of entries from her father's journal, in which he wrote how many people he killed, as a sniper, on a particular day: "November 1: one soldier; November 2: one soldier, one truck driver; November 4th: three soldiers," etc. Gradually, the narrating voice loses its autonomy and coherence, and begins merging and competing with the same voices, which themselves repeat the same kind of information – one soldier two soldiers two one truck driver three soldiers – as if to suggest the sheer quantitative pressure under which the recording apparatus is made to register and organize its data. Over the course of this statistical break-down, the father's photograph emerges fully into the foreground, his eye first coinciding with the red dot, after which the dot disappears

and the narrative concludes: “December 3: My father, the sniper, was shot by a sniper into his right eye.”

Although, just by knowing the ethnic identity of the artist (which can, according to the Yugoslav ethnic “division of names” often be assumed based on the artist’s name), a viewer can also know, or suppose, to which army he belonged, the fact that Jušić refuses to provide that information in the video, brings the work more in alliance with the performances of the 1990s, in which artists elide national identification, than with Grubanov and Fajfrić, who interrogate and speak back to the Principal identification, yet still necessarily identify with it, by locating it as part of their lineage and inheritance. Grubanov’s and Fajfrić’s works implicitly also pose the question of the position of critical art in relation to the contestation over national distribution of innocence and guilt in the Yugoslav wars. Typically, artists from Serbia approach these themes from the position of implied guilt, and the intention to articulate a critical distance towards the responsibility of Serbian state and military leadership for genocide and war crimes. In this way, they necessarily also accept their own identification with the Serbian nation, just like the Bosnian artists, such as in the famous work *Bosnian Girl* (2003) by Šejla Kamerić, in which Kamerić combines her self-portrait with the denigratory and racist graffiti – “No teeth...? A moustache...? Smel like shit...? Bosnian girl!” – made by Dutch battalion soldiers (who part of the “peacekeeping mission” of the United Nations) in Srebrenica, necessarily identifies with the Bosniak position of the victim of genocide.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ This problem is insightfully analyzed in Erden Kosova, “The Problematic of National Identity and Social Engagement in the Contemporary Art Practice in the Balkans,” in Minna Henriksson and Sezgin Boynik, eds., *Contemporary Art and Nationalism* (Pristina: Institute of Contemporary Art “Exit,” 2007).

In a version of this critical imperative of identification, theatre director Oliver Frlić bases his choice of contentious subjects not on his own national identity, but on the national context in which his plays are produced and presented. Thus, in response to the outrage of Croatian veterans and conservative, right-wing audiences who denounced his play on Aleksandra Zec, a twelve-year-old girl of Serbian origin who was shot together with her family by a squad of Croatian militiamen in 1991, asking when he will thematize numerous Croatian children killed by the Serbian army, he comments – in Nebojša Slijepčević excellent documentary *Srbenka* (2018) – that he will make such a play but not in Croatia.¹¹¹ In other words, one must always assume a critical stance towards crimes whose perpetrators are indigenous to a given political and national community. Although an understandable and to some extent strategically justifiable stance, its ossification, by means of insistent repetition, ultimately threatens to result in a politically correct and even depoliticized position, which further entrenches, rather than disturbs the status quo.

The same is true for the position of that art that identifies with the suffering of a particular social or political community, in particular, a nation. A dramatic staging of the two positions – a conscientious, self-critical one and that of the victim – took shape in and around the exhibition *Exception: Contemporary Art Scene from Prishtina*, which presented art by Kosovo artists in Belgrade’s Kontekst Gallery in 2008 and whose opening was violently interrupted by the Serbian far-right, and the exhibition subsequently closed down by the police and the closing justified by safety concerns.¹¹² With this, both the Serbian organizers

¹¹¹ Oliver Frlić, cited in *Srbenka*, directed by Nebojša Slijepčević, 2018.

¹¹² According to Sezgin Boynik, the opening was “violently interrupted by a demonstration of the far-right group Obraz, a painter who declared himself as an academic and member of ULUS (the Association of Fine Artists of Serbia), and an anonymous person who vandalized one of the works exhibited before the opening. The police forces, who were present as

and the Albanian artists became fashioned as victims of the authoritarian state, but in her commentary on the exhibition, Jelena Vesić has provided a perspective that complicates the issue, and points to the exhibition's unproblematized relationship towards the relation between art and nationalism in the work of the Kosovo artists, which the "Belgrade libertarian intellectuals," in the framework of the polarized political sphere in Serbia, see mainly "through the optics of the [Kosovo Albanian] 'movement for independence,' interpreting them as a struggle for de-colonialization, or as a process of 'liberating' the new national states," while the the critique of those works as 'nationalist' seems to be entirely impossible."¹¹³ In other words, if nationalism – present in the contemporary Kosovo art, for example, by frequent deployment of the Albanian flag – is articulated from the minoritarian, non-hegemonic side in a political or military conflict, then it is justified, while in the case of Serbian artists, it would be considered unacceptable. In his analysis of the critical and theoretical reflections by Belgrade artists and intellectuals on the "incident," Sezgin Boynik has gone even further and argued that the exhibition "functionalize[d] Albanians for the sake of politicization of contemporary art."

The debates sparked by the *Exception* exhibition controversy make clear the radical difference of Jušić's work in relation to the prevailing modes of national identification in contemporary art. Since Jušić's father was part of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Army which

security during the attempt at opening the exhibition, decided that it is not safe for the viewers to go ahead with the opening ceremony," Sezgin Boynik, "Theory of Incident: How to Ponder the Relationship of Art and Politics beyond Functionalism (the Case of Closure of the Exception: Contemporary Art Scene from Prishtina exhibition in Belgrade, 7th February 2008)," in *Free and Sovereign. Art, Theory and Politics. A Collection of Essays and Interviews and Kosovo and Serbia*, edited by Vida Knežević, Kristian Lukić, Ivana Marjanović, and Gordana Nikolić, Novi Sad: Cenzura, 2014. The exhibition was curated by Kristian Lukić, Gordana Nikolić, Ivana Marjanović and Vida Knežević.

¹¹³ Jelena Vesić, "Politics of Display and Troubles with National Representation in Contemporary Art," *Red Thread* 1 (2009), <http://www.red-thread.org/en/article.asp?a=22>

resisted the siege of Sarajevo and in which her “father, the sniper” shot at snipers who had been shooting civilians and children on Sarajevo streets, precisely identifying her inheritance would place her in a more “comfortable” position in the international courtroom of justice than the one that Grubanov faced in his confrontation of his own “contradictory” involvement. However, Jušić denies even such identification, and thus implicitly also the position of victim, as well as that of a national hero’s daughter. Like Tomić, Grubić and Tolj, Jušić is fatherless in the very moment that she narrates the story of her father. She is fatherless not only because the story that she tells is of her father’s death, or because he himself, as a sniper, is responsible for the death of others, but because she does not allow the memory of her father to be overwritten by the collective paternalistic script.

In fact, it could be said that her father had symbolically died even before he was killed. As the artist explained, the photograph she used in the video was a photograph that her father made and gave to her mother, so that she would have a memory of him in case he died.¹¹⁴ Their house was burnt, and this was the only photograph the family had of her father, a photograph made in advance as a dead mask.¹¹⁵ The photograph could thus be seen as the positive image of the “negative” recorded by photojournalist Ron Haviv in a home that had been completely plundered by the enemy army, and to which the family returned after the territory was liberated. The single item that soldiers left in the house was a family photograph from which they scratched off the faces of family members. [Figure 24] The photograph of Jušić’s father was a positive of this image, a photography of the death

¹¹⁴ Adela Jušić, in a discussion “Conflicted Societies, Memory and the Visual Arts,” at the London School of Economics and Political Science, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/lse-player?id=1871>

¹¹⁵ Jušić explores the loss of the family photo album in another work, *Memory Lane* (2014).

sentence that the Principal command had endowed him with, the same command that had burnt their home, together with the actual photographs of her father. This splitting between the father and father-the-sniper, between the burn family album and the soldier-photograph as death mask, is perhaps why the word father only appears in the film with an attribute that identifies this death sentence (“My father, the sniper”).

By circumventing the opportunity to use the forensic evidence to tell what would seem a “meaningful” story, Jušić refuses to follow the procedure of international justice or to assign a predefined meaning (victim/perpetrator = Muslim/Serb) to her father’s participation in war and, implicitly, to her own name, which she inherited as his daughter. It should be noted that the information on the army in which her father serves appears in the textual descriptions of Jušić’s works, and I do not wish to overstate the case of the refusal of identification. However, as the artist herself has stated, she has often been accused by Bosniak viewers of failing to identify with the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while Serbian viewers would, analogously, exploit her lack of a clear position by using her work as evidence that “they, too” had snipers, and were therefore not as innocent as presumed.¹¹⁶ Her gesture of refusal is, therefore, one aligned with Antigone’s claim. Like Keča, she also does not arrive at any meaningful story about the events that defined and changed her life, and the life of her family. Keča, too, fails to identify, and purports to not care about the actual facts of the story: “I guess it doesn’t matter anyway.” However, he does not leave the film at that. In the only moment in the film in which he identifies with a position, he relates his own film-making work with his father’s extensive/extinctive production of family videos:

¹¹⁶ Jušić, in “Conflicted Societies, Memory and the Visual Arts.”

“Now I understand how similar you and are – we are both hiding behind the camera. Only you recorded all those beautiful moments of ours, and they still fell into oblivion. And so I’m thinking, if I record all those other things, maybe I can also forget them.”

Surviving generation

Forget what? Forget, most certainly, his origin as the offspring of a “mixed marriage,” the inheritance which prevents both himself and his mother from joining one or the other chorus, whose historical refrains they could happily sing. What he needs to forget is that he is a survivor of his own gestation. This is what I wish to argue in the conclusion to this chapter, namely that the generation born as children of parents who were the actors, or victims, of Yugoslavia’s disintegration, are not simply children *of* survivors, but that they are themselves survivors, even in the case when they were born only during, or after the war. In contrast to the frameworks, such as that articulated by Marianne Hirsch in her concept of “postgeneration,” which define the ways in which the children of survivors deal with the original trauma of the parents, the concept of surviving generation, which I am proposing, signifies the survival of the very process of generation which brings a certain new generation into the world. In this case, there is no original trauma, because the (trans)generativity is ongoing. On the one hand, this is an even more paralyzing inheritance, for if there is no original trauma, then my attempt at storytelling is even more precluded; if I have to tell a story of my father, who volunteered to serve in the Serbian army, and if I then say that I cannot be a post-, or second generation, because my father is already the postgeneration coming after his own father, who was murdered by Ustasha during WW2, and if then – etc.; this could lead me back at least to Princip’s insurgent camp at Crni Potoci (Black Brooks).

Of course, this kind of transgenerationality has been claimed precisely by the Principal narrative, as it seeks out to legitimize its historical right for sovereignty, or revenge, and I am indeed not claiming any kind of ideological purity of the conceptual framework that I am proposing. What I am claiming is that it can also be used otherwise because, if there is no original historical trauma, there really is no moment that can rightfully claim my identity.¹¹⁷ Instead, there is only history and, unlike the survival of trauma – a clinical concept which by this very fact places me in a position of subordination to the curative measures of society, including culture and art – the survival of history, of history understood as generation and generativity, endows me with a certain amount of power. This power may be, as Walter Benjamin would say, a “weak messianic power,” just like the act of resistance by Keča’s mother is a “weak” act, a laconic adaptation of history in which there are no good and bad guys, and in which a brother fought against none other than himself. However, this weak power is real, and enables me to choose, and claim for myself, the outlines of my own historical gestation; to claim my inheritance beyond the Paternal command, which, as I will discuss following Judith Butler’s analysis of “Antigone’s claim,” is a command of purity.

Such understanding of generational survival primarily in relation to history, and not in relation to clinical definitions of trauma, is closer to Stiles’s framework of the “survival ethos” of “destruction art,” which she develops in dialogue with psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton’s thinking on trauma, death, and survival in the recurring social circumstances of the twentieth and twenty-first century that he, along with the sociologist Eric Markusen, defines

¹¹⁷ By saying this, I am not claiming that there is no definable origin of personal trauma, which can, certainly, also be historically determined.

as the “genocidal mentality.”¹¹⁸ Although art is here posited as a way to confront such social circumstances, Stiles warns that this does not entail a moralizing or a redemptive position of art, but rather, one that confronts “open wounds” and seeks, on a pragmatic, rather than a utopic level, ways to “unite and heal.”¹¹⁹ Similarly, and unlike the Paternal command, the concept of surviving generation is impure already on the level of grammar, as it presents one with doubt as to who or what is surviving and who or what is there to be survived. Surviving generation means at the same time to survive *as* a specific generation, and also to survive history as itself a process of generation and generativity; in turn, it also means that this historical generativity is itself a survivor, a certain genealogical line that can be traced and claimed. In the remainder of this chapter, I will argue that such an “impure” position of claiming should be viewed as specifically relevant for those who, like the “children of Omarska,” choose the Yugoslav twentieth century as their inheritance, and seek to align and “group” themselves with those who were, both in the present and the past, dedicated to exploring the historical, as well as aesthetic and intellectual, generativity inherent in Yugoslavia’s claim.¹²⁰ A major part of that claim is precisely its call for impurity of identity, its postulate not of brotherhood and unity, but of (br)otherhood and unity. Because, although a (failed) attempt at “making Yugoslavs” was one, in actuality, very brief, part of Yugoslav history, the “Yugoslavs” were never meant to cohere into a single nation with a

¹¹⁸ Kristine Stiles, “Survival Ethos and Destruction Art (1992),” in Stiles, *Concerning Consequences*, 29.

¹¹⁹ Stiles, 31.

¹²⁰ It is important that although I would suppose that the specific historical position of the generations born in the late 1970s and early 1980s also has a certain sociological import, in the sense of how most of its members position themselves in relation to the present and the past, I am not arguing for any sociological import of the concept of surviving generation. It is a theoretical concept, but one which is based on the recognition of existing identifications of members of this, mainly artistic and intellectual, generation, in relation to the Yugoslav legacy.

single, Principal narrative.¹²¹ As I will argue in the following chapter on the example of sculptor Ivan Meštrović, who is usually aligned with “integral,” or essentialist Yugoslavism, his work is in fact predicated on the idea of composedness, and of an ultimate confusion of identity, which, in Hajdarpasic’s terms, makes me unable to determine whether the other is my brother or, indeed, an other.

The theatre project *Generation 91-95: Croatian History Class* draws on this slippage to create as a certain tragicomedy of errors, conflating victims, perpetrators, and generations. The play is based on a short, satirical novel *Jeb’o sad hiljadu dinara* (Who Gives a Fuck Now About 1000 Dinars), written by Boris Dežulović.¹²² The story takes place in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and depicts an episode in the conflict between the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Croatian Council of Defense army.¹²³ Simultaneously, both armies devise the same tactics: to put on the uniforms of the enemy army, and try to trap the enemy by pretending that they belong to them. When their paths cross, great confusion and insecurity arises, resulting in a sort of split identity disorder and an inability to answer the question: who is one of “us” and who is one of “them,” and how does one define the difference between the two in the first place?

¹²¹ Christian Axbode Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs: Identity in King Aleksandar’s Yugoslavia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014). King Alexander’s aggressive and violent attempt to “make Yugoslavs” left a lasting stigma on what was in socialist Yugoslavia repeatedly denounced as “unitarist.” The Yugoslav Communist Party only briefly, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, experimented with advancing the notion of “socialist Yugoslavism” as the form of supranational Yugoslav cultural unity, based on socialist internationalism, and not bourgeois nationalism. However, this too was met with resistance. See Hilde Katrine Haug, *Creating a Socialist Yugoslavia: Tito, Communist Leadership and the National Question* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012).

¹²² Boris Dežulović, *Jeb’o sad hiljadu dinara* (Beograd: V.B.Z., 2008).

¹²³ Both armies are Bosnian-Herzegovinian armies, the first one being predominantly Muslim (Bosniac) and the latter one predominantly Croatian. Initially, the two armies fought together against the Serbian forces, but in 1993, engaged in mutual conflict.

The path that the story followed from the novel to the theater play is also very interesting, as it involves a series of translations and traumatic transferences, including those across generations. The writer based his story on an experience of a soldier who was the only one in his brigade that survived a war episode in Bosnia, and who returned home completely mute. After reading a short newspaper article about this, the writer of the novel met with the soldier, who used drawings in order to attempt to narrate his experience, which was translated into his book, in a unique satirical style of Dežulović. The director of the play, Borut Šeparović, with dramaturge Goran Ferčec, made another intervention in translating the story from the written to the performed form: the actors who were to play the soldiers fighting during the 1991-1995 were to be recruited among those born between 1991-1995, most of whom were, at the time of the production of the play, high-school students. [Figure 25] The play about the wars of the nineties in which they were conscripted to act suddenly became a play about themselves as, in the middle of the play, they abandoned their fictional characters, and assumed the first-person voice, presenting themselves to the audience, each proudly announcing to have “an A in history.”

In this confrontation with the audience and themselves, they talked about their preconceptions about the recent history, and their generations’ position in it. The second part of the play emerged from the director’s workshops with the actors, and incorporated incidents that happened during the preparation of the play, such as a dramatic moment when one of them “outed himself” as a Serb among a predominantly Croat group of young men. In a radio interview where they talked about their experience of participating in the play, one of them unwittingly reconstructed the theory of transgenerational trauma:

We do not really have anything to do with the war. We were not in it, we didn't do the shooting. They should give us a chance to have our say regardless. If I am to love Serbia, I will love it, it has nothing to do with the war and what the Serbs did in it. I know we were the ones defending our country and they were the ones who attacked and I respect the war and all the casualties and all that went on. However, they still should let us live our own lives the way we want to live them. If we wish to live in Belgrade, for example, it doesn't make us traitors. The pressure is not so tangible, but if you say "Serb" to anyone, I have a feeling that they will "flinch" at hearing it. Maybe not to that extent, but ask an older person and you'll get this reaction. This is being transmitted to us through generations. This play is about how we view this matter.¹²⁴

The generational transference of trauma does not happen through grand narratives of victimhood and suffering; a silent flinching of the parental body, an unconscious bodily reaction, is enough to transmit the anxiety about the former kin turned enemy. This generation – unlike the previous one, born during the late 1970s and the early 1980s – has absolutely no living memory of Yugoslavia. It is also more firmly entrenched in the paternal narratives, which is why all the actors can boast an "A in history." It is more than just narratives, as we have just heard; a flinch is necessary, an undeliberate indication of the always possible bodily punishment for refusing the parental command. But why are the parents flinching? They are flinching not because the word "Serb" represents an undesirable memory of the most recent war enemy, but because it triggers an involuntary memory of the Yugoslav past from which they had fully dissociated themselves, as this dissociation was the only way for them to survive their own generation. It was the only way to accept the Principal command, just as Keča's uncle did, without really understanding its illogical conclusion to the set of premises that preceded it ("Noone is against Croats... Croats on

¹²⁴ Ivan Fedor, in "Generation 91-95. Selected clips from the Show *Odeon – Perform and Face the Consequences*," Croatian Radio, Channel 3, author and editor: Agata Juniku, in *Where Everything is Yet to Happen. Exposures*, eds. Ivana Bago and Antonia Majaca, Delve/Protok, 2011.

this side, Hungarians on the other... that's just how it is that's the politics no one understands...”), and the only way to accept the psychological trade-off that their original acceptance of the command entailed (“oh, man, what have I experienced...”). They are flinching at the word “Serb” because this word reminds them that it could have, perhaps, all ended otherwise, without them living now as hostages to an unnarratable experience.

The surviving generation, however, will continue mentioning the word “Serb” and continue interrogating the paternal dissociation from the Yugoslav experience, and the “impurity” which in Yugoslavia existed as a norm, or at least, among the norms of identity. This is the kind of impurity that Keča’s interrogation of his mother manages to draw out, as well as the impurity of Jušić’s refusal to identify her father with the emblem on his uniform. How is her father to be buried and grieved, if such refusal places him on neither side of the only two available identifications (victim/perpetrator)? How will the brother of Keča’s mother be buried and grieved if it remains unknown what he was defending and from whom? Judith Butler’s reading of Sophocle’s *Antigone*, prompted by her own generation’s experience of loss and the AIDS crisis in the 1990s, addresses exactly this question.¹²⁵ What she reads as “Antigone’s claim” is her protestation of the inequality according to which not all deaths constitute equal losses, and not all lives are equally grievable, which ultimately means that not all lives are equally livable, or even, considered to be lives. However, against conventional readings of Antigone as a heroic figure opposing the state in the name of kinship, Butler sees her position as much more ambivalent, and “difficult for anyone to

¹²⁵ Judith Butler, *Antigone’s Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

romanticize or, indeed, to consult as an example.”¹²⁶ It is not a position of “oppositional purity” but precisely the “politics of the scandalously impure,” which puts the entire social and symbolic order under question.¹²⁷

Antigone exposes the limits of representation and representability: she cannot represent kinship, because her position within kinship structures are already scandalous. She is a daughter of the incestuous bond of Oedipus and Jokasta, nurturing another potentially incestuous bond to her dead brother, whom she chooses over her living fiancée, ultimately embracing the grave as her “bridal chamber.” Her father’s curse (and Oedipus is at the same time her father and brother), the incestuous and scandalous line has already condemned her to a death within life, “a living death,” just as it has condemned his two sons to kill each other in a struggle for power.¹²⁸ By asking “What has Oedipus engendered?” and “What happened to the heirs of Oedipus?,” Butler poses the question of all those whose lives are not livable and whose claims are not intelligible within the existing social norms, the question of the “deathlike quality of those loves for which there is no viable place in culture.”¹²⁹

There is a direct link between Antigone and Yugoslavia, and this is one of kinship, precisely as it relates to the boundaries set by the norm and the “politics of the scandalously impure.” Antigone’s major claim, according to Butler, is to remind that norm has a temporality. The kinship laws, the laws of mourning, and those governing grievability and un-grievability of life, are historically conditioned, and can be challenged. The founding of

¹²⁶ Butler, 23.

¹²⁷ Butler, 5.

¹²⁸ Butler, 23.

¹²⁹ Butler, 22-24.

socialist Yugoslavia implemented a new norm of kinship, encapsulated in the slogan Brotherhood and Unity, whose own scandalously impure claim – impure, indeed, even in relation to the sanctioned understanding of this concept – should be translated as “(br)otherhood and unity.”¹³⁰ Apart from its resonance with the “brotherhood” – and, surely, never explicitly a sisterhood – of revolutionary struggles, from the French Revolution onwards, the Yugoslav “(br)otherhood” also implied horizontal kinship between its different ethnic and confessional groups. Challenging the politics of national purity, Yugoslav politics sanctioned the so-called “mixed marriages.” Following the introduction of the category “Yugoslav – ethnically undetermined” in the 1953 census, the children born in these marriages would identify as Yugoslavs, as an alternative to previously existing national identifications: Croat, Serb, Slovene, Albanian, etc.¹³¹ Just like Antigone’s brothers, Polyneices and Eteocles, so did the Yugoslav “(br)others” end their kinship in the violent wars led during the 1990s. From the perspective of the nationalist politics reinstated in the 1990s, such “impure” positions as that of mixed marriages, suddenly became unintelligible and unrepresentable – the temporality of the norm at work. In the system of representative democracy, it was now possible to represent national, ethnic, sexual, and any other majorities and minorities, but the designation “Yugoslav” lost conditions of intelligibility in the public sphere – despite, or even precisely because of, the fact that it is constantly being evoked in a simplified, dichotomous battle over its meaning. Stripped of the conditions of legitimacy and intelligibility, the “Yugoslavs” chose to join the dead, rather than get conscripted by the

¹³⁰ Brotherhood and Unity defined the relationship between Yugoslav nations and nationalities, following the establishment of socialist Yugoslavia, when the Yugoslav communists claimed that the national question had been resolved. See Haug, *Creating a Socialist Yugoslavia*.

¹³¹ Haug, 141.

new politics of the present, which was ultimately the politics of genocide and ethnic cleansing.

Antigone – one etymology of her name equates it with “anti-generation”¹³² – is thus the offspring of Oedipus, a new generation, who in its very inception carries the seed of its destruction. Antigone’s “(anti)generational” position is that of being simultaneously the one where a certain inheritance line ends, and yet one in which that very ending provides an opening to begin questioning the conditions of possibility of its existence in the first place, or in Butler’s words, it enables us to ask the question: “what the conditions of intelligibility could have been that would have made her life possible?”¹³³ Antigone enacts a rejection of closure, a position that discards the comfort guaranteed by existing social norms. Such position turns out to be suicidal one, one condemned to death in life and a living death. If Oedipus has engendered Antigone, anti-generation, what has Yugoslavia engendered? How can those who wish today to examine “the conditions of intelligibility” that could have made Yugoslavia’s/Yugoslavs’ life possible, understand Yugoslavia’s claim? If Yugoslavs are, just like Antigone, “dead in some sense and yet [speak],” they are then “precisely the one[s] with no place who nevertheless [seek] to claim one within speech, the unintelligible as it emerges within the intelligible, a position within kinship that is no position.”¹³⁴

In asking this question via Butler, I do not assume any romanticized or heroic notion of a Yugoslav identity, or the history of Yugoslavia. Like Antigone, both Yugoslavia and the Yugoslavs, and despite their present-day revival and to some extent normalization, are

¹³² Stathis Gourgouris, *Does Literature Think? Literature as Theory for an Antimythical Era* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 133.

¹³³ Butler, *Antigone’s Claim*, 24.

¹³⁴ Butler, 78.

signifiers for the very limits of representation and representability. The Principal command has made the very word Yugoslavia unintelligible, in response to which it has perhaps become even too stable, as Ugo Vlaisavljević would say about the condition of the sign in the Balkans, in “a good metaphysical condition.”¹³⁵ Significantly, Vlaisavljević’s experience of this condition is very much first-hand, as he was once the literal carrier of the Yugoslav name, which he was pressured to abandon just at the time when it reached the limits of scandalous unintelligibility. In the early 1990s and during the occupation of Sarajevo, he changed his given name, “Jugoslav” (Yugoslav) into “Ugo,” or rather it could be said he amputated his name, as if to surgically remove the capitalized Yugoslav/Southern “J,” and the suffix “-slav,” both now marks of not only a minority status, but one directly associated with the name of the army (Yugoslav Peoples’ Army) that was shelling the city.¹³⁶

Almost three decades later, the situation has significantly shifted, as a result of the work of Yugoslavia’s surviving generation and the reactivation of the generativity of Yugoslavia’s claim against the purity of names and the stability of identitarian signification, a work that is also recognized by the “veterans” identification of Yugoslavs as enemies that remained, even after the destruction of Yugoslavia [Figure 1] These are children who have rejected the Principal injunction and decided to once again halt the TRAIN and examine the crime of the dissolution of the Yugoslav century and decipher its claim, as well as the claim of those who were, as children, wives, or husbands of the Yugoslav “mixed marriages,” and

¹³⁵ Ugo Vlaisavljević, “The South Slav Identity and the Ultimate War-Reality,” in Dušan Bjelić, ed. *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation* (Cambridge (MA): MIT Press, 2002), 191–207.

¹³⁶ According to Sanja Vlaisavljević, “to carry the name Yugoslav in Sarajevo under siege was worse than carrying the name Radovan [i.e., Radovan Karadžić], and the last name Miloš “Tko to vraća “pooštrene mjere protiv Židova” u BiH?” 12 February, 2015, <https://sanjavlaisavljevic.wordpress.com/2015/02/12/tko-to-vraca-pooštrene-mjere-protiv-zidova-u-bih/>

those who in any other war symbolized impurity, either killed, or left with no means to articulate a legible story of their lives, and of their historical generation.

The Children of Omarska

There is another name for the location at which the train is made to stop: Omarska. Unlike the designation (post-)Yugoslav, which denotes primarily the persisting relation of what is to what was, the name Omarska entails a decision to define that relation. In other words, it is a decision to tell a story. In 2010, visual artist Milica Tomić initiated the “working group” *Four Faces of Omarska*, with the aim of exploring the iron ore mine at Omarska, located in what is now the Serbian entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The starting point of the research was the idea that Omarska contains “four faces,” which stand for its four different historical functions within three different “eras”: a highly productive company within the Yugoslav system of socialist self-management; a concentration camp in which the non-Serbian population of the Prijedor region was imprisoned, tortured, and killed during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the early 1990s; a privatized company, owned since 2004 by the multinational corporation Arcelor Mittal; and, finally, a location where the Serbian WW1 film spectacle, *Saint George Shoots the Dragon* (2009), was shot.¹³⁷ Omarska, then, becomes the location from which it is possible to tell exactly the kind of “complex” story, which involves both the “local authorities” and the “international community,” and which is

¹³⁷ The project was inspired by Pavle Levi’s text “Kapo iz Omarske” (Kapo from Omarska), in which he proposes a critique of the film, jointly funded by the governments of Serbia and the Republic of Srpska, from the perspective of its complicity in the erasure of the recent history of violence and ethnic cleansing in the region, which the film enacts by the very fact that it chooses Omarska as a shooting location for a spectacle on WW1. Levi makes the critique without watching the film; in fact, the decision – and the invitation – not to watch the film, and to make instead different films, ones that would come face to face with the histories of the 1990s, is at the center of his critical intervention. Pavle Levi, “Kapo iz Omarske,” <http://www.e-novine.com/kultura/kultura-tema/27796-Kapo-Omarske.html>. The English version of the text is reproduced in Pavle Levi, *Jolted Images: Unbound Analytic* (2017).

kept obscured by various forms of simplification. What is even more important is that the endeavor to tell this kind of story is not a pursuit by a single artist, but one which entails the forming a community. The initial outlines of this community, defined as a “working group,” involved a group of students, and a collective trip to Omarska.

Although by the very act of forming this group Tomić assumed the role of a mentor, this role was negated in the process of research, in which everyone adopted a starting position of “not knowing,” while embracing a quest for “subjugated knowledge,” that is, knowledge for which there is no room in the hegemonic epistemological regimes that govern the narratives on Yugoslavia’s break-up and the war.¹³⁸ During the initial phase of research, concentration camp survivors – those who decided to return to the Prijedor region, despite all odds – became the key source of this subjugated knowledge, a knowledge dispelled by both the local government (which at best ignores and at worst denies the war crimes), and the multinational corporation (for which even the limited gestures that memorialize the mine’s wartime function present an irritating interruption of business-as-usual). The work of the *Four Faces of Omarska* working group consisted mainly in providing forms of legibility and legitimacy to the witnessing that was fully marginalized in the public sphere of the Republic of Srpska, where the only memorials of the last war were dedicated to the Serbian army.

What gave a “working group” the power to endow anything with legibility and legitimacy? It was, of course, art, and the fact that the first public meeting of the group, which involved the witnessing of three camp survivors, took place in the context of a “biennial.” Although ultimately a short-term project, Spaport Biennial in Banja Luka, the

¹³⁸ Subjugated knowledge is a concept by Michel Foucault that the Group has embraced as a guiding principle of their work.

capital of the Republic of Srpska, was initiated in 2008 with the aim to – as one description of the organization clumsily but very truthfully put it – “provide a platform for installing contemporary art in Bosnia and Herzegovina.”¹³⁹ The existence of such a civilizing mission was exactly the precondition to subvert it during the second, and last, edition of the Biennial (2009-2010), which used the “installation of contemporary art” in order to position the Republic of Srpska – in whose name the tortures and killings at the Omarska concentration camp, as well as the Srebrenica genocide, were committed – as a place from which the question about the very possibility of “speech,” in regard to the past, is posed.¹⁴⁰

In such a reinstallation of contemporary art, the space of the gallery (in fact, an abandoned socialist factory), was transformed into a classroom. Although this could metaphorically be said of the entire exhibition, it was literally true for the contributions of the two mutually connected “groups,” the Monument Group and the “working group” *Four Faces of Omarska*. What was the function of this grouping, which recalled both the *zadruga* (commune) formed by the children of Mato Lovrak’s arrested train, and the “working community,” a cell in the complex organization of labor during the final part of Yugoslav self-management, the bureaucratic traces of which (desks, dusty files, shelves) populated the exhibition space? Despite the position of “not knowing” in advance its purpose, the

¹³⁹ “Protok – Center for Visual Communication, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina,” available at the website of the German foundation, Robert Bosch Stiftung, who was the main sponsor of the project, <http://kulturmanager.bosch-stiftung.de/content/language2/html/12617.asp>.

¹⁴⁰ Together with Antonia Majaca, I was one of the curators of the exhibitions *Where Everything is Yet to Happen: “Can you speak of this? –Yes, I can”* (2009) and *Where Everything is Yet to Happen: Exposures* (2010) in the framework of which the project was initiated and first presented. The question that the exhibition posed was grounded in Giorgio Agamben’s notion of potentiality which he, in turn, derives from Russian poet Anna Akhmatova and her acceptance – in response to a question directed at her – of the responsibility to “speak” of the horrors that she and others waiting to hear news about their imprisoned family members in front of the Leningrad jail during Stalin’s purges. Ivana Bago and Antonia Majača, eds., *Where Everything is Yet to Happen: “Can you speak of this? –Yes, I can”* (Zagreb: Delve, 2009).

grouping functioned as an attempt to articulate a new kind of “we,” a group that abandoned the “classrooms of democracy,”¹⁴¹ which recruited the children of postcommunism, and entered instead a “classroom of difficult questions,”¹⁴² a classroom for the children of Omarska. [Figure 26] If, as Fredric Jameson has argued, the temporality of a generation is dependent on the “collective enunciation of the attempt to say ‘we,’” and on the experience of an “enlargement of my existential present into a collective and historical one,”¹⁴³ a new generation was formed within that classroom. If Miljenko Jergović, furthermore, defined Gavrilo Princip as the origin of this “we,” Omarska was its current historical location and the children of Omarska must be seen as this generation’s name. To be “grouped” as children of Omarska means to see its “four faces” as the intertwined histories of the Yugoslav twentieth century, which at the same determine life in the present, and offer a chance for the present to be challenged. The generativity of this new generation thus went both in the direction of the past and the present, if not yet the future. It also went beyond its initial geographical location.

On July 2, 2012 yet another group – consisting of the Omarska camp survivors, the *Four Faces of Omarska* working group, and members of the London-based *Forensic Architecture* research project – reclaimed the monumental tower, built to mark the opening of London’s 2012 Olympic Games, as a “memorial in exile,” a stand-in for the missing memorial to those who suffered and died in the Omarska camp. [Figure 27] The Olympics, a celebration of humanity and of the achievement of the human body, as Milica Tomić put it, was used as a

¹⁴¹ Buden, “Children of Postcommunism,” 18-19.

¹⁴² The phrase “Classroom of Difficult Questions” was used by Jasmina Husanović to describe her workshop organized as part of *Where Everything is Yet to Happen: Exposures* in 2010.

¹⁴³ Fredric Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 2009), 525-26.

stage for bringing attention to the crimes against humanity, and the violation of the human body in the death camps.¹⁴⁴ The connection between the two was not simply their painful contrast; a direct link was provided by the multinational company ArcelorMittal, who sponsored the ArcelorMittal Orbit, the Olympic landmark which now stands as the tallest sculpture in London, offering “extraordinary 20-mile views over Queen Elisabeth Olympic Park and the London skyline.”¹⁴⁵ The tower, which also boasts “the world’s longest and tallest tunnel slide,” was designed by sculptor Sir Anish Kapoor and engineer Cecil Balmond, and made out of “35,000 bolts and enough steel to make 265 double-decker buses.”¹⁴⁶ [Figure 28] With its gesture of reclaiming the ArcelorMittal Orbit during its public opening, *Memorial in Exile* refashioned the spectacular slide ride, and the “extraordinary” views that precede it, into a plummeting crash with what made this extraordinary experience possible: the multinational corporation’s expropriation of resources and labor power, which, in the particular case of the Omarska mining complex, cannot be extricated from the persisting effects of the death camp, and from the fact that the death camp is part and parcel of the company’s legacy, and its business.

Even more importantly, the action, performed in London and involving researchers and students of the Centre for Research Architecture at Goldsmiths, University of London, showed that Omarska’s children do not reside merely on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, or post-Yugoslavia, but that their citizenship is global. During the press conference organized as part of the intervention, one of the PhD students of the

¹⁴⁴ Milica Tomić, cited in “A Memorial in Exile: Orbits of Responsibility for a war crime from a Bosnian mine to London’s Olympic Park,” *www.forensic-architecture.com*, <http://archive.forensic-architecture.org/explorations/a-memorial-in-exile/>

¹⁴⁵ “Our Story,” <http://arcelormittalorbit.com/about/about-the-arcelormittal-orbit/>

¹⁴⁶ “Our Story.”

Goldsmith's program, Nabil Ahmed, read from an essay by a Delhi-based scholar Anirban Gupta Nigam, which pointed to the changed constellations in the global structures of power, evident in the very fact that ArcelorMittal is an Indian company, and that its "arrogant actions might just mark the first significant act of corporate delinquency committed by [...] a major corporation from the formerly colonised world."¹⁴⁷ Omarska's fourth face (the postsocialist existence of the Omarska mining complex as part of a multinational corporation) thus revealed, or rather confirmed, that Yugoslav history was not simply a matter of a localized, Yugoslav inheritance, but that it is instead, both metaphorically and literally, everyone's business.

The business of the now enlarged group of the children of Omarska was to intervene in the business-as-usual of global capitalism and its connection to mass violence and death, and to thus attempt to draw the outlines of a new generation, or even, a new era that would arise out of the generativity of their efforts. These efforts are ultimately efforts to rewrite the history of the Yugoslav twentieth century, and with it, the history of global modernity, and to find a position from which this history can be grasped as a totality, in its essential outlines. Omarska is the name for one such position, and there could, of course, be many others. In the context of post-Yugoslav art and culture, *Four Faces of Omarska* made a crucial intervention in shifting the story of the Yugoslav wars away from their overdetermination by the ethnic and national divisions between perpetrators and victims, and towards identifying their entanglements with the more complex, "international" story of global capitalism and its

¹⁴⁷ Anirban Gupta Nigam, cited in "A Memorial in Exile: Orbits of Responsibility for a war crime from a Bosnian mine to London's Olympic Park," *www.forensic-architecture.com*, <http://archive.forensic-architecture.org/explorations/a-memorial-in-exile/>

colonial origins. Ultimately, *Four Faces of Omarska's* aesthetic and theoretical lesson is encapsulated in the act by which it translates a concretely located mining complex into a historical complex, from which it is possible to tell a story of the world.

In fact, a fifth face, and another era should be added to this historical complex: the imperial and colonial period that precedes both the socialist Yugoslavia and WW1, which is not counted in the working group's list of faces and eras, but is referenced by the *Saint George Shoots the Dragon* film spectacle, and its participation in the rewriting of Yugoslav history along narrow, nationalist agendas. Although the Omarska mining site was opened only in 1986 – a birth date which would, as I will later argue, place it in the same age group with the “children of Omarska” generation – it was part of a larger mining complex called “Ljubija,” launched by Austria in 1916 in the midst of WW1, after which it operated throughout the Yugoslav century. The year 1916, however, represents merely an industrialization of production in the mine, while the Austrian extraction of iron from the region began immediately after Austria's occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in 1878. Then again, this exploitation was just an intensification of the expropriation of iron ore and labor power under the Ottoman Empire – and intensification which, in fact, included a worsening of conditions for the local population.¹⁴⁸ Historicizing could go even further, to the very beginnings of the iron age when the Phoenicians, in their quest for iron, silver and gold around the Mediterranean, began digging the iron ore in the region – again, by exploiting the labor of the local population.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Vladimir Krčkovski, “Devedeset godina industrijske proizvodnje željeznih ruda u Rudnicima željezne rude ‘Ljubija’” <http://rzrljubija.com/Istorija.pdf>, 20. Of course, this does not include the cultural continuity of the “local population,” who, at the time, preceded both the Illyrian and the Slavic tribes.

¹⁴⁹ Krčkovski, “Devedeset godina industrijske proizvodnje željeznih ruda u Rudnicima željezne rude ‘Ljubija’,” 17.

What is more, a direct link between war and mining has been there at least since the Ottoman era and late seventeenth century, when the single facility that produced cannon balls for the entire Ottoman Empire was located in the Ljubija/Omarska area, near Kamengrad. In 1916, the Austrian launching of the industrialized production of iron ore in Ljubija was directly motivated by the need for the production of arms in support of the Austrian war effort. This origin of Omarska as a modern, industrialized mining complex at the opening of the Yugoslav twentieth century, a few years following “Gavrilo’s shot,” already contained the elements that Omarska will assume at the century’s end. The Ljubija mine was, namely, operated by Serbian, Russian, and Italian prisoners of war, imprisoned within wooden barracks set up on the site. [Figure 29] The story, then, about the “faces” of Omarska in the Yugoslav twentieth century not only ends, but also begins with the concentration camp, and the merging of industry with violence and death.

However, between those two points, the Yugoslav twentieth century was the time when the local populations were finally the owners of both the labor power and its results in the Omarska mine.¹⁵⁰ In the socialist period, this was literally the principle of the organization of labor under the heading of self-management, and despite the contradictions of that system, and the actual persistence of the divide between the working class and the managers, Ljubija mine was a prime example of a socialist company that strove to provide its workers not only with the salary, but also with food, housing, health care, culture, and

¹⁵⁰ This was the case only one other time in history, at the time of the Bosnian Kingdom in the fourteenth century. Krčkovski, 18., which is also the time of the flourishing of the Bosnian Church, or the Bogomils, who, as was shown in the second chapter, assume a central place in Krleža’s narration of Yugoslav history and Yugoslav aesthetics, as a precursor of political and cultural autonomy. Of course, the paradoxes of the principle of sovereignty are at work here, even if the “local populations” are most generally identified as Slavs, because Slavs also had to occupy and fight for this territory, starting from the sixth century, in order for once to be considered a “local population” who autonomously govern the mine.

leisure-time, including company-owned holiday resorts specifically reserved for workers.¹⁵¹

Even if taken as a mere ideal – and it was not a mere ideal – such a mission of comprehensive care for the life of workers appears like a fantastical scenario, unimaginable in the contemporary moment of globalized precarity. This is another reason why the children of postcommunism have reconsidered the planned trip to the classrooms for democracy, and have returned instead to the classroom of difficult questions, which includes a revised lesson on the socialist past.

ArcelorMittall has shown arrogance not only in relation to the claims of camp survivors – the same people who were once workers-owners of the mine – but also, implicitly, with regards to the value of this socialist past, when it designated as second-rate the ore that it expropriated from the region. Reacting to the interview that Sudbin Musić, a camp survivor activist and a close collaborator of *Four Faces of Omarska*, made with group members Milica Tomić and Srđan Dragojević, ArcelorMittall’s Ewa Gabala, Head of Mining Communications and Corporate Internal Communications, wrote a letter to the magazine that published the interview, in order to revoke the allegedly false claims about the company. In an almost farcical opening, before moving on to the issues concerning the company’s attitude towards the Omarska death camp and the survivors, the letter declared:

Your text claims that iron ore from Omarska is “of the very best quality.” In fact, the opposite is true. Iron ore from Omarska is of a relatively low quality. The steel plant at Zenica, in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was specifically designed to be able to accept this low-quality ore. Steel made from this ore is primarily used as reinforcement for concrete buildings, roads, etc.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Krčkovski, “Devedeset godina industrijske proizvodnje željeznih ruda u Rudnicima željezne rude ‘Ljubija,’” 17.

¹⁵² Ewa Gabala, cited in a group email correspondence sent by Milica Tomić to the author and members of the *Four Faces of Omarska* working group, *Forensic Architecture* research group, and survivor activists Satko Mujagić and Sudbin Musić, April 7, 2017.

Denying perhaps the last source of pride that an Omarska camp survivor could have in relation to the legacy of the site on which his or her human dignity had already been most brutally denied, the Head of Mining Communications and Corporate Internal Communications, in the same move, classifies as second-rate a historically central source of subsistence for the population of the region, as well as a major symbol of the Yugoslav socialist industry, the Zenica factory. This factory was, as the camp survivor can learn now – and in another revision of the history he had learned in school – designed precisely to industrially accommodate this naturally found second-rated ore. The low quality of the iron ore, which can be used only for such prosaic purposes such as “reinforcement for concrete buildings, roads, etc.,” at the same time implicitly denies another claim made by camp survivors, namely that the ArcelorMittal Orbit in London may have been made partly with the steel originating from the Omarska mine, and that this steel, given the number of mass graves that remain hidden and unexcavated in the area, may also contain bodily remains of the camp victims. Evidently, however, the “tallest sculpture” in London and the “world’s longest and tallest tunnel slide,” designed by a knighted artist (Sir Anish Kapoor), would never be built with material of “relatively low quality.”

Given the centuries of mining and expropriation, however, this “relatively low quality” is also only a relatively natural phenomenon, and ArcelorMittal seems to have arrived as the last to squeeze out whatever is left in the soil. In a comment written as part of a group email correspondence, which aimed to formulate a joint statement on ArcelorMittal’s didactic intervention, Branislav Stojanović concluded:

Any company that buys the property on the territory of Yugoslavia must know that it is purchasing a stolen property [stolen from Yugoslav society, which, according to the Yugoslav definition of “social property,” was its actual owner] and that the very

act of purchase is thus complicit in the concealment of the robbery, as well as the means with which this robbery was accomplished, namely, war. In the case of ArcelorMittal and Omarska, this fact is so drastic and obvious that the owners should think about whether the complicity in concealing the robbery, torture and murder, is really worth a poor-quality ore.¹⁵³

The group email correspondence, such as the one cited above, is another way in which the work of the children of Omarska continues as another form of grouping. Can this work be done without this kind of grouping, without a conscious attempt to form a generation in the sense of a new articulation of the “we” and a new generativity – aesthetic, social and intellectual – that stems from it? Grouping is a way to resist, or at least circumvent, the pressures of the Principal historical narrative and the paternal injunction that it entails, and a recurring procedure in the examples of storytelling examined in this chapter, from Jergović’s “we,” Dedijer’s historical narrative on the Principis and Young Bosnia, the train stories, in which passengers resolve injustices and crimes, Tomić’s gathering of the Belgrade art scene with a similar aim of resolving a crime (committed by the Serbian state against Kosovo Albanians), Iveković’s participation in the women’s activist networks, Tolj’s (although left unmentioned) leadership of the Art Workshop Lazareti, an independent art space in Dubrovnik that was very important in establishing transgenerational links, the gathering of “Generation 91-95” for an examination that contests their “A’s in history,” the *Exception* exhibition, with the polarized ideological and interest groups clashing at the exhibition opening, just as it confronted nationalism (or, in another reading, Kosovo Albanians) and contemporary art, *Four Faces of Omarska* and the artist-activist and

¹⁵³ Branislav Stojanović, email to the author, as part of a group email correspondence among members of the *Four Faces of Omarska* working group, *Forensic Architecture* research group, and survivor activists Satko Mujagić and Sudbin Musić, April 7, 2017.

transnational bonds that it managed to create. Even Stilinović's "failed" grouping of defunct and painted over objects and absences stages a desire to group, even if only to declare the reality of isolation. As I suggested, works by the surviving generation of artists group themselves in isolation, so to speak, by parallelly attempting to narrate the stories of their families and their inheritance, but managing instead only to tell the story of their own generational belonging, to identify their historical position as a generation that explicitly interrogates and elides the paternal, Principal injunction. Finally, by attempting to bring all these visual and narrative practices together in an overarching act of storytelling, I am also performing a sort of augmentation of these individual gestures, stories and acts, with the aim of proposing a transgenerational protol that, over time and with contributions by numerous individuals, groups, and generations – many of which I unfortunately do not have space to discuss – opened up the possibility of grouping in solidarity and in order to tell the "whole story" not only of the Yugoslav twentieth century, but to also point to its global import and its links and analogies to world history.

With that end in mind, I will end the chapter with a reflection on Walter Benjamin, not only because he is among the most frequent references by Yugoslav as well international curators, artists, and scholars – in particular those dedicated to narrating the forgotten and suppressed histories – but also because he himself could be said to constitute a surviving generation gathering those who were annulled by the forceful regeneration of German society along racist and nationalist lines. In fact, his own history can be said to encapsulate the story of the Yugoslav century.

A leading activist of an association within the broader Young Germany movement – just like Gavrilo Princip of the Young Bosnia movement – Benjamin's youthful engagement

was violently interrupted by WW1. Although he initially even considered responding to the call for conscription to war, the suicide of his friend, a suicide made as a gesture of protest to war, has been the snowdrift that has arrested Benjamin in his youthful, activist tracks. The arrested train, as I have argued earlier, is a metaphorical space hosting a community gathered to resolve a crime, a debt to the past, which interrupts the presents, and which is a precondition for history to unfold. The suicide of Benjamin's friend and his girlfriend, the suicide enacted exactly at the "Meeting House" of their youth movement, situated "in a back wing of one of the houses standing nearest the municipal railway viaduct," was, according to independent accounts by Shoshana Felman and Martin Jay, the event that accounts for the centrality of death in Benjamin's work.¹⁵⁴ In the course of these days preceding and following the suicide, Benjamin crosses the path from "Gavrilo's shot" – that is, his enthusiasm for youth activism, and even, the German war effort – to "Princip's bang," the recurring echo of the Principal claim that ultimately determines the shot, and transforms juvenescence into debris. For this reason, Benjamin is the exemplary thinker of the Yugoslav twentieth century, even if he never wrote or thought about it, and even if he died long before its conclusion.

The suicide of Benjamin's friend Fritz Heinle and his girlfriend Rika Seligson took place on August 8, 1914, at the eve of WW1. Both were Benjamin's friends and active members of the Berlin Free Student Union, of which Benjamin was president at the time. A radical wing of the general phenomenon of the so-called German Youth Movement at the

¹⁵⁴ Shoshana Felman, "The Storyteller's Silence: Walter Benjamin's Dilemma of Justice," in *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002). Martin Jay, "Against Consolation. Walter Benjamin and the Refusal to Mourn," in *Refractions of Violence* (Routledge, 2003), 11-24.

beginning of the twentieth century, the group to which Benjamin belonged fought for an educational and intellectual transformation of Germany society, challenging the existing institutional and family structures. However, the outbreak of the War violently shattered the enthusiasm of the youth, who were conscripted to transform their revolutionary fervor into real battle in the trenches. Benjamin broke all ties to Gustav Wyneken, his mentor and idol whose ideas on the reforms of the education system had a great influence on the radical wings of the youth movement, after he supported the war. In a gesture of protest, Benjamin sent him an outraged and disappointed letter. But at the very eve of war, Benjamin himself received a letter. It was an express letter from his friend Heinle, containing only one message: "You will find us lying in the Meeting House." The Meeting House was a place where Benjamin's youth group discussed and planned their activities. In "The Berlin Chronicle," he recalls an altercation that took place there between Heinle and himself, when Benjamin was giving his speech entitled "Youth," which Heinle challenged. From the perspective of 1932, when Benjamin wrote the "Chronicle," the differences in their opinions that they so passionately expounded, seemed insignificant, merely part of "the language of youth" that marked their life at the time. Very soon, however, their youths would split much more dramatically – the nineteen-year old Heinle and Rika would commit suicide, which their friends interpreted as an act of protest against the war, and the twenty-two-year old Benjamin would leave Berlin for Switzerland. This will initiate a six-year period of what Felman calls "Benjamin's silence," in which he publishes nothing, and works solely on a text on Hölderlin examining the relation between the lyric and the poet's death, which Felman, again, reads as Benjamin's attempt at coping with Heinle's death. Heinle's suicide marked an event where the personal and historical merged with extreme force – the death of his friend

embodied for Benjamin the violent shattering by the war of their youth ideals and a belief in social and intellectual transformation that they were seeking. “The corpse has left a letter,” but “does not narrate anything other than the utter muteness of the body.”¹⁵⁵ The corpse testifies only to its exposed materiality at the Meeting House, where it can be encountered as a finding. A few days earlier, Benjamin himself stood in line to volunteer for war, in order to secure a “place among friends in the inevitable conscription”; Heinle’s suicide, however, brought forward a painful realization that, in Felman’s words, the place among friends “turn[ed] out to be a place among corpses.”¹⁵⁶

Felman reads Heinle’s suicide as a traumatic event that would shape Benjamin’s entire thinking, and particularly his thinking on history and justice. And justice, writes Felman, is for Benjamin first of all “justice (and quite paradoxically, life) for the dead,” which is why Benjamin announces the link between history and justice that will mark the second half of the 20th century, beginning with the Nuremberg trials, where both history and justice were put on trial. In a similar vein, Martin Jay reads the event of Heinle’s suicide as informing much of Benjamin’s work, most notably his “bleak ruminations on unresurrected, fragmented corpses in his book on Baroque Tragic Drama.” Jay, however, draws different implications from Benjamin’s “insistence of not letting the dead rest in peace,” equally important for the subsequent unfolding of the story of the twentieth century. In Jay’s reading, Benjamin performs a gesture of the refusal to mourn, a refusal to seek consolation, symbolic healing and closure. This refusal is read as a resistance to the post-war

¹⁵⁵ Felman, 41.

¹⁵⁶ Felman, 42.

commemoration culture in Germany, which spread the ruse that the deaths of the First World War were worthy and meaningful sacrifices for the nation. The refusal to mourn does not imply a denial of loss; on the contrary, according to Jay, Benjamin fears that mourning would “close the case prematurely on the cause for which they [Benjamin’s friends but, by implication, all victims of the war] died,” and so he insists on “not letting the dead rest in peace, at least as long as they remain in false graves.”¹⁵⁷

Benjamin dedicated his life and work to pursuing the task of reviving and asserting the claim of those whose life, in Butler’s terms, was not deemed grievable. Similarly to the work of the “children of Omarska,” who refuse to board the Europe-bound train, Benjamin refused to go on with the smooth flow of history, until the claim of the past is settled. As is well known, Benjamin was also reluctant to follow the example of most of his colleagues of the “Frankfurt School” and emigrate to the US, in order to save his life from Nazi terror. We can only speculate on how such a shift of context and perspective, burdened by the traumatic legacy of yet another World War and the Holocaust, would inflect and transform his thinking. In 1938, on one of many occasions when he was urged by Adorno to emigrate, Benjamin is reported to have responded that “there are still positions in Europe to defend.”¹⁵⁸ How are we to approach these positions, to which Benjamin vouched to stand by and defend, despite all odds? On an earlier occasion, in 1933, he wrote to Hannah Arendt that his support of Bertolt Brecht’s production “represents one of the most important and most reinforced points in [his] entire position.”¹⁵⁹ Was this reinforced assertion necessary in

¹⁵⁷ Jay, “Against Consolation,” 17.

¹⁵⁸ Walter Benjamin, cited in Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923-1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008)

¹⁵⁹ Benjamin, cited in Jay, 202.

order to defend Brecht who was repeatedly accused for “vulgar materialism” by Benjamin’s Frankfurt School colleagues? Was this kind of materialism, finally, akin to Benjamin’s own concern with the materiality of art and life, a materiality that refuses to be disentangled from the “tradition of the oppressed” the fidelity to which, in turn, cannot afford the privilege of an elegant distance from the “vulgarity” of oppression and violence?

“Read it carefully”, Benjamin instructs the reader of “The Storyteller,” as he points to a passage in Johann Peter Hebel’s story “Unexpected Reunion,” which illustrates the passing of time by means of a chronology of major historical world events, from the Seven Years’ War, the partition of Poland, American independence, death of Empress Maria Theresa, Napoleon’s capture of Prussia, etc. etc., while “the peasants sowed and harvested...[t]he millers ground, the smiths hammered, and the miners dug for veins of ore in their underground workshops.”¹⁶⁰ What the history of the victor recounts as the procession of great victories by great men, the storyteller enables Benjamin to reveal as “natural history,” a chronicle, that is, where the only rhythmical regularity is the repetitive occurrence of death: “Never has a storyteller embedded his report deeper in natural history than Hebel manages to do in this chronology. Read it carefully. Death appears in it with the same regularity as the Reaper does in the processions that pass around the cathedral clock at noon.” This act of Benjamin’s (re) naming of human history performs a revealing dialectical ambiguation. On the one hand, it debunks the anthropo-exceptionalism by relocating the human from the realm of bios to that of zoe, where the human becomes not only the observer and narrator, but also the object of “natural history,” an integral part in the chain of

¹⁶⁰ Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller,” in *Illuminations*, 95.

consummation, growth and decay. On the other, it reveals that there is, in fact, nothing “natural” about human history, because in the succession of wars, invasions, partitions, conquests and defeats that the chronicle piles up in front of us, only the rulers have the privilege to die of what is dubbed “natural death,” and only their death marks an event, while each of their listed triumphs covers up the piles of anonymous dead bodies whose death did not occur “naturally,” but as a result of oppression, injustice and violence – as if these had nothing to do with “nature” – and had as a result remained unnarrated. Committing to the narration of these unnarrated deaths is a matter of oppositional arrest of the sanitization of history and life, both of which erase the trace of the fact that violence and death are their precondition. Just as Benjamin warns us of the emergence of the figure of novelist, withdrawn into the solitary space of the modern interior away from the “community of listeners” – which formed the space of the art of storytelling – so has dying as once a dignified part of life been removed from those sanitized bourgeois interiors, and displaced into sanatoria and hospitals. To warn of these losses is not to be melancholically fixated on death at the expense of life, but to insist on the undeniable kinship between them, a kinship that entails a certain mutual – although not necessarily reciprocal – obligation.

To say that “not even the dead will be safe” is, of course, to say that even the dead need to be saved, just as the living need to form the community of listeners to the voices of the dead, if they are to be able to invest their life with hope, and their hope with purpose. Otherwise, saving life would mean nothing but policing the border between life and death, where life would have value by default, merely as the opposite to the negativity of death. Just like death, however, life doesn’t come “naturally,” and it needs the storyteller who is at the same time “the trading seaman” and a “tiller of soil.” The storyteller is thus someone who is

able to navigate and nurture life, one who has come from afar, both in time and space. Human life, Benjamin claims, is the material of the storyteller's craft. But the story is not there for its own sake or the sake of the teller only, but also for the sake of the addressee, and it is this kind of claim that it makes on those who listen, the same claim Ljuban makes at the beginning of *Train in the Snow*: "Children, listen to my story, and make your judgment." Listen to my story, and make your own: just like instituting law, storytelling is a form of transgenerational protocol, a form of kinship between life and death. Unlike law, however, storytelling is not about one-directional relay of authority. The storyteller's authority lies in his ability to offer counsel, and counsel, in Benjamin's words: "is less an answer to a question than a proposal concerning the continuation of a story which is just unfolding." However, the commitment to propose rather than impose a continuation does not imply that the exchange is free from bonds of obligation. The storyteller must be able to appeal for continuation of what is unfolding, and the listener to intuit and redeem the initiatory curvings of the present fold, the secret index of the past.

From the "Theses" we know that this dialectics between the past and present, the living and dead, would come to a "standstill" only if every single moment of the past would be redeemed, and become "citable". This is a utopian, messianic vision, the event to be imagined only to the extent that Last Judgment is imaginable. Until then, our own "messianic power" remains weak. Is it due to this perpetual simultaneous inheritance of a grand task and a weak power – both individual and generational – that Benjamin, in a way, multiplies himself, and trains a guerilla army of agents who will join him in accomplishing the task, and whom he will appoint, by protocols he writes and perfects in his texts, to assume posts and "defend the positions" that he had vowed to defend? The collector, the

flaneur, the storyteller, the translator, the chronicler, the historical materialist – these characters are all conscripted by Benjamin to engage in the struggle of claiming kinship between life and death, of delving deep into the depository of the tradition of the oppressed, the depository of the dead, from which they redeem silenced evidence. But this evidence, for Benjamin, is not simply inanimate matter to be manipulated; it rather retains a certain intentionality of its own, even if it remains unrecognized: a life or a moment is “unforgettable,” even if everyone has forgotten it. Forgetting it only means betraying its unforgettability, and it is precisely the task of the weak messianic agents to retrieve it. An object is “fit for exhibition,” a text is “translatable,” two texts are “comparable,” an event “citable,” etc. The task of Benjamin’s agents is to detect the echoes in the silences of traces of the dead, and engage with their “afterlife.” Just like the translator’s task, situated between poetry and theory, is that of caring for the inheritance, or the afterlife of an old text, so all other agents have the weak messianic power to shape the afterlife of the traces of the dead they are invested in. This is where the mutuality of the obligation comes to the fore – the storyteller gives counsel to the listener, but the listener, as Benjamin writes in another text, is the “silent partner,” giving meaning to the story. In the “Theses,” it is the historical materialist who gives meaning to history, who therefore constructs history for the present. The tradition of the oppressed claims from the living the ability to give it meaning, and for this meaning to be able to inflect the continuation of the story unfolding in the present – which, for Benjamin, is ultimately the story of redemption.

Benjamin and his friends were not able to procure a common grave for Heinle and Sigelson in Berlin and were forced to separate their bodies and funeral ceremonies:

And, finally, after August 8, 1914, the days came when those among us who were closest to the dead couple did not want to part from one another until they were buried, we felt the limits in the shame of being able to find refuge only in a seedy railway hotel on Stuttgart Square. Even the graveyard demonstrated the boundaries set by the city to all that filled our hearts: it was impossible to procure for the pair who had died together graves in one and the same cemetery.

As if invoked by the train stories of the Yugoslav children and the international community, told in the beginning of this chapter, the weight of the railway is pounding in the background of Benjamin's account, taking us from lively discussions of the youth in the Meeting House, situated in the vicinity of a railway viaduct, to the "seedy railway hotel" in which they found the only space of refuge to be with each other in grief. "A Berlin Chronicle" is imbued with references to the transformations of the modern city, and the railway appears as a ghostly sign, itself transformed throughout the twentieth century from a symbol of hope in human progress, to a progressed technology of death, leading towards extermination camps, which, in turn, left behind countless "false graves," an innumerable mass of scattered bones.

The unfinished "Berlin Chronicle" finishes with Benjamin's reflection on *déjà vu*, "the shock with which we come across a gesture or a word the way we suddenly find in our house a forgotten glove or reticule" making us think that a stranger had been there, who left these words and gestures "in our keeping".¹⁶¹ Benjamin ends his account with recalling a late-night visit by his father to his room, who informed him in great detail that a cousin had died of a heart-attack, including a detailed explanation of what a heart-attack was:

"I did not take much of the explanation. But that evening I must have memorized my room and my bed, the way you observe with great precision a place where you feel dimly that you'll later have to search for something you've forgotten there.

¹⁶¹ Benjamin, "A Berlin Chronicle," 634-635

Many years afterward I discovered what it was. Here in the room, my father had 'forgotten' part of the news about the deceased: the illness was called syphilis."¹⁶²

The chronicle written as a testament from Benjamin to his son Stefan, ends unfinished, with a memory of a transference relayed to him by his own father, each containing words, rustlings, sounds uncovering a story not fully told, at the same time posing the claim for its continued unfolding. The claim to halt the train and look back. Solve the puzzle encrypted in the snow. Respond to the call of the unrecognized and subdued voices of the past and the nameless bodies scattered in mass graves. To refuse to embark the train that promises an easy slide into a promise of progress, but rather remain looking at the grave, the Omarska mining/historical complex, uncovering the voices that challenge the terms of intelligibility and legality of the existing social order, even when those voices, and the inheritance is not easily romanticized or celebrated, when it is an inheritance of incest, a stigma of disease, a burden of criminal or perpetrator legacy.

In this sense, it enables us to question precisely the point where ends and generativity meet: how does a "dead" end engender a purposeful end which lays claim to our thought and action? Benjamin's speculation on his exotic position of the "last European" in America, Derrida's self-identification as the "last Jew," claims of the ends of history, theory, art, and Yugoslavia, all posit a certain state of urgency to turn to and question that which has come to an end, and receive "counsel" from the fact of its extinction, from being faced with its corpse. How does this question resonate in the light of the end of socialist Yugoslavia? Who

¹⁶² Benjamin, 635.

are the last Yugoslavs and where is the express letter in which they navigate us towards the Meeting House where we can find and inherit the corpses of their claims?

In their series of research-based performances, which, unlike the majority of the post-Yugoslav art production that either deals with the 1990s war or with socialist Yugoslavia, Damir Bartol Indoš took as their theme Gavrilo Princip's generation and the radicalism expressed not only in the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, but also in other successful or unsuccessful assassination attempts in Yugoslavia and Europe at the time. Under the general name *Each Revolution is a Throwing of Dice*, and under the heading of what the artists call "documentary theater," a series of performances merged their archival research on the radical Yugoslav nationalist youth from the beginning of the century with the tradition of radical, avant-garde experiments in music and literature. The medium in which Indoš's own radical musical experiments merged with the research of Yugoslav history is an instrument that he devised and that he calls "*šabtofon*," which could be translated as "sewagephone," as it uses a dark box that resembles an indexes a square sewage cover under which Indoš's musical experiments develop by means of vibrations of strings, suspended inside the box.

In these performances, Indoš's long-standing work with the *šabtofon* as something that is able to not only evoke the radicality of the avant-garde but also to enable the artist to link his art with the unlivable and ungrievable life of those who are at the bottom of social hierarchies, those who are discarded as society's waste, merges with Indoš's and Vrvilo's joined linking to the radical history of Yugoslav intellectuals and activists. As the artists note, what characterizes that generation of artist is that almost none of them survived their historical moment, and either fell victim, as communists and/or nationalists to Yugoslav

royal government, or disappeared, as committed communists, in the Stalinist purges. As such, they also symbolize the repressed of the “Fanonist” Yugoslav generation. In Miroslav Krleža’s dream diaries, which Indoš’s and Vrvilo’s document in their performances, one such repressed figure repeatedly appears: “I am tormented by Đuka,” writes Krleža, as he dreams that they are riding a motorbike together. Krleža perhaps dreams that he and Đuka are on a revolutionary journey together again, at a time when, during WW2 Krleža himself retreated from the revolution and when he chose not to join his comrades who were busy instantiating the socialist Yugoslav revolution, and instead began writing diaries, and tuning in to the echoes of the “bygone days.”

As a musical instrument, *šabtofon* thus also becomes an instrument of history. Its vibrations, remediations, and its ability to delve into history’s “sewages” enables the present to tune in to both the mute tone of Gavriilo’s shot and the echo of Princip’s bang, and thus account for those who had not survived. *Šabtofon* is thus an instrument particularly attuned to Yugoslavia’s surviving generation, and which will take me in the next chapter to another resounding vibration from the past: the muted tone of Yugoslav “similar singing,” whose consonant dissonances seek for a constitution of a new nation, even as its dissociative groupings elide the uniformity of the national ideal of “a single harmony.”

Chapter 2. Similar Singing: A (South-Slav) Peoples

Judge not the play before the play is done:¹

“Yugoslavia has no alternative,” declared writer Predrag Matvejević in the preface to his 1982 book *Jugoslavenstvo danas – pitanja kulture* (Yugoslavism today – questions of culture), in which he pled that a critical and historicizing approach replace the routine avoidance of what he had been warned was the “very sensitive” Yugoslav question.² A strange occurrence, indeed: a question bearing the name of a sovereign nation is labeled “sensitive” within the borders of that very nation. Such a paradox, however, was only one of many aspects of the crisis that marked Yugoslavia in the early 1980s, following the death of its founder and life-time president Josip Broz Tito in May 1980. A series of mass protests shook the whole country in the spring of 1981 when Kosovo Albanians urged that the Kosovo autonomous province be transformed into a federal republic and that Albanians be included among the “constitutive” Yugoslav nations. The protests, however, were only a culmination of an ongoing political, economic and cultural autonomization of the Yugoslav republics and nations, which was legitimized by a new constitution in 1974, although it had, in fact, been built into the very foundations of the post-war state, initially named Federal Peoples’

¹ Francis Quarles (1592-1644), epigram from *Respice Finem* (1635)

² Predrag Matvejević, *Jugoslavenstvo danas - pitanja kulture* (Zagreb: Globus, 1982), 6. In the treatment of original titles that have not been translated in English, I am providing the English translation as a sentence style capitalization when first introducing the work, as per recommendation of The Chicago Manual of Style Online, 17th Edition, 11.9, which indicates that a work has not been translated in English. In repeated use, however, I use the possibility of “editorial discretion,” which the same recommendation cites, and switch to only the English translation, with headline-style capitalization.

Republic of Yugoslavia.³ Matvejević's "no alternative" (to Yugoslavia) was declared in this climate of ever-more thriving national particularisms,⁴ and, it should be added, in the midst of Margaret Thatcher's own "no alternative" (to capitalism) with which the Yugoslav crisis was deeply intertwined.⁵ Although Matvejević's tone is largely reflexive and analytical, rather than proclamatory, his book must be read as a late-Yugoslav manifesto that sought to reactivate the emancipatory potentials of socialist Yugoslavism. It thus followed – ideologically, historically, and historiographically⁶ – in the footsteps of a number of nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers, artists and intellectuals, who embraced Yugoslavism as a search for alternatives beyond the hegemonic political options that defined a particular historical moment.

³ The federal constitution of the new Yugoslav state, founded during, and formally established in the aftermath of WW2, was the way in which Yugoslav communists, following also Lenin's idea of national self-determination and the Soviet model, strove to resolve the "national question," which was among the key contentious issues in the first Yugoslav state. The rule by the Serbian Karadžević dynasty was generally perceived, especially by the non-Serbian population, as promoting Serbian hegemony under the guise of Yugoslav unitarism, which is one of the reasons that the ever-growing decentralizing tendencies could always be legitimized as countering the threat of unitarism. In the new Yugoslavia, five South Slav nations – Croats, Slovenes, Serbs, Macedonians, and Montenegrins – were declared to form five "constitutive" nations (*narodji*), Albanians, Hungarians, and other non-Slavs, and minority groups were nationalities (*narodnosti*). See Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), Haug, *Creating a Socialist Yugoslavia: Tito, Communist Leadership and the National Question*. For developments centered around the later changes and, especially, the 1974 constitution, see Sabrina P. Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1963-1983* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), and Jović, *Yugoslavia: A State That Withered Away*.

⁴ As a political term, particularism defines a politics catered to interests of a particular group, typically distinguished by ethnic or religious identity, rather than to the benefit of the whole society, in respect of universal human rights. In Yugoslavia, the word was used to signify nationalist claims that would go beyond those already made legitimate by the federal constitution, which provided, in turn, a measure against the other major threat – unitarism, which would fully negate the individual national rights.

⁵ Matvejević, in fact, began working on the book already in 1971, another year in which the crisis of Yugoslavism became palpable, most notably in the form of the movement known as the "Croatian Spring," when Croatian party leaders, with the support of great numbers of university students, demanded a more equitable economic and cultural position of Croatia within Yugoslavia. Although Matvejević does not discuss economic matters, they were part and parcel of the "national question" in Yugoslavia, and related to significant economic inequalities among the Yugoslav republics. For an account of how the very first labor strike in 1958 was intertwined with the re-opening of the national question, see Vladimir Unkovski-Korica, *The Economic Struggle for Power in Tito's Yugoslavia* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2016). For the genealogy of Yugoslavia's economic crisis in the 1980s see Woodward, *Socialist Unemployment: The Political Economy of Yugoslavia, 1945-1990*.

⁶ The book was at the same time a reflection on the history of Yugoslavism.

Quite like his predecessors, Matvejević summoned the realm of culture as the location proper of these political alternatives, which is why it can be said that the subtitle of his book, *Questions of Culture*, is fundamentally redundant, as it is a repetition of its title, *Yugoslavism Today*. The shortcut proof of this equation is the inverted form in which it appears in another Yugoslavist manifesto, Miroslav Krleža's essay "Književnost danas" (Literature today), which postulated: "The topic of our literature is our country [...] we are all working on this topic, we analyze it and penetrate it, which in turn transforms our attitudes and views."⁷ Written in 1945, immediately following the founding of the socialist Yugoslavia, this declaration of a perpetual dialectic between "our literature" and "our country" was not merely rhetorical praise of the new nation and its leadership, although Krleža, as will later be shown, had every reason to relieve interwar tensions between himself and the Yugoslav Communist Party.⁸ "Working on this topic" is rather instituted in Krleža's text as the very task of Yugoslav literature and as the precondition for what I propose to (re)construct as the tradition of Yugoslav aesthetics.

While its origins go back to the Romantic-nationalist, "Illyrian" movement of the 1830s and 1840s, which called for the "discordant strings" of the South Slav "lyre" to be tuned "to a single harmony,"⁹ it is in Krleža's critical and literary work that Yugoslav

⁷ Miroslav Krleža, "Književnost danas," in Miroslav Krleža, *Eseji. Kritike. Polemike. Putopisi. Dnevnici. Zapisi* (Sarajevo; Zagreb: Svjetlost; Školska knjiga, 1977), 48.

⁸ Although a member of the Yugoslav Communist Party since its inception in 1919, during the 1930s he was part of a polemic surrounding the notions of proletarian literature, social literature, and later, socialist realism, during which he eventually became alienated from Yugoslav communists, and he also did not participate in the partisan struggle during WW2. After the war, these conflicts were set aside, and he was nonetheless embraced by the Yugoslav communist leadership as a central cultural figure. I write about the so-called "conflict on the literary left" in the following chapter.

⁹ "The discordant strings of this lyre are Carniola, Carinthia, Istria, Kranj, Styria, Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia, Dubrovnik, Bosnia, Montenegro, Herzegovina, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Lower Hungary [...] Let's stop each strumming on his own string, and tune the lyre to a single harmony." Ljudevit Gaj, "Proglas za 1838. godinu," cited in Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia*, 27.

aesthetics finds at the same time its most determinate negation and its radical re-inauguration – its re-inauguration, moreover, as an aesthetics of negation. However, Krleža’s negation, developed over the course of his almost century-long intellectual production, from 1914 to his death in 1982, was grounded in an intense political, historical and historiographical involvement with a tradition of “working on this topic” that both preceded and shaped his own work, but also coincided, and collided with it. Rather than viewing Krleža – and by extension, the Yugoslavism of the second, socialist Yugoslav state – as a decisive, historical negation of the century of work and debates that preceded him, in this chapter I seek to establish continuities that reach across these cuts. The most obvious one is the continuity of the very name “Yugoslavia/Yugoslav,” which, as I will argue, involves a continuous, if interrupted, revised, and disputed, generation and generativity of something that can be called Yugoslavia’ claim, which arises from an illegible, inarticulate historical claim of “a peoples.”¹⁰ Ungrammatical, singular plural, “a peoples” inhabits a distance that separates the Yugoslav “failed” nationalism from the victorious nationalism of the individual South Slav Nations, grounded in “The People,” a legible, singularly capitalized subject, whose “right” to self-determination bears philological and historiographic legitimacy. If the above is Yugoslavia’s claim, Yugoslav aesthetics, then, is the quest to transcribe the illegible, ungrammatical claim of “a peoples,” an aesthetic generativity which, in turn, reveals Yugoslavism itself as precisely a site of contestation – not collective unity – and a site which ultimately contests the very idea of Proper Name.

¹⁰ I am here establishing a dialogue with Judith Butler’s “Antigone’s Claim,” which was more explicitly elaborated in the first chapter. Butler, *Antigone’s Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death*.

Before beginning the reconstruction delineated above, however, and since what I am primarily dealing with is cultural – as well as my own, methodological – nationalism, some introductory remarks on the very coupling of the signifier Yugoslav with the universal names of art/culture/literature.

A special relationship

Matvejević's book *Yugoslavism Today – Questions of Culture* conflates Yugoslavism and culture already in its title, but inside its pages Matvejević elaborates on the historical dimensions of this conflation: "Regions under Austro-Hungarian and Italian rule are characterized by a special relationship (of both connections and contradictions) between culture and politics, and, especially, a commitment to cultural projects in the absence of the possibility to accomplish truly political projects."¹¹ This "special relationship," however, can be found at the center of almost any theory and history of nationalism, regardless of the various versions of the divide between the "organic/eastern" nationalism grounded in Johann Gottfried Herder's essentialist notion of *Kultur*nation, or the "rational/western" nationalism associated with the civic, state-building traditions of France, England, and the United States (the *Staatsnation*).¹² If, in his famous *What is a Nation?* (1882), Ernest Renan

¹¹ Matvejević, *Jugoslavenstvo danas*, 41. This relates specifically to Croatia and Slovenia, but it is precisely in Croatia, where the Yugoslav nationalist and cultural movement developed, in the form of the "Illyrian movement," in the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

¹² The distinction between *Kultur*nation (culture-nation) and *Staatsnation* (state-nation) was made in the nineteenth century, and was developed by twentieth-century scholars of nationalism, in particular, Hans Kohn, who in the 1950s, made the distinction between progressive, Western European (liberal and democratic) nationalism and the reactionary, organic, non-Western, nationalism, grounded in the German, language-based understanding of the nation. See Miroslav Hroch, *European Nations: Explaining Their Formation*, trans. Karolina Graham (London: Verso, 2005). Chapter 1, eBook. This rather moralizing polarization was later challenged, although it was revived recently, for example in the work of Michael Ignatieff, who reproduces the dichotomy between good, civic nationalism and the bad, ethnic nationalism, run by warlords and epitomized by his portrait of Croatia and Serbia during the war in the 1990s. Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging: Journeys Into the New Nationalism* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995).

rejected the relevance of the typically “organic,” Herderian factors, such as the natural environment or shared language, he nonetheless defined the (French) nation as a “spiritual principle,” a decision to live together grounded in an acceptance of a common “heritage,” a heritage denoting both glory and suffering.¹³ And what else is the business of a wide variety of practices subsumed under the rubric of “culture” if not the cultivation of a field of shared “heritage,” even if this field were minoritarian, that is, counter-hegemonic, and if it constituted a challenge to an already hegemonic and institutionalized territory of collectivized memory and social practice?¹⁴ At the same time, the historical and contemporary expansiveness of the term “culture,” which includes (micro)biology, agriculture, the culture of everyday life, popular culture, “high” culture, and even, an equivalent to civilization, threatens the stability of the very division between culture and politics, which the major scholarly accounts of nationalism presuppose and on which they depend.¹⁵ Some scholars have challenged this division, for example Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, who view the English state formation (the process typically seen as the quintessentially “political” instance of nation building) as a “cultural revolution” marked by the interrelationship of the “triadic interweaving of nation/state/culture” and the

¹³ Ernest Renan, “What is a Nation?,” in *Nations and Identities*, ed. Vincent P. Pecora (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 174.

¹⁴ Or, in the words of Thomas Mann: “Art is a conservative power, the strongest of all; it preserves spiritual possibilities that, without it, perhaps would die out.” Cited in Eric Michaud, *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 10.

¹⁵ Painstaking and nuanced attempts by scholars of nationalism to unravel the conceptual and historical complexity of the concept of nation regularly leave culture as a self-explanatory notion that does not seem to need to be dissected and questioned in the same way. As a result, they ignore the fact that, just like nation, “culture” is also a historical, as well as a markedly modern construct. As Larry Wolff writes, the very word “culture” entered the famous *Encyclopédie* of 1751 as *culture de la terre*, i.e. agriculture, and only in Samuel Johnson’s dictionary of 1755 did the term, beside this reference to “tilling the ground,” acquire a second, potentially metaphorical meaning: “Art of improvement and melioration. Larry Wolff, “Discovering Cultural Perspective: The Intellectual History of Anthropological Thought in the Age of Enlightenment,” in *The Anthropology of the Enlightenment* (na, 2007).

consolidation of capitalism.¹⁶ Still, to truly question the separation between politics and culture means to see that the very process of their autonomization is itself “culturally” determined, that is, to see it as a product of the history of “Western Culture.” Provincializing Europe *avant la lettre*,¹⁷ in 1918 Oswald Spengler proposed to view Western Culture as merely one among many “living forms” of “world-history,” which, as all other forms in Spengler’s vitalist, non-teleological schema, was necessarily endowed with a beginning and (an imminent) end.¹⁸ Seen through such a bio-anthropomorphic lens, politics – in the form of a quest for national sovereignty and statehood – is nothing but a trait of a specific “provincial,” as it were, culture, which, however, conquered the whole world.¹⁹

According to Elie Kedourie, nationalism is a European doctrine that was invented in the nineteenth century and propelled by the French Revolution and the Enlightenment ideals of freedom and self-determination.²⁰ In foregrounding the ideational processes that led

¹⁶ Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, *The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985).

¹⁷ The term “provincializing Europe” comes from Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

¹⁸ Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926). In proposing such a view, Spengler reflects the German tradition, which originated with Herder, of speaking of the plurality of cultures, instead of a single development. See Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (2015), 51. However, despite the fact that they both promote the historicist view according to which, in Herder’s words, “our age should not bestow our own ideals of happiness and virtue onto other remote nations and times in order to judge, assess, condemn and petrify,” Spengler’s early twentieth-century view of the decay of Western Culture, and its utterly contingent position in world history is a far cry from Herder’s idea of history as a universal progress of mankind from infancy to maturity. Johann Gottfried Herder, *Another Philosophy of History and Selected Political Writings*, trans. Ioannis D Evrigenis and Daniel Pellerin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2004), 30. Despite his critique of the Enlightenment *philosophes* and their ahistorical views of other cultures, Herder himself ultimately glorifies the achievements of “our age,” including the civilizing mission of colonization: “[We have] all peoples and continents under our shadow, as it were, and when a storm shakes two small twigs in Europe, how the whole world trembles and bleeds! When has all the earth ever been joined so universally *by so few united threads*? When has there ever been more *power* and *machinery* to shake the entire nations with the push of a button, with the movement of a few fingers?” (58, original emphasis).

¹⁹ Herder is again enthusiastically explicit about this: “How this seems to go on without end! *Where* are there no European colonies, and where *will* there not *be* any? The fonder savages grow everywhere of our liquor and luxury, the more *ready* they also become for our *conversion*! Everywhere they are brought closer to *our culture*, by liquor and luxury especially, and before long — God willing! — all human beings will be *as we* are: *good, strong, happy men!*” (Herder, 59, original emphasis).

²⁰ Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1961).

to the inception, naturalization and world-wide spread of nationalism, Kedourie anticipated more recent scholarship that has emphasized the cultural roots of nation-building, and in which the “cultural” denotes a varying range of intellectual and creative practices. The widely cited definition by Benedict Anderson of the nation as an “imagined community” is based on his elaboration of the formative role of “print capitalism” (in particular, the modern novel and the newspaper), which enabled a horizontal-secular synchronization of time (as opposed to the vertical-divine temporality of religion), and thus opened up the possibility for otherwise disconnected populations to imagine a shared historical destiny in the form of nationhood.²¹ Imagination does not equal invention, as Miroslav Hroch has warned, and as many superficial readings of Anderson would have it, because in addition to its ideational layer, the European nation-forming process was dependent upon a set of social and historical preconditions and did not simply arise as a result of the “wishes and ideals of the ‘nationalists.’”²² At the same time, Hroch envisions the role of artists, scholars, and intellectuals as crucial in those contexts where nation formation was not based on the already existing state-nations (such as France), but where it was generated by movements that “did not regard their national existence as inevitable but as something they needed to strive for,” as was the case in Italy, Germany, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.²³

²¹ “The idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogenous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history. An American will never meet, or even know the names of more than a handful of his 240,000,000-odd fellow-Americans. He has no idea of what they are up to at any one time. But he has complete confidence in their steady anonymous, simultaneous activity.” Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Books, 2006), 26.

²² Hroch, *European Nations: Explaining Their Formation.*, Preface, eBooks.

²³ Hroch, Chapter 2, eBooks.

Radicalizing the link between the intellectual class and nation building, Ernest Gellner defined nationalism as “essentially, the general imposition of a high culture on society,” which makes cultural pluralism practically unviable.²⁴ Therein, he elaborates, lies the real “nationalist deception”: nationalism “usually conquers in the name of a putative folk culture,” with a variety of low, vernacular cultures fighting against the oppression of an alien high culture. But, in fact, even when it eliminates the alien high culture, nationalism replaces it not with a low vernacular culture but with another “local high (literate, specialist-transmitted) culture of its own.”²⁵ In this scheme, the usual distribution of priorities between politics and culture seems to have been reversed: despite the fact that Gellner himself sees state formation as the ultimate goal of each nationalism, his “nationalist deception” implicitly gestures at an overarching culturalist deception, according to which the state is itself but a screen that enables the flourishing of (yet another) high culture. The logic of deception is operative also in Kedourie’s psychologizing account of the nationalist movements in colonies, which were initiated by local intelligentsia enthralled by the Enlightenment ideals they encountered in the West, but who, having been rejected by the West, “realized their messianic fervor by turning the west’s weapons against itself.”²⁶ Returning to their home countries, these “alienated intellectuals” adopted and “adapted the ideology of nationalism to their own ethnic traditions,” creating nations “out of a medley of tribes and kingdoms in the colonies.”²⁷ Seemingly paradoxically, then, the assertion of cultural and political sovereignty

²⁴ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 56.

²⁵ Gellner, 56.

²⁶ A paraphrase of Kedourie’s argument, in Anthony D. Smith, “Nationalism and Modernity,” in *Central European Avant-Gardes: Exchange and Transformation, 1910-1930*, ed. Timothy O. Benson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002), 72.

²⁷ Kedourie, cited in Smith, 72.

and authenticity is achieved through the adaptation of the locally specific into the dominant, European mold. Despite Kedourie's arguably hostile exaggeration of the agenda and agency of alienated intellectuals, his analysis points to the heart of the contradiction that would continue to haunt quests for cultural sovereignty at the geopolitical margins, and whose epilogue can be witnessed in the present-day global remapping of a multiplying number of "peripheral," "alternative," "errant," "perverse," etc., modernisms and modernities.²⁸ The rejection of European cultural and political domination takes the form of asserting the specificity of local culture, but only in order to claim a position within the global cultural arena, a position in which, however, the "specific" can only be a *modifier* of the modernism/modernity complex, which remains the only acceptable, and decidedly European, currency of cultural exchange.²⁹ As Stacie G. Widdifield has concluded in her study of Mexican national art in the nineteenth century, the Mexican artists sought to be

²⁸ In the realm of contemporary art, a prominent statement declaring the new age of the "altermodern" was Nicolas Bourriaud manifesto that accompanied the 2009 Tate Triennial, which celebrated new forms of global interconnection, travel, translation, and hybridity, in which altermodernity is seen to arise "out of planetary negotiations, discussions between agents of different cultures," unlike "the modernism the modernism of the twentieth century which spoke the abstract language of the colonial west, and postmodernism, which encloses artistic phenomena in origins and identities." Nicolas Bourriaud, "Manifesto," available at: <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/altermodern/altermodern-explain-altermodern/altermodern-explained>. More recently, modernities and modernisms with innovative prefixes — among which, multiple modernities, Marshal Plan modernism, socialist modernism, cosmopolitan modernisms, errant modernisms, perverse modernisms, etc. — have been part of the ongoing global rewriting of the canon of art history. See, for example, Duke University Press's announcement of the new project Modernist Exchanges "dedicated to rewriting the history of modernism and modernist art to include artists, theorists, art forms, and movements from around the world." Duke University Press, Fall and Winter 2018 Catalogue, 24. Perverse Modernisms is the name of another series by Duke UP.

²⁹ There are arguments against the view of the European provenance of modernity. For example, against the "postcolonial" idea of modernity as an originally Western phenomenon, which was then imposed around the world, in a recent volume on "third world literature," a group of authors see modernity as a world phenomenon inherently related to capitalism as a world system. By referring to Harry Harootunian and Fredric Jameson, they argue that modernities cannot be "alternative," only "coeval, or peripheral," i.e., in a peripheral relation to the centers of capitalism. Sharae Deckard et al., *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 14. However, even if I would agree that capitalism — as well as colonialism, as the decolonial theorists argue — thus "precedes" modernity which is its expression, and that modernity is, as Jameson claimed, singular, I do not see how this argument disproves the European origin of modernism/modernity, especially if added into the equation is the idea of the sovereign state/nation, one of the bulwarks of Immanuel Wallerstein's theory of the capitalist world system on which the authors rely.

much more than a pallid European reflection, but “the mirror was still being held by the Europeans.”³⁰

The mirror’s surface does not simply issue judgment on matters of artistic style, but, more importantly, measures the distance crossed on the path of humanity’s struggle to overcome its immaturity, a figure used by Immanuel Kant to express the vision of universal human progress, or the Enlightenment. The mirror, then, is nothing other than History, as is explicitly stated in a 1918 manifesto that called for the creation of a unique Yugoslav culture and literature: “At any moment History can ask us: ‘What speaks to your right?’ and we have nothing to show her.”³¹ Without culture, that is, without great spiritual deeds, there is no entrance into History, which is why “culture” is not, as one could infer from Matvejević’s formulation of the “special relationship,” a compensatory activity of the subaltern subject deprived of the possibility to engage in “truly political projects,” but an end in itself, or rather, a means towards the universal ends of humankind. At the same time, human History, conceived by G. W. F. Hegel as the path to Freedom, depends on the spirit of the Nation, and it is as a national contribution – an oxymoronic, competitive, and thus always potentially violent, contribution – to this universalist vision that Niko Bartulović, in his above cited editorial of the newly founded journal *Književni jug* (Literary south), envisioned the tasks of Yugoslavism and Yugoslav Culture.³² Writing in January 1918, following the “three years of

³⁰ Stacie G. Widdifield, *The Embodiment of the National in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexican Painting* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996), 25.

³¹ Niko Bartulović, “Zadaci vremena,” *Književni jug* 1, no. 1 (1918), 3.

³² The Yugoslavist orientation of the journal is evident already in its title, *Književni jug* (Literary south), where “south” is the evocation of “jug” (transliterated into English as Yug) in Yugoslav, or South Slav. A number of journals and organizations carrying similar names existed over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth century in Yugoslavia, and abroad, e.g. *Slavenski jug* (Slavic south, 1848-1850), *Slovenski jug* (Slavic south, 1904), *Jugoslavenska njiva* (Yugoslav field, 1917-1920).

slaughter” (of WW1) during which the country had been transformed into a “wolf’s den,” he indeed called for the liberation of Yugoslav lands from foreign domination, but at the same time insisted that “art in itself is liberation,” and not simply a means to achieve political freedom.³³ The unexpected circumstances of the actual founding of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in December 1918 (since 1929 Kingdom of Yugoslavia), only allowed Bartulović to confirm his views and to state that the accomplished political freedom was but a precondition for cultural tasks that still remain, because “our nation” should proceed in the “direction of spiritual development” in order to climb towards the “absolute heights of universal progress.”³⁴ We find here another reversal of priorities, in which political freedom is the precondition for culture, and not the other way around.³⁵

The views of one Yugoslav intellectual cannot, and indeed, do not, represent the entire tradition of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Yugoslavism. However, in their extreme, subaltern identification with European Enlightenment, they reveal the extent to which the very idea of a liberated nation forms this project’s integral part, rather than a move by which one escapes its universalizing grasp. After all, “Europe” is a unity only when seen from its colonies or its peripheries. Moreover, its universalist ideal is itself a result of colonial, imperial, economic, and ideological competition and warfare among its core nations, including, since the nineteenth century, the assertion of its Northern (“Germanic”)

³³ Bartulović, “Zadaci vremena,” 3.

³⁴ Bartulović, “Politička sloboda i kultura,” 357.

³⁵ Seen from a more materialist perspective, such priorities reflect the interests of local intellectuals, for whom national freedom signifies a possibility to transform into a veritable bourgeoisie and assume the positions of power that would otherwise be out of their reach, both with regards to their local context, and the international cultural arena. Similar arguments in relation to the autonomy of culture in the postcolonial context are made by Elie Kedourie, as well as Julio Ramos study of Latin American literature. See⁸ Elie Kedourie, “Introduction,” in Elie Kedourie, ed. *Nationalism in Asia and Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1974)., Julio Ramos, *Divergent Modernities: Culture and Politics in 19th Century Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

against its Southern (“Latin”) axis, which made clear that the conflict between “barbarism” and “civilization” was an intra-European matter par excellence.³⁶ If, as Immanuel Wallerstein has argued, the capitalist world-system depends not on the truly liberated market, but precisely on the institution of the sovereign state and its monopolizing powers,³⁷ then the political and cultural freedom that South Slav politicians and intellectuals were striving for was a means to expand the world-system, not resist it, while at the same time it prompted the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman Empires, as remnants of the old regime, which never managed to transform into truly modern, colonial, capitalist states.

What Bartulović’s writing also reveals is the principal synchronicity between the two modern processes that both derive from the ideals of the Enlightenment: the autonomization, and by the same token, capitalization, of Art and Culture and the constitution of modern Politics, or “the rule by modern institutions of the state, bureaucracy and capitalist enterprises,” which Dipesh Chakrabarty calls “political modernity.”³⁸ In this

³⁶ Eric Michaud, “Barbarian Invasions and the Racialization of Art History,” *October* 139 (2012). See also Neil McWilliam’s research on art historical investments in the debates around 1900, centered on the question of whether France is a Latin or Celtic nation, Neil McWilliam, “Towards a New French Renaissance: Memory, Tradition and Cultural Conservatism in France Before the First World War,” *Art history*, 40, no. 4 (2017). The art historical and critical discourses produced in connection to these debates on the French national character, involved an interpretation of artistic production “in uncompromisingly ethnic terms, with racial essentialism serving as a basic analytical category” (726). Advocates of a *renaissance française* and *impérialisme*, who advocated for a merging of classicism with the “French” indigenous traditions (Celticism, Gothic legacy), saw art as the transformative power by means of which France was to overcome the demoralizing aftermath of the military defeat by Prussia in 1871, and assert itself again as the leading European nation and race.

³⁷ Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

³⁸ “The phenomenon of political modernity, namely, the rule by modern institutions of the state, bureaucracy, and capitalist enterprises is impossible to think of anywhere in the world without invoking certain categories and concepts, the genealogies of which go deep into the intellectual and even theological traditions of Europe.” Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, 4. To this should be added the concept of culture, because, as David Lloyd and Paul Thomas have argued, there is an “intrinsic relation of culture to the idea of the state,” which can be traced back to the eighteenth century, and whose end result has been the suppression of working-class interests and the consolidation of the bourgeois politics of representative democracy.[¶] The paradox of bourgeois politics, by which irreconcilable group interests are represented only to be “sublated in the formal universality” of the institutions of the state, is not compromised, but, just the opposite, resolved and displaced by culture, whose own abstract and reconciliatory ideals mirror the formal universality of the liberal state.[¶] David Lloyd and Paul Thomas, *Culture and the State* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 5-8.

synchronized process of autonomization, freedom of art is gained, but only to be enlisted in the service of the idea of Freedom itself, as its image, the effectiveness of this service best exemplified by the role of the abstract-expressionist, yet “American,” art in the “cultural Cold War.”³⁹ This is another reason why claims that designate art and culture as compensatory, which take the secondary place of a missing or impossible politics, such as those made by Matvejević – and Matvejević himself merely ventriloquizes a well-established trope – are always also self-exoticizing judgments shining back from the mirror of History. The unfree, yet heroic, art of “peripheral modernities” is valued primarily as a sign of struggle against the unfinished work of political modernity, a measure of a developmental lack of Freedom, or, in the case of “regions under Austro-Hungarian and Italian rule,” the lack of Nation, as a necessary step towards Freedom.

Yugoslav art of the early twentieth century and, in particular, the work of artist and architect Ivan Meštrović (1883-1962), achieved international fame precisely through its heroic aura of South Slavic resistance to foreign domination, a version of which, despite the Communists’ distancing from essentialist forms of Yugoslav nationalism, would also become the basis of the post-1948 Yugoslav state, as well as its art. In the post-socialist era, this coincidence between the Yugoslav political and aesthetic program was mostly ignored, and post-war Yugoslav art was to a large degree subsumed under the newly-consolidated paradigm of Eastern European art, whose “essence” was, similar to that of Latin American conceptual art, defined primarily in relation to its perceived opposition to the “regime,” and

³⁹ Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The Cia and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: New Press, 2000). See also Lloyd and Thomas for an argument about the origin of this bond in the eighteenth century.

therefore, in relation to political suffering of its protagonists in conditions of unfinished political modernity, or, in other words, the conditions of the yet unattained Freedom.⁴⁰ The success of this construction of art as an expression of political suffering, which arose both as a result of the work of local protagonists and the global art circuit, has greatly depended on “forgetting” about the political dimension of “Western” art, whose antagonisms are then primarily defined as intra-aesthetic, and ignoring the fact that “peripheral” artists were also concerned with the “free” realms of the aesthetic and the philosophical.⁴¹ If, then, peripheral culture can only enter the global arena under the sign of radical political struggle, even when, and nowadays, especially when, this struggle is against the global hegemony of the center, Bartulović’s approach can be said to avoid the self-exoticizing trap by identifying fully with a Hegelian vision of the spiritual advance of freedom and, in this way, not negating the Enlightenment promise, but rather putting it to task. The price of that, however, is the danger of tripping up on the nationalist, racist, and colonial underside of modernity’s

⁴⁰ See, for example, Luis Camnitzer, *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), Irwin, ed. *East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe* (London: Afterall, 2006).

⁴¹ For example, Luis Camnitzer first needs to construct “Western” conceptual art as a practice engaged with abstract propositions of analytical philosophy and the philosophy of language, which aesthetically defines itself against the medium-based modernism of Clement Greenberg, in order to then propose that, unlike the American *conceptual art*, Latin American art is, by contrast, *conceptualism*, as something that is, even on the nominal level, more than art, which even rejects art, by overwriting it with an “-ism,” and which is then defined as a decidedly political and politicized practice. See, in relation to this, also Camilla Maroja’s reading of Cildo Meireles refusal to describe one of his works as political and conceptual. Camilla Maroja, “Red Shift: Cildo Meireles and the Definition of the Political-Conceptual,” *ARTMargins* 5, no. 1 (2016). In fact “peripheral” artists were often even more eager to claim their place in the world republic of Art, and not simply within the confines of their nations. An example is quoted by Bojana Pejić in the introduction to the catalogue of the exhibition *After the Wall: Art and Culture in Postcommunist Europe* (1999-2000), of the artist Darius Narkevičius complaining about wanting to be “just an artist,” and no longer a “Lithuanian artist.” Cited in Amy Bryzgel, *Performance Art in Eastern Europe Since 1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 270. This statement, along with other examples that Bryzgel discusses in connection to it, should also be understood in the context of the *After the Wall* exhibition, and the moment when the “discovery” and globalization of Eastern European art was in full steam. By the same token, those artists who were not “Eastern European” enough, or who were Eastern European but were not as different and exotic as, for example, Chinese artists, also found themselves alienated by Western curators, as Bryzgel concludes: “Whereas prior to 1989, Eastern Europe was perceived as not European enough, ironically it is now seen as too European to be of interest to the West” (Bryzgel, 271).

universal promise,⁴² and becoming one of Kédourie's "alienated intellectuals," ultimately at the service of (yet another) high culture, and at the price of everything this culture needs to belittle in order to maintain its (peripheral) altitude. The problem is, as both postcolonial and decolonial thinkers have repeatedly found – most notably, Frantz Fanon in his reflection on "national culture" – if it is true that the conquest of what Anníbal Quijano identified as the inseparable bond between modernity and coloniality has truly been thoroughly global, then there is no possibility to simply step out of it, and land on some suppressed yet latent indigenous ground.⁴³ Instead, one must work, in one way or the other, both with and against the hegemonic forms, which, as Chakrabarty has said of political modernity, are "now everybody's heritage."⁴⁴ Among his predecessors and contemporaries who necessarily confronted this issue in their attempts to create a Yugoslav art, whether they embraced or rejected European culture, Krleža was most acutely aware of this predicament. Indeed, it was precisely under the conditions of a certain kind of siege, and torment, caused by this predicament, that he developed his "Fanonist" – as literary critic Stanko Lasić called it, and as I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 2 – vision of "our literature" and "our art."⁴⁵

⁴² Enrique Dussel, "Eurocentrism and Transmodernity (Introduction to the Frankfurt Lectures)," *Boundary 2* 20, no. 3 (1993).

⁴³ Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/rationality," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2-3 (2007). Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004).

⁴⁴ Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 16. In the case of Yugoslav culture, the boundaries between "ours" and "theirs" have never been as clear, since the regions that comprise Yugoslavia have historically been both part, outside, and on the margins of Europe, one cannot speak of an initiatory moment of colonial "contact." Walter D. Mignolo's idea of "border thinking" develops along similar lines, Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

⁴⁵ Stanko Lasić, *Sukob na književnoj ljevici 1928-1952* (Zagreb: Liber, 1970). Lasić compares Krleža's vision of national culture with that of Frantz Fanon.

A single harmony

Who were Krleža's predecessors and how does the trajectory of Yugoslavism appear in light of the above-cited scholarly debates on nationalism? The first thing to say is that the Yugoslav national movement(s) co-existed and developed throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century in parallel to national movements of individual South Slav nations, among which only three were defined as such in the nineteenth century: Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Of the three, Slovenes grounded their national revival mainly in language, while Serb and Croat nationalism also relied on the tradition of church autonomy (in the case of Serbia) and medieval statehood, institutional traces of which were kept when Croatia was incorporated into the Habsburg/Austro-Hungarian Empire.⁴⁶ The successful Serbian rebellion against the Ottoman rule in the period from 1804-1817 (and the ensuing formation of an autonomous province, and later, independent kingdom) was not only a major factor in the formation of the Serbian nation, but also an inspiration to other South Slav national movements, in particular, Yugoslavism, whose proponents saw in Serbia the beacon of the struggle for liberation of the remaining lands and peoples from the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian rule.

The pan-South-Slavist agitation in the nineteenth century was almost exclusively confined to Croatian and (to some extent) Slovene intellectuals and politicians, who used it as a way to magnify, so to speak, their quests for national sovereignty in Austro-Hungary. According to Mirjana Gross, Croat and Yugoslav nationalism were largely co-extensive within the "Illyrian movement" of the 1830s and 1840s, with which the national revival in

⁴⁶ Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia*.

Croatia began, although other scholars, such as Petar Korunić, argue that Illyrianism was never based on anything but the idea of a cultural, and not political, unity of South Slavs within, and not outside, the Austro-Hungarian Empire.⁴⁷ The banning of the name “Illyrian” in 1843 (until 1845), following the victory of the Illyrian Party at the 1842 Zagreb elections, shows that the movement was, at least to some extent, perceived as a political threat by the Austro-Hungarian government. Although the name was in use during the early modern period, when it was co-extensive with the denomination Slavic, it was formally revived at the time of Napoleon’s brief occupation of the region, which he entitled, mimicking his Roman predecessors, the Illyrian Provinces (1804-1811).⁴⁸ Following the ban, the possessive pronoun *naš* (our) was used as the attribute of South Slav unity (*our language, our people*), and, although the term Illyrian did not completely disappear from view in the nineteenth century, the South Slav nationalist agenda would continue to evolve under the name Yugoslav – “Yug,” a transliteration of *jug* (south) + Slav – and its variants, which include alternation

⁴⁷ Mirjana Gross, “Croatian National Integrationist Ideologies From the End of Illyrianism to the Creation of Yugoslavia,” *Austrian History Notebook* 15-16 (1979); Petar Korunić, “Jugoslavenska/južnoslavenska ideja. Sudbina jedne enciklopedijske studije iz 1988. godine,” *Scrinia Slavonica* 9 (2009). Whatever the case may be, during the nineteenth century the grounds for political unity of South Slavs were weak, in particular due to their separation within the three state formations that they inhabited (Kingdom of Serbia, the Ottoman Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, within which there were further divisions between territories under Austrian and those under Hungarian jurisdiction).

⁴⁸ On the multiple (self-)identification of artists (Illyrian/Slavic/Croat/Macedonian), who emigrated in the early modern period from Dalmatia into Venice where they were known as *Schiavoni* (Slavs), see Ivana Prijatelj Pavičić, “U traganju za povijesnim, kulturnim i umjetničkim identitetom umjetnika Schiavona: crtica iz povijesti njihove recepcije u 16. i 17. stoljeću,” *Ars Adriatica* 4 (2014). Ironically, some Yugoslav writers even claimed Napoleon as the forebear of Yugoslavism, as the occupation territorially united the South Slavs, and, according to Susana S. Macesich, transmitted the idea of the French Revolution. Susana S. Macesich, “The Illyrian Provinces: A Step Towards Yugoslavism,” *Southeastern Europe* 1 (1974). Among the writers Macesich cites for claiming Napoleon’s instance of naming as the basis for unification are: Jernej Kopitar in the nineteenth century, and Jovan Jovanović and Ferdo Šišić in the early twentieth century. This hypothesis reads as an unusual illustration of Kedourie’s thesis about the origin of nationalism in the French Revolution, and its subsequent spread around the world, only in this case by imperial hand alone, and without native mediation, i.e., with only secondary agency of the “alienated intellectuals.” At any rate, Napoleon’s “unification” perhaps gave the idea of Illyrian statehood some credibility.

between “south” and “southern” (*jugoslavenski, južnoslavenski*), as well as different variants of the word Slav and Slavic (*slovenski, slavenski, slovjenski*).

The deep-historical displacement that the name Illyrian was able to provide – by situating them as descendants of ancient Illyrians⁴⁹ – was also one way to contain precisely the South Slav “variants,” which Ljudevit Gaj, the leader of the Illyrian movement and the mastermind behind the Croatian language reform needed to work through in order to be able to distinguish between, for example, Croats who spoke the *kajkavian* dialect (and whom therefore some considered to be Slovenes) and those who spoke *štokavian* (whom some thus considered Serbs), Croats as those who lived in the Kingdom of Croatia (administratively tied to the Hungarian Crown in the Habsburg Monarchy), and which also included Serbs, that is Orthodox “Croats (Serbs in Croatia),” from those who lived in the Kingdom of Dalmatia (directly under the Austrian crown), or Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the Catholic religion became a distinguishing factor.⁵⁰ It also enabled him to confront the existing philological theories, such as those by Jan Kóllar, who inspired Gaj’s pan-(South)-Slavism but who classified all South Slavs as belonging to the tribe of Serbs, one of four larger Slavic tribes. In the process, Gaj changed the prefixes in his publications from “Croatian” to “Illyrian,” and switched from the *kajkavian* to *štokavian* dialect as the “grounding form” (*Grundform*) of Croatian language.⁵¹ Indeed, it was easier to list the proper names that denoted territories, rather than tribes, peoples, and nations, and invite the “discordant strings” to join into a “single harmony”: “The discordant strings of this lyre are

⁴⁹ This is how ancient Greeks called the tribes that populated western Balkans in antiquity.

⁵⁰ The classification “Croats (Serbs in Croatia)” is cited in Nikša Stančić, “Naš narod” Ljudevita Gaja iz 1835. godine,” *Radovi* 23 (1991), on which I base this discussion of the evolution of Gaj’s research.

⁵¹ Stančić, 60.

Carniola, Carinthia, Istria, Kranj, Styria, Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia, Dubrovnik, Bosnia, Montenegro, Herzegovina, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Lower Hungary [...] Let's stop each strumming on his own string, and tune the lyre to a single harmony."⁵²

Even if in his research of the development of Gaj's thought Nikola Stančić disputes the idea that the 1835 article "Naš narod" (Our people), evidences Gaj's – as well as that of his peers – "confusion" and lack of "clarity" as regards the ethnic relations among South Slavs and the scope of Croatian ethnic identity, the very reconstruction of the evolution of Gaj's thought that Stančić traces (some of whose features I singled out above), is nothing but a reconstruction of a taming of confusion by means of scholarly apparatuses and ideologies. In the process, "clarity" comes to prevail over "confusion," but some of those apparatuses, for example, the postulate of identity between language and nation, were not strong enough to confront the resistance of the studied material. It is symptomatic, therefore, that an article titled "Our People" should be the place of the taming of South Slavic confusion – a moment, even if temporary, of a titular renouncing of a name, of renouncing any name and even, a search for a name. This possessive pronoun has stuck throughout the twentieth century as precisely a sign of "confusion" and a resistance to tame it, and it persists even until this day, when people unwilling or uncomfortable to utter the official name of the language they speak – whether Serbian, Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, Serbo-Croat, Croato-Serb – choose to say "our language." Unlike the "Royal We," this "our" in "our people" is not situated above, but precisely below the legitimate and legible systems of signification. It is through this "our" – even when it is not stated as a sign of brave,

⁵² Ljudevit Gaj, "Proglaš za 1838. godinu," cited in Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation*, 27.

counter-hegemonic resistance, but as a sign of weakness, confusion, inability to understand the South Slav identity – that the residue of “a peoples,” the ungrammatical singular plural that could not be tamed under any proper name, is transcribed.

This residue, as a necessary yet unattainable element of nation building, was found in peoples’ language – and, it should be noted, the awkward English translation of *narodni* (peoples’), as the attribute of *narod* (people), is well-suited to point to the estrangement between “our people” and a People with a proper name that I am seeking to formulate. By contrast, for the Illyrian nationalists, their alienation from the peoples’ language became a measure of their status as alienated intellectuals studying and working in European metropolises. Poet Petar Preradović (1818-1872) reflected on this, following his decision to start writing “Illyrian” poetry in his native tongue, which he had almost forgotten:

“Everything that I write is as if seen through a dream, the dream of the first year of my life when I heard no other voices than my mother’s. I have been overgrown with too many foreign customs, feelings, and thoughts to become a true native writer.”⁵³ The shedding of the foreign skin was, as in many other national revivals, enabled by the writers’ summoning of the authentic native: the peasant, uncorrupted by alien civilization. The peasant offered not only authentic language, but also an authentic poetics, epitomized by South Slavic oral poetry, which had already achieved Europe-wide fame in the eighteenth century when the Italian writer Alberto Fortis discovered the “Morlachian ballad,” the oral poetry of the rural population of inland Dalmatia, whose life and customs he explored.⁵⁴ By taking on the folk

⁵³ Petar Preradović, cited in Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation*, 40.

⁵⁴ Larry Wolff, *Venice and the Slavs* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002). Fortis’s writings became popular all over Europe, instigating a trend of “Morlacchismo,” a fascination with the Venice Slavs that led even the great Johann Wolfgang von Goethe to translate into German one of the Morlach epic poems transcribed by Fortis.

tradition as the basis of their own literary work and of South Slav identity, the Illyrian writers entered the same contradiction that Aleksandar Ignjatović noted in his study on Yugoslavism in architecture in the first half of the twentieth century: the assertion of national difference, as a token of liberation from European cultural and political domination, assumes its foundation precisely in the element of local culture on which the European elite builds its orientalist fantasies of the exotic, uncivilized other.⁵⁵

Following European fashions – what Neil McWilliam describes as the “obsession with history” during the nineteenth century, which involved the study of folklore, vernacular languages, and national epics often elevated to the most elaborate forms of high culture⁵⁶ – the (local, but Italian speaking) upper classes in Dalmatia took this tradition as a source of intellectual curiosity, as well as ridicule, measuring their own urbanity and literacy by their distance from the hinterland Slavic folk songs, which they perceived as “entertainments for the drunken *bajduks* (brigands) and starving peasants.”⁵⁷ By the same token, the “peasant entertainment” was a source of shame for those who strove for upward mobility or wished to assert their class standing, as Dominique Kirchner Reill reports in the case of the Dalmatian bourgeoisie member, Niccolò Tommaseo, and his childhood wish to “deillyrianize himself,” namely remove his Illyrian identity.⁵⁸ By embracing oral poetry, the Illyrian poets re-exoticized it, but they also endowed it with dignity, revealing its aesthetic potentials from the perspective of both content and form. Its key formal features were,

⁵⁵ Aleksandar Ignjatović, *Jugoslovenstvo u arhitekturi: 1904-1941* (Belgrade: Građevinska knjiga, 2007).

⁵⁶ Neil McWilliam, “Culture and Nationalism,” in *Nations and Nationalism: A Global Historical Overview*, ed. Guntram H. Herb and David H. Kaplan (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 406.

⁵⁷ Reill, *Nationalists Who Feared the Nation*, 120.

⁵⁸ Reill, 120.

according to Andrew Wachtel, the ten-syllable verse, fixed noun-adjective combinations (“grey falcon”), the use of repetition (“Is it the empire of heaven? / Is it the empire of the earth?”), and antithetical constructions (*nije, već je* – it is not this, but that).⁵⁹ The last two are particularly interesting, as they can be seen as constitutive of what is considered to stand at the very opposite end of this folk tradition: Krleža’s writing, with his (in)famously protracted, enumerative style, and the place that negation holds in his entire thinking.

Perhaps more importantly, however, the repertoire of folk songs provided South Slav nationalism with what Ernest Renan identified as the core of the nation: a shared heritage made up of memories of collective glory and suffering. “To have done great things together” but even more crucially, “to have suffered together” because “mournings” create a greater common bond, “they impose duties, they demand common effort.”⁶⁰ The key source of collective suffering in South Slavic folk poetry were the Turks and the struggle against the Ottoman occupation, which were, at the same time, the greatest evidence of Slavic resilience, heroism and glory that could then be reactivated in the struggle against any form of oppression. Such metonymic value of anti-Ottoman resistance is evident in Petar Preradović’s 1847 drama about the ubiquitous South Slav folk hero, Kraljević Marko (Prince Marko), whose rebirth is anticipated, much in the manner of Christ’s Second Coming, so that he could liberate the South Slavs from their suffering.⁶¹ According to Wachtel, the fact that heroes such as Kraljević Marko were part of the folk imaginary in regions as diverse as Slovenia, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia, and Croatia, and that South Slav people were found to

⁵⁹ Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation*, 34-35. For a more extensive discussion of the canonization of the Yugoslav literature, based on the folk tradition, see pages 31-53 of Wachtel’s study.

⁶⁰ Renan, “What is a Nation?” 174.

⁶¹ Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation*, 42

be singing similar songs, “provided a powerful argument for the essential unity of the South Slavs.”⁶² The Yugoslav nation was thus conceived primarily “as a singer of songs, about Marko Kraljević in particular.”⁶³

This is an intriguing definition of the Yugoslav nation, but in order for it to really function, I propose to extend it beyond the historically and thematically limited repertoire of songs and artworks that Wachtel explores in his argument about the romantic-unitarist, nineteenth-century model of Yugoslav culture that took the Serbian national tradition as its source.⁶⁴ Rather than a singular, or, for that matter, originally Serbian phenomenon, the singing of similar songs could be pursued as a thread constitutive of a folk/pop/turbofolk tradition that persisted and transformed throughout the twentieth century until today, as popular music and the very trope of *song* and *singing*, have been a strong integrative force both within particular South Slav nationalisms and against them, as a connective tissue of Yugoslav unity. In the formulation offered by Yugoslav philosopher Vladimir Dvorniković in the interwar period, the trope of what I’m calling similar singing – not the similar song, as in Wachtel, but precisely similar *singing* – became the ground for the development of the idea of South Slavic unity that went beyond the Illyrian attempt to tune the lyre to “a single harmony.” Instead of audible and pleasing harmony, it sought after its “muted tone.”

The muted tone

One oft-cited colloquial “evidence” of the totalitarian nature of the socialist Yugoslav regime is its ban on a number of songs considered to spawn chauvinistic-

⁶² Wachtel, 33.

⁶³ Wachtel, 42

⁶⁴ Wachtel, 38-53.

nationalist sentiments, which included songs associated with the heritage of the pro-fascist Croatian Ustasha regime during WW2. I can only substantiate this with more colloquial evidence, my childhood memory of the story I was told about my uncle, who spent a night in prison because he sang a certain song during a wedding – a practice that seems to have been popular as a way of provoking, perhaps even teasing, the organs of law and order. Today, when I ask some of my older relatives or acquaintances to explain to me why they feel that Yugoslavia was so bad, one of the first thing they would say is that “you could not sing certain songs,” which logically points to two possible conclusions: either the Yugoslav regime was not that bad, if the banning of “certain songs” was among the worst forms of oppression, or alternatively, the singing of certain songs, or simply singing as such, was so central to the life of its people that infringing upon it was perceived as a very threat to national survival.

Indeed, celebrating the newly achieved Croatian independence in the early 1990s, the first president of Croatia, Franjo Tuđman, spoke of the imminent future in which Croats would be “our own people on our own land” (*svoji na svome*), free to sing “our own songs, and not their songs,” *their* referring to Croat songs devised by the communists.⁶⁵ As Miroslav Sikavica has shown in his recent film, *Louder than Guns* (2017), popular music had an astoundingly prominent role in Croatian independence and war mobilization of the 1990s.⁶⁶ Marko Perković Thompson, the controversial Croatian warrior turned singer-songwriter, whose entire oeuvre revolves around Croat national suffering, resistance and glory (including

⁶⁵ Franjo Tuđman, speech shown in Miroslav Sikavica’s documentary *Louder than Guns* (Factum, 2017).

⁶⁶ See note above, as well as Catherine Baker, *Sounds of the Borderland: Popular Music, War and Nationalism in Croatia Since 1991* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

references to the Ustasha regime), is nothing if not a contemporary reincarnation of his name-sake, the all-Yugoslav Kraljević Marko and oral folk poetry, a link only augmented by the fact that he was born and raised in the Dalmatian hinterlands. Ironically, both his guttural singing style and his signature medley of folk and rock, as well as the lyrics that combine lamentation with militancy, evoke also the pro-Yugoslav, Bosnian-Herzegovinian band Bijelo dugme (White Button), and especially their 1986 hymn to Yugoslavia, “Pljuni i zapjevaj, moja Jugoslavijo” (Spit out and Sing, My Yugoslavia). Among their other Yugoslavist projects, this song was made during the crisis years of the mid-1980s as a battle cry of sorts, encouraging Yugoslavia, summoned by contradictory terms as “my mother and my step-mother,” “my sorrow and my comfort,” as well as “my poor queen,” to stand up and fight (or rather, to “spit and sing”) for “better days,” while predicting, in a now eerie and threatening evocation of the ensuing wars, the sound of “storm” that awaits all who are unwilling to “hear the song.”

The combination of epic agitation and melancholic reflection in the Bijelo dugme song, as well as in Marko Perković Thompson’s music, indeed fits the dual character of traditional folk poetry, which their nineteenth-century collector Vuk Karadžić categorized in gendered terms, setting off the masculinist, epic-heroic, from the lyrical, or “feminine,” tradition. The latter included songs in which women mourn their husbands and sons lost in battle, a classical division of the gendered labor of nation-building, which would once again become prominent during the wars of the 1990s.⁶⁷ An analogous duality reappears in the

⁶⁷ The extreme “realization” of this principle is the Srebrenica genocide of Muslim/Bosniak men and boys, and the “Srebrenica Mothers,” whose trauma and loss have been coopted by Bosniak nationalism as the symbol of national suffering.

series of texts by philosopher and ethno-psychologist Vladimir Dvorniković, written in the period from 1917 to 1939, in which he argued that despite prevailing definitions that placed the “Dinaroid” race in relation to the heroic resilience of Kraljević Marko, the determining feature of “Yugoslav psyche” was the “Yugoslav melancholy,” most clearly expressed in art and music, and, especially, in the “folk-melos.”⁶⁸ But as the music itself revealed – another Yugoslav oxymoron! – this was a “cholerically tinted melancholy,” a fatal mixture resulting in a “tendency towards extremity in all forms of habitual reactions, including sudden emotional transitions from depression into excitation (melos!), to the short and poorly nuanced distance between the two moral extremes: a ruthless egocentrism and a ‘touchy’ sentimentality.”⁶⁹

In Dvorniković, the etiology of this temperamental duality is no longer anchored in sexual difference, nor in geography and climate, but rather in the “dark sediments” of historical experience, which constitute the unconscious of the Yugoslav soul, an atavism “physiologically” inherited through generations: “There is in [this song] something shady, dubious, something whose origin is unknown to us; we do not know where [this something] is screeching from, but we can feel how it follows this song from tone to tone, from beat to

⁶⁸ Vladimir Dvorniković, *Psiba jugoslavenske melankolije* (Zagreb: Knjižara Z. i V. Vasića, 1925). His ideas were first articulated in a brief article he wrote in 1917, during WW1, and which were first formulated into the above cited book, and followed in 1939 by a voluminous study on the “characterology of Yugoslavs.” Vladimir Dvorniković, *Karakterologija Jugoslovena* (Belgrade: Prosveta, 2000). Dvorniković’s writing must be seen within the context of the wider European trends to define physiognomic “types” and “races,” and, in particular, the popular idea of “Yugoslav civilization,” or rather, the “Dinaroid race,” as it was expounded by ethnologist and geographer Jovan Cvijić, and in which resilience was posited among the predominated psychological characteristics that united South Slavs. This, and also the notion of Slavic spirituality and Christian Orthodox mysticism informed a decidedly anti-European sentiment of a number of Yugoslav artists and intellectuals in the interwar period, whose views were partly informed by Oswald Spengler’s proposition of the decline of the West. For an informative presentation of the scope and implications of such discussions see Branka Prpa, “Između Istoka i Zapada — Kulturni identitet i kulturno-civilizacijska uporišta,” *Tokovi istorije: časopis Instituta za noviju istoriju Srbije* 3–4 (1997). Cvijić’s theories were also published in French in 1918, Jovan Cvijić, *Péninsule balkanique, géographie humaine* (Paris: A. Colin, 1918).

⁶⁹ Vladimir Dvorniković, cited in Aleksandar Ćirić, “Karakterologija Jugoslovena, treći put.” *Vreme*, 2000.

beat.”⁷⁰ The murky element is there not only in *sevdab* (the song of yearning), or in *dert* (songs of mourning), but even in joy and celebration, because this unconscious force is in disharmony with the “conscious horizon of the psyche, a stubborn and persistent sorrow that bursts out even in circle dancing (*kolo*) and joy, in fact, it is in the service of joy!”⁷¹

Clearly, Dvorniković is describing the structure of trauma, and the folk song as its recurring sign. Although he refers to Sigmund Freud’s notions of repressed impulses and the unconscious in his 1939 book, he never uses the actual terminology of trauma. It is interesting, however, that, just like Freud’s 1920 reflections on the “traumatic neuroses” of soldiers and the idea of the death drive, incited by horrors of WW1,⁷² the first version of Dvorniković’s study, the 1917 essay in which he related Yugoslav melancholy to the “dark sediments” of centuries of difficult history, appeared precisely in response to the war, and in the midst of it. “In the blackest year of the Great War, in 1917, in the Bihać exile, as I watched those *kerajišnici* of ours [inhabitants of the Ottoman-Austrian frontier], once fierce people and now without a voice, dying of hunger and misery, I wrote, overtaken by some kind of spasm for liberation, the first sketch for [this book].”⁷³ Like Freud’s death drive, the folk-melos is for Dvorniković not simply an expression of the inaccessible, dark sediments of the past, but an indispensable way to deal with them: the song is inevitable, decisive, “it relieves an inner pressure, an unsatisfied remainder, which seeks articulation.”⁷⁴ Which is

⁷⁰ Dvorniković, *Karakterologija Jugoslovena*, 409. This does not mean that Dvorniković does not take geography as an important factor, but that the Yugoslav melancholy can be found despite geographical difference. In fact, Dvorniković embraces Hegel’s developmental differentiation between nations of space and nations of time, of which only the latter have overcome the overdetermination of their destiny by nature, and entered history in the proper sense. The Yugoslavs are judged to be in the transitional phase.

⁷¹ Dvorniković, 387.

⁷² Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989).

⁷³ Dvorniković, *Psuha jugoslavenske melankolije*, 1.

⁷⁴ Dvorniković, *Karakterologija Jugoslovena*, 387.

why the response to the song is so passionate and potentially tragic: “It has happened more than once that, in an extreme mood, a Yugoslav wants to kill if someone deprives him of his song, or if someone insults it.”⁷⁵ In other words, those of Bijelo dugme, “the one who does not hear the song will hear the storm.”

The perpetual link between war and song in Yugoslavia can now be said to have received, in Dvorniković’s analysis, a scholarly explanation, much along the lines of what, independently of each other, photographer Ron Haviv, curator Harald Szeemann, actor/director Angelina Jolie would, following the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia, repackage as the sublime marriage of “blood & honey” in the Balkans.⁷⁶ I would not, however, be too quick to dismiss Dvorniković’s study as merely essentializing and exoticizing, although it provides material for both these reifying operations, and although Dvorniković was written off in socialist Yugoslavia among the other “integral Yugoslavs,” who attempted to impose the idea of a unitarist Yugoslav nation.⁷⁷ In fact, his essentially

⁷⁵ Dvorniković, 387.

⁷⁶ I have in mind here Harald Szeemann’s famous exhibition *Blood and Honey - Future’s in the Balkans* (Vienna, 2003), and Angelina Jolie’s film *In the Land of Blood and Honey* (2011), which thematized the war in Bosnia. Already in 2000, photojournalist Ron Haviv published a photo-book, *Blood and Honey: a Balkan War Journal*, with his coverage of the Yugoslav wars, Ron Haviv, *Blood and Honey: A Balkan War Journal* (New York: TV Books, 2000). It is not known to me whether a connection exists between all these instances of titling, or whether they all independently came upon the translation of the Balkans as constituting of the two Turkish words, *bal* (honey) and *kan* (blood).

⁷⁷ Those artists, writers and intellectuals who strove, before WW1, for Yugoslav unification, led by the idea that South Slavs nations form a single, albeit historically divided nation, and who continued to support such views in the interwar state, which in 1929 also attempted to build Yugoslavism from the top – what Christian Axbode Nielsen calls “state Yugoslavism” – were generally referred to as the “integral generation.” Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs: Identity in King Aleksandar’s Yugoslavia*, 5. However, there are great nuances, and even, contrasts between the various ideas of Yugoslav “integration” in the period, and virtually no-one really thought that Yugoslavs already existed as a nation, but rather as something to strive for, which is true even for those who believed that its proto-model existed in the ancient past. This variety is also reflected in some level of confusion in the terminology used. Aleksandar Ignjatović uses the term “primordial Yugoslavism” to denote the conviction that Yugoslavs were truly in the past a single ethnic group, Ignjatović, *Jugoslovenstvo u arhitekturi: 1904-1941.*, while Wolf Dietrich Behschnitt differentiates between “unitarists,” who believe that South Slavs form an ethnic whole, but do not necessarily pursue their present homogenization, in contrast to “integralists,” who do insist on a single nation, even if it may not yet exist. Apart from these, Behschnitt also cites federal Yugoslavism (which acknowledges political and cultural particularity), and pseudo-Yugoslavism (Yugoslavist politics as a pretense for particularist – Croat, Serb, or Slovene – agendas. I take Behschnitt’s classification of four types of Yugoslavism, to which he also adds three

dialectical and materialist – without defining itself as such – reflections are analytically perhaps more subtle than contemporary ethnological studies of the revival of epic heroism – including the instrument *gusle* and the figure of *hajduk* (brigand) – during the wars of the 1990s, which, despite their undisputable value as both scholarly contributions and critical interventions into the destructive nationalisms of the 1990s, ultimately reproduce a moralizing dichotomy, which situates the rural, irrational impulses sparked by the folkloric tradition, against the urban, civilized, rational order of democratic politics.⁷⁸

In one such study by Ivo Žanić, for example, an incarnation of the Yugoslav killer-singer appears in the words of a Serbian soldier describing the situation on the front-line in Bosnia-Herzegovina: “When we don’t shoot, we play *gusle*. One row of burst fire, one row of *gusle*.”⁷⁹ Žanić rightly passes judgment not on the epic tradition itself but on its appropriation and nationalization in contemporary politics and war. However, his understanding of the folk imaginary as “ahistorical,” as a “traditional conceptual machinery” whose contemporary activation precluded the potential resolution of the Yugoslav conflict by contemporary political theory and “rational, legal and political categories,” reveals his analysis as ahistorical, not only because it denies the continued, contemporaneous existence (and not simply revival) of forms of the Yugoslav folkloric tradition, but also because it projects a “traditional” model of history according to which humanity overcomes the

dichotomies that define Serbian/Croatian national ideologies, from Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs: Identity in King Aleksandar's Yugoslavia*, 17.

⁷⁸ Ivo Žanić, *Prevarena povijest: guslarska estrada, kult hajduka i rat u Hrvatskoj i Bosni i Hercegovini 1990-1995. godine* (Zagreb: Durieux, 1998). Translated into English as Ivo Žanić, *Flag on the Mountain: A Political Anthropology of War in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina 1990-1995* (London: Saqi, 2007). See also Ivan Čolović, *Bordel ratnika: folklor, politika i rat* (Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek, 1994). *Gusle* is a single-string, folkloric instrument that traditionally accompanies South Slav epic poetry, and *hajduks*, or brigands, are legendary Robin-Hood-like figures, who resist the Ottoman or Habsburg authorities.

⁷⁹ Žanić.

irrational, epic-folkloric impulses, and embraces the supposedly pacifying “conceptual machinery” of democratic political theory.

Despite the fact that Dvorniković’s study is similarly framed – albeit fifty years earlier, when the progress-based notion of history was not yet thoroughly deconstructed – by his underlying belief in the progress of humankind from irrational impulses towards rationality (a path on which the Yugoslav is stuck in a phase of transition), he would no doubt acknowledge the persistent, and indeed, *historical*, weight of the “irrational” element. His account of the “inconsolable [Yugoslav] melodies” that had been sung by “innumerable generations,” and which the “contemporary Yugoslav must repeat unconsciously, manneristically,”⁸⁰ predates and anticipates theories of collective and transgenerational trauma, and his speculation on the “physiological” model of generational transmission of the “dark sediments” of history finds confirmation in the ongoing research on “epigenetic inheritance” of post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as other forms of stress-related psychiatric disorders.⁸¹ Moreover, while revealing the violent undercurrent of the Yugoslav song, which would seem to conform to stereotypes of eternal interethnic conflicts and the “blood and honey” in the Balkans, he simultaneously insists that this song is precisely what connects the South Slavs, and what serves as evidence of their common, predominantly troubled and “defensive,” history on the crossroads between East and West, North and South. (After all, both Thompson in the Croatian army, and the anonymous Serbian soldier

⁸⁰ Dvorniković, *Karakterologija Jugoslovena*, 405.

⁸¹ Rachel Yehuda et al., “Holocaust Exposure Induced Intergenerational Effects on FKBP5 Methylation,” *Biological Psychiatry* 80, no. 5 (2016).; Seyyed Taha Yahyavi, Mehran Zarghami, and Urvashi Marwah, “A Review on the Evidence of Transgenerational Transmission of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Vulnerability,” *Revista Brasileira de Psiquiatria* 36, no. 1 (2014).; T Klengel, BG Dias, and KJ Ressler, “Models of Intergenerational and Transgenerational Transmission of Risk for Psychopathology in Mice,” *Neuropsychopharmacology* 41, no. 1 (2016).

on the opposite side of the frontline, depend on the double armament of the machine gun and the song). However, unlike nineteenth-century Yugoslavs, for whom the “singing of similar songs” was anchored primarily in the anti-Ottoman, heroic *thematics*, Dvorniković finds the common thread in the musical *form*, as well as singing technique, which the Western European researchers had reportedly described as absurd self-torture, or, in scientific jargon, an “utterly non-economical use of breath.”⁸² Here, his analysis once more aligns with a central trope of trauma studies, that of unrepresentability, which he identifies in another formal feature of folk-melos, namely, the “mute, deadened continuations of the final tone,” which persist even after the final tone’s physical vibration had ended, a persistence that confused musicologists, as they did not know what to do with, and how to represent in notation, this “sound without tone.”⁸³

In defining the Yugoslav similar singing by the formal trope of this muted tone, and not by heroic anti-Ottoman resistance, Dvorniković avoided not only the simplistic nationalist trope of Yugoslav bravery, but a major blind spot of Yugoslav nineteenth-century nationalism, namely, the question of the Yugoslav Muslim population and their songs, a question posed explicitly by poet August Cesarec in his 1918 critique of Yugoslav nationalism.⁸⁴ In fact, Bosnian *sevdah* music plays a prominent role in Dvorniković’s theory, but he insists that the specificity of Yugoslav music, including *sevdah*, cannot be fully

⁸² Dvorniković, *Karakterologija Jugoslovena*, 379.

⁸³ Dvorniković, 380.

⁸⁴ August Cesarec, “Mistifikacija jedne etike” in August Cesarec, *Rasprave, članci, polemike: Nacionalni, socijalni i kulturni problemi Jugoslavije* (Zagreb: Zora, 1971), 40. Since the Yugoslav Muslim identity is at least in part tied to Islam and other traditions linked to the Ottoman history of the region, and since South Slav Muslims are often viewed by other South Slav groups as co-extensive with the Ottoman aggressors, the songs like those that celebrate Marko Kraljević by definition exclude or alienate the Muslim population.

explained by Oriental influences, because one finds its key elements in areas that were never under the Ottoman occupation. The boundaries of the Ottoman occupation have always played a role in claiming and negotiating the intra-Yugoslav borderlines between culture and savagery, civilization and primitivism, with Croat and Slovene lands generally self-identifying with the supposedly civilized culture of the West, i.e., of their Western rulers. This issue came to prominence at the beginning of the war in Croatia, when the bombing of the city of Dubrovnik by the Yugoslav Peoples' Army was branded by Croatian media and politicians as the conflict between Serbo-Montenegrin barbarity and Croatian (European) culture. By the same logic – a logic now thoroughly overwriting both the Illyrian “single harmony” and Dvorniković’s “muted tone” – an ideological ban was imposed on the so-called turbo-folk music, a commercial derivative of Yugoslav folk-melos that was widely popular during socialist Yugoslavia, and which now came to be fully identified with the undesirable “Serbo-Chetnik” culture.⁸⁵

Despite the propaganda, however, masses of post-Yugoslav, post-war millennials – among whom are generations that did not even grow up in Yugoslavia – still fill city clubs and concert halls to listen to both classical Yugoslav pop-folk (such as Halid Bešlić) and turbo-folk, proving that, even without the alleged brainwashing by the state-sanctioned ideology of Yugoslav multiculturalism, and even after another series of “fratricidal” wars, there may be something to the thesis of similar singing.⁸⁶ Similar singing persisted also in one

⁸⁵ Catherine Baker et al., eds. *The Concept of Turbofolk in Croatia: Inclusion/exclusion in the Construction of National Musical Identity* (London: SSEES Publications, 2007). For a comprehensive study of the phenomenon of turbo-folk, see Uroš Čvoro, *Turbo-Folk Music and Cultural Representations of National Identity in Former Yugoslavia* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

⁸⁶ For the connective role of turbo-folk as an “ex-Yugoslav” evening entertainment among Yugoslav labor migrants (*Gastarbeiter*) during the 1990s in Berlin, that is, during the time when they witnessed, from their displaced position as

of the last – both desperate and wildly humorous – defenses of Yugoslavism, created in the mid-1980s by a Sarajevo-based, “neoprimitivist” group of music performers, whose TV show *Top lista nadrealista* (The top list of the surrealists), as Pavle Levi argued, countered the discursive ethno-nationalist consolidation of the 1980s by “a deeper subversion of the elementary discursive coherence.”⁸⁷ Levi brilliantly describes their “intentionally muddled [and grotesquely exaggerated] perspective on national identity” – evident, for example, in the staging of the alleged ancient initiation ritual of *omlečivanje*, or “sucking of the wooden pole,” supposedly found across Muslim, Orthodox, and Catholic communities – as “Yugoslavism without limit,” in which Yugoslavs emerges as “surreal figures.”⁸⁸ [Figure 3] This surrealism stems from the “surplus of identity” enacted by the show’s characters, so that, in a circular logic, Yugoslavs first turns out to be surreal figures, but then again, these surreal figures “cannot be thought of as anything other than Yugoslavs [insofar as] the ‘authentic’ Yugoslav being is to be found only in excess of any and every form of codified national identity asserted at any given point in time.”⁸⁹

The persistence of the muted tone of the Yugoslav folk song, namely that “excess” of the Yugoslav that overflows any codified national identity – and which also accounts for

migrant workers, Yugoslavia’s disintegration, see Matthias Thaden and Alexander Praetz, “Turbofolk Reconsidered. Some Thoughts on Migration and the Appropriation of Music in Early 1990s Berlin,” *Südosteuropäische Hefte* 3, no. 1 (2014).

⁸⁷ Levi, *Disintegration in Frames*, 70.

⁸⁸ Levi, 77-78.

⁸⁹ Levi, 75. The Slovenian “retro-avantgarde” band Laibach, part of the Neue Slowenische Kunst movement that was formed in the 1980s, which is seen to stand on the opposite (avant-garde) side of the folk-melos, as well as of the mass cultural phenomena such as *The Top List of Surrealists*, would itself have to be seen as necessarily marked by the “primitivist” Yugoslav tradition of the “muted tone,” even if in Laibach this muted tone completely metastasizes into pitch darkness, a symptom of the disintegration of “similar singing” in the 1980s. In particular, a “Slovene-ness without borders” could be sought in their play with the Slovene folk nationalist symbols and nationalist rhetoric, despite the fact that the “genre” of this performance is more along the lines of what could be called “totalitarian horror” than the *Surrealists*’ ultimately tragic satire, and despite the fact that Laibach attempts to create an ambivalent, at the same time ironic and dead-serious, distance towards these folkloric traits.

the absurd similarity between the Croatian and Yugoslav patriotic pop-folk-rock icons, between Croatian and Serbian singer-soldiers, which are all just different instances of “sucking of the wooden pole” – is in perfect correlation with the confusion of identity that has accompanied South Slav national revivals since the nineteenth century, the same confusion that led Ljudevit Gaj to halt the “naming machine” at least momentarily and title his text “Our People.” Susana Milevska’s concept of the “renaming machine,” on which I am leaning here identifies precisely the scope of the constant namings and renamings, emblemized by Macedonia’s still ongoing struggle for its “proper” name,⁹⁰ a struggle to liberate itself from the title of “Former Yugoslav Republic,” which marks it as a dead echo of the mute Yugoslav tone, and to progress from this residue of “a peoples” into a proper European nation.

The question of language – which, unlike the mute tone of similar singing, offers a level of legibility, but only in order to cause further confusion – is a particularly acute one. Most Serbian researchers identified the *Štokavian* dialect, which the Illyrians took as the basis for their Croatian language reforms, as nothing but evidence that those who spoke it, both within and outside the territory of Serbia (in Bosnia, Montenegro, and Croatia), were, in fact, Serbs. This “evidence” would become a recurring theme of Serbian expansionist politics. An analogous idea, about Croat orthodox identity and that of Muslim populations inhabiting the territories of the medieval Croatian kingdom, was advanced by Croat scholars and politicians, and based on the notion of a Croat political nation and the territorial (not

⁹⁰ Suzana Milevska, ed. *The Renaming Machine: The Book* (Ljubljana: P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Institute, 2010). Macedonia’s status was one of the starting points for Milevska’s research and exhibition project.

cultural) legacy of Croat medieval statehood. Macedonians were claimed by Serbian, Bulgarian, as well as Greek nationalists, with their identity conflicts ongoing, as the Greeks have opposed the non-Greek claim to the Macedonian name. Muslims were claimed equally by Serbs, Croats, and Yugoslavs, and considered to have been Slavs who abandoned, or betrayed, their Christian faith, while a part of the Muslim intelligentsia argued about the existence of a separate, Bosniak nation, rooted not in Islam but in a medieval Christian heresy (the Bogomils) and the medieval Bosnian kingdom, which they claimed as their national tradition, and according to which Serbs and Croats could also be viewed as orthodox and catholic Bosniaks or Bosnians.⁹¹ In the nineteenth century, Montenegrins “conceded” to being Serbs, despite the existence of a separate Kingdom of Montenegro, and today they form a separate nation-state, and, as of recently, a separate language. Four languages (Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, Serbian) have now officially developed out of what in socialist Yugoslavia was called the “Serbo-Croatian / Croato-Serbian,” itself a result of language reforms over the course of the nineteenth century. All four contemporary languages are mutually intelligible, or rather, perfectly *similar* – of course, partly due to numerous reforms of language standardization – and the morbid absurdity of their present separation is best emblemized by the legally obligatory tag on Bosnian-Herzegovinian cigarette packages, which must warn that “Smoking kills” (*Pušenje ubija / Pušenje ubija / Пушење убива* in three different languages, each repeating an identical sentence. The Cyrillic script serves as the only marker that identifies the “Serbian” warning (and points also to their

⁹¹ Since the 1990s, the option of the Bosniak, rather than Muslim, nation has become the basis of the official national identity of contemporary Bosniaks of Bosnia-Herzegovina, although the religious identification still plays a prominent role, as it does in all post-Yugoslav nationalisms.

separate and ever-more separating national “entity” within Bosnia-Herzegovina), while Croats and Bosniaks are left to wonder which promise of imminent death to heed (which says more than little about the promises of their leading political representatives). [Figure 30]

Rather than evidence of the existence of a single Yugoslav nation, or, for that matter, language, the historical linguistic fluidity delineated reveals the radical instability of the boundaries that define individual South Slav nations, whose political legitimacy is unquestioned today, while Yugoslavism is denounced as a failed and artificial construct. Furthermore, the trope of similar singing shows that the “people,” or the “folk,” that rural and primitive element that is supposed to warrant ethnic and national authenticity, is precisely the element that resists South Slav separation, even if does so unwillingly, compulsively, and unconsciously, as Dvorniković would have it. Instead of successful nation building – whether Yugoslav, Croat, Serbian, or any other – the muted tone carries the testimony of “our people,” or rather, the illegible, ungrammatical “a peoples,” which the philologist’s and musicologist’s pen can only overwrite, but never properly transcribe.

Permeated by the peoples’ spirit

It is in this light that I wish to consider – and, most of all, reconsider – the work of sculptor and architect Ivan Meštrović, who is usually himself overwritten as simply the official artist of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, itself overwritten by the infamous attempt by King Alexander to implement “state Yugoslavism” during the 1930s.⁹² This attempt came as a response to the decade of the 1920s, which was wrought by the constant conflicts of all the

⁹² For a study on this period – but one which argues precisely to see it as a separate period in the history of first Yugoslavia state, and one which, in addition to WW2 and Nazi occupation, also let the Kingdom of Yugoslavia to its final days – see Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs: Identity in King Aleksandar’s Yugoslavia*.

South Slavs “national questions,” as well as the assassination of the parliamentary representative of the Croatian Peasant Party, Stjepan Radić. However, King Alexander’s program of homogenizing the nation, and extinguishing all forms of opposition, was not only forced and forceful, but also created enormous backlash, to the extent that the Yugoslav communists found themselves on the same side with the nationalists, including those of the Croatian Ustasha movement, which was later to lead the Nazi puppet-state.⁹³ Although Meštrović indeed was something like the official artist of the royal Yugoslavia, and although the fact that he was disillusioned by the actual reality of long-desired Yugoslav unification does not excuse his continued support of this “disillusionment,” I wish to examine both the biographical and aesthetic aspects of his work as the first truly monumental attempt at transcribing the South Slav “muted tone,” and thus the first monumental attempt to materialize a Yugoslav aesthetics.

This monumentality is also something that he was criticized for, and that still prevents his work from being seen as truly “modern,” but the very fact that in the early 1910s this hyperbolized muted tone managed to capture the imagination and the liberatory drive of many of his peers, as well as the international and local audiences – even those who very soon, like Krleža, rejected him – speaks to the fact that there is something “more” to his work than blown-up pathos and monumentality. Nonetheless, his vision was indeed monumental:

A vision floated in front of my eyes to create a synthesis of popular folk ideals and their development; to express in stone and architecture how deeply seated within each one of us lies embedded a memory of the greatest moments and the most

⁹³ Milorad Djilas speaks about this in his memoirs, and his reminiscences of sharing the prison cells with members of the Ustasha movement. Milovan Djilas, *Memoir of a Revolutionary*, trans. Drenka Willen (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973).

fateful events of our history, while creating at the same time an anchorage for future hopes, situated in the midst of nature and under clear skies.⁹⁴

Meštrović speaks here of his idea for his never-realized *Vidovdan Temple* – also known as the *Kosovo Temple*, and sculptures belonging to it are variously referred to as part of the *Vidovdan/Kosovo Cycle*, or *Vidovdan/Kosovo Fragments* – which he developed in the period between 1906 and 1914, and which, like the German *Walballa* (1830-1842), was to be a memorial to national history, populated by sculptures that embody national heroes and legends. The skies under which Meštrović imagined his Yugoslav temple, however, were very precisely located above the Kosovo field where the Serbian medieval army succumbed to the Ottomans in 1389, on June 28, St. Vitus Day (*Vidovdan*). Although for Meštrović – like for most Yugoslav nationalists in this period – the Kosovo battle was a metonymy for the historical struggles of all South Slavs, it nonetheless strongly associated “our history” with that tragic, yet mythic event of Serbian national history. Aside from the anonymous figures of South Slav slaves and widows, and Kraljević Marko, himself a metonymy for South Slav unity, Meštrović’s most prominent figures were associated with the Serbian Kosovo myth, including Miloš Obilić, the Mother of Yugoviches, and the Kosovo Girl.⁹⁵

Meštrović’s “Serbophilia” was part of the general political and cultural climate at the time when, as Ivo Banac explains, even those Croatian parties previously hostile to the idea of collaborating with Serbs and the Serbian kingdom, now changed course, and when also a

⁹⁴ Norka Machiedo Mladinić, “Političko opredjeljenje i umjetnički rad mladog Meštrovića,” *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 41, no. 1 (2009), 145.

⁹⁵ The temple, writes Aleksandar Ignjatović, was “imagined as an architectural-sculptural whole equipped with more than eighty plaster and marble pieces of gargantuan scale associated with a popular folk myth depicting the Battle of Kosovo of 1389 and its aftermath.” In addition, the Kraljević Marko cycle was later added, and “these two series of sculptures were regularly exhibited side by side under the common name the ‘Vidovdan Temple,’” Aleksandar Ignjatović, “Images of the Nation Foreseen: Ivan Meštrović’s Vidovdan Temple and Primordial Yugoslavism,” *Slavic Review* 73, no. 04 (2014), 828.

number of artists and intellectuals began to see Serbia as the superior South Slav nation, not only because it was the only sovereign South Slav nation, but also because it had presumably not been corrupted by centuries of Western influence, and had thus kept the traces of the primeval Slavic nature.⁹⁶ For Meštrović, however, this new moment smoothly merged with a “Serbophilia” that stemmed from his rural background in the Dalmatian hinterlands, where Serbs and Croats, as it is narrated, lived next to each other, and where the folk songs, as well as memories of battles against Turks were part of everyday life.⁹⁷ With no possibility to attend school, he had learned the Latin alphabet from *Razgovori ugodni naroda slovinskoga* (Pleasant conversations of the Slavic people), a collection of folk tales and chronicles, compiled by Andrija Kačić-Miošić in 1756, and the Cyrillic from Vuk Karadžić’s collection of oral poetry.⁹⁸ Meštrović was, as Norka Machiedo Mladinić writes, “permeated by the peoples’ spirit.”⁹⁹ His transformation from an “authentic” representative of the people to an alienated intellectual, and finally an internationally renowned artist, is itself a picture of

⁹⁶ Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics*, 95-193. The conditions of this shift were defined by the mounting crisis of the dual, Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the influence of the Czech politics of Tomáš Masaryk, as well as the rising prominence of Serbia on the political scene, which resulted in a greater number of Croat politicians and intellectuals no longer looking for solutions exclusively within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but looking towards broader Slavic alliances. The climate of “Serbophilia,” including the revival of the Kosovo myth, was fostered also by the seizure of the Serbian throne in 1903 by the house of Karađorđević, which overthrew the Austrophile Obrenović dynasty. Croatian, Dalmatian and Bosnian-Herzegovinian artists, students and intellectuals visited Belgrade and participated in celebrations and events (among which was the first Yugoslav Exhibition) that marked the crowning of King Peter I Karađorđević, which took place on St. Vitus Day, June 28, in 1904, the date coinciding with that of the 1389 Kosovo battle and the year with a hundredth anniversary of the Serbian insurrection against the Ottoman rule in 1804. Also, it should be noted that the idea of the spiritual value of the “primeval” Slavic nature is a staple in Eastern Slavic nationalism as well, and is related to orthodox mysticism. Anti-European attitudes of a number of Serbian intellectuals in the interwar period are also marked by the trope of the civilizational decay of the West, and the spiritual superiority of the East. See Prpa, “Između Istoka i Zapada — Kulturni identitet i kulturno-civilizacijska uporišta.”

⁹⁷ Machiedo Mladinić, “Političko opredjeljenje i umjetnički rad mladog Meštrovića,” 144.

⁹⁸ Dalibor Prančević, “Suprotstavljanja i imperativi Ivana Meštrovića. Fragmentaran pogled na kiparstvo prve polovice dvadesetog stoljeća u Hrvatskoj,” in Ljiljana Kolešnik and Petar Prelog, eds. *Moderna umjetnost u Hrvatskoj 1898.-1975.* (Zagreb: Institut za povijest umjetnosti, 2012), 135-36.. Kačić-Miošić was a Croatian author who, almost a century before the Illyrians, pioneered the practice of collecting folk tales and used them to as a pedagogical tool for raising national awareness among the masses, which meant, again, mainly the history of struggles against the Turks.

⁹⁹ Machiedo Mladinić, “Političko opredjeljenje i umjetnički rad mladog Meštrovića,” 144.

imperialist history in the region. “The first one to exploit the mineral riches” of the Dinaric region, an Austrian entrepreneur looked for a local cause to which he would donate some funds, and it was suggested that he instead pay the stipend for the schooling in Vienna of the self-taught but talented Meštrović.¹⁰⁰ Thanks to this patronage (which could be said to have augured those of the post-socialist period, when the “philanthropist” George Soros and Austrian banks became key sponsors and promoters of contemporary art in the post-Yugoslav, and Eastern European region), Meštrović went to Vienna in 1901, successfully enrolled in 1903 at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, and soon became the international brand name of Yugoslav art.

His sense of alienation, however, began already on the way to Vienna, when, as Maria Meštrović biographical account describes, an attendant in Rijeka’s post office responded to him first in German and then Hungarian, pretending not to understand or speak Croatian, a proof of cultural assimilation of the Croatian urban center, “sharpened his nationalist sentiments.”¹⁰¹ By contrast, Belgrade appeared to him, as he recalled in his 1969 memoirs, as authentic and uncorrupted as the rural region from which he came:

All of it felt so dear and close to me [...] the poor, small, and scattered old town [...] and the primitive people, just like me, their heartfelt hospitality, their peasant speech, which both the educated and the non-educated spoke; all of this made me feel as if I were in my own enlarged village, a capital of a greater province of peasants, who are just like my folks in the place where I was born, but who are, on top of that, brave and courageous just like mine were in the old days [...] who want to govern and live as they wish, without corrupting their old ways, without imitating others. I felt that this was my country, my people and the language, which the anti-national destiny severed; that this division was merely external, that on the inside there were no boundaries, and that all artificial borders would be torn from the

¹⁰⁰ Meštrović was at the time working as a stonecutting apprentice in Split, where his parents had sent him, noting his extraordinary carving talent.

¹⁰¹ Maria Meštrović, *Ivan Meštrović: The Making of a Master* (London: Stacey International, 2008), 27.

inside. This is the feeling I had every time I went to Belgrade, until the Unification.¹⁰²

At the same time, Meštrović thrived in the Viennese art scene, replacing his red peasant beret, “which served as a form of identity document during his first year,” with a new wide-brimmed hat “that was then the hallmark of the artist,” as soon as he had managed to get admitted as a regular student to the Vienna Art Academy.¹⁰³ In Vienna, he refined his sculptural talent, learning from both classical sculpture and his European contemporaries, most of all Auguste Rodin, and the Vienna Secessionists. After finishing his studies, he moved to Paris, from where his “return” home was enacted in the form of return to the subject of South Slav vernacular culture, when, incited by the Austrian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908, he finally gathered courage to begin working on his vision of the *Vidovdan Temple*.¹⁰⁴ He premiered this, as Dalibor Prančević calls it, “anti-Austrian concept” precisely in Vienna, at the 35th exhibition of the Vienna Secession 1910, where he exhibited his sculptural “fragments” and a large wooden model of the future temple, although, as Aleksandar Ignjatović notes, the sculptures were not explicitly titled in order to avoid overt political connotations.¹⁰⁵ [Figure 31] Soon after, the exhibition of the Meštrović-led Medulić Group was staged in November and December of 1910 in Zagreb, titled *In Spite*

¹⁰² Ivan Meštrović, cited in Machiedo Mladinić, “Političko opredjeljenje i umjetnički rad mladog Meštrovića,” 146.

¹⁰³ Maria Meštrović, *Ivan Meštrović*, 26, 31.

¹⁰⁴ He started working on sketches in 1906 but, according to his own testimony, did not have the courage to embark on their realization until the event that radicalized the anti-imperial and nationalist sentiments in the region (and culminated in the assassination of the archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914): “It was only on the occasion of the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908 — when it seemed that our national catastrophe is complete and that the destiny of our race was forever sealed, at the peak of our national distress and in the midst of the fever that shook us all — that I dared to begin working on a few fragments.” Ivan Meštrović, cited in Machiedo Mladinić, “Političko opredjeljenje i umjetnički rad mladog Meštrovića,” 145.

¹⁰⁵ Prančević, 134. Ignjatović, “Images of the Nation Foreseen,” 836 ft. 29.

of *Unheroic Times*, and dedicated to Kraljević Marko and folk poetry.¹⁰⁶ [Figures 32] Even greater “spite” was manifested when, on the occasion of the 1911 International Exhibition of Art in Rome, Meštrović refused to exhibit in the Austro-Hungarian pavilion unless a special Croatian pavilion was built, and, when this was denied, invited instead the Serbian government to build a Serbian pavilion in which he and other (predominantly Croat) artists could show their work.¹⁰⁷

The international fame that followed Meštrović’s Rome presentation, where the Serbian pavilion won the first award, received divided reactions in Zagreb. Some celebrated Meštrović as the prophet of Yugoslavism and the exhibition as “our first and greatest victory in the world artistic arena,”¹⁰⁸ others denounced the fact that all participating artists, including Meštrović, were defined in the catalogue as “Serbian” artists and that the Croat name was nowhere mentioned, while the third lauded precisely Meštrović’s transvestitism, as it were – a hyperbolized identification with the Serbs – as a sign of achieved proximity between Serbs and Croats: “Meštrović, born Croatian Dalmatian, has embedded himself so deeply into the spirit of the national Kosovo epic, deeper than even the most eastern Serb ever could; he is therefore a greater Serb than most Serbs.”¹⁰⁹ However, on the occasion of his solo exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, in 1915, he refused to be subsumed under the Serbian name, despite threats that representatives of the Serbian

¹⁰⁶ On Group Medulić, see the excellent recent study by Sandi Bulimbašić, Sandi Bulimbašić, *Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika “Medulić” (1908.-1919.): umjetnost i politika* (Zagreb: Društvo povjesničara umjetnosti Hrvatske, 2016).

¹⁰⁷ The full list of exhibitions of the *Vidovdan* sculptures and the wooden model included “Vienna and Zagreb (in 1910), Rome (1911), Belgrade (1912), Venice (1914), Great Britain (in five exhibitions, from 1915 to 1918), and Paris (1919),” Ignjatović, “Images of the Nation Foreseen,” 831.

¹⁰⁸ Dimitrije Mitrinović, cited in Machiedo Mladinić, “Političko opredjeljenje i umjetnički rad mladog Meštrovića,” 157.

¹⁰⁹ Mirko Deanović, cited in Machiedo Mladinić, 161.

government, which helped organize and fund the exhibition, would otherwise not attend the opening. Designed by the artist himself, the exhibition poster included one of Meštrović's epic figures, *Srđa Zlopogleda* (*Serge, the Frowning Hero*), itself a symbol of rage and defiance, to which the inscription defiantly added: "Exhibition of Ivan Meštrović, a Southern Slav Sculptor." [Figures 33, 34, 35] When asked why he decided not to change this identification into "Serbian," he was reported to have said: "You know very well that I am not bothered, and was not correcting when it was written 'Serbian,' but when [the ambassador] is against Southern Slav, then I could only write the truth, and that would be: Croatian. Using the term Yugoslav I wanted to say both one and the other, meaning that we are together."¹¹⁰

The conceptual and historical instability of the referential fields behind the existing national signifiers, as well as the fundamentally agonistic nature of the supra-national denomination "Yugoslav," or "South Slav," is sublated in Meštrović's monumental sculpture, whose sinewy, resolute volumes were seen as a literal materialization of the idea of a Yugoslav nation and the first tangible evidence of South Slav unity. As much as for his artistic talent, Meštrović was recognized on the international art scene as one who heralded not only a new nation, but also a new national style, whose tinge of coarseness was perceived as exotic and threatening. Director of Tate Gallery, Charles Aitken, wrote: "It was at once obvious to those who visited the Rome exhibition that a new planet had swum into the

¹¹⁰ Meštrović, cited in Flora Turner-Vučetić and Eric Turner, "Meštrović and the Victoria and Albert Museum," *Sculpture Journal* 25, no. 2 (2016), 173. The quotation is slightly modified for readability. The contentions and negotiations over the national denomination point to, on the one hand, the political urgency of the exhibition, staged in the midst of WW1 as a token of support to Serbia by its British ally, as well as the ongoing calculations of the post-war future, in which Meštrović held a stake as a founding member of the London-based Yugoslav Committee, an activist organization that propagated the idea of an independent, South Slav federation, while the Serbian government envisioned an expanded Serbian state. They also reflect the agonistic character of the denomination "Yugoslav," which would be reactivated throughout the twentieth century, especially in debates that pitted the unitary notion of "Yugoslav art (or literature)" against the pluralist concept of the "arts (or literatures) of Yugoslav, or South Slav peoples."

artistic heavens, and those who regarded Serbia as a rather doubtful Ruritania, unfortunate in its royalties and plethora of hogs, realized from Meštrović's sculptures that they were face to face with a heroic, virile race."¹¹¹ This perception must be seen in relation to concurrent investments to seek links between national character and artistic expression, in which art was construed, as McWilliam writes in relation to the turn-of-the-century discourse of *renaissance française*, as that which possesses the power to "revitalize the popular will through a sort of perceptual cleansing," and the artist as "a hero and a leader of men."¹¹²

Meštrović's sculpture *Miloš Obilić* (1908) best exemplifies the virile energy that both local and foreign critics singled out as the key feature of his *Vidovdan Cycle*. [Figure 36] Composed of taut, bulging muscles, the hero's figure is further animated by a spiraling movement of the body itself. At the same time, as Vera Horvat Pintarić notes, this is an "energetic, yet futile stride"; the figure's advancing, resolute movement is arrested, as the legs stride forward but cannot fully separate from the block of marble that keeps them together.¹¹³ In addition, the figure is finished below the knees, so that its feet are cut off just as its twisting arms are severed right below its shoulders, and the bowed head shades the face.¹¹⁴ Horvat Pintarić locates the modernity of Meštrović's heroic body precisely in this energetic futility of *Miloš Obilić*. However, while one can indeed see here formal traits shared many European painters and sculptors at the same – decomposition of volume, bodily fragmentation and elongation, stylized and geometricized forms, etc. – it is perhaps more interesting that the art historical "diagnosis" of the "energetic, yet futile stride" comes from

¹¹¹ Charles Aitken, cited in Turner-Vučetić and Turner, "Meštrović and the Victoria and Albert Museum," 166.

¹¹² McWilliam, "Towards a New French Renaissance," 726, 728.

¹¹³ Vera Horvat Pintarić, *Tradicija i moderna* (Zagreb: Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 2009), 174.

¹¹⁴ Horvat Pintarić, *Tradicija i moderna*, 174.

the same author who, in another book, defined “monochromy,” and with it related “melancholy,” as a persisting characteristic of Croatian painting.¹¹⁵ Does not Meštrović’s “energetic, yet futile stride” align precisely with the decisive futility of pictorial space that is implicit in her reading of Ljubo Babić’s painting *Black Flag* (1916)? [Figure 37] In fact, precisely an energetic futility, since the swirling composition of the painting almost exactly matches the twist and direction of *Miloš Obilić’s* stride?

The flag falls out of nowhere, Horvat Pintarić writes, “as if it is released in the middle of space from the sky itself, from nowhere [...] One does not know where the street ends and where the sky begins.”¹¹⁶ The futility of the conspicuously torn flag, augmented by its blackness, as much as by its unknowable origin, is matched by the futility, albeit only implicit in Horvat Pintarić’s account, of the very painterly gesture – of the artist, a very skilled artist such as Ljubo Babić, giving up on his capacity to depict space, the kind of space in which objects assume meaningful positions and relations. Whereas the defiance of illusionist space is again what makes Babić modern – and this Horvat Pintarić explicitly concludes – what about the other, specifically “Croatian” implications of this decision towards spatial futility, as well as monochromy, which she locates in a number of other artists, across generations? In other words, how are monochromy and with it associated melancholy to be “explained,” both historically and theoretically, aside from being simply

¹¹⁵ Horvat Pintarić, *Tradicija i moderna*. The ideas that Horvat Pintarić develops in this book, as she notes, continue on her earlier texts and exhibitions from the 1970s and 1980s, that is, during her activity as one of the central art historians in Yugoslavia, among which she lists the 1977 exhibition she organized for *Trigon*, Graz, where she singled out the tradition of whiteness in Croatian contemporary painting of the 1970s, and texts on artists of the interwar, as well as post-WW2 period (Miroslav Kraljević and Gabrijel Stupica). Almost all examples are Croatian, except the Slovenian painter Gabrijel Stupica, whose “whitesses” she perhaps nationalizes by noting that he studied under (Croatian painter and art historian) Ljubo Babić.

¹¹⁶ Horvat Pintarić, *Tradicija i moderna*.

registered as a notable phenomenon of national art? It is not that Horvat Pintarić is the kind of art historian who does not take into account social history, just the opposite; although not as ground-breaking as in her pioneering of art in public space in Yugoslavia, or her equally landmark writings on the medium of television and its political potential, in this mature study on “tradition and modernity,” the reader learns that there is war, that, moreover, the Emperor (Franz Joseph I) had died, hence (although still out of nowhere) the black flag on the streets of Zagreb, that the future is unknown. And yet, while this might serve as a “synchronic” link between monochromy, futility and melancholy, what about the diachronic meaning of this link; why does it persist in Croatian painting? [Figure 38]¹¹⁷

Put differently still, what indeed is the place of “tradition” in “modernity”? What is the answer to Krleža’s bewilderment, which she cites, about the fact that Babić never adopted the avant-garde trends, represented by Kandinsky and Matisse, which he knew very well (including a personal friendship with Kandinsky), and committed instead to more traditional variants of modern painting? The answer, although again not explicit, is partly given by Horvat Pintarić’s discussion of Babić’s research of color in Croatian folk costumes, which he deemed to be unique given the fact that, even when the costume designs combine colors, the combinations are always established in relation to white and black.¹¹⁸ Here, then, the monochromy – and the implicit melancholy – of Croatian painting is related to the monochromy of Croatian folk art, and by extension, the Croatian people. Indeed, Babić’s

¹¹⁷ The figure shows Babić’s painting next to Josip Vaništa (1924-2018), who was its owner, and who was (financially) pressured to sell it in his old age. Vaništa was also Babić’s student, and another painter of “monochromy,” as well as a member of artist group Gorgona (1959-1965). Ivan Posavec’s 2001 photograph depicts Vaništa walking back and forth, trying to decide whether or not to sell the painting.

¹¹⁸ Horvat Pintarić, *Tradicija i moderna*.

research drawings themselves lack a vivaciousness that one would expect from an affirmative demonstration of local culture and customs; as if emulating the contradictory movement of the bowed head that shadows Miloš Obilić's face and the energetic force of his stride, Babić portrays his peasants's determined stance, at the same time as he lowers their heads and immerses their faces (especially women's faces) in a shadow that exceeds documentary function.¹¹⁹ [Figure 39] Could not, then, Meštrović's "energetic, yet futile stride," and Babić's equally energetic, spatial futility and monochromy, both of which find their grounding in the "peoples' spirit," be a sign not only of their modernity, or a sign of ways in which modernity feeds on tradition, but also a sign of that muted tone identified by Dvorniković in the South Slav similar singing? The muted tone that – just like the duality between modernity and tradition, like the enthusiastic stride towards Europe and the disappointed return home of the "alienated intellectual" – pointed to the "choleric-melancholic" merging of energy and "spasm," to use the word that helped Dvorniković articulate the origin of his text?

Dvorniković's analysis of the ambivalence, in Yugoslav folk songs, between pain and joy, between violence and traumatic suffering, mirrors the ambivalent international response to Meštrović's work. Critics recognized in it a characteristic "seal of grief," but also the contradictory, Dvorniković would say choleric, trait, which is what made his London detractors describe his famous 1915 presentation at the Victoria & Albert Museum as an

¹¹⁹ It should be noted that Babić's book, containing his research of folk costumes, was published in 1943, in the Independent State of Croatia, which was a Nazi puppet state, whose flag he designed in 1941. This is another evidence of the impossibility to view the history of Yugoslavia and Yugoslavism by endowing particular positions and figures with any notions of ideological purity. Babić crossed the path from designing Krleža's explicitly communist magazine, *Plamen* (1918) to the Croatian fascist flag. Whereas Krleža also did not join the anti-fascist, communist-led resistance in Yugoslavia, he also did not accept invitations by Croatian officials to participate in public life.

“exhibition of brutal force, barbarous and repugnant.”¹²⁰ To this, Meštrović’s supporters retorted by pointing to the function of art as a sincere expression of “national emotions,” which the British audience should embrace, with a (humorously-British) caveat: “True, five centuries of Turkish tyranny do not produce drawing room emotions.”¹²¹ Even when Meštrović abandoned the *Vidovdan Cycle* during the 1920s, and began working on religious themes, among generally enthusiastic reactions to his North-American tour were those that recognized in his representation of the Passion “a perverted, almost sensuous, enjoyment of the agony.”¹²² What is this formulation if not a paraphrase of Dvorniković’s (at the time yet unwritten) claim that the “stubborn and persistent sorrow” of the South Slav folk song emerges even in circle dancing, since it is, in fact, “in the service of joy!”¹²³ Despite the fact that Dvorniković’s and Horvat Pintarić’s accounts arose in two very different historical moments, and despite the fact that Horvat Pintarić is miles away from the idea of national typology and “characterology,” what they have in common is the attempt, or perhaps it is better to say a need, to seek in formal elements signs of some kind of nationally defined continuity, which, in both cases, revolves around the notion of “melancholy.” The difference is that in (interwar psycho-ethnologist) Dvorniković this need is explicit, while in (post-war art historian) Horvat Pintarić it persists precisely as a non-transcribed, muted tone.

Quite contrary to Dvorniković, who wishes to delineate the specific boundaries of Yugoslav character, Horvat Pintarić’s assertion of Meštrović’s and Babić’s modernity, in a

¹²⁰ Turner-Vučetić and Turner, “Meštrović and the Victoria and Albert Museum,” 174-75.

¹²¹ Turner-Vučetić and Turner, “Meštrović and the Victoria and Albert Museum,” 175.

¹²² Johanna Cilia, “Meštrović’s North American Debut: The Travelling Exhibitions of 1924–26,” *Sculpture Journal* 25, no. 2 (2016), 195.

¹²³ Dvorniković, *Karakterologija Jugoslavena*, 387.

book in which she also writes about artists such as Paul Cézanne, Kazimir Malevich, and Piet Mondrian, is aimed at placing them inside the trajectory of European modern art, whereby tradition (Croatian or otherwise) is simply an ingredient, so to speak, of a more universal story of modernity. Melancholy, too, is in that scheme, a universal feature of modernity. And yet, the diachronic Croatian monochromy that is simultaneously laid out in the text remains unexplained by universalization; it remains on the level of art historical observation, some kind of a trace, which elicits further curiosity and elaboration. Meštrović's contemporaries also recognized his modernity, but some among them, contrary to Horvat Pintarić, saw it negatively, as something that signals a contradiction with, or even betrayal of, his stated aim to create a decidedly "Yugoslav" art, and to be, as he himself wanted, the "Southern Slav Sculptor." Krleža's sobering from the nationalist pathos of Yugoslavism, which he shared with many others in the years leading up to WW1 – he even escaped from his Budapest military school to aid the Serbian army in the first Balkan War (1912) – was catalyzed precisely by a recognition of this contradiction. Although, as Tonko Maroević writes, the moment of "split" goes back to the 1914 Venice Biennial, when Krleža had the first opportunity to see live the *Vidovdan Temple*, and to see it in the context of works made by his European peers, in particular, the German sculptor Franz Metzner, he would make his criticism explicit only beginning with 1919.¹²⁴ "Meštrović comes from Vienna, that same Vienna against which Meštrović's sculpture is used in the political battle as a symbol of national liberation," he wrote in 1928, in the most direct attack on the decidedly greatest visual artist in Yugoslavia, who, at the time, was busy with a number of commissions by the

¹²⁴ Tonko Maroević, "Krlježa prema Meštroviću," *Život umjetnosti* 33/34 (1982).

Yugoslav royal government.¹²⁵ Krleža's "last judgment" on Meštrović was presented in 1956 in the *Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia*, where – despite the fact that Krleža offered a more sympathetic view in the "*marginalia*," that is, a set of notes that accompanied his encyclopedic work¹²⁶ – Meštrović's art is defined as "a most direct progeny of Secessionist aesthetic theories of Vienna and Munich," while his attempt to turn Secessionist eclecticism into a "so-called autochthonous, racial, *Vidovdan*-esque, archaic, 'Yugoslav artistic style'" is deemed as just another variant of "similar neo-nationalist attempts in a number of European artistic scenes, from Denmark to Spain."¹²⁷

A contemporary reading by Aleksandar Ignjatović also situates Meštrović's *Vidovdan Temple* as "the conspicuous phenomenon of a rather complex, multifaceted, and distinctive modernism of the 1910s in Austro-Hungary," which must be seen with regard to the obsession in Central European art and scholarship with the archaic, oriental, and the primitive, as opposed to the classical.¹²⁸ The modernist archaism, argues Ignjatović – arguing also against Wachtel's claim that the *Vidovdan Cycle* is an example of "synthetic Yugoslav culture," which brought together Croat and Serbian, Latin and Byzantine elements – enabled Meštrović to bring forth his idea of "primordial Yugoslavism," and allude to the lost traces

¹²⁵ Miroslav Krleža, cited in Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation*, 112. Meštrović's monument to the victory in the Balkan Wars and WW1, *Victory*, was erected in Belgrade 1928, and in mid-1930s he will begin work on the *Monument to the Unknown Hero* on Mount Avala, near Belgrade.

¹²⁶ Miroslav Krleža, *Marginalije: 1000 izabranih komentara o tekstovima za enciklopedije JLZ* (Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2011). For an insightful overview of Krleža's ambivalent relationship towards Meštrović, see Maroević, "Krleža prema Meštroviću."

¹²⁷ Miroslav Krleža, "Ivan Meštrović," 210. More concretely, Krleža states that Meštrović's work develops "in the shadow" of "[Frantz] Metzner's athletic, pan-German sculpture, [Angeles] Anglada's Spanish dramatics, and Finish epics (Kalevala)." Meštrović was the only Croatian artist, who was the permanent member of the Vienna Secession, and his 1910 monumental presentation at the 35th Exhibition of the Vienna Secession testifies to his indisputable place within the movement. For a broader insight into the relationship between the cultural links between Vienna and Zagreb, and in particular, as regards the Secession, see Irena Kraševac and Petra Vugrinec, eds. *Izazov moderne: Zagreb-Beč oko 1900. Slikarstvo, kiparstvo i arhitektura zagrebačke i bečke secesije (exhibition catalogue)* (Zagreb: Galerija Klovičevi dvori, 2017).

¹²⁸ Ignjatović, "Images of the Nation Foreseen," 836.

of ancient Slavs, the fragments that the *Temple* would once again make whole.¹²⁹ Both of those readings that place Meštrović as a product of Central European modernism and Vienna Secessionism, however – and especially the one by Krleža, since Ignjatović’s aim is primarily to reconstruct the “primordial Yugoslavism” that Meštrović’s contemporaries saw in his work – are examples of a “paranoid reading,” as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick would say.¹³⁰ Despite their shrewd analytical insights, or rather precisely because of them, because of the “detective” approach that seeks to uncover the ultimate nationalist lie, they overwrite any attempt to see Meštrović’s art as an “authentic” expression of, if nothing else, his own experience, which did bring him to Vienna, but it brought him there from somewhere, not from nowhere, to recall Babić’s black flag falling from the sky. American newspaper titles indeed exhibited the very same modern obsession with primitivism, when they announced that a “Dalmatian shepherd [was] exhibit[ing] at Harvard,” a “child of stony mountain district,” whose first carvings were executed “with rude curved peasant knife.”¹³¹ However, this is not simply propaganda whose ultimate aim needs to be unveiled; it is a propaganda that tells the truth of the geopolitics of modern art, of, indeed, the paradox and predicament of a Dalmatian shepherd exhibiting at Harvard! Unlike the Viennese scholars exhibiting an obsession with the primitive, Meštrović was not simply a modern, Europeanized artist seeking inspiration in the primitive, the rural and the archaic; he very literally *embodied* the primitive (“primitive people, just like me”); he truly was “a child of stony mountains,”

¹²⁹ Ignjatović, “Images of the Nation Foreseen: Ivan Meštrović’s Vidovdan Temple and Primordial Yugoslavism,” 836–41.

¹³⁰ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You’re So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay is About You,” in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

¹³¹ Newspaper headline at *The Crimson*, Boston, 1926. Other quotes are by art critic Christian Brinton in the exhibition catalogue of the Brooklyn Museum, 1924, both cited in Čilia, “Meštrović’s North American Debut,” 195.

imagining his ideal city as a “larger province of peasants.” These (self-)identifications do not authorize his authenticity any more than Krleža allows, but they speak not only to his experience, but to the underlying contradiction of Yugoslav culture – and most peripheral cultures – in which a predominantly peasant and largely illiterate nation sought its authentic representation in modern art.

According to Ljubodrag Dimić, and despite great differences along the country’s East-West axis, the key challenge of the cultural politics of the newly established Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in 1918 was to overcome the “endless ocean of backwardness” represented by the Yugoslav “autarkic village,” in a country where the rural population accounted for 78,87%, with industry taking up less than 10% of the economy, and where 51.5% of the people were illiterate.¹³² Meštrović, the “Dalmatian shepherd” turned Viennese Secessionist turned “Southern Slav Sculptor” turned Famous International Artist – in fact, ironically, he ended his career as an “American sculptor”¹³³ – literally embodies the path that Yugoslav culture, as well as Yugoslav politics and economy, were supposed to take in order to modernize, from the “rude curved peasant knife” to the Fine Arts Academy. Moreover, the Yugoslav “autarkic village” that Dimić identifies as key stumbling stone to the cultural politics of state building is not to be imagined as a pastoral

¹³² Ljubodrag Dimić, *Kulturna politika u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji, 1918-1941* (1996), 14,35,44. The statistics are taken from the 1921 census. It should be noted that the national average occludes the differences in both education and economic standard between the north-western and south-eastern part of the country, which can best be illustrated by the illiteracy rates, which in Slovenia were only 8.85% in 1921, in contrast to Macedonia, where they amounted to 83.86%.

¹³³ See the entry on Ivan Meštrović in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, available at <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ivan-Mestrovic>. Meštrović emigrated to the United States following WW2, and did not accept invitations to return to Yugoslavia.

painting, but was “agriculturally overcrowded,” and characterized by a “permanent fear of hunger”; the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was, in fact, “a country marked by hunger.”¹³⁴

What kind of art is to represent such a nation, and what is its function? Meštrović answered this question by seeking to transcribe the hungry, illiterate voices of the “autarkic village,” whom he depicted as strong, but denuded and oppressed bodies of the legendary folk heroes, anonymous widows and slaves, whose sculptural form was, however, informed by contemporary European artistic styles. [Figure 40] But what would have been the autochthonous form? While it cannot be said that Meštrović had no local visual arts tradition to follow, this tradition, beginning with Dalmatian early medieval sculpture and architecture, was interpreted either as a “delayed” imitation of European or Byzantine styles, as part of Italian or Nordic culture, or, at best, as a “creative assimilation” of foreign cultural elements, the well-known formula that Krleža recalled to have used in 1917 to counter denigratory attitudes of a Zagreb intellectual towards local culture.¹³⁵ In 1963, art historian Ljubo Karaman would theorize this free assimilation of various artistic influences in Croatian medieval and early modern art as an authentic mark of what he called “peripheral art,” whose originality, stemming from its lack of fidelity to a single aesthetic source, he contrasted to the more derivative art of “provincial” and “border” regions, where art production was more directly tied to a single, dominant cultural center.¹³⁶ Rather than

¹³⁴ Dimić, *Kulturna politika u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji, 1918-1941*, 27, 38.

¹³⁵ Miroslav Krleža, “O hrvatskoj inteligenciji,” in Miroslav Krleža, *Deset krvavih godina i drugi politički eseji* (Sarajevo: Oslobođenje, 1973), 71-72. In the beginning of the twentieth century, Italian art historians, for example Adolf Venturi, interpreted Dalmatian art as part of Italian art history, while Joseph Strzygowski advocated the thesis on Nordic, or “barbarious” origin of early Romanesque architecture in Dalmatia, Ana Šeparović, “Teorijski okvir hrvatske likovne ‘periferičnosti?’” *Studia lexicographica* 9, no. 2(17) (2015), 96.

¹³⁶ Ljubo Karaman, *Problemi periferijske umjetnosti* (Zagreb: Društvo povjesničara umjetnosti Hrvatske, 2001).

merely a reflection of Meštrović's Secessionist affinities, the proverbial eclecticism in the *Vidovdan Cycle* — his citation of formal tropes ranging from classical Greek, Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Renaissance, and modern European sculpture and architecture — could be read as the paradigmatic case of Karaman's "peripheral art." Instead of claiming, or resuscitating, a supposedly indigenous, local tradition, Meštrović constructs it out of the surviving elements of various traditions of the past, in the same way that he, a "Southern Slav Sculptor," imagines the Yugoslav nation as a future-bound construct, which both includes and leaves behind the historically more established identities of Serbs, Slovenes, Croats.

Could not Meštrović's "energetic, yet futile stride" also be related to the torment inherent in the very process of modern nation making, a process to a great deal analogous with the making of modern art? While Meštrović, as was shown, thought that "it was all the same" whether he be called Croat, Serb, or otherwise, as long as he felt that he represented the "peasant speech" uncompromised by imperialist domination, it was not so much his art, but the exhibition, that medium par excellence of modern European nation building, which pushed him — as a subject decidedly marked by "backwardness," inherent both in his personal origin as well as that of the country he is supposed to represent — to fixate this identity under one or the other proper name.¹³⁷ The national pavilions, the exhibition

¹³⁷ The exhibition brings together the key elements of European modernity: capitalism (the role of the world exhibitions in promoting international trade), nation-building (national representation in world exhibitions, since the first International Exposition in London in 1851, and, in the context of art, since the launching of the Venice Biennial in 1895), modern art (the salon exhibition as a token of art's autonomy from the patronage of church and nobility), and political modernity (the role of the "exhibitionary complex," as Tony Bennett termed it, in the disciplining of modern citizens). Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex," *new formations* 4 (1988). Even a century later, the Venice Biennial still functions as a platform for national liberation, by its embrace of national pavilions of officially unrecognized nations, for example the Roma, Palestinian, or the Kosovo Pavilion, the latter of which preceded, and urged for, Kosovo independence (a radically different Kosovo than that of Meštrović, however).

posters, exhibition catalogues, newspaper headings, art criticism – all these were discursive apparatuses of exhibitionary nation-building, to which, as was shown above, he repeatedly offered resistance. He refused the proper-exhibition-name Austro-Hungarian for its suppression of the Croatian name, he embraced the Serbian name as a symbol of the first refusal, he refused the Serbian name for its suppression of the South Slavic name, and in the name of a new art and nation – the nation defined oxymoronically as a “three-named people” (*troimeni narod*), in the making of which he participated as member of the émigré “Yugoslav committee” during WW1. Finally, once “Unification” was truly achieved, once the national unity (*narodno jedinstvo*) of the three-named people was proclaimed, he – implicitly, by the fact of his disillusionment – abandoned the *Vidovdan Temple*, and turned to depictions of Christ’s Passion, replacing the three-named People with the three-named God. Instead of South Slav suffering, he depicted a Passion said to represent universal suffering and salvation, but perhaps also a Passion that was the only one to lead him back to the remaining sculptural and discursive repertoire from his peasant childhood, once the South Slavic heroic folk poetry was overwritten by the disappointing Unification.

Ironically, of course, it precisely through a series of his exhibitions that his “Southern Slav sculpture” became the very embodiment of that Unification, and no wonder that the local admirers ventriloquized the military jargon by talking about “our first and greatest victory in the world artistic arena,”¹³⁸ an arena that, unlike the never-built *Vidovdan Temple*, provided the *Vidovdan* fragments with a national pavilion as an illusion of wholeness. In yet another of his bitter critiques, Krleža also used the “nominal” logic to illustrate this path

¹³⁸ Dimitrije Mitrinović cited in Machiedo Mladinić, “Političko opredjeljenje i umjetnički rad mladog Meštrovića,” 157.

from the seemingly innocuous and anonymous (that is, universal) modern art to the modern, oppressive national state, which imposed on all a single proper name. Referring to the fact that Meštrović retroactively “baptized” one of his allegorical sculptures, and changed its title from *Remembrance* (1908) to *Vukosava of Miloš Obilić*, the hero’s legendary wife, Krleža exclaims: “So, that’s how it was! From the torso of a nameless female figure Vukosava was made, from Vukosava the cycle of widows, from the cycle of widows the Vidovdan Temple, from Vidovdan Temple, in accordance with the principles of Vidovdan Mystery – the Vidovdan Constitution. Trivial cause, enormous consequences.”¹³⁹ [Figure 41]

By placing the Viennese Secessionist artist (who made the nameless, that is, allegorical sculpture) turned Southern Slav Sculptor (who renamed the sculpture to Vukosava) at the chronological and ideological root of the 1921 Yugoslav Constitution, the document that crushed the hopes of those who advocated for a federalist structure of the newly-founded Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, Krleža marked Meštrović as the very symbol of the failed project of integral Yugoslavism, which would come to be identified as merely a disguise for Serbian domination. At the same time, for Krleža, who himself was invested, variously or at the same time, in both the Croatian and Yugoslav national question, Meštrović may have been a symptom of yet another specifically Croatian illusion, since, according to the historiographical trope of a specific national distribution of emotional and political investments in Yugoslavism, Croats are perceived as self-sacrificing, ideal-driven

¹³⁹ Maroević, “Krlęza prema Meštroviću,” 132.

and, thus, genuine Yugoslav nationalists, while Serbs presumably wore Yugoslavism only as a disguise that enabled them to pursue their genuine, Great-Serbian interests.¹⁴⁰

Such retroactive leveling of “cause and consequence,” which would become typical in socialist Yugoslavia, where unitarism and integral Yugoslavism were among key scare-words, cancels out the very process of search, marked by “confusion,” “lack of clarity,” and, most of all, *contention*, which Yugoslavism generated, since the Illyrian movement, as its lasting legacy. Not unlike their peers in the new, socialist Yugoslav state, the integral Yugoslavists of the beginning of the twentieth century strove to build something new, even if some of them thought that it had existed in the “primordial” past. In fact, one of the key motifs in this period is the one of “composedness,” which even today is at the root of the dominant perception of Yugoslavism not only as a “failed idea,” but also as an “artificial construction” [*umjetna tvorevina*], which corrupts the organic link between nation, state, and culture. Instead of covering up the lack of organic links, instead of seeking to deny the “nationalist deception,” as Gellner puts it, the artists of the integral generation have, on the contrary, embraced precisely the idea of construction, and the idea that the now separate South Slav nations needed to “get to know each other” – another trope of integral Yugoslavism.

Writing in 1918 about the standard Slovenian language, Fran Ilešić claimed that it was characterized precisely by composedness (*sastavljenost*), due to the simple fact that it had

¹⁴⁰ Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia*. On Krleža’s ambivalent investments in both Yugoslav and Croatian nationalism see Vladimir Biti, *Attached to Dispossession: Sacrificial Narratives in Post-imperial Europe* (London: Brill, 2017)., in particular, the chapter “A Rebellion on the Knees: Miroslav Krleža and the Croatian Narrative of Dispossession,” 97-121. However, I am not sure that one can see this simply as ambivalence, as this very ambivalence – between the Croatian and Yugoslav nationalism – was part and parcel of Yugoslavism, ever since the Illyrian Movement.

been composed of different regional dialects. It was this composedness, Ilešić further argued, that enabled Slovenian to continue to develop not only in the Slovenian, but also in the Yugoslav direction, by deliberately embracing words that were closer to Serbian and Croatian. Here, Yugoslav composedness emerges precisely as Karaman's "peripheral art," the art of hybridity that does not follow directions from any single center, but which compromises the very idea of center, as well as the idea of centered identity. Ilešić's composedness does not imply the stable identity of either the whole or its constituent parts; just the opposite, the parts themselves (the Slovenian language) are composed, and thus open for further configurations, reconfigurations, as well as decompositions. By summoning a future in which connection, or even intimacy (getting to know one another), would arise primarily as a matter of commitment to a common struggle, rather than as a result of restoration of mythical communities of the past, Yugoslavism of the integral generation truly defines itself as a generation – as the attempt to create and generate a kind of solidarity that does not yet exist. Meštrović, too, imagined the building of the *Vidovdan Temple* as a process, which, albeit with him as its master-South-Slav-Sculptor, would evolve "slowly and involve several generations."¹⁴¹ Even if some roots are envisioned to have preceded that process – and I will conclude this chapter by proposing what those roots are – the new generational task is not warranted by the promise of the certainty of Roots, but are more in line with what Edouard Glissant defined with the concept of relation.¹⁴² In 1980, himself historicizing (what is left of) Yugoslavism, Predrag Matvejević concluded, or rather, transcribed once again

¹⁴¹ Meštrović cited in Ignjatović, *Jugoslovenstvo u arhitekturi*, 44.

¹⁴² Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010).

Yugoslavia's claim: Yugoslav culture "cannot be accepted nor affirmed as a liquidation of differences, elimination of particularities, rejection of traditions, but only as a *relation* of the existing particularities, traditions, and differences."¹⁴³ This desperate manifesto by Matvejević, at the time when everything around him went in the direction of cutting all relations, indeed proves that, rather than simply negating Meštrović's *Vidovdan Temple*, the new Yugoslav generations have been none other than those invoked by his vision of the temple as a future project. In fact, precisely by negating Meštrović, they have continued to work on Yugoslavism, which was constituted – and it was constituted as such also in Meštrović's work – as a cite of contention, the very place where the dialectics between negation and relation is worked out.

A peoples

Indeed, despite its declaration of negation of the first Yugoslavia, the new, socialist Yugoslav state continued "working on [the Yugoslav] topic," as Krleža said of the task of Yugoslav literature. Even their first "no" to the Comintern – which preceded the famous Tito's "no" in 1948, when Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform – concerned a disagreement on Yugoslavia, which the Comintern viewed as a creation of the post-Versailles imperialist order that should either be broken up or expanded into a broader Balkan federation.¹⁴⁴ According to the reconstruction by Hilde Katrine Haug, and notwithstanding ongoing factional strives as to the very position of the national question

¹⁴³ Matvejević, *Jugoslavenstvo danas*, 47. Emphasis added.

¹⁴⁴ For the history of the Yugoslav Communist Party in relation to the national question, including the different factions and politics that marked this development, see Haug, *Creating a Socialist Yugoslavia*. See page 19-20, 29-30 for the discussion of the relationship between the views of Yugoslav communists and that of the Comintern.

within Marxist theory of the revolution (whether it was a socialist or a bourgeois question), the Yugoslav communists initially, during the early 1920s, supported the idea of Yugoslav national unity and the three-named people.¹⁴⁵ Under the pressure of the Comintern, as well as King Alexander's state Yugoslavism, between 1929 and 1935 they switched to advocating the break-up of Yugoslavia in the name of national self-determination, and finally, with the rise of Josip Broz Tito as the leader the Yugoslav Communist Party since 1934 (who argued "that one of the primary parola (pledges) of the KPJ must 'be the liberation of all the peoples of Yugoslavia under Great Serbian hegemony'"), and in line with the new Comintern politics of the Popular Front declared in 1935, they embraced Yugoslavia as the framework of their work, seeking to build a "unified front of 'all progressive and democratic forces' against the danger of fascism and extreme nationalism."¹⁴⁶ However, by 1940, Tito abandoned the Popular Front policy and sought to identify a "specific socialist approach to the Yugoslav national question(s)."¹⁴⁷

The break-out of WW2 and the Nazi occupation of the country, however, once again imposed tactics that could appeal to a wider social base, and the Partisan struggle in WW2 was defined as the Peoples' Liberation Movement. Yugoslav communists, in fact, again went against the Comintern's instructions, and toyed with promoting and implementing a socialist – and not simply national, or popular – revolution, which also included "heavy use of symbolism from the international communist movement."¹⁴⁸ Haug nonetheless concludes

¹⁴⁵ Haug.

¹⁴⁶ Haug, 33, 42.

¹⁴⁷ Haug, 55. This, according to Haug, involved a suppression of those who continued to support it (mainly Croatian communists, including Krlježa), and who also refused to support the Nazi-Soviet Pact of Non-aggression in 1939.

¹⁴⁸ Haug, 69.

that it was “the popular liberation struggle, not the struggle for socialist revolution” that served as the key vehicle that brought the Yugoslav Communist Party to power, and that the “promise to solve the national question and to ensure peaceful national relations” was the key strategy of popular mobilization. Indeed, following the war, a socialist solution of the national question was proclaimed to have been achieved; in practice, this meant a horizontal reorganization of the country as a federation, and a creation of a new hierarchical structure, based on ethnic and national identity. The top of the hierarchy recognized five (instead of the previous three) “constitutive nations” (*narod*) (Macedonians, and Montenegrins were added to Serbs, Slovenes, and Croats, with the addition of Muslims who were considered constitutive, alongside Serbs and Croats, in the multinational Bosnia and Herzegovina). These were followed by “nationalities” (*narodnosti*), including Hungarians, Albanians, and eight other groups that were granted only cultural rights, since their “state-forming nations” were outside of Yugoslavia.¹⁴⁹ At the bottom were “ethnic minorities,” which included smaller groups, among them, Roma, Jews, Germans, Vlachs, and Ukrainians.¹⁵⁰

It is clear why the word *narod* (people), even beyond the legacy of the Popular Front, could serve to epitomize not only the national unity-in-disunity, but also the unity of the national and socialist revolution. WW2 enabled Yugoslav communists to “skip” the historical stage of national, bourgeois revolution – although, technically, this is precisely what its predecessor, as a sovereign royal-bourgeois-capitalist national Yugoslav state, was – and merge the “peoples” into “a people.” A level of defiance of Comintern invectives shown by

¹⁴⁹ Haug, 88.

¹⁵⁰ Haug, 89.

the Yugoslav communists during this process, first with regard to the national question, when they insisted on Yugoslavia as a framework of struggle, then with regard to failing to follow rules about “concealing” their ambitions towards a socialist revolution (as the Soviets directed in order to support their novel interpretation of the allied war as a struggle for “democracy”), could retroactively be read as a premonition of the “deviations” because of which they were expelled from the Cominform in 1948, and which ultimately led to the “third path” to socialism, and the invention of self-management. Indeed, self-management seems to mirror self-determination, the principle of national liberation that came to be so central, and it is indicative that Edvard Kardelj, the architect of self-management, was also the leading Yugoslav theorist of the national question.¹⁵¹ Tito, on the other hand, was at once the communist leader who overcame the chronic weakness of the Yugoslav Party to gain significant following of the masses, and the perfect image of a national leader, who, as a “Croatian peasant’s son from Zagorje” and “one of the few Comintern-trained Yugoslav communists to escape Stalin’s purges,”¹⁵² embodied a Meštrović-like figure of proverbial “Dinaric,” that is, rural, resilience.

The slippage between the political subject of nation and class resulted, as Ugo Vlaisavljević has written, in a merging of two discursive registers, with which “the modern political reality was associated with the ancient ethnic one,” resulting in the war

¹⁵¹ His book *Razvoj slovenačkega nacionalnog pitanja* (The development of the Slovene national question, 1938), was the first attempt to provide a Marxist analysis of the historical and national development of Slovenia, and he also contributed greatly to the forming of the federal model of the new Yugoslavia. The book was published in its second edition in 1957, when Kardelj somewhat reformulated his views and proposed what would for a while be discussed under the heading of “socialist Yugoslavism,” that is a kind of a rapprochement between the Yugoslav peoples, which does not strive to create a single nation, but instead strives towards an overcoming of the nation by means of socialist internationalism.

¹⁵² Haug, *Creating a Socialist Yugoslavia*, 45, 46.

simultaneously being defined as a “communist revolution” and “national (i.e., ethnic) liberation war,” the subject of history at once “the working class/all working people” and “our nations (i.e., our ethnic communities),” and the postwar society representing both “free communist society” and “cohabitation in brotherhood and unity.”¹⁵³ Ultimately, another oxymoronic relationship is formed, which Vlaisavljević also proposes is typical for all Eastern Europe, “a modern strategy against modernism, a strategy at the bottom of which *ethnic resistance* is to be found.”¹⁵⁴ What is lost in Vlaisavljević’s text, in which he must find always new English equivalents for the various referents of the ambivalent signifier of the people (*narod*), and what is especially lost in resorting to such technical terms as “ethnic” and “ethnic,” is that *narod* – the people – is a single word that covers all these different political and discursive registers: the working people (*radni narod*), our nations (*naši narodi*), national liberation war (*narodno-oslobodilački rat*), ethnic resistance (*narodni otpor*). It is a word that always sounds equally “ours” – something that anyone speaking “our language” (*naš jezik*) and belonging to “our people” (*naš narod*) can grasp – and that, unlike the foreign and alienating, technical term such as class (*klasa*) or nation (*nacija*), could unite all. By the same token, *narod* could also serve as the synecdoche of *narodi*, people in the plural, or peoples. Without this hyperbolized, out-of-control semanticity of *narod* (which also exists in Russian) there is really no contradiction between “communist revolution” and “national liberation” from the perspective of their modernity, as they are both, indeed, bulwarks of modern politics.

¹⁵³ Vlaisavljević, “The South Slav Identity and the Ultimate War-Reality,” 202-03.

¹⁵⁴ Vlaisavljević, “The South Slav Identity and the Ultimate War-Reality,” 203. Original emphasis.

And so, rather than seeing the national (or ethnic) liberation as contradicting – and demodernizing, as it were – the communist revolution, it is instead this excess of *narod*, of the people, which is at the same time encompassed by both of these revolutions, as much as it always escapes them. This excess of *narod*, this residue of the inarticulate singular plural of “a peoples” is the same excess of Yugoslavism in the Sarajevo Surrealists’s “Yugoslavism without borders,” in which the only authenticity of Yugoslav identity is found in its chaotic, perhaps even grotesque, overflowing of any settled identity. This overflow of “a peoples,” which does not represent any political subject in the modern sense, but is precisely the pre-subject, or even, anti-subject, which forms the core of the singularity of Yugoslav history. It is the one singularity that the introduction to *Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia* – signed by the “Editorial Board” but very conspicuously authored by Krleža – could, in 1955, crystalize into a single, unique, current, which corresponds “to the interests of the whole.”¹⁵⁵

What were those interests? According to *Encyclopedia’s* introduction, this was the survival of “all South Slavic peoples,” who, confronted by centuries of “foreign oligarchies and empires,” had no other defense mechanism at their disposal but the “power of their own will, which, in the struggle for freedom and independence, never once wished to bow to the force of the stronger.”¹⁵⁶ With the socialist and peoples’ revolution, led by Josip Broz Tito, South Slavs were freed not only from imperialist political violence, but also from class subordination. Having achieved that, the same “peoples” could now continue to develop their rich culture and civilization, which includes a struggle against another obstacle, namely

¹⁵⁵ *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije*, n.p..

¹⁵⁶ *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije*, n.p.. Since the two-paged text is non-paginated, further citations will not be indicated, as all ensuing quotes are from the same text, unless noted otherwise.

backwardness, into which South Slavs were “hurled by the whirlwind of history.” From all this derives the true purpose of the *Encyclopedia*: “to raise the curtain from the centuries of darkness, to light up, with full illumination, the longlasting nocturne of our life,” and to imbue the collected documents with “positive mass cultural consciousness.” For, although the collected documents testify to nothing but the historical agency of the masses, although the key evidence unveils peoples’ insurrections and rebellions, continued struggle for the peoples’ language and the persistence of folk poetry, it is the light of encyclopedic knowledge that is to translate this mass agency into a “positive mass cultural consciousness.” Hence, perhaps, the already mentioned primacy of the defensive power of the peoples’ “will,” which can now merge with the generative will of intellectual labor, necessary to make philosophical, or at the very least, historical sense of what would otherwise remain recorded as a sheer will for survival.

It is now only left to identify the picture revealed by such encyclopedic illumination, which has less to do with scientific knowledge, and much more with a capacity for exceptional, poetic vision:

Dying under the hoof of foreign conquerors, in the tyranny of wars and armies, next to the ubiquitous bang of weapons, in the fantastical ossuary of our past, only the most developed minds, only the visionary eyes of rhapsodes could, with one single all-encompassing gaze, explain all the logical totality of those historical, cultural, and political events, a totality which still today leads us to pour into a single, unique current.

The Encyclopedia is careful not to singularize the names of either the single current, or the individual streams pouring into it; “Yugoslavia” is mentioned only in the initial reference to Encyclopedia’s title (*Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia*), and no-one but the singularly

plural “South Slavic peoples” populate the text.¹⁵⁷ What is restated with certainty, however, is that none but petty minds can fail to see the historical laws revealed to have governed these individual streams and drove them to persistently merge into a unique current, despite all odds and floods, so to speak, not the least of which was the still overflowing bloodshed of WW2. Encyclopedia’s mission was to formulate – or perhaps simply organize, in the form of knowledge – this preexisting, exceptional, poetic vision, and to guarantee its continued massification, a massification already launched by the socialist revolution and the political victory under “Tito’s flag.”

That the political and intellectual vanguard take responsibility for the consciousness of the masses is nothing new from the perspective of the history and theory of both revolutionary class struggle and nationalism; however, *The Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia* illuminates neither a class consciousness nor a national consciousness in a classical sense. This is, rather, a consciousness of something like “a peoples” – an ungrammatical, singular plural – whose rise from the darkness of centuries indeed presupposed the overcoming of subordination on the level of both class and nation, but, even more importantly, it entailed an overcoming of “backwardness,” or, in the terms of contemporary theory, of “colonial difference.”¹⁵⁸ Given that both communism and nationalism are modern European projects,

¹⁵⁷ Although the introductory text confidently promotes unity, at this point the Yugoslav Communist Party was not yet advocating the notion of socialist Yugoslavism and was very careful when it came to references to Yugoslav unity.

¹⁵⁸ On the concept of colonial difference, in particular in relation to the production of knowledge and what Mignolo calls the geopolitics of knowledge, see Mignolo, “The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference.” Mignolo differentiates between colonial and imperial difference, both standing in relation to the “two macronarratives, that of Western civilization, and that of the modern world” (58) The “difference” defines a range of positions in relation to those macronarratives, and, in terms of critical scholarship, enunciates either an imperial difference, which is an internal critique of macronarratives, one that is still inherently within its systems of knowledge (the example here is Immanuel Wallerstein’s world systems analysis, which is ultimately concerned with opening up social sciences), or a colonial difference, which takes, in one way or another, the position that steps aside, or even outside, those two macronarratives, to consider their own historical formation, and here, racial difference is one of the key determinants. The question is where Yugoslav and Balkan history fall within such demarcation, and what position of difference Krleža could be said to assume in the introduction to

whose successful implementation presupposes the existence of a modern state apparatus, including culture and civilization, overcoming backwardness by embracing the ideologies of progress by which backwardness is produced in the first place, is bound to result in contradiction. A struggle in the name of “South Slavic peoples” leaves a painful residue of a still anonymous, inarticulate, illiterate and illegible “a peoples,” unable to adopt the consciousness of either the proletariat or the citizenry. Paradoxically and surprisingly, the Croat veterans – a mad, PTSD-ridden cousin hidden in the attic of both the capitalist-nationalist state oligarchy and the leftist and liberal civil society – with whose rebellion against Yugoslavia and the Yugoslavs I began my own introduction to this dissertation, are nothing but evidence of one such backward residue, which populates the civil, urban space with its dirty “tent revolutions,” and stacks fire-wood under city lamps, as if to deny even the sheer fact of Zagreb’s electrification. [Figure 1] In other words, if the philosophical and historical meaning of “Yugoslavia” was effectively illuminated by Encyclopedia’s introduction and by the unnamed “Yugoslavs” that authored it, then what the Croat veteran stood up against, both in 1991 and in 2014, is none other than that which was, by definition, to guarantee his survival. As if to confirm the full perversion of Yugoslavia’s historical claim, the army that bombed Croatian and Bosnian cities in the 1990s carried the name of “Yugoslav Peoples’ Army.”

the Encyclopedia (and his other works). I will argue in the second chapter that, despite the fact that he is not able to truly “delink,” as Mignolo would say, from the underlying Eurocentrism of Yugoslav history (and intellectual history) – which is anyway not possible – and although in the 1950s he affirms the “third,” Yugoslav civilization as a contribution to European heritage, the fact that his entire thought revolves around that, and various other, processes of negation, delinking, and border thinking, is what defines his position – and Yugoslav position, as it emerges from his writing – as one of colonial difference.

From the perspective of both its historical and contemporary generation, and generativity, Yugoslav history can be conceptualized as precisely a claim arising out of “a peoples,” a claim which is only provisionally called Yugoslav, as if for lack of a better name, a name to come. And the irruption of nationalism, or perhaps, this kind of vernacular, “uncivilized” nationalism, only shows that Yugoslavia is not faithful to its claim, a claim that is most easily appropriated by nationalism and its populist apparatus. It is significant that in 1989 (when it was already too late) Branko Horvat, a historian who had earlier authored dozens of books on economic history and Yugoslav self-management, wrote a book on *Kosovsko pitanje* (The Kosovo Question). To the question of “whether the problem of Kosovo can be solved by economic measures,” the prime economic expert Horvat – quite scandalously, and against the Marxist idea of nationalism as a false, or merely subordinate, social problem to be overwritten by socialist revolution and class equality, not to mention against Tito’s claim that Yugoslavia provided a socialist solution to the national question – responds that the answer is an “unambiguous and categorical: No, it cannot!”¹⁵⁹ Horvat states that the source of all problems is the question whether Albanians are “ours” or “others.”¹⁶⁰ On this question depend not their civil rights, but their “ethnic rights,” which, according to the Yugoslav hierarchy between Slavs and non-Slavs, which was once even included in official statistics, they are not; however, as the “Slav” principles weakens, they also could be “ours,” in which case they have a right to their own republic, their language, and, what is more, they “enter into the history of Yugoslavia, into Yugoslav literature, into

¹⁵⁹ Branko Horvat, *Kosovsko pitanje* (Zagreb: Globus, 1989), 243. The text included in this book had been commissioned by the Novi Sad youth magazine *Star*, but it was not published there.

¹⁶⁰ Horvat, 199.

the Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia” – and here Horvat notes that they had indeed “entered” into the *Encyclopedia’s* new edition.¹⁶¹

In this way, a full circle was drawn between Encyclopedia’s introductory text about the “fatherland” and those who found themselves as its unwanted children. From the perspective of the principle of national self-determination, this constant dialectics between “ours” and “others” is never-ending – this is why it is perfectly encapsulated in Edin Hajdarpašić’s term (br)other.¹⁶² Although he initially defines it on the basis of the ambivalent position of Bosnian Muslims within Yugoslav nationalism – Muslims are (unlike Albanians) at the same time Slavs, that is brothers, and non-Christians, that is, others – he also uses the concept as the name for the endless production of otherness in the never-finished process of national liberation and homogenization. Women and children, who evidently don’t share the national brotherhood in the same way as men, are the most evident examples.¹⁶³ A similar never-ending differentiation could be seen to happen on the level of class liberation, a modern project that similarly depends on identifying a revolutionary subject. As in most countries of “really existing socialism,” which were paradoxically at the same time too belated and too advanced for a communist revolution, this subject, the proletariat, was initially barely existing, which is why *narod* (the people) filled in the gap, or rather, created a new, hybrid subject, one always threatening to dissolve into unreadability.

¹⁶¹ Horvat, 199. The second edition was published between 1980 and 1990. The volume covering A-Biz, which should include Albanians, was published in 1980.

¹⁶² Hajdarpašić, *Whose Bosnia?*

¹⁶³ Hajdarpašić, 16.

This happened immediately after WW2, as Ana Antić's research of the curious Yugoslav phenomenon of "partisan hysteria" shows.¹⁶⁴ Following WW2, numerous partisan "heroes" were turning into "hysterics" and exhibiting neurotic symptoms, such as seizures, disobedience of authority and a "heightened willingness to fight," which were not found in the repertoire of war traumas in other countries, where anxiety and withdrawal were typical.¹⁶⁵ Psychiatric observation revealed that the affliction struck only "certain ranks of partisan soldiers," namely those of mostly uneducated background, of "a very distinct (low) socioeconomic position," at times also described as "primitive," who were "given important political responsibilities but experienced severe trauma and anxiety due to their own inadequacy and unpreparedness."¹⁶⁶ Antić reads the phenomenon of partisan hysteria, and in particular, the predominantly anxious psychiatric response to it, as a sign of "the dark side and subversive potential of increased social mobility," which involved "the post-war creation of a new political and military elite from the ranks of workers and peasants."¹⁶⁷ At the same time partisan hysteria touched upon analogous anxieties of the Communist Party leadership, who were "concerned that the lax wartime entrance criteria to its ranks had resulted in a large influx of members of questionable political and ideological 'value.'"¹⁶⁸

In partisan hysteria, all the motifs explored in this chapter seem to merge: heroic struggle for national and class liberation under the proper name Yugoslavia, and its dark,

¹⁶⁴ Ana Antić, "Heroes and Hysterics: 'Partisan Hysteria' and Communist State-Building in Yugoslavia After 1945," *Social History of Medicine* 27, no. 2 (2014). For a feminist perspective on the "morning after" of the Yugoslav socialist revolution, see Bojana Pejić's classic essay on the conservative retreat against the emancipation of women initiated during WW2, as it manifested itself in post-war film, mass culture, and art, Bojana Pejić, "The Morning After: *Plavi Radion*, Abstract Art and Bananas," *n.paradoxa* 10 (2002).

¹⁶⁵ Antić, "Heroes and Hysterics," 349.

¹⁶⁶ Antić, 350.

¹⁶⁷ Antić, 351.

¹⁶⁸ Antić, 351.

“choleric-melancholic” side, which testifies to the persistence of the “muted tone” of “a peoples,” that undifferentiated mass presented as the unconscious subject of revolution in Encyclopedia’s introduction, and therefore not yet, or never-will-be a subject – a conglomerate of “bare bones,” as Vlaisavljević would say of South Slavic “proto-Self” – whose claim Yugoslav aesthetics aspires to transcribe. Perhaps, however, it has never managed to do that better than a song, since this mute, illegible claim seems to find its closest abode in similar singing.

In his immensely sad film, *Flotel Europa* (2015), Vladimir Tomić narrates, by means of found video footage, his childhood experience as a refugee who in the early 1990s, and together with hundreds of other Bosnian refugees, lived on a large ship pulled into the canals of Copenhagen, as the existing refugee camps were full. [Figure 42] In this floating existence – which coincides with his early teenage years and thus with a process of maturation – he is gradually alienated from his sense of belonging with the majority of the ship’s inhabitants (themselves suspended in the floating state of the TV room, where they obsessively watch war coverage in Yugoslavia). The moment of alienation has is clearly identified: at some point in the ship’s lobby, another ship inhabitant – a translator, moreover! – called him “Chetnik.” Shocked by this translation of his identity into a proper name, the very proper name deemed responsible for the war and thus the very condition in which the ship’s inhabitants find themselves, he is left speechless. More precisely, he is unable to say anything in response while badly wanting to say everything: that he is a child of a mixed marriage, part of a truly diverse family, a child whose grandparents were partisans and fought in WW2, a child who... but his defense against the dreadful judgement remains unarticulated. Over time, he finds his comfort in the company of a similarly “mixed” group, and somewhat older

group of young men, including one who grew up in a Mostar orphanage, a group that is not interested in politics, but in music and girls, and whose two members die of a drug overdose by the end of the film. The single true trace of hope for Vladimir, however, is the announcement of the performance of the Yugoslav band Bijelo Dugme. Eagerly awaiting the performance of the pop-rock band who authored the famous song “Spit out and Sing, My Yugoslavia,” he is once again left disappointed, as the concert involves the lone Alen Islamović (the band’s singer), who sits in the corner chain-smoking while waiting for the folk performance of “some nationalist” (presumably Muslim/Bosniak nationalist) singer to end.

The naïve childish narration does not acknowledge that Bijelo Dugme’s song is also a nationalist one, although one that is not “folk” but “pop-rock,” and one that sides – although rather ambivalently, as was shown earlier – with the tradition of Yugoslav nationalism, a tradition with which the narrator, as the infamous “child of a mixed marriage,” naturally identifies. He also does not realize the painful irony of the fact that the “threat” that Bijelo Dugme, perhaps also ambiguously, included in this song, namely the promise that “those who don’t hear the [Yugoslav] song will hear the storm,” was just being perversely realized by the army still calling itself the Yugoslav Peoples’ Army, while bombing the city of Sarajevo, the emblem of Yugoslav diversity, the actual identity of the narrator. In the process of Slobodan Milošević’s ideological appropriation of the Yugoslav name and the Yugoslav Peoples’ Army, which insisted on its position as defenders of Yugoslavia and the Yugoslavs, not only the narrator, whose father is marked as Serbian, but also the Yugoslav name itself becomes translated into “Chetnik” – the “Yugo-Chetnik aggressor,” as the media at the time would say. Finally, the “nationalist singer” is done and Alen Islamović takes the state to sing to an almost empty hall (likely an editorial intervention, since the singing is

partly non-diegetic). The Bijelo Dugme singer does not perform “Spit Out and Sing,” however, but another equally or perhaps more famous song, which was made earlier, in 1975, and which could even be said to reject in advance their own battle song for Yugoslavia that the band will sing in the 1980s. In fact, it elides any battle cry as well as any proper name, with their always inherent death threat, and embraces a decidedly universalist title and message: “Ima neka tajna veza [tajna veza za sve nas]” (There is a secret connection [a secret connection for us all]).

I end this chapter on similar singing with this sentimental ending, the ending that was left to the Yugoslav surviving generation, one that Krleža’s generation would undoubtedly denounce in advance as yet another instance of sentimental and romantic Yugoslavism, to which they opposed their (supposedly radically different) “Yugoslav-Fanonist” claim.

Chapter 3. Krleža's Fanonist Aesthetics and Its Post-Yugoslav Generation

Her plot hath many changes; every day¹

In this chapter, I propose to view the life and work of the writer, art critic, essayist and polemicist Miroslav Krleža (1893-1982) as a synecdoche of Yugoslav history and Yugoslav aesthetics. His long and active life span, his intellectual and polemical positioning in relation to topics ranging from South Slav early medieval history to the Illyrian movement, from Croat and Serbian nineteenth-century politics to Ivan Meštrović, together with his own position as a protagonist and witness of the Yugoslav century since WW1 to the death of Josip Broz Tito, make his name into a code that enables a translation of Yugoslav history as a certain kind of antiteleological teleology. Inside this code, Yugoslav century appears as a century of “Krlležology,”² a history of a negative dialectics that does not rely on fixed positions, but instead evolves as an always contingent positioning, whose claim derives from negation of immediate reality. It is such positioning that Stanko Lasić identified as Krleža's “Fanonist vision of Yugoslav culture,” which, as he lamented in his landmark 1970 book on Yugoslav aesthetic debates in the interwar period, remained unrealized.³ In what follows, I will follow Lasić's almost casual remark about Krleža's “Fanonism,” which he himself, however, dispels by the very Hegelian set-up of his reading of the Yugoslav “conflict on the

¹ Francis Quarles (1592-1644), epigram from *Respice Finem* (1635)

² Krlležology is the term devised by literary Stanko Lasić to refer to rich tradition of critical thinking and writing on Miroslav Krleža.

³ Stanko Lasić, *Sukob na književnoj ljevici, 1928-1952* (Zagreb: Liber, 1970).

literary left,” as a clash between the two forms of synthesis of the “absolutes” of art and Revolution, which, as he thought, saw their “purest” expressions in France and Russia. In my analysis, tracing that “third,” Yugoslav component of the conflict will emerge also from displacing the centrality in Lasić’s account of the “*literary left*,” in order to reveal not only the extent to which the discussions were rooted in the visual arts, but also the fact that this is what at the same time what places them in the continuity with, and in the aftermath of, the failure of Meštrović’s “Temple.” Lasić’s book, written at a time of yet another Yugoslav “failure,” the time of the explosive 1968 student protests and the first acute crisis in Yugoslavia, which reached its peak with the Croatian Spring in 1971, must be read as a diagnostic code that detects both the revolutionary potential and the failure of Yugoslav socialism. For this very reason, I argue that this book inaugurates, *avant la lettre*, a post-Yugoslav moment, the moment when (Yugoslav) revolution transmutes into its historical narration, and when (Yugoslav) aesthetics transmutes into (Yugoslav) art. In this sense, the present-day markings of the post-Yugoslav, (post)Yugoslav and (post-)Yugoslav, must be seen in analogy with – although not simply as repetitions of – that initial, post-1968 and post-1971 “postness.” What does and what can Krleža mean for this “post” moment? I attempted to draw out three Krležian figures in this chapter that I argue are worth salvaging for the present: Krleža the vulgar materialist; Krleža the tormented Fanonist; and Krleža the drunken historiographer. In these three figures, a picture comes together of the Yugoslav twentieth century: its blood-soaked wars and interwar hunger, its dreams of authenticity and independence; its anticipatory, yet decidedly contingent and agonistic, historiographies of past and the future.

From role model to enemy of social art

“Fire! Fire!,” demands Miroslav Krleža in the first issue of his journal with the appropriate title *Plamen* (Flame), a publication that he and August Cesarec founded in the immediate aftermath of WW1, into which Krleža was conscripted as an Austro-Hungarian subject.⁴ [Figure 43] “It is time, time to burn and destroy and break to pieces the greatest among all of our sacrosanct lies, the legendary lie above lies, the lie of Croatian literature.”⁵ Krleža’s primary target here is the Illyrian Movement and, specifically, its absorption into the official discourses of the “dual kingdom” of Austria and Hungary established in 1867, in which Croatia gained a level of legislative and cultural autonomy within the Hungarian part of the kingdom. These “romantic pan-Slavic agitators” and their weak poetic verses were turned into heroic geniuses so that, continues Krleža, intoxicated by the romantic and hollow song, Croats could be pushed into running around “as blood-soaked veterans under the double-headed eagle across the entire Europe.”⁶ Despite generations and generations that inform “our literary graveyard,” Krleža finds no existing artistic solution to the problem

⁴ Miroslav Krleža, “Hrvatska književna laž” [1919], in Miroslav Krleža, *Svjedočanstva vremena: književno-estetske varijacije* (Sarajevo: Oslobođenje, 1988), 104. *Plamen* was issued biweekly, from January to August 1919, when it was banned, due to its ideological links to the Yugoslav Communist Party, whose members were simultaneously being persecuted under suspicion of plotting a revolution. According to Jasna Galjer, *Plamen* was, in the context of Croatian art and literary criticism, “the first journal based on the program of a radical anarcho-Marxist orientation, which was socially and politically engaged, and which set the highest demands on art in the local context.” Jasna Galjer, *Likovna kritika u Hrvatskoj: 1868-1951* (Zagreb: Meandar, 2000), 148. All of the covers of the *Plamen* magazine, as well as Krleža’s first poetry book (1919), were illustrated by painter Ljubo Babić, always containing an abstracted image of a bright red flame. The insistence on this image of the flame can be read as a way of coping with the turbulent and insecure times of transition: the violent dissolution of the turn-of-the-century world in the flames and blood-shed of the First World War, and at the same time, the redness of the flame igniting the sparks from which a new world would be built, on the ruins of the old one, and under the banner of the international proletarian revolution.

⁵ Krleža, “Hrvatska književna laž,” 104.

⁶ Krleža, 105.

of “being a Croat,” whose true meaning is “to feel yourself perish under the foot of the black-and-yellow emperor.”⁷

His second target is modernism: the trend of the “New – New – New,” whose iterations in Croatian literature are only the flipside of the same “pathetic ornamental wallpaper.” The fundamental incompatibility of the decadent, West European bourgeois culture, and the grey, illiterate, poverty-decimated local reality, in which the imitations of modern art are “stuck onto the walls of the Croatian hut, ruinous and sooty, still without a chimney,”⁸ is articulated here for the first time and will remain a constant motif in Krleža’s literary, critical and essayistic work. Finally, with a degree of not only diagnostic defeatism but also cultural-masculinist essentialism, Krleža asks whether “we” do not feel the “fervor of the Balkan race, youthful and thirsty for unrestrained dispositions,” or are “we” instead mere “civil servants,” or worse, “homosexual English lords, hypercivilized marionettes, who lose themselves in the various aphorisms on Eternal Beauty?”⁹ In a paradigmatic avant-garde manner, after calling for the conflagration of all graveyards and wallpapers, he presents his transformative vision: “We want a living emotion, primary and forceful, and we will not accept the lies, the phrases, the sects, the dogmas, and the cult of old values.”¹⁰ This new movement, aimed at overcoming the “infertile and sinful and naive sermon of nationalism,” should be anchored in the movement of the People and inspired by the bells of the International and the banners of the “Russian commune” in the “holy Slav mother

⁷ Krleža, 106.

⁸ Krleža, 107.

⁹ Krleža, 107.

¹⁰ Krleža, 110.

Moscow.”¹¹ In a proclamatory-utopian manner that is, to say the least, atypical of his later work, Krleža is truly ecstatic: “Yes! The Redeemers” will come, and “speak the word of Absolute Liberation and Absolute Literature! A word as clear as the sun, a word of Liberation!”¹² As the ultimate result of this liberating advance, the “Redeemers will vault the antithesis of Byzantium and Rome [including the gigantic clash between Asia and Europe] and so lay the foundation-stone of our cultural problem,” and the cultural mission of Slavism as such.¹³

This finale is crucial, as it locates the politics of Krleža’s aesthetics as a quest within the tortured and disparaging split in the hegemonic expanse of the “antithesis,” between and beyond a number of geopolitical and aesthetic “either-ors,” which are all rejected as unacceptable: Byzantium and Rome, East and West, colonial assimilation and cultural essentialism, romanticism and modernism. Following Krleža’s disillusionment with the Soviet Union during his trip to Russia in the 1920s, a disillusionment only multiplied by the number of “our tombs in Siberia,” that is, Yugoslav communists who disappeared in the Stalinist purges in the 1930s,¹⁴ the Soviet Union will no longer be the source material for the “vaulting” of the antithesis, but will, together with its gospel of socialist realism, rather take the place of a new “Byzantium” to be overcome. That which was supposed to repair the

¹¹ Krleža, 111.

¹² Krleža, 112.

¹³ Krleža, 112.

¹⁴ Miroslav Krleža, cited in Haug, *Creating a Socialist Yugoslavia*, 49. Krleža took great pains to organize a trip to Russia in 1924, in order to dispel Western propaganda about the reality of the revolution, but his series of travel notes, published in 1926 as *Izlet u Rusiju* [A Trip to Russia], was ambivalent and melancholic. Miljenko Jergović aptly places in relation Krleža’s position of a communist heretic believer to that of another “communist renegade,” Walter Benjamin, whose own *Moscow Diary* was also written during the 1920s, although the paths of the two renegades never crossed, Miljenko Jergović, “Izlet U Rusiju. Pogovor Jednoj Knjizi.” (13 November 2013): <https://www.jergovic.com/ajfelov-most/izlet-u-rusiju/>. Krleža’s travel journal was recently translated to English, Miroslav Krleža, *Journey to Russia*, trans. Will Firth (Zagreb: Sandorf, 2017).

split only pushed the negative dialectics further, so that the “vaulting” of an antithesis was itself revealed to be yet another antithetical gesture. However, by the end of Krleža’s manifesto appear three elements of local cultural heritage that are nonetheless salvaged from the furious flame, among which are the Bogomils, medieval Christian heretics whose “Church of Bosnia” defied the authority of both Rome and Byzantium.¹⁵ Significantly, this last paragraph of “Croatian Literary Lie” is at the same time the only place in which the designation “Yugoslav” supplants the decidedly Croatian focus of the text. The Bogomils, in particular, are not just able to serve as guides in the attempt to bridge the antithesis, to “exit the mire” and find “Salvation,” but are presented as an integral part of the “Yugoslav cultural tradition and continuity.”¹⁶

The medieval sect will survive all future fires staged by Krleža, and will reappear at the exhibition *Yugoslav Medieval Art* in Paris in 1950, and with which Krleža promoted the Yugoslav “third” European civilization at the time when the Yugoslav “Exit” had already been made. The WW2 antifascist resistance and socialist revolution initiated this exit, but it was completed only when Josip Broz Tito reenacted the heretical, Bogomil gesture that led Yugoslavia’s excommunication from Stalin’s Cominform in 1948.

After identifying himself publicly with the “banner of the Russian commune,” during the 1920s Krleža remained an influential proponent of the so-called social art and literature, whose work was regularly censored and banned by the anti-communist, royal Yugoslav

¹⁵ The Bogomils were a gnostic, Christian heretic sect, originating in Bulgarian Empire during the tenth century, formed in opposition to the Bulgarian state and the Catholic Church. The other two sources of inspiration that Krleža mentions are the Croatian writers Juraj Križanić (1617-1683), one of the earliest Croatian advocates of pan-Slavism, and Silvije Strahimir Kranjčević (1865-1908), a poet politically siding with advocates of Croatian independence and struggle against Hungarian domination.

¹⁶ Krleža, “Hrvatska književna laž,” 112.

government.¹⁷ At the same time, he gradually became a target of criticism for a number of his communist peers, who saw his work as increasingly straying from progressive, leftist postulates on art and literature, which he himself had earlier most loudly expounded. This heretical betrayal of the ABC's of communism – Krleža's deviations towards irrationalism, decadence, and aestheticism – was crystallized in 1933 in a question of appropriately ecclesiastical origin, "Quo vadis, Krleža?," signed by a three-letter pseudonym, A.B.C.¹⁸ Little did the author of this polemical attack on Krleža, Bogumil Herman,¹⁹ know that while Krleža may have indeed strayed towards the right, he was in fact (as history would show, and just like Jesus) headed in the right direction. Getting there was not easy, however; the dramatic and polarizing social and political circumstances, in which the shock of the 1929 royal dictatorship in Yugoslavia, followed by the fascist overtake of Europe, made Krleža's repeated provocations of what he saw as his peers' parroting of doctrinaire dictates, with no true aesthetic results, seem increasingly out of place.²⁰ As Jovan Popović, one of Krleža's leftist detractors put it: "The time in which we live is the time of 'either—or' [...] the writers

¹⁷ Apart from the nationalist opposition, the newly founded Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, was faced with strong leftist opposition. In the first elections in 1919, the freshly formed Communist Party of Yugoslavia came out as the leading opposition party, winning almost 13% of the votes and fifty-nine seats in the Parliament; it beat the Social Democratic party by 50.000 votes, attracting a large part of its voters. Already in December 1920, however, the Communist Party was banned and its activities resumed illegally, coordinated by a leadership in exile, in subordination to the Soviet central leadership. Krleža's first journal, *Plamen*, was banned in 1919 precisely due to its association with the Communist movement.

¹⁸ The author behind the polemical text was Bogumil Hermann, and it was published in the fourth issue of the magazine *Kultura* in 1933. According to apocryphal gospels, *Quo vadis, domine?* is the question that Peter posed to the resurrected Jesus, whom he encountered while running away from Rome, where Christians were being persecuted.

¹⁹ The name Bogomil, incidentally, declares the author of the pamphlet as "dear to God," Bogumil, from *Bog* (God) and *mil/mio* (dear). Ironically, it also evokes the medieval Bogomils.

²⁰ Although the Communist Party was banned already in 1920, and the communist activists were submitted to ongoing persecution, the situation in Yugoslavia was particularly grave after the introduction of the 1929 dictatorship, when the abolition of National Assembly was accompanied by the abolition of political parties, the shrinking freedom of speech and intensified censorship. Oppositional action became virtually unimaginable, with student groups at universities and literary magazines being among the rare platforms where alternative political views could be (more implicitly than explicitly) articulated. Communist activities had been banned for a decade even before the dictatorship. The press regularly featured news about persecution and execution of communists, although their activities were reduced to what seem like only loosely organized, benevolent actions of printing leaflets and unsuccessfully trying to engage and mobilize workers. See Djilas, *Memoir of a Revolutionary*.

should choose their front, or otherwise the front will choose them. There is no neutral ground.”²¹

The Yugoslav “conflict on the literary left,” as critic and theorist Stanko Lasić memorialized it in the early 1970s, ran parallel to similar international debates that attempted to define the nature and the goals of Marxist aesthetics during the 1920s and the 1930s, in relation to, on the one hand, radical modernist and avant-garde aesthetic experiments, and, on the other, various attempts by the Soviet intellectual and political vanguard to define an aesthetics in line with revolutionary principles.²² Initially, these attempts did not involve the Party, but were scattered among different groups and their respective programs. The resolution of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party in 1925 stated merely a general striving towards proletarian culture engaged in a class war, while recognizing that

²¹ Jovan Popović, cited in Lasić, *Sukob na književnoj ljevici*, 70. This resonates with other accounts of the period which defined Marxist thought at the time. As Fredric Jameson has written, introducing his book on *Marxism and Form* to American readers in the 1970s, this was “a world in which social conflict was sharpened and more clearly visible, a world which projected a tangible model of the antagonism of the various classes toward each other, both within the individual nation-states and on the international scene as well — a model as stark as the Popular Front or the Spanish Civil War, where people were called on to take sides and to die, which are, after all, always the most difficult things,” Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), xvii. François Furet’s account of the first half of the twentieth century is equally one of a radically polarized world, the clash between two ideologies, Fascism and Communism, both of which managed to attract intellectual elites, as well as the masses, François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Deborah Furet (University of Chicago Press, 1999).

²² Lasić, *Sukob na književnoj ljevici*. Some of the key questions that informed these debates were: Is art able to merely reflect or also transform the world? Does its effectiveness depend primarily on the content it presents, or does the form play an equally important role? In order for art to represent or advance the proletarian class struggle and revolutionary consciousness, must it also be created by members of the proletariat, or at least artists who are Communist Party members? Alternatively, does bourgeois art also have a lesson to teach, and if so, should one take into consideration only bourgeois art of the past, or include the art of the present made by bourgeois artists or non-Party members? Is modern art’s emphasis on the individual freedom of expression, aesthetic experiment and autonomy, to be considered as formalist, and therefore, reactionary, and even (in its presumed irrationalism and decadence), as complicit with Fascism. For an early overview of Marxist aesthetics, see Henri Arvon, *Marxist Aesthetics*, trans. H. Lane (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973), and for a selection of representative debates, involving members of the so-called Frankfurt School, see Theodor W Adorno et al., *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso, 1990). Among the vast literature mostly discussing individual national contexts, see in particular Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London; New York: Verso, 2010), Eugene Lunn, *Marxism and Modernism: An Historical Study of Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin, and Adorno* (University of California Press, 1982), James F. Murphy, *The Proletarian Moment: The Controversy Over Leftism in Literature* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

such culture was not yet existent but represented a future goal, without prescribing a style or method with which this goal was to be achieved.²³ The unearthed writings of Marx and Engels on art offered no tangible program either; as Henri Arvon concludes, in these fragmented reflections art is conceived as simultaneously “totally dependent on the social situation, at times as completely autonomous, and at times as an instrument of political action.”²⁴ The writings nonetheless contained several important ideas that would shape future discussions, among which was the notion of *Tendenz*, or tendency/tendentiousness, a term appropriated from the Young German Movement, which, according to Arvon, for Marx and Engels implied simply an opposition to “pure art,” and the process of connecting the work with its “social praxis.”²⁵

Following the more or less decentralized experiments of the 1920s in the Soviet Union, in the period from 1928 to 1932 the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP) emerged as a force with a more concrete program, in which art was placed in relation to the concept of dialectical materialism and the artist conceived as an embodiment of the “living person,” an authentic social being immersed in the real-life events of her time. The 1930 Kharkov conference, the second International Conference of Proletarian and Revolutionary Writers that gathered representatives of twenty-three countries, is typically seen as the “first serious attempt by the international cultural left to formulate a unified program for revolutionary artists and writers,” including the idea that “the method of

²³ Murphy, *The Proletarian Moment*, 21-35.

²⁴ Arvon, *Marxist Aesthetics*, 12. The fragmented writings of Marx and Engels on art that began appearing in magazines in the early 1930s were first synthesized in 1933 by Mikhail Lifschitz and Franc Schiller, at the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow, where Georg Lukács will also work after his emigration to the Soviet Union.

²⁵ Arvon, *Marxist Aesthetics*, 36.

creative art is the method of dialectic materialism.”²⁶ The split among the French surrealists, the so-called “Affaire Aragon” that gradually exploded in the aftermath of this conference, greatly informed the debates in the Yugoslav context.²⁷ Against Louis Aragon, the Belgrade surrealists sided with André Breton and his defense of metaphorical, associative and not purely referential function of poetic language. This, in turn, antagonized local supporters of “social literature,” and although Krleža was not a proponent of surrealism – his ambivalent relation to the avant-garde is a frequent trope in Yugoslav criticism²⁸ – he found himself on the same side with surrealists in the conflict. This solidarity was strengthened in 1939 by his editorial collaboration with the Belgrade surrealist Marko Ristić on the *Pečat* (Stamp) magazine whose “Trotskyist” tendencies were soon denounced by the Party organs, a denunciation that also sealed Krleža’s alienation from the party. As Lasić reminds his readers, as he cites Ristić as one among nineteen European surrealists to sign Breton’s “Second Manifesto of Surrealism” in 1930, and a supporter of the new magazine *Le surréalisme au service de la révolution* (Surrealism in the Service of the Revolution, “to state in Yugoslavia in the 1930s that communist revolution is the only solution for humanity was an act of courage par excellence.”²⁹ However, while the revolutionary positions of Belgrade

²⁶ Barbara Foley, *Radical Representations: Politics and Form in U.S. Proletarian Fiction, 1929-1941* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 73. In the period from 1927 to 1934, several important international conferences on literature were organized in the Soviet Union.

²⁷ The “Affaire” began when Louis Aragon, who was supposed to represent the Surrealist Movement at the 1930 Kharhiov conference, declared instead full commitment to “proletarian literature,” which he later claimed to have been pressured into. However, the split between him and André Breton was final by 1932, when Aragon distanced himself from Breton’s “poetic” defense of his pro-Soviet poem “Front rouge” (Red Front, 1930), accused to incite public unrest. Carrie Noland argues that the Affaire Aragon has greatly informed not only the writing of Aimé Césaire, but, even more generally, the “black front” and postcolonial theory, including Frantz Fanon and Edward Said, Carrie Noland, “Red Front/black Front: Aimé Césaire and the Affaire Aragon,” *diacritics* 36, no. 1 (2007). See also the summary of the events surrounding the Affaire in the same text (73-76).

²⁸ See, however, Predrag Brebanović’s recent study, which affirms Krleža’s status as an avant-garde writer, Predrag Brebanović, *Avangarda krležijana: pismo ne o avangardi* (Zagreb: Arkzin, 2016).

²⁹ Lasić, *Sukob na književnoj ljevici*.

surrealists were thus explicitly stated, from the perspective of Kharkov conclusions surrealism's fault was to be found in the obsession with the interiorities of the human mind, Freudianism, irrationalism, and, hence, individualism.

The Kharkov conference has become a kind of specter of the history of leftist literature, denoting the rigidity and dogmatism that the Soviet writers tried to impose on their international comrades all over the world. However, as James F. Murphy showed, such characterizations, at least in the case of the United States, were to a large extent the product of subsequent accounts by American participants close to the New York leftist magazine *Partisan Review*, who portrayed themselves (after leaving the Communist Party and becoming first Trotskyites, then ultimately, fervent anti-communists) as radical subverters of the presumed oppressive dogma.³⁰ Such analyses, based on reevaluations and transnational recontextualizations of primary sources serve as warnings about the ideological underpinnings of the histories of the aesthetics debates of the 1930s, and the dichotomy that is most often staged between an oppressive Soviet dictate and an individualist struggle for the freedom of artistic creation. The historiography of the Yugoslav conflict on the left has forged Miroslav Krleža into one such freedom-fighter, but only since the late 1960s, and primarily thanks to Lasić's pioneering book. According to its editor Slavko Goldstein, this was the first book that resuscitated Krleža from his earlier position as villain in the story told

³⁰ With this maneuver, they assumed the role of intellectual heroes illuminating a more sophisticated view of proletarian literature – and denouncing Stalinism – while at the same time triumphing over the *New Masses*, another US leading leftist journal, which ostensibly remained faithful to the Soviet dictates. In fact, as Murphy shows, all critical points against “leftism” in the US debates were already an integral part of the RAPP discussions, as well as earlier discussions in *New Masses*, Murphy, *The Proletarian Moment*, 1-18.

by Yugoslav Communists, who, despite “forgiving” Krleža for his pre-war deviations, nonetheless insisted on the correctness of their own positions in the literary conflict.³¹

Although Lasić offered a subtle dialectical analysis of the conflict, in which he demystified the engrossment of both sides in different versions of the same Salvation myth and belief in an Absolute Synthesis (in different ways, between art and revolution), Krleža still emerged from his text as a giant who, in his polemical response *Dijalektički antibarbarus* (Dialectical Antibarbarus, 1939), easily chewed and spat out the minor, untalented figures and their aesthetically impotent dogmas. Whereas it is beyond the scope of both my research and my argument to provide a thorough reevaluation of the debates, I wish to return to two key points of contention – Krleža’s 1929 novel, *The Return of Philip Latinowicz*, and his aesthetic manifesto, *Predgovori Podravskeim motivima Krste Hegedušića* (Foreword to the Drava Motifs by *Krsto Hegedušić*, 1933) – and find in them a set of contentions that move beyond the clash of art and revolution, and even, beyond fascism and communism. This “beyond” is what had tormented Krleža in 1919, in his “Croatian Literary Lie” manifesto, and what ultimately torments Lasić fifty years later, namely, the question of South Slavic colonial difference. Here, I revert again from Yugoslav to South Slavic, because this question is something that again concerns “the South Slav people,” and even, “a peoples.” It also seems to concern specifically the visual arts, and thus shifts the Yugoslav version of the “literary conflict” not only beyond the clash of art and revolution, but also beyond literature, placing

³¹ Slavko Goldstein, “Sukob na književnoj ljevici: kulna knjiga jedne epohe” [Conflict on the literary left: the cult book of an epoch], *Jutarnji list*, April 5 2013, <http://www.jutarnji.hr/-sukob-na-književnoj-ljevici---kulna-knjiga-jedne-epohe/1100696/>, last accessed December 2 2013. However, in her contribution to the exhibition catalogue *Social art and surrealism*, published in 1969, that is, before Lasić’s book, Božica Čosić even more explicitly posits Krleža as a hero resisting the dictate. Božica Čosić, “Socijalna umetnost u Srbiji,” *1929-1950: nadrealizam, postnadrealizam, socijalna umetnost, umetnost NOR-a, socijalistički realizam* (Belgrade: Muzej savremene umetnosti Beograd, 1969).

it rather amongst the ruins of Meštrović's *Vidovdan Temple*, a ruin, that is, of Yugoslav exhibitionary nationalism.

Manifesto of “our realism” as the formula of Yugoslav aesthetics (the vulgar materialist)

Lovorka Magaš and Petar Prelog have argued that the positions that would come to define the conflict were initially consolidated around the figure of German Dada painter and caricaturist Georg Grosz, and Krleža's essays (dating to 1926 and 1927) that presented Grosz as a prime example of the revolutionary “tendency” in art.³² In these texts, Krleža affirmed the key leftist trope: “Today, an indisputable class struggle is ongoing, and if an artist is indifferent towards this struggle, when he takes a so-called neutral stand, he is in fact not neutral, but is siding with the stronger.”³³ Later, of course, he will be accused precisely of failing to take both a stand and a side.³⁴ His failure to take a stand stems again from taking a “third” stand, that is, refusing to choose between the “absolutes” of art and revolution, as well as refusing the very identification of the absolute of art – aestheticism, poetry, irrationality, individualism, etc. – with fascism. However, this does not mean that he takes the side of “art,” or even, of individualism, which is how his opponents, and most of his later interpreters, read the split caused by the *Foreword to Krsto Hegedušić's Drava Motifs*. Instead

³² Lovorka Magaš and Petar Prelog, “Nekoliko aspekata utjecaja Georgea Grosza,” *Radovi Instituta za povijest umjetnosti* 33 (2009). Krleža's first essay on Grosz was published in *Jutarnji list* in 1926, and the second one in *Književna republika* in 1927, see Magaš and Prelog, 229.

³³ Krleža, cited in Magaš and Prelog, “Nekoliko aspekata utjecaja Georgea Grosza,” 237, ft 21.

³⁴ His own, “Krleža Affair,” which by 1940 caused a split between himself and the Yugoslav Communist Party, was also reflected in his decision not to join the partisan struggle during WW2, and instead remain “neutral,” keeping a low profile in Zagreb (capital of the fascist Croatian puppet state), and constructing a narrative of the past in his diaries. On his diary notes, subsequently published *Davni dani* (Bygone Days), see Suzana Marjanić, “Apocalypse and Golgotha in Miroslav Krleža's Olden Days Memoirs and Diaries 1914-1921/1922,” in *Shapes of Apocalypse. Arts and Philosophy in Slavic Thought*, edited by Andrea Oppo, 153–73 (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2013).

as a celebration of artistic autonomy and individual talent with which he opposed the presumed dogma of social literature, and later, socialist realism, Krleža's text must be seen as a manifesto of something that can be named "our realism."

The very selection of Georg Grosz as the model revolutionary artist in 1926 speaks to the realist commitment. As Magaš and Prelog convincingly showed, Grosz's work, via the impact of Krleža's texts, became a model in "the process of articulating the idea about an independent, national artistic expression," which was among the aims declared in the 1929 manifesto of the artistic association *Zemlja* (Land), while, in turn, *Zemlja*'s founding member Krsto Hegedušić emerged in Krleža's 1933 "Foreword" as the "local" counterpart to Georg Grosz (and to Pieter Brueghel).³⁵ The art group *Zemlja*, then, became a materialization of Krleža's aesthetics as defined in his reflections on Grosz, where a socialist, revolutionary political orientation merged with the imperative to create art as a response to the local context, and to do that by embracing decidedly realist – and not avant-garde – means.³⁶ Indeed, Group *Zemlja*'s manifesto declared as its main goal "the independence of our artistic expression," and identified social art, collective work, the struggle against *l'art-pour-l'art* and against foreign trends such as impressionism and neoclassicism, as means to achieve that goal.³⁷ After centuries of political and cultural subordination to a number of Western European nations, the manifesto maintained, Croatian culture could now strive for

³⁵ Magaš and Prelog, "Nekoliko aspekata utjecaja Georgea Grosza," 230.

³⁶ Krleža's texts on Grosz were the "program before the [actual] program," that is the 1919 manifesto of *Zemlja*, Magaš and Prelog, "Nekoliko aspekata utjecaja Georgea Grosza," 229.

³⁷ Cited in Josip Depolo, "Zemlja 1929-1935" in *1929-1950: nadrealizam, postnadrealizam, socijalna umetnost, umetnost NOR-a, socijalistički realizam*, 38. See also Petar Prelog, "Pitanje nacionalnog identiteta u Podravskim motivima Krste Hegedušića," *Radovi Instituta za povijest umjetnosti* 36 (2012). for the discussion of national identity in the art of this period in Croatia.

autonomy, in cultural dialogue with other Yugoslav nations, or through the idea of a unified Yugoslav culture.³⁸

This last part is at the same time the one elided in Magaš and Prelog's analysis, which rightly points to the "national" dimensions of not only *Zemlja*, but also Krleža's "Foreword," the key text around which the "conflict on the left" exploded. But what is the dimension of the national dimension? In another text, Prelog reads the "regional" focus of Krleža's "Foreword" – his discussion of the relationship between Krsto Hegedušić's art and the rural Croatian Drava region – as evidence of the text's "national" investments.³⁹ Moreover, Prelog notes that Krleža's text, with its central place in the "conflict," marks a split within "the corpus of so-called social literature whose orientation is decidedly Yugoslav." This implies that Krleža's intervention – despite the fact that Krleža "does not take a clear attitude towards such [Yugoslav] orientation," and despite the fact he does not explicitly address the question of national identity⁴⁰ – could also be an act of national splitting (the splitting of a Croatian from the Yugoslav "corpus"), and not simply a matter of aesthetic dispute. The split is certainly national, and not merely aesthetic, but it is Croatian only to the extent that Krleža's Croatian investments are inseparable from his Yugoslav ones, just like they were in "Croatian Literary Lie," and in *Zemlja*'s manifesto, for that matter. And this is despite Krleža's negation, as Magaš and Prelog do not fail to mention, of "Meštrović's 'Vidovdan ideology.'"⁴¹

³⁸ Depolo, 38.

³⁹ Prelog, "Pitanje nacionalnog identiteta."

⁴⁰ Prelog, 206.

⁴¹ Magaš and Prelog, "Nekoliko aspekata utjecaja Georgea Grosza," 229.

In fact, the inseparability of his Croatian from his Yugoslav investments make him the true heir of both Meštrović's "ideology" and the Illyrian movement, both of which were similarly immersed in exploring relations between the "Croatian" and the "Yugoslav," and both of whose explorations he negated, but only in order to make them better – "to entrench [them] more firmly in [their] area of competence," as Greenberg might say.⁴² In other words, the critique is an internal one, and even if it may be the case that Krleža's "national" investments in the "Foreword" may have been specifically and synchronically Croatian, that is, Croatian at that particular moment – in the aftermath of the assassination of Croatian parliamentary representative Stjepan Radić, and in the midst of King Alexander's "state Yugoslavism" – they are still inseparable from his ongoing dialectical and diachronic "work" on the Yugoslav topic, regardless of how much this work feeds precisely on its situatedness in the Croatian "corpus." What else is Yugoslavism if not the working out of the relations between a contingent situation and universal anticipation (of the new, of new relations, and not simply a new nation, to come)?

In this sense, the use of the possessive pronoun "our" – both in its Croatian inflection, as it appears in Krleža's texts and in group Zemlja's manifesto, and in its Serbian inflection, which comprises a set of parallel investments by Belgrade writers into delineating what is "ours" in the interwar period – once again becomes the "anonymous" site of this ongoing work on the proper name Yugoslav, the work on a name which always threatens to slide into no-name, into a "Yugoslavism without limits," beyond the threshold of

⁴² "The essence of modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of the characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself – not in order to subvert it, but to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence." Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," in Eric Dayon, ed. *Art and Interpretation: An Anthology of Readings in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* (Ontario: Broadview Press, 1998), 454.

signification. As Branka Prpa-Jovanović showed in her research on the problem of cultural identity “between East and West” in the texts of Serbian intellectuals in the interwar period, Belgrade artists and writers started from the same negation of “Kosovo,” that is, of the Yugoslav Vidovdan myth, on the ruin of which they found themselves, the same ruin on which I claim that Krleža should be placed.⁴³ “Yugoslav ‘culture’ is an alien and rotten apple,” exclaimed the avant-garde artist and writer Ljubomir Micić in the seventh issue of his magazine *Zenit* in 1921.⁴⁴ Almost a perfect mirror to Krleža’s “Croatian literary lie,” Micić’s manifesto rejects “our only tradition: Kraljević Marko and Kosovo,” a heroism that ended in WW1, when “the Balkan-Serbian man barbarously died for a *physical* freedom and the freedom of borders – for the freedom of an oppressed race,” which should now be closed as a “dead, bloody chapter,” in order to begin a struggle for “the freedom and the affirmation of the all-human spirit.”⁴⁵ Most of the answers to the question “With what to replace Kosovo?,” as Prpa-Jovanović shows, were versions of decidedly anti-European discourses, which, echoing Oswald Spengler asserted the spiritual superiority of the Slavic soul against Western materialism and decadence. Even the Belgrade surrealists had to respond to accusations that they were merely importing foreign trends, to which they emphatically retorted that Belgrade was a branch of the worldwide movement of surrealism, an equal participant and not a mere “reproductive reflection.”⁴⁶

Rather than a pacifying, “single harmony,” the work on the quintessentially Yugoslav possessive pronoun “our” continued to be a site of contestation, for example when another

⁴³ Prpa, “Između Istoka i Zapada.”

⁴⁴ Ljubomir Micić, cited in Prpa, “Između Istoka i Zapada,” 8.

⁴⁵ Micić, cited in Prpa, “Između Istoka i Zapada,” 8.

⁴⁶ Cited in *1929-1950: nadrealizam, postnadrealizam, socijalna umetnost, umetnost NOR-a, socijalistički realizam*, 11.

Zenitist writer, Branko Ve Poljanski, posed in 1925 the question of “‘Us’ at the decorative exhibition in Paris,” contending that although he is not speaking as an “anti-Croat,” he still must state that “our” pavilion – that is, the Pavilion of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes at the Paris exhibition – is not “ours,” but Croatian, and that “our art” does not equal a few “*Kulturтреger* from Zagreb.”⁴⁷ Poljanski’s denunciation also involves a more explicitly chauvinist discourse about Croats “reaping the cream from our political life and public life in general,” as well as a sarcastic note that points to the Germanic origin of “the ‘Croatian’ name of this ‘constructor’ – Ibl-er!” – the reference is to Drago Ibler, architect and founding member of Zemlja. Certainly, it is not inconceivable that Zemlja’s search for the “independence of our visual expression” should be understood within precisely the site of contestation opened up by the signifier “our,” as well as the imposition of the “our” of “state Yugoslavism.” It is perhaps within such a contestation that, as Magaš and Prelog imply, their “our” is in fact a Croatian one. However, not only their manifesto, in which they place this Croatian quest in relation to the Yugoslav one, but also, ironically, the very fact that in Magaš and Prelog’s analysis Georg Grosz emerges as a pan-Yugoslav phenomenon par excellence, testifies to the ultimate instability of the possessive collectivization inherent in the search for “our artistic expression.” As Magaš and Prelog write, besides the already mentioned Krleža’s texts, the Zagreb-based communist magazine *Radnička borba* published a translation of Grosz’s text, most likely in Krleža’s translation; Otto Bihalji Merin wrote affirmatively about Grosz in the “Belgrade magazine *Nova literatura*” in 1929 (with the Zagreb-based Ljubo Babić in the editorial board) – a text that, in fact, made Grosz famous

⁴⁷ Branko Ve Poljanski, “‘Mi’ na dekorativnoj izložbi u Parizu,” *Zenit*, 1925.

across the “entire Yugoslav space”; a text on Georg Grosz by Vilim Svečnjak was published in the “Belgrade [magazine] *Stožer*” in 1935; his works were presented at the international exhibition of German contemporary art and literature, held in Belgrade and in Zagreb in 1931, and finally, Grosz’s monumental solo exhibition in Zagreb in 1932 was most likely again facilitated by Bihalji Merin, through his contacts with Berlin leftist circles, including his collaboration with Georg Lukács on magazine *Die Linkskurve*.⁴⁸

Could it not be, then, that Grosz’s particular approach to realism, first “translated” for specific, “our” circumstances by Krleža in 1926 and later in 1933, in the controversial “Foreword,” is the basis not only of a Croatian search for “our artistic expression,” but also one that places this “our” below the threshold of proprietary national signification, the region that is more properly defined as Yugoslav? Furthermore, as critics such as Božidar Gagro already noted, “Grosz’s landscape of degenerate bourgeois society and the chaotic urban environment becomes in Krleža the landscape of the ‘Pannonian mud,’” Grosz’s Berlin, as Magaš and Prelog conclude, with its exploited proletariat and its urban poor is transposed by Hegedušić into “the poor and oppressed peasantry” of the Croatian Podravina region.⁴⁹ It is this territory that Krsto Hegedušić will paint, and, even more importantly, the territory whose inhabitants he will teach to paint, providing them with the signifying tools with which to begin their own “realist” investigations. The transposition of European realism to this specific site only indicates that the our-realist translation of Grosz still takes place at the territory of the inarticulate, illegible “a peoples,” which is precisely the site of

⁴⁸ Magaš and Prelog, “Nekoliko aspekata utjecaja Georgea Grosza,” 229, 232-233.

⁴⁹ Božidar Gagro, cited in Magaš and Prelog, 230, and Magaš and Prelog, 230.

Yugoslav aesthetics. This site is, then, what Krleža's "Fanonist" translation of Grosz shares with the Illyrian movement's "our people," Vladimir Dvorniković's "similar singing," and Ivan Meštrović's "greater province of peasants," despite – or precisely because – Krleža negates these earlier quests for authenticity as failures. Ultimately, the element that determines Krleža's "similarity" with those earlier quests is also the element that prevents Krleža from "taking sides" in the conflict on the left – namely the "spasm," as Dvorniković would say, induced by the mark of "colonial difference."⁵⁰

For this reason, Frantz Fanon's definition of national "authenticity" in *Les Damnés de la terre* (*The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961) is the best segue into the discussion of Krleža's "Foreword," as well as his novel *The Return of Philip Latinowitz*:

This creator, who decides to portray national truth, turns, paradoxically enough, to the past, and so looks at what is irrelevant to the present. What he aims for in his inner intentionality is the detritus of social thought, external appearances, relics, and knowledge frozen in time. The colonized intellectual, however, who strives for cultural authenticity, must recognize that national truth is first and foremost the national reality. He must press on until he reaches that place of bubbling trepidation from which knowledge will emerge."⁵¹

A place of bubbling trepidation is precisely what Krleža found in a series of drawings of village life by Krsto Hegedušić, a finding that, in the form of the controversial "Foreword" to Hegedušić's exhibition, sparked the central controversy around which the literary conflict exploded. [Figure 44] In this text Krleža explicitly denounced the uncritical reproduction of the theses of tendentiousness and the social function of art. Indeed, Krleža accused their proponents of preaching, in a Jacobinist manner, a correct, rationalist line from which there can be no straying. What is worse, these imported theses reached the local arena with at least

⁵⁰ Mignolo, "The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference."

⁵¹ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 161.

an eighty-year delay.⁵² In contrast to the rationalist dogma of dialectical materialism, Krleža proposed that art is neither a matter of brain nor reason, but of subjective “excitations” resulting in “artistic truths that emerge more from the hindbrain, from shady passions and bodily secrets, often out of impure impulses and deranged intuitions, and almost always in an unreasonable, spiteful and elementary manner, like a fever.”⁵³ Certainly, a leftist critic was duly alarmed by this outburst of irrational and visceral excitation, which, interestingly, had much in common not only with surrealism, but also with Dvorniković’s analysis of the place of the unconscious in Yugoslav folk song, itself informed by uncontrollable excitations arising out of troubled history. The already mentioned A.B.C./Quo vadis Krleža? response soon appeared in the leftist journal *Kultura* (Culture) and with its dramatic title accused Krleža of “fleeing the social imperatives of our time,” straying from the principle of *partijnost* (party-mindedness), deviating to the right and turning his own literary work into solipsistic and pessimistic ruminations of a loner, aristocrat, and renegade.⁵⁴

The majority of interpretations (and, usually, defenses) of Krleža’s position against these accusations have ended up reinforcing A.B.C.’s charges by emphasizing Krleža’s commitment to artistic subjectivity, talent and individualism as a means of resistance to the party-line dictate.⁵⁵ However, what Krleža designated as “subjective invention” turns out to be more complex than when referred to, as it usually is, by a few general remarks. For example, in one of the polemical passages Krleža derides the cold, technical approach of a

⁵² Miroslav Krleža, “Predgovor *Podravskeg motivima* Krste Hegedušića” in Miroslav Krleža, *Eseji* (Sarajevo: Oslobođenje, 1973), 26.

⁵³ Krleža, 23.

⁵⁴ Cited in Bogert, *The Writer as Naysayer*, 115.

⁵⁵ For example, those by Bogert, as well as Lasić, *Sukob na književnoj ljevici*. and Velimir Visković, *Sukob na ljevici: Krležina uloga u sukobu na ljevici* (Beograd: Narodna knjiga/Alfa, 2001). Available at:

leftist critic's assessment according to which Hegedušić's painting *Flood* (1932) shows that "life along deregulated river banks is hard." [Figure 45] Krleža's aim is to prove to what extent subjective invention enabled the artist to depict the harshness of that life, precisely because it cannot be disentangled from the artist's own experience, and from the fact that he was "destined," since childhood, "to watch the muddy Drava river for years, to see it roll as a boggy flood along the Podravina ivy trees, to carry along pig carcasses and human corpses," etc.⁵⁶ Far from designating Hegedušić as a painter preoccupied with his own, subjective world, Krleža framed him as the first among "our painters" to see "our world" with such strong sense for reality; in fact, his work is a "diagnosis of our reality."⁵⁷ This is Krleža's primary concern: rather than a defense of artistic individualism, his foreword is a manifesto of realism, written to counter those who preached tendentiousness in art, and not in order to deny but precisely in order to reaffirm, the quest for reality. Krleža, however, offered a radically different way in which art is able to "subjectively reflect" objective reality, or what he identified as "our reality," beyond the bland, rationalist formulas advocated by the partyminded camp. If anything, the text could be accused of "vulgar materialism," another anathema of debates on Marxist aesthetics, but certainly not of idealist subjectivism. I propose that Krleža here, indeed, becomes a vulgar materialist, and strategically so, in order to demonstrate that vulgar materialism is the exact diagnosis of "our reality," a reality emerging from the history of oppression.

⁵⁶ Krleža, "Predgovor *Podravskim motivima* Krste Hegedušića"

⁵⁷ Miroslav Krleža, "Predgovor *Podravskim motivima* Krste Hegedušića"

Despite its title, discussion of Hegedušić's work comprises only a minor part of the "Foreword," which is in fact an aesthetical treatise on the nature of beauty in art. It is built around Krleža's central claim, namely, that beauty, ever since the Altamira caves, is grounded in one thing, "blood." Blood, flesh, teeth, corpses, graves, war, death, warm bowels of dead slaughtered animals, murder, rotten eroticism – these are, if they can at all be summarized, the key motifs of Krleža's essay. For him, they are the true sources of beauty, the "earthly excitations" at the root of artistic creation, itself defined as a way in which the earthly and the ephemeral achieves an eternal affect. This predominance of blood is equally valid for the religious art of Fra Angelico, where God is present "within those bodily bound realities as some kind of decadent *Stimmung*,"⁵⁸ just as much as it is for Pieter Breughel, in whose paintings there is "always someone who urinates, someone who vomits, and someone who's swinging from the gallows."⁵⁹ Art can be, and usually is, Krleža insists, complicit with exploitation and oppression: "art makes evident the fact that people like to bow to the stronger [...] and are quite indifferent towards the death of their neighbor;" in fact, "if one could define visual arts by referring to some higher cult, it would be the cult of murder and murderers. A good two thirds of all known paintings are nothing but a mere exaltation of moral, military, legal, sexual, and pilfering murder."⁶⁰

These radical postulates on the nature of beauty, and the inseparable link between art and "earthly excitations," demonstrate why art cannot be grasped by the interpretative and prescriptive models of rationalist-leftist aesthetics that aims to faithfully reflect reality. If art

⁵⁸ Krleža, "Predgovor *Podravskega motivima* Krste Hegedušića," 11.

⁵⁹ Krleža, 36.

⁶⁰ Krleža, 19.

is to be realist, it can be so only by remaining true to those excitations, without sublimating them in the form of decorative exaltation. According to Krleža, Hegedušić's drawings are a prime example of such realism: they are the "negation of our contemporary, agrarian, Maria-Theresian absurd," which reveals *our* true reality, namely "the Pannonian mud," "the arrest stories," "the dirty walls," "the harsh, drunken, rough, elementary peasants," "the swollen noses," "their awkward movements," "the world of staunch necks and low foreheads still believing in the Devil and werewolves, the church and the witches" – again, the feverishly enumerative list can hardly be summarized. Without doubt, in the "Foreword" Krleža himself did what he demanded of art, and presented an aesthetico-philosophical "physiognomy" of "our reality," one conceived as the pure opposite of celebratory odes by late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century nationalist Yugoslav romantic poets, as well as of the equally romantic, ethnographic (and racist) explorations of the virile physiognomies of the Yugoslav, or "Dinaric," "Balkan," and "Panonian" race. What is nonetheless retained as a common theme in both Krleža and the nationalist-romantics is the theme of collective suffering, of "our" destiny situated at the world periphery and mercilessly maneuvered by the greater powers: "The neurasthenic reaction to the commotion of those physiognomies of ours, as sorrowful living excrescences in the midst of ubiquitous gloom; upon which trample the imperatives of present-day Europe as the Atilas upon our vineyards and fields."⁶¹ Unlike romantic nationalists, however, Krleža offers no heroic twist to the story; just the opposite, the only envisioned future is a peculiar vision of "clay future," and even the past is nothing but a "dark curse": "Hegedušić's declassed and degenerate children are waterhead-idiots with

⁶¹ Krleža, 41.

a clay future and a dark curse of burglarious origin.”⁶² This, Krleža concludes, is no less “typically ours” and “homemade,” than all the “romantic props of ‘our own, homemade,’ tame Illyrian and Herderian pigeonhole.”⁶³

Although Krleža does not use the word realism in the “Foreword” – and only following 1934, and another writers congress in the Soviet Union, did “socialist realism” replace the earlier notions of tendentiousness and social literature – his text is a manifesto of realism, or more specifically, a manifesto of *our realism*, which I further propose must be read as the foundational text of Yugoslav aesthetics. This aesthetics, as discussed above, decidedly links beauty to bowels, blood and earthly excitations, an anti-rational realism that remains true to the sensorial root of “aesthetics,” as it was asserted by Alexander Baumgarten, who proposed aesthetics as a novel philosophical discipline in the eighteenth century.⁶⁴ Although, as Paul Guyer writes, the novelty of name “aesthetics” in Baumgarten did not also imply a radical departure from existing philosophies of art, his notion of sensible faculties as those that form the “analogue to reason” are what, in addition to his emphasis on the “emotional impact of art,” eventually opened “the way for much more radical reconceptions of aesthetic experience in Germany.”⁶⁵ Baumgarten developed the concept of *analogon rationis* (analogue to reason) in an earlier work, *Metaphysics*, in which he referred to the “lower faculties of cognition,” those situated beneath the level of *ratio* (reason), but which “comprise *that which is similar to reason (analogon rationis)*.”⁶⁶ Moreover, these lower faculties, which are not, in fact,

⁶² Krleža, 41.

⁶³ Krleža, 41.

⁶⁴ Alexander Baumgarten, *Aesthetica - Ästhetik : Lateinisch-Deutsche Ausgabe* (Paderborn: Fink Wilhelm, 2007).

⁶⁵ Paul Guyer. “18th Century German Aesthetics.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, no. Winter 2016 Edition

⁶⁶ Alexander Baumgarten, cited in Zalta, *18th Century German Aesthetics*.

subordinate to reason, but run parallel to it, are types of sensible perception tasked with “represent[ing] the connections among things.”⁶⁷

Although Baumgarten’s idea – his intervention that decenters the dominant place of reason in existing theories, and which can thus be seen as a critical act marked by “imperial difference”⁶⁸ – is ultimately one of mental powers geared towards the production of pleasure,⁶⁹ it should not come as surprise that in Krleža’s aesthetic enunciation of colonial difference the “lower faculties” are tasked with “making connections” whose ultimate ratio radically shifts the scale to the region of pain, torment and suffering. Krleža’s stimuli and excitations, which arise from the “hindbrain,” a place that, just like Baumgarten’s *analogon rationis*, is not brain but is analogous, *similar* to it, and which “make the connections” between the “Atilas,” “Europe,” “the agrarian, Maria-Theresian absurd” and the “Pannonian mud,” “degenerate children,” “awkward movements,” “arrest stories,” “swollen noses,” ultimately add up to a vision radically different from pleasure, the vision of “clay future.” Krleža’s undoubtedly unique, fiery, and tortured rhetoric, which he derives from a negation of the romantic idealization of the “typically ours,” still turns out, once again, to have something in common with the Illyrian and Dvorniković’s explorations of South Slav “similar singing,” as well as Meštrović’s simultaneously heroic and tortured, classical and deformed, physiognomy of the South Slav slaves and heroes. In particular, Dvorniković’s “muted tone” stands next to Krleža’s “hindbrain” as another articulation of an analogy/similarity to reason, which is, in contrast to Baumgarten’s anticipatory targeting of

⁶⁷ Alexander Baumgarten, cited in Zalta, *18th Century German Aesthetics*.

⁶⁸ That is, according to Mignolo’s classification, a critique that does not endanger the (Eurocentric) epistemic system as a whole, Mignolo, “The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference.”

⁶⁹ Zalta, *18th Century German Aesthetics*.

pleasure, historically attuned to pain. In all versions of Yugoslav aesthetics, the origin of the “deformation” of the Yugoslav physical, psychological – in fact, physiognomic-materialist – constitution, is to be located in history, or, more precisely, the history of oppression. They also all point to Yugoslavism as precisely an exploration of a set of “similarities” between “higher” and “lower” functions – the similarity, or analogy, between singing and similar singing, between the loud and muted tone, between the nation and “a peoples,” between imperial and colonial difference, between colonial pleasure and decolonial pain, between the pronoun “ours” and a proper name.

Towards socialist, self-managed, non-aligned Yugoslav aesthetics (the tormented Fanonist)

Krleža’s insistence on the body, on physiognomy, on art as a tortured, descriptive and ongoing *diagnosis*, is reminiscent of another aesthetic framework, Fredric Jameson’s recent theorization of the connection between realism and affect. In his book *The Antinomies of Realism*, Jameson identifies affect (decidedly distinguished from emotion) as an impulse associated “with the emergence of realism as such,” and standing in opposition to the other, narrative impulse.⁷⁰ This distinction between affect and narration is, according to Jameson, fundamentally a temporal one: affect interferes with the “past-present-future” temporality and introduces the time of “perpetual present.” The other key feature of affect in Jameson’s view is the crisis of language that it enacts, a crisis proportionate to “the emergence of the phenomenological body in language and representation,” which results, in mid-nineteenth-century literature, in a “competition between the system of named emotions and the

⁷⁰ Fredric Jameson, *The Antinomies of Realism* (London: Verso, 2013), 27.

emergence of nameless bodily states.”⁷¹ Furthermore, this increasingly diagnostic and medical obsession with the body is detached from its allegorical function; it does not necessarily perform a signifying function in the text, but instead becomes intensified and autonomized.⁷² The analytical framework that Jameson proposes is relevant not only for the kind of “our” brand of Yugoslav diagnostic, physiognomic-vulgar-materialist, hindbrain realism laid out in Krleža’s “Foreword,” but also his literary works, in particular, his 1932 novel *The Return of Philip Latinowicz*. This novel, whose deviations towards nihilism, solipsism and pessimism were also included in the “Quo vadis?” response to the “Foreword,” should be read as the literary counterpart to the aesthetic manifesto that Hegedušić’s drawings occasioned, and as the site of struggle towards what, taking a cue from Lasić, I identify as the “Fanonist” Yugoslav aesthetics.

After spending twenty-three years as a successful Fauve painter in Europe, Philip Latinowicz, the novel’s hero, decides to return home, to a small town in the North Croatian province, much like the one depicted in Hegedušić’s drawings. As in Jameson’s account of realism, Krleža’s hero – and concomitantly the narrative – suffers precisely from an excess of affect, which turns into an acute crisis of his creative, painterly powers, in which his perception of the world becomes increasingly fragmented and autonomized:

Nothing but details all around him [...] People pour down the street, faces move in procession, powdered complexions, pale, clownish, with slashes of burning lipstick on their mouths, short-sighted masks of women in mourning, faces of hunchbacks, lower jaws, long waxy fingers with purplish nails, all very ugly. Loathsome faces, inhuman snouts, branded with debauchery and vice, malice and care, sticky, burning

⁷¹ Jameson, 32.

⁷² Jameson, 35-44. See also the discussion of other emergent features related to the impulse of affect in these pages.

faces, carrot heads, negro jaws, firm set of teeth, sharp, carnivorous, and everything grey like a photographic negative.⁷³

Trapped within this “incessant, analytical disintegration of everything,” which became “an end in itself,” the painter is haunted by incoherent, autonomized sensations, especially scents and sounds, but is unable to translate them into his work, since all his ideas for a painting dissolve in the discouraging realization of the inadequacy of pictorial language to depict this violent stream of excitations.⁷⁴ (These, Dvorniković might have added, could be relieved by a song, or even a curse, but our hero is a modern artistic subject, estranged from the “people.”) While portraying this representational impotence of painting, Krleža’s narrative is itself obsessively busy with its own unending search for adequate articulation. Engrossed in an operation of incessant enumeration, it proceeds as a flood of nouns and adjectives, chased in turn by their own streams of modifiers, a lexical conglomerate that in itself orchestrates, rather than merely describes, the gap between the hero’s rush of experience and the static character of representation. This insupportable fragmentation of the painter’s world in a European metropole is what eventually prompts him to return home, in search for cohesion that could bring relief to his frustration. However, his return merely perpetuates the pain. For, what he finds upon returning is an even darker picture, one that promises to take him even further away from any hope towards representational and narrative closure, the picture, namely, of the “mere existence of matter.”⁷⁵ In addition, his return leads to the reactivation of childhood anxieties, the greatest of which is his illegitimate

⁷³ Miroslav Krleža, *The Return of Philip Latinović*, trans. Zora Depolo (Evanston Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1995), 31-33.

⁷⁴ Krleža, 39.

⁷⁵ Krleža, 59.

birth, and especially the rumor that the local bishop is his biological father. He ultimately learns that the truth is even worse, and that his father is a local aristocrat, the epitome of the provincial, snobbish and petty-bourgeois aristocracy that Philip fundamentally despises.

In uncovering the provincial aristocracy as the source of his hero's illegitimate birth, the narrative is at the same time uncovering the social and political origin of the utter disintegration of the painter's world. In the oppressive political and social circumstances, whether in the "decadent" cities of the West or in the muddy province under foreign monarchical rule, his artistic practice can only be a curse of incessant registration of details that reduce the artist to a mere receptacle of sensations amidst "the mere existence of matter." By the end of the novel, however, he at least manages to come up with the question of the proper subject of representation, the task facing the repatriated painter:

How to paint that smell of roasted pork, the noise of the fair, the horses' neighing, the cracking of whips, how to depict that barbaric, Pannonian, Scythian, Illyrian instinct for dynamic movement which urges drunken cabmen to drive their horses and carriages across a rotting bridge so that everything is dashed down into the mud with bleeding heads and broken bones – this self-destructive impulse of ours for the breaking of bones has not yet found its painter – is a matter of inspiration! One should deliberately set to work, tackle the problem, take the risk!⁷⁶

However, Philip lacked the creative "strength," and the "overwhelming flood of ideas" remained but a series of sketches, without painterly realization: "he did nothing, read nothing, but would lie about, beginning to feel silent remorse for within himself because of his inertness, and futile boredom."⁷⁷ Moreover, since he realizes the uselessness of his Fauvist style, in a way similar to that of other painters who renounced avant-garde European styles upon their return from the metropole, Philip must search for an alternative aesthetics

⁷⁶ Krleža, 157.

⁷⁷ Krleža, 159.

that could communicate with the backward “Pannonian mud.” Although the sources for Krleža’s figure of the alienated painter have always been sought among Croatian painters, in particular Ljubo Babić, the fact that Philip’s ultimate redemptive vision is that of crucified Christ – “a real Christ,” and not “an eighty-year-old Biedermeier daydreamer with fair curls and a beard” – makes for another analogy between Krleža and Meštrović, who, as was shown in the previous chapter, ended his own decolonial search for identity with the “perverted,” tormented figure of Christ’s suffering body.⁷⁸

Narrative cohesion of the world stuck in a perpetual present of matter and sabotaged by its self-destructive, bone-breaking, futile impulse – not to mention a world “intensely troubled by the uncertainty of [its] own origin,”⁷⁹ that is, Philip Latinowitz’s trouble with the uncertain origin of his own, Croatian-Latin proper name – would become available to Krleža only in the 1960s, when he wrote his first and last post-war novel, *Zastave* (Banners).⁸⁰ In this multi-volume (and unfinished) historical narrative, its hero Kamilo Emericki defies his Hungarian-aristocrat father, and at the same time transforms from a Yugoslav romantic nationalist into a revolutionary socialist. Dubravka Juraga reads *Banners* as an example of Georg Lukács’s realist historical novel, which, in this case, tells “the story of the prehistory of socialism.”⁸¹ Krleža’s main motivation for writing *Banners*, Juraga states, was the

⁷⁸ “Christ is no Romanized hermaphrodite, of whom old spinsters dream on church benches; a real Christ should be put on canvas for once to break forever with the falsity of all such pseudo-religious playing with the paint-brush and turning great painters’ conceptions into oleographs for sale at village fairs! This clash between the pagan, Pannonian environment and that pale Man who was hanged like a thief, but who as such remained a living symbol to this day – the visionary hatred of that higher Man who realizes from his cross, from that fantastic height from which all the hanged look down upon us, that the dirt under our feet can be dominated only by the clash of granite – this should be put on canvas for once!” Krleža, 156.

⁷⁹ Krleža, 148.

⁸⁰ Miroslav Krleža, *Zastave* (Sarajevo: Oslobođenje, 1976).

⁸¹ Dubravka Juraga, “Miroslav Krleža’s *Zastave*: Socialism, Yugoslavia, and the Historical Novel,” *South Atlantic Review* 62, no. 4 (1997).

frustration with the oblivion of past struggles fought so that socialist Yugoslavia could be born.⁸² As a “prehistory” of history, *Banners* is, then, a *Bildungsroman* of socialist Yugoslavia and, at the same time, a literary legitimization of the path that Yugoslav history had taken, from the beginning of the twentieth century to the illegal struggles of Communists in the royal Yugoslavia. In stark contrast with the disintegration of the hero’s world in the perpetual present filled only by an insupportable flux of affect in *The Return of Philip Latinović*, the socialist revolution gives cohesion to the post-war narrative, a narrative which is certain of its origin and even more importantly, of its historical teleology, by which the scandal of the illegitimate, aristocratic, petty-bourgeois and colonial origin of Yugoslavia, is resolved. In other (Hayden White’s) words, what had earlier been the Yugoslav history of “a South Slav peoples” in the tragic mode, transcribed as an aesthetics of torment and suffering, could finally become a comedy.⁸³

Even more importantly, the stages of the pre-history of Yugoslav socialism, which lead to the realization of an authentic Yugoslav path to socialism largely correspond to Krleža’s life. Indeed, the oblivion of past struggles, to which Juraga refers, must also be the oblivion of his own struggle in the conflict on the left, whose righteousness had not yet been acknowledged at the time when the first segments of *Banners* were published. Just like Krleža had to cross a Golgotha – which is not only a title of one of his early plays, but also the vision of Yugoslav aesthetics, the vision of “our realism” that the painter Philip conceived, but could not paint – Yugoslav communists had to go through their own stations of the

⁸² Juraga, 51.

⁸³ In the same sense in which Hayden White detects in Marx’s philosophy of history a transition from Tragedy to Comedy White, *Metahistory*.

cross, before the genre of Yugoslav history could change. The year 1948, when the Yugoslav Communist Party was expelled from the Cominform and when Yugoslavia found itself all alone in the world, is the redemptive moment of this mythical becoming of Yugoslavia. The split between Tito and Stalin was publicly memorized in Yugoslavia as a heroic deed, as Tito's famous and declarative "No!" to Stalin, but it was, in fact, a moment of extreme anxiety and insecurity of the Yugoslav leadership. A decade after the event, Fred Warner Neal wrote that "[v]arious Communist leaders have described to [him] bodily ailments that resulted from their perturbation at the time, and Tito's gall bladder trouble was attributed to a case of 'nerves' induced by the Cominform action."⁸⁴ It could be said, then, that Philip's and Hegedušić's disintegrated, vulgar-materialist physiognomies presaged this radical perturbation, in 1948, of both the individual and collective, communist Yugoslav body, a physiognomy itself tortured by an excess of affect, of disintegrating excitations, without guarantee of ever again reaching harmony and cohesion. However, in a victorious resolution, this perturbation led to the idiosyncratic political and economic experiment, through which the country formulated its economic and ideological politics of socialist self-management, a decentralized and democratized socialism, as well as the foreign politics of non-alignment and open borders.⁸⁵ Communist sympathizers all over the world, who lost faith in the Stalin-compromised communism, could now see Yugoslavia as an example of an alternate path to

⁸⁴ Fred Warner Neal, "The Communist Party in Yugoslavia," *The American Political Science Review* 51, no. 1 (1957).

⁸⁵ See also Jakovljević's extremely insightful analysis of not only the corporeal, affective and ideological crisis in this period, but also of the resulting transition from what he sees as the political economy – and not simply a style – of socialist realism, which was implemented immediately after 1945, and a transition to the political economy of "socialist aestheticism," as a dominant layer of Yugoslav political economy following 1950, Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 33-115. In fact, Jakovljević argues that "Yugoslavia's entire history followed a path of incomplete, erratic, uneven, ambiguous, and ceaseless disintegration of the political economy of socialist realism" (11).

be followed, as evidenced also by the level of historiographical “involvement,” as James Allcock put it, of Western historians into the history of “Yugoslav exceptionalism.”⁸⁶

This was a program that many artists and intellectuals could, without guilt, endorse, and to which they could make their own contribution. As Sveta Lukić wrote in his aesthetic treatise *Umetnost i kriterijumi* (Art and criteria, 1964), socialism provides a perspective; it, in principle, represents “a society to which the artist can say: yes!”⁸⁷ Once a renegade heretic, Krleža’s hereticism now (implicitly) became the new creed; in his celebrated speech at a literary congress in Ljubljana in 1952, which Lasić posits as the cathartic moment of the final resolution of the twenty-five-year-old literary polemics, Krleža painted a metaphorical picture of Yugoslavia’s idiosyncratic situation: “We have been sailing for already four years all on our own.”⁸⁸ Such free-floating autonomy, albeit without a guarantee of a final destination, endowed the Yugoslav writers and artists, Krleža further spoke, with a special opportunity to finally stop imitating Western Europe, because the West could not offer the tools needed to address the singular historical situation in which Yugoslavia found itself, namely “a time of acute revolution in a poor country that only recently managed to liberate

⁸⁶ John B Allcock, “Involvement and Detachment: Yugoslavia as an Object of Scholarship,” *Journal of Area Studies* 1, no. 3 (1993). Here, a special place should be given to the Research Unit in Yugoslav Studies, founded at the University of Bradford in 1967, and initiated by historian Fred Singleton, for whom Yugoslavia, as well as for a number of other British intellectuals at the time, signified more than an academic topic, and instead reflected his political, socialist commitments, which cannot be seen outside of British political scene at the time, and in particular, the British post-war Labor Party and its “welfare state.” As Allcock writes: “Although ‘state socialism’ has continued to provide a framework for the official ideology of the Labour Party until very recently, both the obvious internal problems of the system and the general discrediting of Stalinism (which really began only in 1956) left socialism in Britain with an increasingly serious difficulty in defining its own identity and the direction of its development. In this situation ‘socialist self-management’ in Yugoslavia was heard as a kind of oracle. Here, it seemed, was a form of socialism which ostensibly turned its back upon the legacy of Stalinism, developing genuinely original ideas about the character of a socialist society and economy, 152.

⁸⁷ Lukić, *Umetnost i kriterijumi*, 190.

⁸⁸ Miroslav Krleža, “Govor na kongresu književnika u Ljubljani,” reproduced in Miroslav Krleža, in Krleža, *Svjedočanstva vremena*, 7.

itself from foreign rule.”⁸⁹ Artists, Krleža stated – implicitly announcing his own historiographical mission that would be realized in *Banners*, as well as his work as head of the *Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia* – had a unique opportunity to reflect on this singular history, by tracing the disintegration of royalist Yugoslavia and the coming of the Yugoslav socialist revolution. At the same time as ceasing to imitate Europe, Yugoslav literature should resist the dictate of socialist realism, just like Tito resisted Stalin: “[W]e are being threatened by canons, in the name of ‘subjective reflection of objective reality.’”⁹⁰ As Yugoslav socialism advanced independently, so should Yugoslav literature “begin to speak its own language.”⁹¹ Krleža’s own earliest essay, “The Croatian Literary Lie,” in which he articulated the same need for autonomous, authentic literature, drawing inspiration from the medieval heretic sect of the Bogomils, could now also finally reach its resolution in the figure of Tito, whom Krleža presents as the symbol of “resistance to all forces that wish to return the country to a subcolonial state. Tito opposes Kreml, just like the Bogomils opposed the pope.”⁹² Krleža thus supplants the reactionary, shameful and pitiful figure of Philip’s biological father, the provincial aristocrat, with the heroic, revolutionary figure of Tito, the father of socialist Yugoslavia (and by implication, of Krleža’s hero from *Banners*, Kamilo Emericki, or even, by way of autobiographical extension, of Krleža himself). On the other hand, Krleža himself discursively competes for the place of the father, since the Bogomil emerges as a code that links Yugoslavia’s heretical gesture with his own invocation of such heresy, in his manifesto “Croatian Literary Lie.” What is more, Krleža is not merely inventing the analogy between

⁸⁹ Krleža, 22.

⁹⁰ Krleža, 43.

⁹¹ Krleža, 46.

⁹² Krleža, 37.

Tito and the Bogomils; as if to prove his prophetic annunciation, in this period he made an index of derogatory words the Soviets used to describe Tito's followers, and found numerous references to heresy and sectarianism.⁹³

That was 1952, the moment of actualization of the centuries-old, Bogomil "anticipation;" it was the time of "acute revolution," a renegade boat sailing, for the first time, on its own and into the unknown, but potentially bright future. In less than twenty years, when Stanko Lasić's wrote *Conflict within the Literary Left 1928-1952* (1970), many things had changed. By the 1970s, the Croatian critic Darko Suvin wrote in his recent book on Yugoslav communism, bad choices had already been made, and the future downward development was a playing out of those choices.⁹⁴ Lasić, an active and fervent Party member since his youth in the 1940s, and now a disappointed veteran, wrote in such an atmosphere of general disillusionment in the early 1970s, which exploded with the leftist 1968 student protests.⁹⁵ From its first pages, Lasić's study is plagued by the question of authenticity: why write about the Yugoslav version of an international polemics, if the purest expressions of

⁹³ The reference to the index is from Zimmermann, *Der Balkan zwischen Ost und West*, 238.

⁹⁴ Suvin, *Samo jednom se ljubi*, 21. By the early 1970s, the country had experienced a series of political and economic reforms and crises, and witnessed a huge labor emigration to the West. In 1968, Yugoslav students called out the communist leadership for abandoning the principles of the authentic revolution, denouncing the Party as "the red bourgeoisie" and "princes of communism." The 1968 rebellion, anchored in Belgrade, was followed by 1971 mass protests of students in Zagreb, based no longer on leftist, but nationalist ideas, including a plea for greater cultural and economic autonomy of Croatia within the federal Yugoslav community.

⁹⁵ In fact, Lasić first presented his research in a lecture at Zagreb Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in 1969, the year following the student unrest. On 1968, and the response of the state, which consisted in part suppression and part appropriation of the protesters' demands, and on the repercussions of the protests for Belgrade's performance and visual arts scene, see Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 116-95; Boris Kanzleiter and Krunoslav Stojaković, eds. "1968" in *Jugoslavien. Studentenproteste und kulturelle Avantgarde zwischen 1960 und 1975. Gespräche und Dokumente* (Bonn: Dietz Verlag, 2008); Hrvoje Klasić, *Jugoslavija i svijet 1968* (Zagreb: Ljevak, 2012). For oral history of the echoes of the Belgrade events in Zagreb, where the scale of the protests was smaller, see Viktorija Antolković, Valentina Nedeljko, and Francesca Vudrag, "Lipanjka Gibanja: Oralna Historija Studentskih Demonstracija Na Filozofskom Fakultetu 1968. Godine," *Pro Tempore: časopis studenata povijest 10-11* (2016)., and for the relationship between 1968 and 1971, when a propagation of set of reforms by Croatian Communist Party leadership, which sought greater economic and political autonomy of Croatia within Yugoslavia, exploded into a mass student movement, see Tihomir Ponoš, *Na rubu revolucije: studenti '71* (Zagreb: Profil, 2007).

the polarized views that it reproduces emerged elsewhere (in the Soviet Union and France, through the clash between advocates of proletarian art and the surrealists)? Why, if the literature in question is, as Lasić claims, not literature but merely its periphery? Or even more dramatically:

Why study something that is a simulation of spirit, and not spirit itself? The ‘ostrich’ attitude [i.e., an attitude of pride] usually leads to megalomania and arrogance; it is easy to tell that it has arisen out of a situation of second-ratedness that it wishes to forget at all costs. It would be inappropriate to think that we are the first ones to discover this situation: *all* our intellectuals have *always* known it. Even when they desperately rejected it. Answers and solutions were different. The most profound solutions were offered by those who felt this contradiction most profoundly. The most relevant solution has been one offered by Krleža.⁹⁶

Indeed, as we have seen, Yugoslav “second-ratedness,” the possession of a second-hand culture imported from Europe, tortured most Yugoslav artists and intellectuals of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and, in particular, Krleža, who struggled with the legacy and shadow of Austro-Hungarian, Western European as well as Soviet political and cultural domination, which all informed as much as they alienated his own work. Did the creation of the new Yugoslav nation following WW1, which for the first time liberated the entire region from foreign political domination from the East (Ottoman Empire) and the West (Austria, Hungary, Italy), also imply a chance of creating a new Yugoslav culture, free of foreign domination? Was the formation of the socialist Yugoslav state a further step on this liberating path to social and cultural autonomy and justice? Was there a specific Yugoslav contribution that was *theoretical and spiritual*, as Lasić would have it, and not merely anecdotal and anthropological? Could the Yugoslav periphery, perhaps, be the very place where the dilemma of revolutionary art and literature finds its resolution, even if its contours had

⁹⁶ Lasić, *Sukob na književnoj ljevici*, 9.

already reached their theoretical purity in Moscow and Paris? In other words, what is the authentic, singular contribution that the Yugoslav periphery offered the world – except for Ljubo Karaman's notion of the creative eclecticism of peripheral art, which would certainly not satisfy Lasić's Hegelian criteria that measure the purity of the expression of Spirit?

Lasić leaves these, and his own, analogous questions, unanswered, at least not explicitly answered. However, his conclusions suggest that, even if there indeed *had not been* an authentic Yugoslav contribution, there still *could have been* one. The unrealized potentiality of this conditional is located by Lasić in Krleža's idiosyncratic vision of national culture which he, ending his introduction, calls Krleža's "Fanonist vision of Yugoslav culture."⁹⁷ According to Lasić's historical reconstruction, with the revolutionary struggle in WW2, Yugoslav nations became for the first time the *subject* and not merely an *object* of history. The status of subject was confirmed once more in 1948 when the nation resisted the threat to again become an object, nay, a "colony" even, governed by the Soviet Union. Then came Krleža's solution, anticipated in his interwar work, sketched out in his above cited 1952 Ljubljana speech, and culminating in his 1954 address to another congress of Yugoslav writers. In Lasić's words, this was Krleža's historical message:

To follow Western role models means to disintegrate before death, it means: to exist as IMITATION. This is the question in which both 'young' and 'late' Krleža is immersed: how to escape from what we are: IMITATION and PERIPHERY? His answer is similar to that of Frantz Fanon: only if we cease to be an object and become a subject, if we cease to be periphery and become center, if we return to ourselves regardless of the gods that formed us. This total negation of Europe and its modern fetishes is in fact a total affirmation of the OPRESSED and REJECTED: in this coming to oneself the DISPOSSESSED has to live through and through the total rejection of the Other who had, up to that point, relegated

⁹⁷ Lasić, *Sukob na književnoj ljevici*, 57. The literal translation of "Fanonovom vizijom jugoslavenske kulture" would be "Fanon's vision of Yugoslav culture" but I translate it as Fanonist, as the original is misleading in implying an attribution of this vision to Fanon.

one to the state of under-being, to a second-rate being... This is Krleža's deepest insight and the structure from which stems his negation of modern art and his synthesis of art and revolution.⁹⁸

Lasić's presentation of Krleža's Fanonist solution is clearly informed not only by Krleža's speech, but by Fanon's concluding words in *The Wretched of the Earth*, in which he called for the dispossessed and the colonized to finally abandon Europe: "Come, comrades, the European game is finally over, we must look for something else. We can do anything today provided we do not ape Europe, provided we are not obsessed with catching up with Europe."⁹⁹ Whether Krleža read Fanon – whose 1961 book was translated in Yugoslavia in 1973, but was evidently known before¹⁰⁰ – is uncertain, and of little importance, as his obsession with "aping," a term he himself used, when referring to the imitation of both "Rome and Byzantium," was characteristic of his work from its very beginnings. Lasić's cursory comparison of Krleža to Fanon, which appears suddenly, at the end of his introduction, without any elaboration, and never reoccurs in the text, might be surprising for today's reader, but may have seemed perfectly logical to Yugoslav readers attuned to Yugoslavia's ostensibly non-aligned position and its strong political and economic connections with the Third World.¹⁰¹ Whatever the case may be, the analogy is illuminating. Fanon's vivid and painfully naturalistic descriptions of the social and psychological state of the colonized are indeed reminiscent of Krleža's descriptions of the "Pannonian mud" and

⁹⁸ Lasić, 57. Original emphasis.

⁹⁹ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 236.

¹⁰⁰ Frantz Fanon, *Prezreći Na Svijetu*, trans. Vera Frangeš (Zagreb: Stvarnost, 1973). "Evidently," since Lasić was familiar with the book before its translation.

¹⁰¹ According to Kathryn Batchelor, in Yugoslavia "Fanon's work attracted interest in the 1970s, being introduced by progressive Marxist-humanist circles [while] the embrace of Fanon's thought by the academic and political elite was facilitated by Yugoslavia's specific international position and by its role in the Non-Aligned Movement." Kathryn Batchelor, *Translating Frantz Fanon Across Continents and Languages* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

tortured physiognomies distorted by European hegemonic economic interests. Fanon's denouncement of the national bourgeoisie of the liberated colonies is analogous to Krleža's criticism of the false national consciousness of the Yugoslav nationalists; both writers denounced the celebration of glorious national pasts, traditions, and superstitions as nothing but an illusion, leading away from solving real problems. Both of them were Marxist thinkers and socialists, whose Marxist commitments were inflected by their enunciations of colonial difference. Finally, they were both tortured by the idea of the threat of drowning in the imitation of Europe, and both called instead for the creation of something new – in Fanon's case, a New Man. In Krleža's case, perhaps less, but perhaps even more ambitiously, a New Aesthetics, a Yugoslav aesthetics, which, however, could not be achieved without a new society, without an authentic socialist revolution.

Despite the identification of the Yugoslav "Fanonist" vision, Lasić's historical narrative on the conflict on the literary left, which must be read as a critical-philosophical counterpart to Krleža's unfinished *Banners*, that is, as an origin story of socialist Yugoslavia, does not end in a crescendo. Krleža, Lasić still claims, came closest to the solution, but "there is [...] no definitive solution to this."¹⁰² Even the Krležian-Fanonist vision might have been but an intoxicating illusion:

History reveals that thus far no vision of the Krleža-Fanon type has been realized as a concrete artistic practice. I wonder if this is at all possible. Isn't this really just a beautiful and sad utopia of the wretched of the earth? Modern artistic gods continue to live in their unfettered glory, while peripheral cultures (despite all quests and originalities, despite all talent and work, despite all national and personal variants) remain what they are: planets. The 1954 plenum, with Krleža's dramatic

¹⁰² Lasić, *Sukob na književnoj ljevici*, 9.

intervention, is far behind us. Once again, we have *everything* that Europe has. In second-rate form.¹⁰³

Lasić must be taken at his word when he warns that by speaking of art and literature, the protagonists of the literary debate of the 1930s were in fact speaking of politics. Thus, while lamenting the unrealized Krleža-Fanon artistic vision, Lasić himself must be seen to be lamenting an unrealized political vision, that of a socialist, self-managed, autonomous, liberated, and non-aligned Yugoslavia: subject and not object of history; creator and not IMITATOR. If, as Suvin claims, all bad choices had already been made by 1970, then Lasić's book is among the first to take up the only thing left to examine once the stage "acute revolution" was dissolved – its history.

Post-Yugoslav generation: Krleža and/as Yugoslav history (the drunken historiographer)

It could, then, be argued that Lasić's 1970 book is already post-Yugoslav. Moreover, the fact that it was first presented as an address to Zagreb students in 1969, following the 1968 student arrest, signals an explicit generational transfer – in this case, the transfer of an admission of failure, which must also be seen as Lasić's personal failure, given his own youthful and partisan commitment to the communist cause.¹⁰⁴ Claims that post-socialism in Yugoslavia began already in the 1970s are implicit in numerous accounts that focus on, primarily, economic reforms that had, since mid-1960s, transformed socialist self-

¹⁰³ Lasić, 58. Again, this must be seen in relation to the student 1968 protests that accused the government of importing capitalism from the West. The students were too, demanding Yugoslav political authenticity.

¹⁰⁴ Lasić recently published memoir narrates the sense of failure, anxiety and disillusionment, which began already in 1945, and was acute by 1948, and the paranoid persecution in Yugoslavia of supporters of the Cominform. In such times of crisis, Lasić seems to have always decided to look at the bigger picture, and see how he can be useful for improving social and cultural conditions, Stanko Lasić, *Autobiografski zapisi* (Zagreb: Globus, 2000). This must have been very difficult for someone who was himself attached to the idea of purity and of the absolute, as much as he, with hindsight, deconstructed them as illusions that governed participants of the literary debate.

management into an increasingly market-oriented, even, post-Fordist, economy.¹⁰⁵ However, this post-socialism is also already post-Yugoslav, not only because of the disintegration of the idiosyncratic Yugoslav model of self-management, but because by this time any attempt by the state to insist on some overarching, Yugoslav identity, had been abandoned. The specter of Serb-monopolized unitarism of the first Yugoslav state was increasingly used as a scare tactic against views and policies aimed at strengthening power on the federal level, and in favor of boosting the sovereignty of the individual republics and their “constitutive nations.” During the 1950s, when Yugoslav leadership still insisted on the new form of Yugoslavism, a “socialist Yugoslavism,” much in line with Krleža’s own ideas and projects of the period, it had at the same time given up on providing any directives for Yugoslav art and culture. As the mastermind of Yugoslav self-management, Edvard Kardelj, proclaimed, culture was to be relegated to the “battle of opinions.”¹⁰⁶

Thus freed – with the great help of Krleža’s Fanonist vision – of the “dictate” of socialist realism, and any effort by the state to define a normative, whether socialist or Yugoslav, aesthetics, Yugoslav culture could pursue its own “self-management,” even as the “self” was defined less and less as a worker and increasingly as a nation. In 1967, “Deklaracija o nazivlju i položaju hrvatskog jezika” (Declaration on the Position and the Name of Croatian Language), signed, among many other Croatian writers and intellectuals, by Miroslav Krleža, argued that the Croatian language, subsumed under Serbo-Croatian /

¹⁰⁵ *From the Primacy of Partisan Politics to the Post-Fordist Tendency in Yugoslav Self-Management* Maastricht: Jan van Eyck Accademie; Ljubljana: Mirovni inštitut, 2010)., Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects: Performance and Self-Management in Yugoslavia, 1945-91*. Darko Suvin, *Splendour, Misery, and Possibilities: An X-Ray of Socialist Yugoslavia* (Brill, 2016). According to Unkovski-Korica’s study, however, the outlines of this development are visible already in the 1950s, Unkovski-Korica, *The Economic Struggle for Power in Tito’s Yugoslavia*.

¹⁰⁶ Kolečnik, *Između Istoka i Zapada: Hrvatska umjetnost i likovna kritika 50-ih godina*.

Croato-Serbian, was under threat of being Serbianized, and by 1971, the Croat Communist leadership, with support of masses of students, demanded greater economic autonomy of the republic.¹⁰⁷ Such increased unwillingness to partake in the creation of a common, Yugoslav, cultural, political, and economic space, was not new, however, since the “Yugoslav,” a sign of pan-South-Slavic liberation but also of royalist suppression of national liberation, was a site of contention. In the beginning of 1967, a polemic on “Yugoslav literature,” which referred back to a 1956 text advocating a “singular Yugoslav criterion,” presented a typical range of arguments around the question on whether a common, Yugoslav culture, art, literature, etc., even exists, or should exist. As others before it, this discussion was fixated on the issue of naming, as well as syntax and grammar: is there such a thing as “Yugoslav literature,” or should one instead speak of “the literature of Yugoslavia,” “the literature of the Yugoslav nations,” or “the literature of the nations and nationalities of Yugoslavia”? If Yugoslav literature exists, what are the criteria that define it, and does it encompass only the five Yugoslav (Slavic), nations, or also the culture of the nationalities (Hungarian, Albanian, Czech, etc.)?¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ On the Croatian Spring, which came partly as a response to – and in ideological opposition with – the 1968 student protests, see Ponoš, *Na rubu revolucije*. As Lasić recounted in his memoirs, Tito’s suppression of the Croatian Spring – a set of reforms by which Croatian communist leaders advocated increased economic and cultural economy, and which also evolved into a mass movement, with increasingly nationalist claims – was for him another source of alienation, as well as a source of disillusionment with Krleža, who did not object to the decision of the Yugoslav leadership, Lasić, *Autobiografski zapisi*.

¹⁰⁸ Major, Nandor, “Postoji li jugoslavenska književnost? (Pismo A. Šoljanu).” *Telegram*, 13 January, 1967., Pavletić, Vlatko, “Jugoslavenska književnost ili književnost Jugoslavije?” *Vjesnik*, 22 January 1967., Vaupotić, Miroslav, “Sablast Pavla Popovića kruži Jugoslavijom.” *Telegram*, 10 February 1967., Bošnjak, Mirko, “Nesporazumi naši nasušni.” *Telegram*, 3 March 1967. In November of the same year, Sveta Lukić published an article in the Sarajevo journal *Izraz*, which reflected on these debates, and defended his own thesis on “Yugoslav literature,” which became part of the title of his 1969 book. Sveta Lukić, “Književni život i savremena jugoslovenska književnost,” *Izraz* 11, no. 11 (1967)., Sveta Lukić, *Savremena jugoslovenska literatura (1945-1965): rasprava o književnom životu i književnim merilima kod nas* (Beograd: Prosveta, 1968)., the latter translated as Sveta. Lukić, *Contemporary Yugoslav Literature; a Sociopolitical Approach*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972).

The same questions were posed in relation to Marxist aesthetics in the 1950s.¹⁰⁹ Sveta Lukić dates the beginning of what he oxymoronically called “socialist aestheticism” – the increasingly depoliticized literature of the 1950s, in which the state gladly allowed artists to deal with aesthetic matters, and leave politics alone – to the debates in the 1950s, whose protagonists proposed that there was no Marxist aesthetics, just as there was no Marxist lunch or Marxist physics.¹¹⁰ At least there were Marxist debates on Marxist aesthetics, while socialist realism (the Soviet solution to the question of Marxist aesthetics, imported in Yugoslavia following 1945) was swiftly removed from the scene during the early 1950s. As Dušan Bošković vividly put it, the 1950s opened a “season of free hunt on socialist realists,” which means that socialist realism in Yugoslavia can be said to have been defeated historically, but not theoretically, as there was no real debate.¹¹¹

There were, of course, those who defended both Yugoslav art and Marxist aesthetics, and both these defenses were always defined as future projections, a matter of ongoing struggle. “Marxist aesthetics is a question of struggle,” it is not yet realized, wrote Ervin Šinko in the less confusing times before 1948 and the break-up with the Soviet Union, but in 1954 he still insisted that “free exploration will at some point lead to Marxist aesthetics.”¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Dušan Bošković, *Estetika u okruženju: sporovi o marksističkoj estetici i književnoj kritici u srpsko-hrvatskoj periodici od 1944. do 1972. godine* (Beograd: Institut za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju Filip Višnjić, 2003).

¹¹⁰ Lukić, *Umetnost i kriterijumi*, 186.

¹¹¹ Bošković, *Estetika u okruženju: sporovi o marksističkoj estetici i književnoj kritici u srpsko-hrvatskoj periodici od 1944. do 1972. godine*, 60, 62. A long footnote to Jakovljević’s analysis of what he sees as the never fully achieved transition from the political economy (and not style) of socialist realism to that of socialist aestheticism reveals the trajectory of both the socialist(-realist) revolution and the “free hunt” on its foremost heroes, as it was played out in the life of Boža Ilić. A socialist realist painter of a peasant background, and thus also a sign of the upward mobility enabled by the revolution, Ilić was “hailed as the epitome of the new artist, unspoiled by bourgeois approaches to art,” until 1950, when he was “first ridiculed and then forgotten,” surviving on meager welfare checks. Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 297, ft. 10. It should also be noted, as Jakovljević has shown, that in the transitional period from 1948 to 1950 Yugoslav communists did not abandon neither socialist realism nor planned economy, but were in fact, radicalizing it, in competition with the Soviets and in a frenzied attempt to boost the economy without outside aid, see Jakovljević, 38-55.

¹¹² Ervin Šinko, cited in Bošković, *Estetika u okruženju*, 48, 50.

Krleža spoke in the same, anticipatory, mode in his famous speech at the Ljubljana Congress in 1952: “If we develop a socialist cultural environment that is conscious of its rich past and cultural mission in contemporary European space and time, our art will inevitably appear.”¹¹³ This future appearance was, for Krleža, irrevocably tied to the appearance of the past, just as his project of *The Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia* was conceived as a “compass for the spiritual navigation” of the socialist man, whose “daring socialist consciousness” should be built on “the enriched remembrance of his own history.” The agonistic nature of the very business of delineating and “owning” this epistemological object, “our history,” was the key challenge faced by the encyclopedic project, which developed as a precarious balancing and commerce between the entries assigned to the “Republican editorial boards” and those carefully guarded by the “Central editorial board.” However, even the members of the Central editorial board, who were supposed to theoretically consolidate and propagate precisely the singular Yugoslav historical current, and introduce all-Yugoslav themes, proved that insisting on the Yugoslav singularity and unity was always a contentious matter.¹¹⁴ In the first place, what *were* the all-Yugoslav themes? Presiding over the Central editorial board’s plenum, Krleža posed the question that, according to Drago Roksandić, he found personally and conceptually the most motivating, namely the question of “the use of the word Yugoslav,” which he cited in its numerous regional and historical variants: “*To je pitanje upotrebe riječi*

¹¹³ Miroslav Krleža, “Govor na kongresu književnika u Ljubljani,” 60.

¹¹⁴ According to Drago Roksandić, the Central editorial board was supposed to oversee the work of Republican editorial boards, including resolving potential conflicts, and was otherwise responsible for all-Yugoslav themes, that is, themes that surpassed republican divisions, Drago Roksandić, “Krležina Enciklopedija Jugoslavije između euroskepticizma i euronormativizma: prilog poznavanju početaka Krležina projekta Enciklopedije Jugoslavije.” *Studia lexicographica: časopis za leksikografiju i enciklopedistiku* 8, no. 2 (2015): 5–22.

jugoslavenski, jugoslovenski, južnoslavenski, južnoslovenski, odnosno južnoslovenski.”¹¹⁵ Being not simply of grammatical or dialectological import, this *use of the word* necessarily led some of his colleagues to ventriloquize familiar debates that have marked the “Yugoslav question” since its inception. “There is no Yugoslav literature (*jugoslovenska književnost*), but one can speak of South Slav literatures (*južnoslovenske književnosti*),” Marko Ristić, none other than Krleža’s surrealist brother in arms, expressed his firm stance on the matter.¹¹⁶ In the same vein, Ristić argued – in a metaphor that seems to have later received its retort precisely in Encyclopedia’s introductory claim of a singular, Yugoslav torrent – that it would literally amount to an act of “violence” to “pour into a single unity” the specific intellectual and social developments pertaining to individual “peoples/nations” (*narodi*), insisting, therefore, that even the planned distribution of the encyclopedic Yugoslav knowledge according to Republics would not do, because what is missing is the distribution according to “peoples/nations” (*narodi*). As for what remains following this operation of distribution, as it were, he concluded that the Encyclopedia must focus on what is “connecting us based on facts, and not based on totalitarian interests.”¹¹⁷ At this point, another plenum member posed the question of who, exactly, are these “Yugoslav peoples/nations,” and whether that includes “our” non-Slavs, that is, the Yugoslav nationalities (*narodnosti*), and a third member cunningly asked whether, then, phenomena such as “malaria” should also be duly nationalized.¹¹⁸ To each its own

¹¹⁵ In approximate translation: “This is the question of the use of the word Yugoslav, Yugoslovene, South Slavic, South Slovenian, South Slovene.” Miroslav Krleža, cited in Roksandić, *Krležina Enciklopedija Jugoslavije između euroskepticizma i euronormativizma*, 18. This is an approximate translation of all the variants of the “word Yugoslav,” many of which are now outdated, and without a proper English equivalent.

¹¹⁶ Marko Ristić, cited in Roksandić, *Krležina Enciklopedija Jugoslavije između euroskepticizma i euronormativizma*, 19.

¹¹⁷ Ristić, 18-19.

¹¹⁸ Mate Ujević, and Andrija Štampar, cited in Roksandić, *Krležina Enciklopedija Jugoslavije između euroskepticizma i euronormativizma*, 19-20.

parasites, and one is already in the territory of the absurd, which is at the same time the only territory one is bound to end up in, when one embarks on the business of owning history.

By the 1970s, however, this business seems to have been normalized, and both culture and historiography appeared to consolidate around the “petty,” national(ist) details, ignoring the common Yugoslav torrent. Those still committed to historicizing this underground torrent, including Lasić in his book on the interwar conflict, Krleža in his multi-volume *Banners*, Sveta Lukić in his history of Yugoslav literature, the Belgrade Museum of Contemporary Art with its series of exhibitions on the twentieth-century history of Yugoslav art – all projects initiated in late 1960s, in the midst of the looming crisis – did so with an unrelenting passion for historical reconstruction, but one that no longer anticipated its future.¹¹⁹ In fact, with Lasić’s book on the interwar polemics, Krleža became the stand-in for the Yugoslav “acute revolution,” but also its end. By the early 1980s, Krleža himself was dead, together with Tito, and those still stubborn enough to stir from sleep the weakened Yugoslav torrent, like Predrag Matvejević in 1981, had to admit to be dealing with a “sensitive question.” But in order to attend to it, in one way or another, they had to deal with Krleža, because, just as Ivan Meštrović had become the sign for the disillusioned ideals

¹¹⁹ See the excellent resource on the history and the activities of the Belgrade Museum of Contemporary Art in Dejan Sretenović, ed. *Prilozi za istoriju muzeja savremene umetnosti* (Beograd: Muzej savremene umetnosti, 2016). It should be noted that the decision of the Belgrade Museum to engage in a historicization of “Yugoslav art,” in an institution that was, like most decentralized cultural institutions of Yugoslavia, funded by the Socialist Republic of Serbia, could itself be understood as a political act. As Ješa Denegri wrote, the fact that the “whole project carried in its title the notion of ‘Yugoslav art,’” could, “in the extremely *sensitive* cultural and political circumstances at the time when these exhibitions were made (1967-1986) cause (and occasionally did cause) controversies,” Ješa Denegri, “Decenijske izložbe’ jugoslovenske umetnosti XX veka,” in Sretenović, *Prilozi za istoriju muzeja savremene umetnosti*, 166. Moreover, the fact that the first exhibition in 1967 dealt with the decade of the 1930s allows the Museum’s project to be placed in the same line with Krleža’s *Banners* and Lasić’s *Conflict*, a line of projects that historicize the “prehistory,” as Juraga said of *Banners*, of the Yugoslav socialist revolution.

of “integral Yugoslavism,” Krleža similarly embodied the disintegration of socialist Yugoslavism.

Even more radically, Krleža was not only the major proponent and researcher of the contentious epistemological object, Yugoslav History, but his life and work can be read as synonymous with this object, or at least, with the way the history of Yugoslavia and Yugoslav art came to be canonized. An excursus into the timeline of his life and work that follows can thus simultaneously be read as a summary portrait of the Yugoslav century, and the Yugoslav aesthetics discussed in this chapter. In this picture — it could be titled *Krležoslavia* — Krleža’s life, work, and legacy impose itself as a motif that enables, as he would say, a rhapsodic, all-encompassing view of the Yugoslav twentieth century, from a present-day, post-/(post-)/(post)Yugoslav perspective, which is, once again, immersed in the work on the topic of “our country.” Just like Yugoslav History, Krleža represents here at the same time a hero, victim, and villain, subject and object, revolutionary and revisionist, struggle and compromise, promise and failure.

In 1912, while still a cadet at the Budapest military academy, Krleža ran off to Serbia to offer his military services in the Balkan Wars, only to be charged with espionage and handed over to Austro-Hungarian authorities — an experience which, according to Ivan Bulić, disrupted his “youthful idealizations of Serbia as the ‘Piedmont of liberation and unification’” and made him return to Zagreb and turn to writing and literature.¹²⁰ As a journalist in the conditions of strict media censorship during WW1, Krleža satirized the

¹²⁰ Ivan Bulić, “Miroslav Krleža o Hrvatskoj u Prvome svjetskom ratu (između kronike i interpretacije),” *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 39, no. 3 (2008), p. 691. Krleža was trained as cadet in the Hungarian military academy from 1908 to 1913.

Austro-Hungarian army and broached forbidden subjects such as the devastating economic and social conditions in the monarchy.¹²¹ His post-war public career was duly inaugurated by a scandal when, during the military reception of the newly founded National Assembly of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918, he interrupted the speech of a Croatian officer, denouncing him as a Serb-hating nationalist and declaring his own political allegiance with Lenin and the Russian Revolution.¹²² In 1942, when this same military officer served as Minister of Armed Forces in the fascist, Serb-prosecuting Independent State of Croatia, Krleža recorded the event in his memoirs and published it a decade later as “Pijana novembarska noć 1918” (A drunken november night 1918). This act of self-historicizing unveiled Krleža as a (drunken) Yugoslav prophet, presciently announcing the three key features that defined Yugoslav history in the first half of the twentieth century: the failure of Yugoslav interwar unitarism, the fascist and genocidal future of Croat nationalism, and the ultimate triumph of the communist revolution and of the new Yugoslavia — whose birth was, incidentally, also proclaimed in a November (of 1943).

“Drunken November” could at the same time serve as an appropriate description of Krleža’s youthful intoxication with “October,” best reflected in the leftist literary journal *Plamen* (Flame), which he initiated in 1919 together with poet August Cesarec, and whose Marxism he later described as sentimental and romantic.¹²³ It is here that Krleža first laid out

121 Although he tried to avoid the army, Krleža also spent some time at the Galician front during WW1, an experience that was formative for his interwar prose, which dissected the violence of war and the social misery of Croatian soldiers that he encountered in battle.

122 The name of the officer was Slavko Kvaternik, one of the founders of the Croatian Ustasha movement. See Bulić, 695-703, whose insightful discussion of both Krleža’s journalistic career and the scandal during the reception I am summarizing here.

123 In the editorial statement that in 1923 opened his new journal, *Književna republika* (Literary Republic), Krleža reflected on *Plamen* and stated that its historical materialism had a ‘sentimental, romantic and *Sturm-und-Drang* character; [...] our Marxism petered out in a provincial and petty- bourgeois environment and was more resistance and rejection than some

the blueprint for Yugoslav twentieth-century aesthetics, delineating its historical roots and destiny as a centuries-old struggle for breaking out of the encirclements imposed by both East and West (Byzantium and Rome), a struggle now guided by the flame of the October Revolution. However, during the interwar period Krleža found in the Soviet Union the new Byzantium to be overcome, a threat of yet another encirclement, and one which was made acutely real during the 1930s when he witnessed a number of Yugoslav communists, some of whom were his close friends, never return from Russia and disappear in the Stalinist purges. At the same time, a growing number of Krleža's leftist and communist colleagues in Yugoslavia began identifying in his work reactionary elements, initiating a decade-long polemics which became known as the "conflict on the literary left." During this period, Krleža did not so much abandon his previous positions about the social, political, and even revolutionary character of literature, as much as he derided what he saw as his opponents' regurgitation of a number of normative and ideological formulae, which he thought found no meaningful application (or admirable literary results) in the local context. This superior and provocative attitude towards his comrades, along with the fact that he supported the work of the Belgrade surrealist Marko Ristić, ultimately earned him the infamous "Trotskyist" label and alienated him from the communist movement, at a time when communism, banned since 1921 in Yugoslavia, was barely persevering as an underground, dispersed effort under conditions of royal dictatorship, and when the majority of its leadership disappeared in Stalinist purges. As supporters of the Popular Front politics

systematized activity." Cited in Ivana Perica, "Social Literature Swindlers?: The R/evolutionary Controversy in Interwar Yugoslav Literature," *Neohelicon* (2017).

argued, this moment was also the time of choosing sides, for or against fascism, and when the time came with WW2, regardless of the side they chose in the debate, most of Krleža's peers would join the anti-fascist, partisan struggle, led by the head of the Yugoslav Communist Party, Josip Broz Tito. Krleža did not. He joined no side, but in 1945 the Party was generous in its victory and embraced him as the leading cultural figure in the new Yugoslavia.

In an ironical twist, in 1948 the Yugoslav communist leadership found itself precisely in Krleža's prewar position, as they saw themselves expelled from the Stalin-dominated Cominform due to their "anti-Marxist" views and actions. For Krleža, this event represented the opening up of the possibility for a truly autonomous and emancipatory Yugoslav politics and art. In fact, as the founder and life-time director of the Yugoslav Lexicographic Institute (1950-1981) — a position that mirrored Tito's role as the founder and lifetime president of socialist Yugoslavia (1943-1980) — Krleža was perhaps less the central writer of the second Yugoslavia, and more its Historian King. As the head of the *Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia*, his contribution to creating the radically new consisted mostly in summoning it, by means of historicizing and by recognizing, in Yugoslav history, a singular "element that resisted destruction for 1500 years," as the ground for "our socialist conception," itself merely an "anticipation of future centuries."¹²⁴

And who else to better do this work of anticipatory historicizing than Krleža, whose capacity to *see* History even before it happened was only confirmed by the events of 1948, the year that now competed with the revolutionary struggle of 1941 for the position of the

¹²⁴ Miroslav Krleža, cited in Roksandić, *Krležina Enciklopedija Jugoslavije između euroskepticizma i euronormativizma*, 13-14.

foundational moment of the new Yugoslavia? Was it not he that prophetically announced all this, this acute revolutionary current of the Yugoslav people, already in 1919, in his fiery manifesto, when he drew a line from the heretic resistance of the Bogomils to socialism, and wrote that “the line of Yugoslav cultural tradition and continuity – *if* it at all exists – must be said to be breaking through, from the Bogomils to Križanić, and from Križanić to Kranjčević”? And did not this line of heretic inheritance, from B(ogomils) to K(rižanić), from K(rižanić) to K(ranjčević), continue precisely through another K – Krleža, the author of the Encyclopedia which he conceived as another breakthrough, as the poetic vision that once and for all demonstrates and scientifically proves the united Yugoslav torrent, while pushing it even further from history into anticipation?

Krleža’s prescient alignment with the “right side” of history pitted his heroism against that of the ultimate hero, his intimate friend Tito. This heroism, however, would be explicitly identified only in 1970, when literary historian Stanko Lasić wrote his initially controversial, but soon canonical, history of the interwar “conflict on the left.” Lasić’s Hegelian reading of the interwar Yugoslav intellectual history presented the two opposed positions as equally closing off the dialectics between “Art” and “Revolution,” the sole difference being that one locked itself into the absolute of revolution and the other in the absolute of art. It was only Krleža who managed — and only in 1952, that is, after 1948 — to overcome the impasse, when he proposed what Lasić described as “Krleža’s Fanonist vision of Yugoslav culture,” in which Yugoslavia ceases to exist as a mere imitation of Europe, a vision, however, never realized.

Just as Lasić insisted that literature was the language that enabled Yugoslav writers to speak of communist politics at a time when communism was banned as both discourse and

political option, I have taken Lasić at his word, and proposed that his deeply melancholic narration of Yugoslav literary history, and Krleža's prophetic place within it, hosts its own encrypted referent. This referent is not simply Yugoslav political history, but Yugoslav History as such, or, more precisely, the absolute of what Lasić at the time of the progressing crisis of the late 1960s was led to diagnose as Yugoslavia's Irreversible Failure. Once the polemics that attempted to define the Yugoslav relationship between art and literature, on the one hand, and socialism, Marxism, and class struggle, on the other, was proclaimed "resolved," and once Yugoslav communists renounced any central "dictate" upon the realm of culture, this culture was free to further liberate its national self against another centralist "dictate," that of Yugoslavism. Despite Krleža's 1967 signature on the "Declaration on the name and position of Croatian language," this increasingly aggressive interpretation of self-management as the autonomy not of the worker, but of the nation – an interpretation perhaps augured by the very fact that the chief theorist of self-management in Yugoslavia, Edvard Kardelj, was also the chief theorist of the "national question" – was not exactly Krleža's fault. Still, with his allegiance with the politics and aesthetics of negation, in which the signifier "Yugoslav" was emptied of any positivist, nationalist pathos, and defined instead as the very genealogy of negation, as the centuries-long struggle against social misery and geopolitical encirclement, Krleža mirrored the politics and the historiography of the Yugoslav state after 1948, which, as Branimir Stojanović has insightfully argued, defined itself only negatively, as *anti*-fascism and *anti*-Stalinism, erasing in this double negation the

radical novelty of the class-based, socialist revolution of 1941.¹²⁵ For Stojanović, writing in 2017, it is this post-1948 historical revisionism that opened the doors to the nationalist ones that followed and that are triumphant today.

If Stojanović's argument about Yugoslavia's 1948 revisionism is to be embraced, Krleža's figure must be summoned to complete the picture, because, as the literary scholar Ante Kadić stressed several years before Lasić's book came out: "Few critics stress the fact that Krleža is the real initiator of Yugoslav revisionism."¹²⁶ For Kadić, member of the Croat émigré intelligentsia, this meant that Krleža, although a harbinger of "Communist dictatorship," was one who was laudably an anti-fascist as much as an anti-Stalinist.¹²⁷ Indeed, Krleža was among the first to publicly equate Nazism and Stalinism in Yugoslavia, again, in his famous 1952 Ljubljana speech, just as he became the symbol of anti-Stalinist resistance with Lasić's book. Regardless of the fact that Lasić tried to approach both sides in the conflict analytically and historically, by revealing their simultaneously emancipatory and blinding belief in their absolutes (of art, and revolution), Krleža nonetheless emerged from his book as a heroic figure, emergence that modulated all the ways in which Krleža was not a hero. At least, from the perspective of the many of his opponents in the debate, who put their lives on the line by engaging in illegal communist activities during the interwar period and by joining the WW2 partisan movement. Milovan Đilas, for example, wrote in his memoirs that he, too, as a young writer with revolutionary ideas in the 1930s, could not

¹²⁵ Branislav Stojanović, "O revizionizmu i drugim zločinima." *www.danas.rs* (24 December 2017): <https://www.danas.rs/medelja/o-revizionizmu-i-drugim-zlocinima/>.

¹²⁶ Ante Kadić, "Miroslav Krleža (1893-)," *Books Abroad* 37, no. 4 (1963), 400.

¹²⁷ Kadić, 396, 400.

condone of literature that prioritizes political message at the expense of artistic value.¹²⁸

However, the conditions of the dictatorship in Yugoslavia made “social literature” into “the sole legal form of opposition activity,” and, in his case, pushed him and his generation away from literature altogether and into political action: “if it were not for the dictatorship, this [internal, psychological] discontent might have culminated in literary experiments.”¹²⁹ The same happened with a number of Belgrade surrealists like Koča Popović, who, following the 1932 “Affaire Aragon,” decided to relinquish the idea of the surrealist revolution in favor of the political one or, rather, to give up on the idea that one could do the latter by means of the first.

This is not to blame Krleža for not making the same choice, but rather to evoke again James F. Murphy’s lesson on ways in which the aesthetic debates of the 1930s became a primary site of what others have also called “cultural Cold War.”¹³⁰ As I have shown, most existing readings of the Yugoslav debates posit Krleža as a singular literary giant, or in Ralph Bogert’s words, the ultimate “naysayer,” leading the struggle for the freedom of artistic creation against the socialist dictate, while ignoring both the socialist and the realist, and even a vulgar materialist, dimension of Krleža’s disobedience. Velimir Visković noted a similar elision in Lasić’s account of Krleža’s 1952 speech, in which Krleža attacked Stalinism and critically deconstructed the normative aesthetics of socialist realism, while his equal

¹²⁸ Djilas, *Memoir of a Revolutionary*, 15. The debate took place primarily through an intense publishing activities, in an array of ever new legal, illegal, banned and reactivated, cultural and literary magazines.

¹²⁹ Djilas, 22. Djilas recounts how he consciously decided to leave his literary ambitions altogether (instead of fighting for a more revolutionary literature within literature) and dedicate himself solely to political activity and the Party. For this, he spent three years in prison, and later became one of the key people of the Yugoslav Communist Party’s Central Committee, and eventually, in the 1960s, after his split with the Yugoslav Communists, the most renowned dissident of socialist Yugoslavia.

¹³⁰ Saunders, *The Cultural Cold Wars*; Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam, *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945-1960* (London; Portland, OR: F. Cass, 2003).

criticism of Western modernism – James Joyce in literature and modernist abstraction towards which Krleža had always been explicitly hostile – as well his insistence on the “undeniable place of the method of dialectical materialism and formulas of [his own vision of] socialist art” remained unacknowledged.¹³¹ It is, then, symptomatic of this elision of the double character of Krleža’s critique that Lasić takes this speech to be the moment of the “defeat of the literary left,” as if the conflict had been between Krleža and a “literary left” standing in separation and in opposition. On the contrary, the conflict was internal, the conflict *on* the literary left, which is after all the title of Lasić’s book. Lasić’s slip is telling, hinting at the overall ideological import of his own research, a research of a true communist believer, yet a disillusioned one.

In lamenting the failure of the Yugoslav vision, Lasić nonetheless remained a paradigmatically Yugoslav intellectual, inscribing himself into the list of those committed to “working on their topic,” analyzing and penetrating it, just as Krleža demanded. Krleža died in 1981, and did not witness the progressing disintegration of the sole topic of his life-time work, “our country,” and it is unknown whether he could prophetically foresee another drunken November, that of 1989, in which the Berlin Wall came down, and the massacre of Yugoslavia and its “nations and nationalities” that followed. During this entire decade, in which Yugoslavia, as Matvejević informed us, was treated as a “sensitive question” (and in which Stojanović began his own quest for the lost Yugoslav history), Krleža was nonetheless present as this “question’s” proxy. As if their lives depended on it – and it turns out, they did

¹³¹ Visković, *Sukob na ljevici*, The quotation is taken from the version available at: http://newpolיס.org/files/sukob_na_ljevici_v_viskovic.pdf, n.p.

– critics continued to dissect the “conflict on the left”: they published their “conversations with Krleža”; they declared themselves “for” and “against” Krleža; they unveiled the “secrets and complexes” of Krleža; they summoned witnesses for “yet another face-off with anti-Krležism;” they waved smugly, “good-bye, dear Krleža;” they announced life in a “post-Krležian epoch,” and showed that, indeed, the history (or at least, the historiography) of the Yugoslav twentieth century is synonymous (or at least, co-extensive) with the proper name Krleža – a century of “Krležology.”¹³²

Beyond the revisionist and other uses and abuses of Krleža and Krležology for the post-Yugoslav, post-socialist life-death-world, there is indeed something to be salvaged within the vast expanse of scripture authorized under this proper name, and this salvaging, as I have argued, would have to include three figures that I attempted to draw out in this chapter: Krleža the vulgar materialist; Krleža the tormented Fanonist; and Krleža the drunken historiographer. In these three figures, a picture comes together of the Yugoslav twentieth century: its blood-soaked wars and interwar hunger, its dreams of authenticity and independence; its anticipatory, yet decidedly contingent and agonistic, historiographies of past and the future.

¹³² *Krležologija ili Povijest kritičke misli o Miroslavu Krležiji* (Krležology, or the history of critical thought on Miroslav Krleža) – its title suggesting a Yugoslav analogue to Shakespearology, and thus the centrality of Krleža for Yugoslav culture – is a major project by Stanko Lasić, which, in five volumes, studies the critical reception of Krleža’s work from the beginning of his career to 1993. The temporal framework of Lasić’s decade-long research thus aligns with the beginning and end of the existence of Yugoslavia as a state formation, and the titles of its volume, including the final one, “The retreat from the historical stage,” published in 1993, indicate the key moments of Yugoslav history. Lasić, *Krležologija ili povijest kritičke misli o Miroslavu Krležiji: Kritička literatura o Miroslavu Krležiji od 1914. do 1941.*; Stanko Lasić, *Krležologija ili povijest kritičke misli o Miroslavu Krležiji: O moralnoj strukturi i totalitarnoj svijesti* (Zagreb: Globus, 1989); Stanko Lasić, *Krležologija ili Povijest kritičke misli o Miroslavu Krležiji: Miroslav Krleža i Nezavisna Država Hrvatska (10.4.1941-8.5.1945)* (Zagreb: Globus, 1989); Stanko Lasić, *Krležologija ili Povijest kritičke misli o Miroslavu Krležiji: Stvaranje kulta: 1945-1963* (Zagreb: Globus, 1993); Stanko Lasić, *Krležologija ili povijest kritičke misli o Miroslavu Krležiji: Književnoznanstvena metoda i literatura o Krležiji: 1964-1981* (Zagreb: Globus, 1993); Stanko Lasić, *Krležologija ili povijest kritičke misli o Miroslavu Krležiji: Silazak s povijesne scene* (Zagreb: Globus, 1993).

Post/(Post)/(Post-)Yugoslav art: the present of history

Given the centrality of Krleža for Yugoslav history, it is not surprising that the title of the last volume of Lasić's monumental *Krležologija ili povijest kritičke misli o Miroslavu Krležji: Silazak s povijesne scene* (Krležology or the History of Critical Thought on Miroslav Krleža: The Retreat from the Historical Stage, 1993), published in the midst of another war, signals both the retreat of Krleža and of Yugoslavia. Both of these proper names all but disappeared during the nationalist wars and revolutions of the 1990s, and decidedly came back, just like in the title of one recent volume, *Povratak Miroslava Krleže* (The Return of Miroslav Krleža, 2016),¹³³ after 2008, with the (post-)Yugoslav, surviving generation. Just when it seemed that Matvejević's 1981 postulate that "Yugoslavia has no alternative" was definitively drowned out first by the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s, and by echoes of another, and much louder, motto declared in the same era, Margaret Thatcher's "There is no alternative," the (post-)Yugoslav generation resumed work on "their topic," the work, which, just like before, has set up its major factory (or should one say office, or coffee-house) in the realm of art.

The (re)appearance of the object "Yugoslav art" should be dated to Prelom's 2009 exhibition *Political Practices of (Post-)Yugoslav Art: Retrospective 01*, which, in the spirit of similar collaborative efforts during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, gathered a group of artists, curators, and researchers around what the exhibition proposed were Yugoslavia's three art historical stages: partisan art, socialist modernism, and the "new artistic practices."¹³⁴ [Figure

¹³³ *Povratak Miroslava Krleže: zbornik radova*, edited by Tomislav Brlek (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod "Miroslav Krleža", 2016).

¹³⁴ Vesić and Dojić, *Political Practices of (post-)Yugoslav Art: Retrospective 01*. The research began in 2006, and initially involved four organizations: Prelom Kolektiv (Belgrade), kuda.org (Novi Sad), WHW – What, How & For Whom (Zagreb), SCCA/pro.ba (Sarajevo). In addition to the research by these organization, the exhibition increased its network to include additional research and case studies, as well as works by contemporary artists, which were brought into relation with that

46] In the introduction to the exhibition catalogue, Jelena Vesić and Dušan Grlja perform a classical, Krležian-Fanonist gesture of double rejection. On the one hand, they denounce the subsuming of the specificities of Yugoslav art under the Cold War paradigm of Eastern European Art, and on the other, the post-Yugoslav art histories that fragment Yugoslav art into a series of national art histories, thereby “participating in the process of consolidation of the new nation-states.”¹³⁵ Is not this double rejection, of the global trends of contemporary art, and of nationalist historiography, a repetition of Krleža’s double negation, of East and West, Byzantium and Rome, modernism and socialist realism? By articulating this negation, Vesić and Grlja break through the enclosure in order to once again release the singular, Yugoslav torrent. With it, they also released “the use of the word,” as Krleža would say, *Yugoslav art*, which had been dormant for at least two decades – not simply dormant, but marked at best as a sign of misguided ideals and at worst as a criminal sign, embodying at once the totalitarian darkness of communism and the violence with which in the 1990s the Yugoslav Peoples’ Army alleged to protect the country from breaking apart.

The exhibition’s (post-)Yugoslav intervention was framed as decidedly historiographical: the exhibition’s “material” is “the history or the history of art,” which is, however, presented not as an academic study, but as a “retrospective,” an exhibition format conceived as a “concise form of speech” and able to offer an “immediate appearance.” With this reinvention of a “retrospective,” an exhibition format usually used for offering a comprehensive overview of the work of a single artist, as a comprehensive and collectively

research. As part of my collaborative work with Antonia Majača at Delve Institute, I also contributed a research section to the exhibition.

¹³⁵ Jelena Vesić and Dušan Grlja, in *Political Practices of (Post-)Yugoslav Art*.

organized overview of Yugoslav art and Yugoslav history, *Political Practices* also reactivated the drunken-historiographical gesture of the *Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia*, which also strove to “speak” about a country in a concise form, in order to inform mass socialist consciousness. It is not surprising that the use of the name Yugoslav came forward precisely in the form of an exhibition. Ever since the first *Jugoslavenska izložba* (Yugoslav exhibition) in 1904, which accompanied the rise of the Karađorđević dynasty, and Meštrović’s celebrated “victories” in the European and North American arenas of art, the exhibition space has proved itself as the domicile of Yugoslavism. Even Krleža, the insatiable and hyper-productive writer, decided to present his post-1948 manifesto of Yugoslav art and civilization in the form of an exhibition. *L’Art médiéval yougoslave* (Yugoslav Medieval Art) opened in 1950 in Palais de Chaillot in Paris, and presented to the French audiences the “South Slavic medieval civilization,” which “disappeared in the tumult of six-centuries-long Turkish, Austrian, and Venetian wars from the fourteenth to the twentieth century.”¹³⁶

In the introduction to the catalogue, Krleža presented the same theses that shaped his conception of the Encyclopedia in this period; the “fragments” of the disappeared South Slavic medieval civilization were defined as anticipation of the “South Slavic socialist

¹³⁶ Miroslav Krleža, *Izložba srednjovjekovne umjetnosti naroda Jugoslavije* (Zagreb: Umjetnički paviljon, 1951). The organization committee of the exhibition consisted of French and Yugoslav medievalists, but Krleža’s text in the catalogue conceptually – and thus curatorially – framed the exhibition. In Tanja Zimmermann’s reading, the text presented theoretical foundations of the “aesthetics of the ‘third way’”: “Die kulturtheoretische Grundlage für die Ästhetik des ‘dritten Weges’ legte Miroslav Krleža mit seiner Katalogbeitrag zur Ausstellung L’art médiéval yougoslave im Jahre 1950 im Palais de Chaillot in Paris,” Zimmermann, *Der Balkan zwischen Ost und West*, 232. Apart from the Bogomil tombstones, the exhibition presented frescoes of the Serbian autocephalic church, and Croatian early medieval sculpture. It should be noted that the difference between the original French title, *L’Art médiéval yougoslave* (Yugoslav Medieval Art) and the one later presented to the Zagreb audiences, *Izložba srednjovjekovne umjetnosti naroda Jugoslavije* (The exhibition of medieval art of the peoples of Yugoslavia) marks, in itself, a negation of Krleža’s thesis, another sign of stumbling in the ongoing debate about the “use of the word” and the agonistic nature of Yugoslav historicizing. Zimmermann, “Der Balkan zwischen Ost und West,” 232. Apart from the Bogomil tombstones, the exhibition presented frescoes of the Serbian autocephalic church, and Croatian early medieval sculpture..

federation, and socialist Yugoslavia, in turn, signifies a dialectical overcoming of the Middle Ages, but also an anticipation of “our future centuries.” Not only is the use of the notion of “fragments” reminiscent of Meštrović’s *Vidovdan Temple*, which was similarly tasked with gathering the fragmentary into the whole, but also, as Tanja Zimmerman writes, the very set-up of the exhibition was based on Meštrović’s 1915 presentation at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, which was taken as a successful model of visual propaganda for the South Slav state.¹³⁷ Not surprisingly, among the “four components” of the exhibition were the Bogomils, or rather, the Bogomil tombstones, whose sculptural features were presented in the catalogue’s introduction as “free of any suggestion of the European artistic and philosophical graveyard, not because [the Bogomil sculptors] were not familiar with it, but because, both in principle and conceptually, they denied it every moral and aesthetic significance.” Once again, as in the “Croatian Literary Lie,” the Bogomils – their tombstones nonetheless – are summoned to burn to insignificance the graveyards of the most significant traditions. Thus surnaming the entire European funerary and philosophical tradition as a graveyard, Krleža ambitiously finds in the “naïve and fresh observations of an artistic *terra vergine*” a prime example of “tendentious and propagandist art.” This sculpture

does not accept the cult of death. It negates, in principle, in Bogomil-like fashion, materialistically, that is, the stupefying thought of dying on one’s knees, as in front of an enigma pointing towards any kind of trans-funerary hierarchy; out of thousands of thousands of human hands depicted on these monolith blocks, not a single one is folded in premortal prayer. Not a single Bogomil figure can be seen

¹³⁷ Zimmermann, *Der Balkan zwischen Ost und West*, 232. See also Zimmermann’s otherwise excellent reading of the exhibition, as well as her singling out of Krleža’s notions of “anticipation” and of “double negation” as determinants of the Yugoslav politics of the “third way,” including a discussion on the link between this exhibition and the post-war Yugoslav naïve art.

kneeling in front of the authority of religious symbols, whether earthly or unearthly.¹³⁸

Although Krleža humbly concludes that the exhibition is evidence of the South Slavic contribution to the great European culture, this calm and non-conflictual conclusion contradicts the first part of the same sentence, which is still riding the wave of the Bogomil refusal to kneel. “[T]he South Slavic civilization had disintegrated in the cycles of wars,” Krleža provocatively claims, “so that Western Europe could continue to live, and create, in harmony, the artworks without which it would be impossible to imagine the history of mankind.”¹³⁹ In the immediate aftermath of the heretic, Bogomil-like moment of 1948, and Tito’s “No” to Stalin, Yugoslav intellectuals, philosophers and artists could indeed dare to presume that this century-long history of suppression could now finally not only catch up with Europe, but be its vanguard. Even before that, following the courageous partisan resistance to fascist occupation in the second World War, Oto Bihalji-Merin could claim that once the artists, inspired by the liberation struggle, create works that are equivalent to the value of the struggle, their art, “born out of the depth and experience of the new life, will be so good, real and true, that Paris will be able to learn, just as earlier generations learned in Paris.”¹⁴⁰ However, as we have seen, this vision of authentic revolution and authentic art – as well as authentic philosophy in the guise of the Yugoslav Praxis school – did not come to be realized. At least, not according the first post-Yugoslav theorist, Stanko Lasić.

¹³⁸ Krleža, *Izložba srednjovjekovne umjetnosti naroda Jugoslavije*.

¹³⁹ Krleža, *Izložba srednjovjekovne umjetnosti naroda Jugoslavije*.

¹⁴⁰ Oto Bihalji-Merin, cited in Božidar Gagro, “Nadrealizam, Socijalna Umjetnost 1929-1950,” *Život umjetnosti* 10 (1969), 166.

Instead, as another literary critic and theorist of a younger generation, Sveta Lukić, claimed, Yugoslav literature of the 1950s signaled an emergence of a new aesthetics – socialist aestheticism. Inspired, as many Yugoslav thinkers in this period, by early Marx and the idea of “total human,” for Lukić the realm of the aesthetic is a space of “anticipation” of the future – the future in which man will overcome alienation from life and achieve “the integral.”¹⁴¹ Until then, art is a negative or reverse integral; in a sort of merger of Plato and Adorno, art is “a false history and false theory, or at least a deceptive one,” but this deception provides an insight into the desired future of disalienation, that is, the total integration with life.¹⁴² The aesthetic, however, involves other realms, such as, surprisingly, sports, which “oscillates from a sensory enjoyment in movement all the way until it comes close to a form of *competition with life*,” the crucial aspect of that “competition” being movement and contingency – sports as a “lightning response to a new circumstance.”¹⁴³ A similar potential of merging with life is found in oral poetry, as another ephemeral, communal and embodied form that enables a glimpse into totality. Unlike sports and oral poetry, however, art is “not indifferent to immortality,” and while it ultimately seeks to cancel out the alienation of man from his essence and from objects, it simultaneously points to the “necessity of objectification,” and to human immersion in reality, the world of objects.¹⁴⁴ However, it is at the same time a fictive, compensatory reality, which stages an encounter with “catharsis,” with “essences,” so that, Lukić strangely concludes, “[a]fter art, it

¹⁴¹ Lukić, *Umetnost i kriterijumi*.

¹⁴² Lukić, 56.

¹⁴³ Lukić, 29.

¹⁴⁴ Lukić, 34.

is hard to live actively,” despite the fact that after Gorky it is easier to join a revolution than after Dostoyevsky.¹⁴⁵

While Lukić’s treatise on aesthetics shares with Krleža’s dialectical anticipation and Flaker’s optimal projection the notion of future anticipation and its opposition to immediate reality, both anticipation and reality are here defined idealistically, rather than materialistically, as they are in Krleža and Flaker, with their primacy of the work of overcoming reality. The work of art is the work of facing a “Maria-Theresian, agrarian absurd,” soaked in sweat, ugliness, and blood, and after WW2 and the revolution – after the primary work of overcoming reality had been done – this work into a work of historiography. It becomes the work of the visionary “rhapsode” able to capture the unique, Yugoslav current, still in anticipation of an unknown, yet hopeful future. Lukić’s 1960s treatise, by contrast, speaks from a position that already seems to be located after history, and this “after” is specifically marked by the position of “art” as situated “after life.” Once art is experienced, there is no return to life. It is as if Lukić’s distinction between sports, oral poetry and art is not expressing a synchronical relation – of different aesthetic practices coexisting at the same moment – but rather a diachronical one, of practices that supplant one another. Sports, then, that “sensory enjoyment in movement,” “a form of competition with life,” and a “lightning response to a new circumstance,” is the aesthetic practice of the Yugoslav socialist revolution and partisan struggle; in other words, it is Yugoslav history, as the always unavoidable and unavoidably contingent overcoming of reality, to which a true Yugoslav responds with remarkable intelligence and improvisation. Oral poetry, still within

¹⁴⁵ Lukić, 63, 71.

the wider realm of the aesthetic, still in contact with life, is the intoxicated Yugoslav historiography which, like the *Encyclopedia* and, later, the *Post-Yugoslav Practices* exhibition, does not write, but “speaks.” It tells Yugoslav people the story of “sports,” and gives meaning to the “lightning response” that these same people had already demonstrated in the arena of revolution. Art, being situated furthest from the broad realm of the aesthetic is but a glimpse of the “competition to life” enacted by “sports,” and, unlike oral poetry, it cannot even tell a story of “sports,” that is, of revolution. Instead, it can access history only by means of set of reified objects, scattered as traces – as allegories, in Walter Benjamin’s terms – of the competition with life. What is more, presaging Lasić’s diagnosis of contemporary Yugoslav literature as a second-rated imitation of everything already existing in Europe, following the theoretical discussion, Lukić will diagnose Yugoslav art as a “golden mean,” that is average, not the best, not the worst.¹⁴⁶ Even Krleža, Lukić notes, has produced only two relevant critical contributions, and in “characteristic moments” (in 1945 and 1952), implying that even Krleža and his generation are no longer practicing “sports.”

Within this complex of the “golden mean” appears finally that which is a truly original Yugoslav contribution: socialist aestheticism. For the first time in the world, a direct yet immanent opposition to socialist realism appears, and this appearance is grounded in a series of debates in the early 1950s, which means that “the author of our variant is a collective one.”¹⁴⁷ What this collective author generated, however, is the “option of a slightly

¹⁴⁶ Just like Lasić will speak of France and Soviet Union as the places where the “spirit” of the literary debate expressed itself in its purest form, Lukić similarly claims that Soviet socialist realist literature and art stand as “a pattern for a great creative adventure,” while Yugoslav socialist realism is mediocre, evidence of the “golden mean,” Lukić, *Umetnost i kriterijumi*, 157.

¹⁴⁷ Lukić, 192.

opened door, which is supposed to satisfy everyone: both the taste of former dogma preachers and those allegedly speaking in the name of free thought.”¹⁴⁸ The best results in this art of compromise are, furthermore, said to be in disciplines that are “away from words,” namely, painting and animation.¹⁴⁹ On the positive side, socialist aestheticism has brought forth variety, multiplicity and exchanges with other countries.

Although Lukić claims that socialist aestheticism had already done its work by 1964, when his book was published, his more recent interpreters have taken socialist modernism, or socialist aestheticism to represent not one particular tendency, but rather the new “political economy” (in Jakovljević’s reading) or a “cultural logic” (in Karla Lebhaft’s reading) of Yugoslav self-management.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, it could perhaps be said that socialist aestheticism represents the moment when Yugoslav history is itself transposed into the realm of art, as a new arena for a different kind of “sports,” or as Lukić would say, the “geopolitics of artistic competition.”¹⁵¹ Also interesting is Lukić’s evident animosity towards what can be said to have defined Yugoslav aesthetics of the Meštrović-Krleža line, namely its link with the life of the “people”: the export value of our art is oriental and rural, dark instinct and murder, which overshadow urban and socialist accomplishments.¹⁵² Instead of provincialism, instead of insisting on what is “ours,” he further concludes, we should measure up to others and “air” ourselves.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸ Lukić, 205.

¹⁴⁹ Lukić, 215.

¹⁵⁰ Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*. Karla Lebhaft, “Vraćanje duga ‘socijalističkom modernizmu’,” *Ars Adriatica* 4 (2014).

¹⁵¹ Lukić, *Umetnost i kriterijumi*, 215.

¹⁵² Lukić, 142.

¹⁵³ Lukić, 142.

It seems that this is precisely what was achieved at Yugoslavia's presentation at the EXPO '58 Brussels, when the Yugoslav pavilion was designed, as Vladimir Kulić states, as “an attempt to internationally showcase the specific brand of socialism” developed in Yugoslavia following its break with the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁴ The avant-garde design of the pavilion, which was originally designed to be suspended in air, was supposed to express the avant-garde nature of Yugoslav socialism in a world exhibition that more generally “marked modernism's worldwide victory,” as a paradigmatic symbol of the cultural Cold War.¹⁵⁵ Among the four sections that represented in the Yugoslav pavilion, a “Gallery of Contemporary Art” was to place Yugoslavia squarely within that competition, which as Kulić argues, compromised Richter's avant-garde vision, which surpassed the Cold War agenda. Richter allegedly exercised “tyrannical aesthetic control,” including an elimination of color photographs and even the Yugoslav flag, which was hung only after the opening.¹⁵⁶ Ironically, this dramatic struggle of avant-garde art to escape the lowly task of national representation was successful and the pavilion was poorly visited, which, even more ironically, resulted in an ad-hoc addition to the exhibition of dolls with folk costumes, which proved as an “immediate success.”¹⁵⁷ Kulić reads this telling incident as the return of the repressed of the first Yugoslavia, when Yugoslav world exhibition pavilions marketed itself through the opposition between the modern and the primitive, but one could also read this as the irruption of Yugoslav aesthetics into (post)Yugoslav art, in which the maker of the

¹⁵⁴ Vladimir Kulić, “An Avant-Garde Architecture for an Avant-Garde Socialism: Yugoslavia At Expo '58,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 47, no. 1 (2012), 161.

¹⁵⁵ Kulić, 178.

¹⁵⁶ Kulić, 181.

¹⁵⁷ Kulić, 182.

dolls, “an otherwise anonymous Belgrade schoolteacher named Dušanka Bulajić” temporarily and unexpectedly stole the stage from the great avant-garde (male) artist.

The late sixties and seventies were another negation of universalist modernism, or as critic Davor Matičević called it, “clean aesthetics of the Zagreb school,” to which he juxtaposed works by Mladen Stilinović, member of the Zagreb Group of Six Authors, who were mostly amateurs and also affirmed a vernacular, dirty aesthetics, “aesthetics of the farmer’s marked,” as Stilinović called it. Still, their work was structurally positioned within art – and not “sports” – and the intensely rich and diverse scene of the “new artistic practices” of the 1960s and 1970s in Yugoslavia testify to the fact that life now took place in the realm of art. This was clear also from a 1989 text by Jerko Denegri, in which he argued that art produced in Yugoslavia evolved within a “Yugoslav artistic space,” which offered a common context for production and exchange, and inside which a common “artistic life” could evolve.¹⁵⁸ It seems that, after sports, and oral poetry, there was again movement and interaction; there was life – however, only of the “artistic” kind. Denegri’s text was published in the catalogue of another exhibition, *Yugoslav Documenta*, held in 1989 in Sarajevo, the city in which the Yugoslav century arguably also began with Gavrilo Princip’s assassination of Franz Ferdinand, and where it now ended, with the last Yugoslav exhibition and with another actual state of siege, in which the city found itself in 1992.

The global discovery of Yugoslav art, following the wars, once more repeated the dynamic delineated by Lukić: first there was fascination with “Balkan” murder and

¹⁵⁸ Jerko Denegri, “Jugoslovenski umjetnički prostor,” in *Jugoslavenska Dokumenta '89* (Sarajevo: Olimpijski Centar Skenderija, 1989).

bloodshed, then a fascination with “Eastern European” conceptual and performance artists who resisted the socialist regime, and finally, after “(post-)Yugoslav art was presented as precisely an intervention into those existing frameworks, it was itself ironically followed by another fascination, a fascination precisely with “Yugoslav” art. The latter one is a mirror image of Richter’s EXPO ’58, which ultimately reiterates Yugoslavia’s self-promotion as the country of avant-garde socialism, or, as one international exhibition of the Museum of Avantgarde Art, a private collection of Yugoslav and Eastern European art put it, a country of “non-aligned modernism.” With this, Yugoslavia has fully joined the “geopolitics of artistic competition” in which the entry into global contemporaneity is preconditioned by the imperative to provide evidence of a particular exotic and earlier unrepresented brand of “modernism.” If, in the first post-socialist decades, the artist’s performing body, trapped behind the Iron Curtain, was a sign of “art under socialism,” Yugoslav art now displaces that image with the futurist-socialist-modernist partisan monuments, whose photogenic status was confirmed even by *National Geographic* [Figure 2] The dazzling, night-view photographs of the surviving Yugoslav monuments were featured in this weekly repository of world’s dead and dying biological and cultural heritage, as a kind of Pompeii of the twentieth century, as “haunting relics of a country that no longer exists,” a socialist state with self-management and open borders, unlike the repressive Soviet Union.¹⁵⁹

David Maljković’s *Scenes for New Heritage* is likely the earliest work that staged this encounter of the global contemporary and the Yugoslav modern. [Figure 47] Beginning in

¹⁵⁹ Christine Blau, “Haunting Relics of a Country That No Longer Exists,” *nationalgeographic.com*, 28 August, 2017, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/destinations/europe/former-yugoslavia-monuments>.

2004 with a series of sketches and drawings, Maljković's 2006 video took as its stage the site of the unfinished partisan memorial at Petrova Gora, designed by sculptor Vojin Bakić. At once sculpture and architecture this futurist, spiraling tower was covered with mirror plates, whose reflecting surface Maljković emulates in the video by aluminum-foil-wrapped cars that visit the memorial. From the car emerge figures who, evidently, do not share the same time-space coordinates with the now rotting and abandoned monument. They are confused, disoriented, and do not know on which unusual, alien even, site they landed. They enter the structure, but still remain alien to its winding forms. What is more, they really *are* strangers, for they speak a language that the video needs to subtitle to its contemporary viewers. In fact, they do not speak, they sing, and this song is – and this is the most captivating, but also the most slippery, element of the video – *ganga*, the traditional, folk manner of group singing, based on minimal lyrics, and a prolonged, loud, insistent, collective articulation of a single vowel-based sound.

By staging a clash between this type of traditional singing, typical of the Dinaric region of the Dalmatian hinterlands, and the avant-garde, future-bound art of Yugoslav socialism, Maljković creates a gripping figure of the level of alienation of socialist heritage in the aftermath of Yugoslavia's disintegration. The *ganga* song, by contrast, presumably signals the hegemonic reactivation of traditional culture, in the service of new national states. By means of this juxtaposition, however, Maljković pits the two Yugoslav aesthetics and makes them fundamentally incompatible, thus sealing the possibility of deriving any progressive aesthetics and politics from the folk tradition, or its potential synergy with modern art. As I have shown, the history of Yugoslav aesthetics was based on exploring and claiming such possibility, and even on claiming it from a decidedly progressive socialist position, which is

what Krleža and the artists of Zemlja group attempted to do. Krleža's selection of the Bogomils as the paradigmatic art of the ancient Yugoslav civilization is grounded – admittedly, this move required a great deal of exaggeration and acrobatics – on their rejection of existing aesthetic models, and their affirmation of their own “fresh” and “naïve” vision. Similarly, as Tanja Zimmerman wrote in her reflection of what she describes as Yugoslav “neoprimitivism,” contemporary art made by self-taught painters and sculptors was featured in a number of exhibitions that Yugoslav curators and critics presented to international audiences in the 1950s and 1960s. A collection of naïve art, grounded in the work of painters of the Hlebine School, initiated in the 1930s by Krsto Hegedušić, was part of the Zagreb's Gallery of Contemporary Art, itself a major proponent of the most current trends in local and international contemporary art. Today, this collection forms a separate institutional entity, a sign, with Maljković's video, that the “folk element” of Yugoslav culture has been relegated to the authority of the conservative, nationalist state, and its historical connection with modern art and avant-garde thinkers, artists and curators erased.

This is one of the reasons why I chose, in defining Yugoslav aesthetics, to focus on a line of Yugoslav art that is not as easily translated in languages of global modernisms, and which attempts to grapple with *ganga*, the mute tone of similar singing, and the “Panonian mud” that it identified as its own, homemade, reality. Indeed, Krleža's vision of aesthetics, in which beauty mixes with gallows and blood, is far removed from the sleek aesthetics of photogenic partisan monuments, whose reified image obscures the existence of a great number of other partisan monuments made in line with a “socialist realist” aesthetics. This image also detaches them from both the history of the “country that no longer exists,” and from their ritualistic and didactic function in Yugoslavia, where they served as sites where

new generations came to learn about their past – or that which was possible, within existing historiographical and ideological frameworks, to learn about it. In this sense, and given that this past is decidedly marked by the affirmation of the inarticulate claim of the people (*narod*), as well as “a peoples,” the majority of whom before WW2 spoke the language of *ganga* and not the universal language of modern art, there is much more in common between Yugoslav costumes made by an “otherwise anonymous teacher” and partisan monuments than there is between them and modernist art.

Chapter 4. The Living Presence of the *Körper*: Monument Group and the Phenomenology of Death

Speaks a new scene; the last act crowns the play.¹

Can there be a phenomenology of death? Is there even a place for death in phenomenology, or is death, on the contrary, exactly that which displaces the phenomenological project, a project so deeply steeped in life? Branching in and out of life, the phenomenological subject is thrust into the (life)world, as a lived, experiencing body, in a living present, of the (touching-touched) flesh, “in so far as we are within life.”² Heidegger introduces death, but only in order to affirm life: death is a guarantor of authentic life, and only the life of a single being, *my* Dasein.³ But what if the death were not mine, but that of another or innumerable others? Instead of *being-toward-death*, what would it mean to think of *being-with-and-after-death*; being-with-others and being-in-the-world that is not simply a life-world, but a *life-death-world*? An intersubjective sharing of the world not only with the living but also the dead, who ground – to introduce Husserl’s geological metaphors that will concern me in this chapter – its subsoil, its sediments, its retentions and protentions, or, in Levinas’s terms, its diachrony?⁴ Or, in Merleau-Ponty’s terms, a kinship that would not only be seen as an enfleshed interwovenness in the world, but a kinship between the flesh and the bone?

¹ Francis Quarles (1592-1644), epigram from *Respite Finem* (1635)

² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 116.

³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010).

⁴ Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being, or, Beyond Essence* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998).

For throughout the entire process of forensic analysis, quantification, and identification, an unpleasant surplus remains: the corporeal surplus that cannot be identified, quantified, buried, or sacralized – the surplus of debased matter, of scattered, excess bones! This unpleasant, radically inassimilable, material remainder opens up the real space of politics. It offers itself as, literally, the ground for a process of subjectivization that would not be identity-bound, and that would demand a different sort of memory-politics. We do not know the proper name of this political subjectivization tied to the non-identifiable corporeal remainder, but we do know that its mandate is to interrupt the “parallel convergence” of the contemporary constructions of identity and the politics of terror.⁵

The above quote is from Monument Group’s *Mathemes of Reassociation*, a collaborative textual and performative intervention that arose out of a series of public discussions held in Belgrade during 2008 on the topic of the Srebrenica genocide and its aftermath. The “scattered, excess bones” are bones excavated during the still ongoing, arduous process of searching for and identifying the victims of genocide, a search obstructed by unknown locations of remaining mass graves, as well as by the existence of secondary and tertiary graves into which once buried remains were transferred and reburied, in a way that caused a disintegration of bodies and a mixing of bones. In this chapter, I intend to stage what is likely to appear as an unlikely encounter between Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology and the work of Monument Group, a loosely delineated collective of artists, scholars, and intellectuals committed to thinking through the violent break-up of Yugoslavia and its aftermath. Neither Husserl nor phenomenology are among the theoretical references employed by the otherwise decidedly theoretical work of the group, situated mainly within the institutional and discursive context of contemporary art. Needless to say, neither Srebrenica nor Yugoslavia can be found among Husserl’s references. Then again, why not take as the initial point of encounter the curious fact that among the rare fragments of *The*

⁵ Grupa Spomenik, *Mathemes of Reassociation* (samizdat, 2010), n.p.

Crisis of the European Sciences to be published while Husserl was still alive were those “published in an obscure exile journal in Belgrade during Husserl’s last years”?⁶ If Husserl were to take part at Monument Group’s Belgrade discussions eighty years later, what would he say? By interrogating what Husserl can do for the Monument Group, and what Monument Group can, in turn, do for Husserl, I intend to formulate a possible procedure for another unlikely encounter: the oxymoronic configuration of the phenomenology of death as a more properly theoretical translation of what the dissertation has thus far examined as Yugoslavia’s own oxymoronic claim.

By diagnosing Husserl’s phenomenology as the “metaphysics of presence” and even “a philosophy of *life*,” Jacques Derrida was the first to explicate the implicit place of death in phenomenology.⁷ Marked also by his encounter with the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, Derrida’s later writings would be increasingly preoccupied with questions of death, mourning, and survival. While relying on critical interventions by Derrida and Levinas, I propose to return to a number of concepts that Husserl developed in his late writings, and revise what I will argue is Derrida’s and Levinas’s (un)critical closure of the significance of Husserl’s project. My own procedure will be that of a “zigzag,” a term that Husserl used in *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, a late work in which history is known to have “irrupted,” as Derrida wrote, into Husserl’s theretofore static and genetic phenomenological research. In

⁶ David Carr, “The Crisis as Philosophy of History,” in *Science and the Life-World: Essays on Husserl’s Crisis of European Sciences* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 83. Carr refers to this as something that “many readers will know” but he offers no citation of the “exile journal” or any other scholarly discussion of it. In his translator’s introduction to *The Crisis*, however, Carr cites “an international yearbook *Philosophia*, edited by Arthur Liebert in Belgrade,” in which the first two parts of Husserl’s text were published in 1936, David Carr, “Translator’s Introduction,” in Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), xvii.

⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Voice and Phenomenon: Introduction to the Problem of the Sign in Husserl’s Phenomenology*, trans. Leonard Lawlor (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2011), 10.

the initial movement of this zigzag, phenomenological tools and concepts are taken over as inherited, iterable “idealities,” which are then “bound” to a specific event of annihilation and violence from recent history (Yugoslav wars of the 1990s and art works that thematize them). A motion in the other direction acts to transform and expand upon those phenomenological tools and concepts, while at the same time bringing phenomenological theory itself back to the “ground” of its own social and political life-death-world, which culminated with the catastrophe of WW2. Both Husserl and Monument Group start from acknowledging a catastrophe, which Husserl identifies as an “crisis of European sciences” in an “unlivable world” and Monument Group as the “‘parallel convergence’ of the contemporary constructions of identity and the politics of terror.”⁸ However, whereas Husserl attempts to remove the “garb of ideas,” that is, to historicize the scientific formalizations that have covered over the “life-world” and thus prevent access to the key philosophical question, the meaning of existence, Monument Group begins from the fact of the already existing life-death-world and, instead of retrieving a lost meaning, seeks to define a future political subject. Both endeavors, however, involve a number of analogous procedures, not least of which is a shared epistemological investment and a confidence in the power of rational thought: while Husserl is after the meaning of existence, Monument Group seeks to formulate “a matheme of genocide.” Both procedures, furthermore, involve a search for a viable language in which to formulate its findings, which at the same time involves a negation of existing languages, in particular, a critique of science (“mathematization,” for Husserl, and forensic science for Monument Group). The latter, in

⁸ Grupa Spomenik, *Mathemes of Reassociation*, n.p.

turn, necessitates a historical inquiry, but one that is preconditioned on historicity, that is, on the specific historical situatedness of the subject in search of historical knowledge. Even more importantly, in both cases the only subject deemed able to perform such a search – what is ultimately in both cases a certain kind of phenomenology of death in the name of life – turns out to be an intersubjective subject. Which, I will propose, ultimately requires the final step that neither Husserl nor Monument Group make: to give up on the very idea of (a philosophizing or political) subject. This former subject can, inflected by the statelessness of both European Jews and present-day Yugoslavs, as well as by conclusions reached by figures of thought that appear both Husserl and Monument Group, be thought of precisely along the lines of “grouping.”

Husserliana is burning

As in a proverbial tale of the cycle of human life, at the age of seventy-seven Husserl ends his life-work by posing the imperative to look back in order to grasp the meaning of human existence. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1936) is an unfinished proposition for a thorough return inquiry (*Rückfragen*), a historical (self)reflection into the origins of philosophy posited as a necessary precondition for the practice of transcendental phenomenology that is once again to give meaning to what Husserl will designate as “unlivable life.”⁹ David Carr recognizes Husserl’s last published work as a veritable turn: for the first time in Husserl’s work, history assumes center-stage and becomes not only a topic of phenomenological investigation, but the very condition of possibility for

⁹ Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences*.

the practice of philosophy.¹⁰ Or so it would be if, as Husserl pleads, philosophy and philosophers were to halt the meaningless proliferation and self-propagation in the “flora of ever growing and ever dying philosophies,”¹¹ and return to “the *one* philosophy to which our life seeks to be and ought to be devoted.”¹² This return is to be achieved by reflecting back in search of philosophy’s original task and the original question, namely, the question “about the meaning or meaninglessness of the whole of this human existence.”¹³ It is this question, furthermore, which defines philosophy as science, the *one* science that ultimately endows all science with sense.¹⁴

The task of philosophy, then, is to reactivate the original task, and to do so with an urgency dictated by the world turned into an unlivable place: “Can we live in this world, where historical occurrence is nothing but an unending concatenation of illusory progress and bitter disappointment?”¹⁵ The only answer to the crisis must be a radical break, nothing short of an initiation of a “new age,” with the “radicalism of a new beginning.”¹⁶ But this new beginning, as was just shown, is conditioned by a return to the very beginning of philosophy. Thus, the task entails simultaneously a revolution (a radically new task for philosophy) and a “renaissance” (of ancient philosophy): “at once a repetition and a universal transformation of meaning.”¹⁷

¹⁰ In the *Crisis*, and the manuscript writings associated with it, most notably “The Origin of Geometry,” historical reflection would, as Carr suggests, “belong essentially, and not incidentally, to the business of putting philosophy on the right road.” David Carr, *Phenomenology and the Problem of History: A Study of Husserl’s Transcendental Philosophy* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 55.

¹¹ Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, 17.

¹² Edmund Husserl, “The Origin of Geometry,” published as Appendix VI in Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, 354. Original emphasis.

¹³ Husserl, 6.

¹⁴ Husserl, 6.

¹⁵ Husserl, 7.

¹⁶ Husserl, 14.

¹⁷ Husserl, 14.

What Husserl discovers in the *Crisis* is the “a priori of the life-world”¹⁸ [*Lebenswelt*] – the pregivenness of the pre-scientific realm of “original self-evidences” that form the root or the “grounding soil” of all objective science. However, access to this original, foundational, and material realm is precluded by the fact of its being covered over by a “garb of ideas” [*Ideenkleid*], the removing of which is the aim of proposed reflection.¹⁹ Having lost its “roots,” humanity has “collapsed.”²⁰ But in the “Origin of Geometry,” we learn that this alienation and discreteness from roots is not the result of some free-floating maneuver high above ground, but amounts to none other than a drowning in the obscure mire of ground, thick and heavy with “sediments” of sense, under which lie buried the “original formations.”²¹ The attempt to reach the original formations of the pre-scientific life-world and to thus counter modern science, which has become “insensitive to the problem of origins,” results in another discovery, the “universal a priori of history.”²² “We stand, then,” Husserl announces, “within the historical horizon in which everything is historical, even though we may know very little about it in a definite way.”²³

¹⁸ Husserl, 139.

¹⁹ Husserl, 49. The primary “garb” that concern Husserl in the *Crisis* (as well as “The Origin of Geometry”) is the mathematization of the world instantiated by modern philosophy’s taking for granted and ontologizing of Galileo’s mathematical discoveries, themselves handed over in the form of the pure geometry inherited from the Greeks. In mathematizing and measuring the universe, science idealizes the world, in pursuit of objective knowledge. However, in taking for granted the mathematized world of modern science, modern philosophy confounds method with being: Galileo’s method for approaching the world is interpreted as defining of the being of the world, and from that moment on “to be is to be measurable.” What is forgotten by such a move is precisely that on the basis which the mathematized abstraction is performed in the first place and from which it abstracts: “the world of sense-experience,” “the intuitively given surrounding world,” i.e., the “prescientific life-world.” See Carr, *Phenomenology and the Problem of History*, 123-124.

²⁰ “The true struggles of our time, the only ones which are significant, are struggles between humanity which has already collapsed and humanity which still has roots but is struggling to keep them or find new ones.” Husserl, 15.

²¹ Husserl, 371.

²² Husserl, 367, 371.

²³ Husserl, 369.

What is the relation between these two horizons, the a priori of the life-world and the a priori of history? Is the life-world, as the ultimate universal horizon, structurally occluded by the horizon of history? David Carr points to ambiguities in Husserl's presentation of the life-world, a concept which at times seems to denote the pregiven world of experience, which surrounds us and which can thus always be accessed via a reflection that reduces all idealizations. At times, however, Husserl implies that such reduction is impossible: accessing the life-world in the present means experiencing it as already transformed, and cultured by layers of ideas sedimented over the course of human history. In other words, in this other version the pregiven life-world can be accessed, but never in its full nudity as it were, never entirely stripped of *Ideenkleid* ("the garb of ideas"). Based on a reading of Husserl's *Experience and Judgment* (1939),²⁴ Carr decides for the latter determination of the life-world, which would designate Husserl's approach to history as stemming from the awareness of – and an active, intentional, creative involvement in – the present historical moment, which emerges as a horizon that necessarily determines and limits all attempts to delve into, and deconstruct [*Abbau*] the past.²⁵ However, as Carr himself points out, the fact that in *Experience and Judgment* Husserl still speaks of the "original lifeworld," and, in fact, makes a distinction between the "covered-over life world" and "the original world

²⁴ *Experience and Judgment* was edited by Ludwig Landgrebe and published in 1939, but Landgrebe himself warns that he did more than just editing, and that he was the one responsible for "literary formulations" based on the "raw material" and "conceptual content" provided by Husserl. Husserl never authorized the final text. See Carr, *Phenomenology and the Problem of History*, 212.

²⁵ See Carr's discussion in the final three chapters of his book (212-277). Husserl uses the term *Abbau* to designate the attempt to reconstruct the original world-experience, which Carr translates as "dismantling." However, deconstruction seems a more fitting translation, especially since the term then emerges as another bridge between Husserl's and Derrida's thought. Carr's conclusions about Husserl's philosophy of history are further based on Husserl's own reference to "poetic invention of the history of philosophy," where each generation, and each philosopher, reinvents the work of his predecessors, according to his aims, as well as according to his own relation to the sediments of the philosophy of others "in whose company, in critical friendship and enmity, he philosophizes." Cited in Carr, 277.

experience and life-world,” indicates that he still projects into a distant past “the idea of a kind of ‘age of innocence,’ an experience free of all conceptualizations.”²⁶

Such insistence on absolute origins, as well as the (theoretical) belief in their restorability, despite all practical difficulties entailed by such a proposition, justifies Derrida’s critique of Husserl’s idealism which, for Derrida, remains undone even by Husserl’s turn to history in his late writings. For no matter how much he tried to penetrate the “significations arising from historicity,” Edmund Husserl, “the author of the *Crisis*,” was a “stranger to history,” “fundamentally incapable” of taking it seriously.²⁷ Thus, although Husserl recognizes that there must have been a unique, historical occurrence by which geometry was *in fact (de facto)* instituted, and although its original “truth-sense” is potentially always under the threat of *in fact* being destroyed, the wholeness and integrity of its sense remain *in principle (de jure)* untouchable. By rejecting empirical history, and by making the distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic historicity, Husserl, according to Derrida, shields the validity of infinite sense. Husserl recognizes the terrifying reality of factual destruction, and yet it seems that no fatal event, not even “a universal conflagration, a world-wide burning of libraries, or a catastrophe of monuments or ‘documents’ in general” could harm “*the very sense of absolute ideality.*”²⁸

Even if *all* geometrical documents and all actual geometers would come to ruin one day, this would not be, Derrida concludes, “an event ‘of’ geometry” but something extrinsic to it. Since it is grounded in the eidetic analyses of the sensible realm, geometrical truth

²⁶ Carr, 234.

²⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Edmund Husserl’s ‘Origin of Geometry’: An Introduction*, trans. John P. Leavey JR. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 93.

²⁸ Derrida, 94.

would always be retrievable by going back to the original evidence that propelled the institution of geometry in the first place.²⁹ If, however, Carr's conclusions about the mutability of the pregiven life-world were to be accepted, the return to the sensible in the present, as proposed by Derrida, could not – not even *de jure* – yield the original sense and self-evidence that once instituted geometry. Because, as Carr infers from *Experience and Judgment*, tradition does not merely affect human ideas, it also determines the boundaries of our sensible experience. This conclusion, which Carr attributes to Husserl, is thus ironically precisely analogous to Derrida's idea of an originary contamination of experience by language, which he arrives at through a deconstruction and critique of Husserl's insistence on univocity, that is, on the separation of fact and ideality, indication and expression.

Unresolved ambiguities in Husserl's writings, indeed, an ongoing internal struggle between the power of the world and the power of consciousness as both constituting the world and being constituted by it, seem to enable one to choose sides as to what Husserl's own last word on the subject might have been, had his *Nachlass* (his research and manuscript archive) not remained in such an unfinished, unedited, and unpublished state. Carr's conclusions redeem Husserl from the charge of perpetuating the idealist, Platonic dream of eternal truth, sense and essence, while Derrida projects the shadow of Plato onto Husserl's idea of non-empirical historicity and his insistence on the *de jure* possibility of infinite iterability, that is, the possibility of retrieving and synthesizing of the totality of sense, despite all *de facto* difficulties, despite, indeed, any realistic hope that this could ever be achieved.³⁰

²⁹ Derrida, 97.

³⁰ "Did not Plato describe this situation? Was not the eternity of essences for him perhaps only another name for a nonempirical historicity?" Derrida, 107.

However one is to understand Husserl's ambiguities with regard to the ultimate task of philosophy, Husserl remained unambiguous in his confidence that transcendental phenomenology is best equipped to master this task. With each new research initiated by Husserl, phenomenology's tools were rebuilt, in preparation for a radical "new beginning." Husserl died in the midst of these preparations, leaving only a few published "introductions" and a heap of unedited manuscripts – the *Crisis*, as Carr notes, is the last among the many "introductions" to transcendental phenomenology that preceded it.³¹ In another late text Husserl called phenomenology itself "the science of beginnings," defining his own position within phenomenology as that of "a real beginner."³² The construction of the method might near its completion but many problems remain, and Husserl enumerates them in the *Crisis*: the question of the insane, children, animals, the problems of genesis, transcendental historicity, the problems of birth and death, the problem of the sexes, of the 'unconscious,' of dreamless sleep, etc.³³ Again, he reassures the reader that all these problems can be approached by transcendental phenomenology, under the condition that "appropriate constitutional questions" be posed, since ultimately, there is "no conceivable problem of being at all, that could not be arrived at by transcendental phenomenology at some point along its way."³⁴

The beginning of the true practice of phenomenology seems to always be postponed, and each new research only delineates phenomenology's pre-history, a determination of its

³¹ Carr, 44.

³² Edmund Husserl, cited in Ronald. Bruzina, *Edmund Husserl and Eugen Fink: Beginnings and Ends in Phenomenology, 1928-1938* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 24.

³³ Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, 188.

³⁴ Husserl, 188.

“sense” and mission. Just as Derrida will argue that in “The Origin of Geometry” Husserl is inquiring not after the first geometer (the one who would merely inherit the sense and task of the new science), but after the first proto-geometer (the one who actually institutes it), thus might Husserl himself be understood not as the first phenomenologist, but as the proto-phenomenologist, instituting the foundations and sense of phenomenology. If, then, a universal conflagration of libraries were to occur, burning all documents of Husserl’s (proto)phenomenology, how could a *Rückfragen*, an inquiry into the origin of phenomenology be performed centuries later? How would its original sense be retrieved?

The “author of the *Crisis*” would instruct this future researcher to begin by examining the sediments. Because, “history is from the start nothing other than the vital movement of the coexistence and the interweaving of original formations and sedimentations of meaning.”³⁵ Strata of deposits cover over the foundations, but the original layers are dispersed among the sediments; there can be no clear separation of the two. Sedimentations are, as Derrida points out, at the same time what caused the crisis and what provides the necessary medium for its resolution; it is “both thanks to and despite the sedimentations,” both thanks to and despite what has been left to me by tradition, that I can inquire into and retrieve the original sense, which, however, is not static, as its *totality* had developed only over time.³⁶ But again, in order to make sense of this totality and its historical development, an insight into the very beginnings is necessary. Although Husserl describes this dynamics as a “sort of circle,” it should not be seen as leading to an aporia. Rather, as he

³⁵ Husserl, 371.

³⁶ Derrida, *Edmund Husserl’s ‘Origin of Geometry’*, 50.

writes, one must “proceed forward and backward in a ‘zigzag’ pattern.”³⁷ Such “historical consideration and historical critique,” Husserl explains, is based on an “interplay” between one motion and the other: “[r]elative clarification on one side brings some elucidation on the other, which in turn casts light back on the former.”³⁸

It could be argued that “zigzagging,” as a peculiar phenomenological, cross-illuminating dialectics, had been present from the beginnings of phenomenology, as the movement that it pursued in its exploration of how consciousness constitutes the world while at the same time being constituted by it. This is the first time, however, that something not immediately present and not directly lived, but rather inherited and passed on, is discovered to inform this relation. Both Carr and Derrida pose the question of whether (the original project of) phenomenology can survive intact, after venturing into historical investigations. Carr sees the turn to history in the *Crisis* as a long-term development, stemming from Husserl’s engagement with genetic phenomenology (which led to the discovery of the temporal constitution of consciousness), and the phenomenology of intersubjectivity (which confronted the problem of alterity and the question of how the other could at the same time be an object for my subjective consciousness and a subject in their own right). By the time of *Cartesian Meditations* (1929) Husserl had discovered, in Carr’s formulation, that subjectivity is “essentially temporal and communal in its constitution of the world.”³⁹ Similarly, Derrida diagnoses phenomenology “to be tormented if not contested, from the inside, by means of its own descriptions of the movement of temporalization and

³⁷ Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, 58.

³⁸ Husserl, 58.

³⁹ Carr, *Phenomenology and the Problem of History*, 248.

of the constitution of intersubjectivity.”⁴⁰ The discovery, in the period of the *Crisis*, of what both Carr and Derrida label the “historical reduction” disturbs Husserl’s initial propositions even more radically. Carr concludes that Husserl’s transcendental philosophy survives, but does not simply survive intact: “once history is taken seriously, phenomenology can no longer be *exclusively* a philosophy based on reflection. The reflective procedure embodied in the phenomenological reduction is now subject to the constant surveillance provided by the historical reduction.”⁴¹ For his part, Derrida argues that Husserl persists in making the attainment of sense dependent upon the strength of his original static analyses, whose artillery wards off the incoming threats of genetic and historical phenomenology.⁴² Derrida’s entire engagement with Husserl will be to amplify the force and fatality of this attack, the (self-destructive and self-deconstructive) tactics of which had been laid out by Husserl himself.

Over the course of the development of Husserl’s phenomenology, then, the intentional potency and autonomy of transcendental subjectivity had steadily decreased. Already the static analyses had shown that consciousness was never independent, but always bound to the intended object, and ultimately bound by the world as the limit horizon. The subsequent considerations of passive synthesis and temporality revealed that consciousness of a present moment could never be free from residues of voluntary and involuntary incursions of past impressions, as well as future projections. Analyses of intersubjectivity

⁴⁰ Derrida, *Voice and Phenomenon*, 6.

⁴¹ Carr, *Phenomenology and the Problem of History*, 266. Original emphasis.

⁴² “One cannot come back to all this evidence without making the sensible the ground of geometrical truth and, therefore, without questioning once more the sense of geometry constituted as an eidetic science. Now this sense was securely decided within the static analyses that, as we saw above, were the indispensable guard rails for all genetic or historical phenomenology,” Derrida, *Edmund Husserl’s ‘Origin of Geometry’*, 97.

determined that the world was not only a world-for-me, but also a world-for-us; that conscious processes and cognition were to a significant degree the result of communication and not direct experience. Finally, in his late works, Husserl discovered what he in the *Crisis* called the “Heraclitian flux”: the disheartening discovery that “every ‘ground’ [*Grund*] that is reached points to further grounds, every horizon opened up awakens new horizons.”⁴³ What is more, these bottomless and limitless openings are not simply bound to individual consciousness (as they were in Heraclitus), but instead span the entire human history, whose sedimentations transport to the present historical moment the heritage of ancient “deposits,” “acquisitions” and “possessions.” In other words, we are not born into this world to start from a clean slate. If in his earlier, genetic analyses, Husserl wrote of “the history of the subject” and of “self-inheritance” – a subject that was, uncannily, an “heir to itself” and its own internal history⁴⁴ – in the *Crisis* he expanded this hereditary historicity of the subject by positing that “we” are primarily “historical beings,” “heirs of the past.”⁴⁵ What is more, “we not only have a spiritual heritage but have become what we are thoroughly and exclusively in a historical-spiritual manner,” with a task which is “truly our own.”⁴⁶

What is to be done with this inheritance, the willed acquisitions and possessions of which are always already there before any willing acceptance of them by their heirs? How can “we” make sense of ourselves as “historical beings,” at the same time remaining aware

⁴³ Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, 156, 170. Husserl’s cue to this formulation is a quote by Heraclitus about the endlessly deep ground of the soul and the inability to reach its boundaries.

⁴⁴ From Husserl’s manuscripts, cited in Carr, *Phenomenology and the Problem of History*, 78.

⁴⁵ Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, 72, 17. Here, Husserl refers specifically to the “we” of philosophers and their historical task and heritage, however, the elaboration of his philosophy of history makes clear that the definition of historicity of being should be taken as universal.

⁴⁶ Husserl, 71. I am here again universalizing the ramifications of this statement, which elaborates on the inherent historicity of “we, philosophers.”

of the limits to access history, with its endless submerged *subsoils*, *grounds* and *horizons*? Rather than a straight-forward retrieval and consummation of origin, historical reduction cannot offer more than a quivering zigzag; rather than a separation of original formations and sedimentations of meaning, history can only be witnessed as their confused “co-existence” and “interweaving.” But Husserl is cautioning the reader against taking all these geological time-travel metaphors lightly: “To be sure, words taken from the sphere of the natural world, such as ‘component’ and ‘stratum,’ are dangerous, and the necessary transformation of their sense must therefore be noticed.”⁴⁷

Why are these words dangerous? And what if we refuse to notice the transformation, that is, the denaturalization of their sense? What if we decide to re-naturalize them, by stripping them of metaphoric layers and bringing them back to the register of their material, sensible referents? It is precisely the materiality and gravity of *ground* where the two horizons, the horizon of the life-world and the horizon of history, meet, and where the very concept of *horizon* reveals itself as an irreducible impossibility of levitation. Policing the border between the earth’s surface and the sky, horizon is still *of* the earth, it is merely its utmost layer. This is why, in its archeological sense, a horizon is found within the earth, buried in the ground, as an optically, that is to say, evidently distinct geological boundary waiting to be excavated as evidence of a bygone limit of consciousness and cognition that had once touched the sky. It is the soil that is the archivist of limits and the primary limit it guards is that of life — its mortality, the deposits of which are buried and sedimented in the ground, and thus available to be conjured in the procedure of *Rückfragen*: a reactivation, an

⁴⁷ Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, 174.

“awakening” — another dangerous word! — of bottomless layers of submerged subsoils, grounds and horizons.⁴⁸ Is this proximity of death, of ghosts, of the imperative of the continuance of life in a world that has become unlivable, what makes Husserl denounce the danger posed by his geological metaphors? And yet, perhaps both thanks to and despite that danger, he finds those metaphors to be most appropriately equipped to carry the sense of his eidetic analyses of historicity. Let us, then, attempt to have it both ways and put those metaphors to work in their “natural world,” while at the same time retaining “the necessary transformation of their sense.”

In our vital need

On July 27th, 2010, a group of students from Belgrade, Serbia, visited ArcelorMittal, an iron ore mine in Omarska, Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁴⁹ “The world’s leading steel and mining company,”⁵⁰ ArcelorMittal is a global corporation, which in 2004 became the majority owner of the Omarska mining site. In the socialist period (1945-1991) the Omarska mine was one of several mining sites managed by “Ljubija Mines,” a public company and the biggest producer of iron ore in ex-Yugoslavia.⁵¹ During the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992-1995) the site was turned into a concentration camp in the newly-established Republic of Srpska.

⁴⁸ “The awakening is something passive; the awakened signification is thus given passively, similarly to the way in which any other activity which has sunk into obscurity, once associatively awakened, emerges at first passively as a more or less clear memory. In the passivity in question here, as in the case of memory, what is passively awakened can be transformed back, so to speak, into the corresponding activity: this is the capacity for reactivation that belongs originally to every human being as a speaking being. Accordingly, then, the writing-down effects a transformation of the original mode of being of the meaning-structure, [e.g.,] within the geometrical sphere of self-evidence, of the geometrical structure which is put into words. It becomes sedimented, so to speak. But the reader can make it self-evident again, can reactivate the self-evidence.” Husserl, “The Origin of Geometry,” 361.

⁴⁹ See also the discussion of Omarska and the *Four Faces of Omarska* working group in Chapter 3. I am repeating a number of facts already stated there, but the story told is a different story, or rather, this is another attempt to tell the same story, and for different purposes.

⁵⁰ <http://corporate.arcelormittal.com>

⁵¹ In taking over the Omarska mine, ArcelorMittal joined with “Ljubija Mines,” the company that had, after the war, inherited the socialist one and resumed production.

In a campaign of ethnic cleansing of the non-Serb population (mainly Bosniaks and Croats) of the Prijedor region, during the spring and summer of 1992, it is estimated that around 5000 people were imprisoned, starved, tortured, and raped in the Omarska camp, one of several camps operating in the area. Between 700 and 800 died as a consequence of torture and exhaustion, or were summarily executed.⁵² The bodies of people whose life ended in these camps were transported in trucks and scattered in some ninety-six smaller or larger hidden mass graves within the Prijedor municipality. Twenty-five years after the war, the process of searching for graves, exhuming the bodies, and identifying the victims, is still ongoing, along with the unwillingness of the majority of the (Serbian) population to acknowledge the war crimes.⁵³ Indeed, as late as 2014 and 2015, two mass graves with some with some 1000 corpses were discovered, first at the Tomašica mining site, followed by a related killing complex at Jakarina Rose. Meanwhile, aided by its new global corporate partner, the factory resumed mining, restoring its premises to “normal” functioning. All except one, the so-called “white house,” a small building where prisoners were taken to be tortured or executed. The building was sealed by The Hague Tribunal and used as evidence in war crime trials. The “white house,” then, is what remains and reminds – a diachronic interruption of the smooth progression of the post-socialist, post-Yugoslav age, busy with covering up the traces of war horrors that preceded the establishment of the Republic of

⁵² In August 1992, the existence of the camp and the brutal conditions in it were exposed in international media. As a result, the camp was closed.

⁵³ With the Dayton Agreement in 1995, the war ended and The Republic of Srpska became an internationally recognized, autonomous unit of Bosnia-Herzegovina, inhabited today by the majority of Serbian population, and with only a very small percentage of non-Serbian population returned from exile. The war persecutions, the camps, and the mass graves do not have a place in the officially sanctioned discourses, just as there are no monuments commemorating the victims.

Srpska, just as the restoration of capitalism, epitomized by ArcelorMittal, covered up traces of the undesired socialist past.⁵⁴

Joined by a few of their colleagues from Banja Luka, capital of Republic of Srpska, Belgrade students were part of the *Four Faces of Omarska* working group, a project initiated by Milica Tomić, artist and member of yet another group – Monument Group, whose work, began in 2006, has centered on Yugoslavia’s break-up and war.⁵⁵ This was the first research trip of what could thus be described as a new, “student” branch of the Monument Group, and a new research whose parameters had nonetheless been set up in advance. Omarska was defined as a location with histories to be unraveled behind its “four faces”: a mining complex during socialism, a death camp during the war, a mining complex owned by a multinational corporation, and the shooting location for the Serbian film spectacle *St. George Shoots the Dragon*.⁵⁶ As was shown in the previous chapter, these four faces of Omarska enable the “student” to pose questions that reach beyond the factual histories of a particular site, and become analytical tools with which to approach the “whole story” of the history of Yugoslavia and its violent disintegration. The four faces provide a structure and an opening for a historical narrative which tells of the magnitude of war violence, mass atrocities, death and displacement that was “necessary” in order to: replace the Yugoslav multinational federation of republics by ethnically clean nation-states; replace the system of socialist self-management and social ownership by capitalism and private ownership; and overwrite

⁵⁴ My use of “diachronic” is informed by Emmanuel Levinas’s elaborations of the concept, which I will refer to in more detail later. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*.

⁵⁵ The original group members were: Mirjana Dragosavljević, Srđan Hercigonja, Sandro Hergić, Vladimir Miladinović, Marija Ratković, Dejan Vasić, Jovanka Vojinović, Zoran Vučkovic i Milica Tomić.

⁵⁶ Working Group Four Faces of Omarska, “How to Think a Memorial,” in *Where Everything is Yet to Happen, 2nd Chapter: Exposures*, edited by Ivana Bago and Antonia Majača (Banja Luka/Zagreb: Protok/Delve, 2011), 203.

Yugoslav pluralistic culture and history by ethno-centric, and religiously inflected cultures and histories.

Omarska is a *mining complex*, and it is so both literally and metaphorically, both historically and theoretically. As such, it provides a ground on which to invite Husserl's geological metaphors in order to "dangerously" merge, instead of separate, their "natural" and "philosophical" significations, disrupting in the process the boundaries between "natural" and "human" history. In this process, the construction of history is itself revealed as a mining complex: a procedure of select covering over and dispersing of past sedimentations, submerging of earlier horizons, while excavating and reactivating other deposits that will serve as acquisitions in leveling out the ground for a new historical and ideological horizon.⁵⁷ Within such regrounding, the "white house," whose minute scale and marginality incidentally embody a perfect opposite to the capitalized monumentality of the U.S. presidential White House, itself not a minor player in the Yugoslav wars, is a sedimentation of a submerged history that has nonetheless managed to remain above ground, on the horizon. The "white house" thus becomes both the material and conceptual embodiment of the possibility to reawaken histories that remain despite their attempted destruction, and to examine their sediments, in an effort to make sense of life after conflagration, a life after "Husserliana" had burnt.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ In the example of Omarska and its four faces, *St. George Slays the Dragon*, the most expensive film in Serbian history, levels out the ground beneath which the traumatizing legacies of the 1990s war atrocities are buried and displaced. At the same time it reactivates the history of the Serbian struggle in the First World War, thus establishing a continuity of national sacrifice and heroism.

⁵⁸ For an analysis of the conceptual and historical reverberations of the fact that the torture place within the camp was dubbed a "house" see Antonia Majača, "Critical Memorial Practices and Their Forums. Reconfiguring Communities of Memory in Former Yugoslavia," MA diss., Goldsmiths, University of London, 2012.

The students visiting the mine in 2010, twenty years after the break-up of Yugoslavia, did so while identifying as students of economics and management, who claimed to want to examine closely the company's successful development. This was a false pretext; in fact, the students (of mostly art and humanities) had travelled from Belgrade to see the "white house." As a co-curator of an exhibition in the framework of which *Four Faces of Omarska* was initially presented, as part of a series of contributions by four Monument Group members, I joined the team on their first research trip.⁵⁹ The visit to the Omarska mine was the final part of the trip, which had begun one day earlier, in the office premises of the abandoned socialist "Rudi Čajavec" factory – another diachronic interruption – in Banja Luka. There, we met with Jasmin Odobašić, a member of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian National Commission for Missing Persons. Having recovered over 4000 bodies, he was "the country's most successful finder of remains."⁶⁰ After an introductory presentation describing the process of locating the graves, excavating the bodies, processing the remains, and identifying the victims via DNA analysis, Mr. Odobašić led the group on a field trip in the area around Prijedor to visit five of the 53 locations where individual or mass graves had been uncovered.

The first step was always to detect grave locations, which was done mainly on the basis of eye-witness accounts. Due to the prevailing vow of silence among the local Serb

⁵⁹ Together with Antonia Majača, I was the curator of the two-year-long exhibition project, *WEIYTH — Where Everything is Yet to Happen*, which took place in Banja Luka (2009-2011) and within which the Working Group 'Four Faces of Omarska' began its research, including the first visit to the Omarska mine. See *Where Everything is Yet to Happen*, edited by Ivana Bago and Antonia Majača.

⁶⁰ <http://p-crc.org/intern-heroes-jasmin-odobasic/>. Mr. Odobasic was born in the Prijedor region and, as a Bosniak, has suffered imprisonment in one of the war camps. His engagement in the search for the remains of victims, is motivated by his vow to witness and prove what had happened during the war.

community, however, and despite the criminal cases at both local and international courts, this wasn't easily accomplished. Very often, the victims' bodies were moved to secondary, or even tertiary graves: once buried, the bodies were exhumed and moved to a different location, in order to obscure traces even further. In the process, the victims' remains, which were as a rule dumped *en masse* into designated pits, were fragmented, and dispersed across different sites. Minefields planted during the war, the locations of which also remained unknown due to the collective vow of silence, represented an additional challenge to the process of locating the graves. Just like Husserl's "sediments," which, as Derrida argued, both obscure and enable the retrieval of "sense," thus here soil emerges as both the carrier of knowledge, an agent able to reveal the truth about the violent and annihilating events of the past, and at the same time as that which blocks that knowledge, mining the efforts to access the truth.

Stepping off the bus at each location and listening to Mr. Odobašić's detailed explanations of how detection and exhumation were performed on each particular site, we found ourselves, each time anew, right at the scene where the disposing of the bodies and therefore the covering up of truth had been committed. And yet, we saw nothing. In some cases, the landscapes were flat and bare, in others more steep and forested; the graves would sometimes be found in remote locations, far away from villages, while in others, they were located just next to houses whose inhabitants had earlier been forcefully exiled, imprisoned, or killed. With the exception of one village where a simple plaque, erected by a small number of exiled survivor returnees, marked the location of the mass grave and commemorated the victims, there were no indicators (let alone memorials) that would warn an unsuspecting visitor, a nature-lover, for example, that s/he was threading the ground beneath which was

once a mass grave. [Figure 48] Even with testimonial guidance, we could not see much further than those unsuspecting visitors. We heard the testimony, but we saw nothing, the witnessing did not make itself evident. More precisely, we saw nothing but ground, recovered to its “natural” state, following the exhumations.

Technically speaking, Mr. Odobašić’s testimonial and expert narrative could have taken place anywhere. We could have stayed in our improvised lecture-room at the abandoned Banja Luka factory, where perhaps, we would continue seeing slides with actual evidence, the recovered bodily remains of the victims, neatly cleansed and packed into evidence bags, marked with codes that designated them as forensic “cases.” Yet, it was precisely our movement, our collective *study trip*, and the effort and time taken to visit each particular location, which enabled us to discover the *horizon of ground* as the limit to our knowledge. We seemed to be examining the “life-world” itself, right in the middle of nature, yet its “meaning” had been obscured by a particular “mathematization” in which genocide was subtracted from the formula that defined the new life and the new community, which, just like Husserl complained of the European sciences, does not inquire after its “origins.” The encounter with the horizon of ground – with the life-death-world that prevented our knowledge – at the same time enabled us, just like it did Husserl, to discover another horizon, that of historicity. We found ourselves identifying our own location in history, a location that was epitomized by the position that the *Four Faces of Omarska Working Group* had assumed as their aesthetic and epistemic credo: the position of non-knowledge.⁶¹ Dangerously challenging Husserl’s desire to alienate his chosen geological signifiers from

⁶¹ Working Group Four Faces of Omarska, “How to Think a Memorial,” 203.

their indigenous, natural environment, here the two grounds, the natural and the theoretical, the empirical and the eidetic, merged, opening the path towards a phenomenology of life whose central component was the phenomenology of death.

The group members were – again, both literally and metaphorically – students. Most of them, just like myself, were descendants of the generation that waged the wars of the 1990s, and were thus heirs to both the bones and the mines deposited, scattered, and sedimented in the soil. Without having partaken in this deposition, and without having witnessed it, we were nonetheless conditioned by the deposits and acquisitions we had come to reawaken and reactivate, in order to claim our inheritance, however unwanted and unwilling. In other words, we found ourselves standing “within the historical horizon in which everything is historical, even though we may know very little about it in a definite way.”⁶² Our heads protected by blue helmets, we entered a small van, with two workers driving us around the premises of the Omarska mine and explaining the purpose of each particular facility. [Figure 49] The workers described in detail the process of iron ore mining. First, the explosions created a hole from which blasted ore was then loaded onto trucks. Then, the ore was crushed and ground, following which the waste material had to be washed away and separated from the iron. The powdered iron was subsequently transformed into pellets and finally, the pellets were ready to be used and transformed into steel. We did not really need to learn this, as we were only pretending to be interested in mining. Or were we? As we stood and watched the carts carrying the soil on mine rails, the structural mirrorings between the procedure of mining and that of exhumation surfaced as a binding text,

⁶² Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, 369.

independent of the separate informants of the two disparate, seemingly incommensurate, guided walks. In both cases, the bulk of unearthed raw findings was first loaded onto trucks, then washed, cleansed, and powdered to isolate the “useful” elements, which were then delegated to experts responsible for obtaining the final gains of the process. In the first case, steel, used for multiplying the profits of the company, and in the second, DNA extracted from bone samples, and used for victim identification, or what is in forensic jargon known as the “reassociation of identity.”

The “white house,” it turns out after all, was not the only diachronic interruption in the contemporary corporate life of the mine. The work of mining itself, the everyday immersion of (predominantly local Serbian) workers⁶³ in the process of handling the soil, of exploding, unearthing, washing away, separating, congeals into an uncanny double of the simultaneous but displaced work of exhumation, that is to say, the work of mourning, the attempt by the victims’ families to end their search for truth, and to bury their loved ones. Is this other work, the work of exhumation, really displaced? Are there unidentified mass graves at or near the Omarska mining site? Are there traces of scattered bones among the raw ore exploded in the mine?⁶⁴ Do the ore mining explosions, then, also mine the evidence

⁶³ A number of Bosniak returnees to the Prijedor region – some of whom participated in public discussions organized in the framework of the project – stated that by avoiding to employ Bosniak returnees and reserving the jobs for the Serbian population, the factory was in fact reproducing the results of the ethnic cleansing during the war.

⁶⁴ In July 2012, a group of Omarska camp survivors, in collaboration with the Forensic Architecture project from Goldsmiths University, and the Four Faces of Omarska working group, performed *Memorial in Exile*, an action in which the London Olympic tower – the ArcelorMittal Orbit, designed by sculptor Anish Kapoor and commissioned by ArcelorMittal – was reclaimed as the Omarska memorial in exile as a way of protesting against the fact that a memorial still doesn’t exist at the Omarska site. Steel used for constructing the Olympic tower originated from the ArcelorMittal’s mines across the globe, including Omarska, and one of the claims of the survivors was that the Olympic monument thus contained crushed human bones, mixed with steel. Interestingly, in their description of the tower, the company refers to steel as the “fabric of life.” (<http://arcelormittalorbit.com/our-story/#.VY3FMWD-8s>). For more information on the *Memorial in Exile* action see Susan Schupli, “A memorial in exile in London’s Olympics: orbits of responsibility,” *openDemocracy*, July 2, 2012, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/susan-schupli/memorial-in-exile-in-london’s-olympics-orbits-of-responsibility>.

that will never be recovered, perpetuating the vow of silence? Was any of the heavy machinery of the present-day mine used to dig and cover up mass graves? Did any of the present-day mine workers serve as soldiers or guards at the Omarska concentration camp? Were our two guides among them? Did any of them load the trucks with the bodies, or help deposit them in a mass grave? Will they take the knowledge of an unidentified grave to their own graves?

The post-Yugoslav, post-war subjects are supposed to have finished with the obsessive enumeration of such questions. They should have already given up on the unproductive work of mourning, and to have instead embarked on the work of mining in order to build the “transitional” economy and cure their societies of the sickness of being pathologically glued to the past. To cure themselves, also, of the pathologically futurist temporality of socialism, an ecstatic promise of a utopian communist future, and to then push themselves into contemporaneity, an oxymoronic promise of nothing but the present. Every day at Omarska, however, mining reveals itself to be more than contemporary productivity; by way of its dangerous encounter with the sedimentations and deposits of the violent past, the Omarska mining complex is where the work of mining and the work of mourning meet, in a perpetual, unsettling contamination of one by the other. It is this encounter that reveals itself as the horizon of the life-death-world of the post-Yugoslav generation, whose own work, epitomized by the *Four Faces of Omarska Working Group*, can only be a work of *Besinnung*, a labor of students of non-knowledge, who embrace a common horizon of ground on which to invite the question of what life, and what life-world, is to be generated from the inherited sedimentations of mass violence and death.

If Husserl were to offer a third guided tour for the students of Omarska, what would he say? Perhaps he would say: “In our vital need, this science has nothing to say to us,”⁶⁵ since this is how, during his European tour in Vienna and Prague in 1935 the “author of the *Crisis*” ventriloquized the complaints of the European post-WW1 youth, who did not know yet, and neither did Husserl, that they were in fact interwar youth.⁶⁶ Husserl did not explicate, and perhaps he would also choose not to explicate in Omarska, the precise circumstances that condition the young generation’s vital need; he merely evoked the world in which “historical occurrence” is “nothing but an unending concatenation of illusory progress and bitter disappointment.”⁶⁷ He then proceeded to discuss the internal historicity of science and philosophy, and, as Derrida’s critique has shown, he explicitly denounced the relevance of empirical historical investigations, the weight of the *de facto*. He also criticized contemporaneous attempts, primarily Wilhelm Dilthey’s historicism, to link scientific ideas to a broader set of factors and relations that define a particular historical moment. Instead, Husserl proposed a different turn to history, an *internal historicity* of particular trajectories of science and philosophy whose zigzag-like unraveling of strata, components, and deposits enable a reactivation of their original sense.

⁶⁵ Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, 6.

⁶⁶ *The Crisis of the European Sciences* was based on two lectures that Husserl was invited to give in Prague and Vienna. This is how David Hyder and Hans-Jörg Rheinberger reconstruct the context and the impact of the lectures: “The book was born in a political crisis and, as Eva-Maria Engelen explains in her contribution to this volume, at a time of personal crisis as well. Husserl was invited to give lectures in 1935 in both Vienna and Prague, titled “Philosophy in the Crisis of European Mankind” and “The Crisis of European Sciences and Psychology,” respectively. These lectures were later reworked as the first two sections of the *Crisis* and were published in the journal *Philosophia* in 1936, shortly before Husserl became ill. They were supplemented by the third section when Walter Biemel finally published them in 1954 in their final, but still fragmentary, form. The original publication was almost totally ignored, although the publication (p.xiv) in France in 1939 of what later became Appendix VI, *The Origin of Geometry*, did provoke some discussion there,” David Hyder and Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, “Introduction,” in *Science and the Life-World: Essays on Husserl’s Crisis of European Sciences* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), xiii.

⁶⁷ Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, 7.

Carr reads the *Crisis* as Husserl's attempt to settle accounts not only with the inherited tradition of philosophy, but also with Husserl's own earlier investigations. He thus reads (in the critique of Kant's blind appropriation of the Galilean concept of the world as mathematized and measurable) Husserl's "disguised" self-criticism of his own taking the world for granted *as* world, even while seeing it *as* the ultimate horizon.⁶⁸ The mathematized world taken for granted is discovered as the *hidden presupposition* of Kant's philosophy, as well as, according to Carr, Husserl's own earlier research. To avoid the same trap, Husserl introduces historical reduction in the *Crisis*, which enables him to supplant the earlier phenomenological horizon of the world with the novel concept of the prescientific life-world.

With this injection of life into the world – with the world's vivification – Husserl strips a vast layer of the inherited, hidden *Ideenkleid* and no longer takes the world for granted. However, even if Husserl, as Carr argues, sees the life-world not as a purely natural horizon, but also as a historical horizon, what Carr does not note is that he now takes for granted is precisely life, with death taking the place of the new hidden presupposition. Death is lurking everywhere in and around the life-world of the *Crisis*, in the "danger" of the natural metaphors of soil and ground, in the "vital needs" of the youth whom the old generations leave the world without accounting for either the "meaning or meaninglessness of existence." To say, as Husserl does, that we are necessarily "historical beings," "heirs of the

⁶⁸ "If the life-world concept in its present form is lacking not only in Kant's but also in Husserl's previous work, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that his Kant-critique is really a Husserl-critique in disguise, that the inadequate notion of transcendental philosophy that is attacked here is not Kant's but Husserl's own." Carr, *Phenomenology and the Problem of History*, 132.

past,” is to say that we are mortal beings, and heirs of mortal beings, as there can be no inheritance without death, no passing on without passing away. Regardless of how much Husserl tried to erect a shield from the exteriority and literality of his philosophical language, of its *de facto*, it is not life, but rather the discovered *fact of unlivability* in the world, which constitute the underlying sense of the phenomenological inquiry into the simultaneous retrieval and transformation of the true question of philosophy. This pervasive threat of both spiritual and physical death enacted by the crisis of the European sciences is, furthermore, inseparable from Husserl’s own confrontation with old age and death. This is explicitly marked by his very positioning as someone who bequeaths the life-giving message to the European “youth,” whose passing on augurs his imminent passing away, as well as someone who, as this same youth would soon come to see, will be exiled, as a Jew, from that very European family to which he so insistently claimed allegiance in the *Crisis*. It turns out, then, that Husserl is much more “at home” giving a tour in 2010 to the students of Omarska, then delivering in 1935 his lecture to the Vienna audience.

Nachlass

Despite Derrida’s criticism of Husserl’s banishment of fact for the sake of sense, Derrida himself does not leave the boundaries of the intrinsic historicity of phenomenology and philosophy. When he poses the question of the exact “point” at which Husserl, while remaining “a stranger to history” begins at the same time to “respect historicity’s own peculiar signification and possibility and truly to penetrate them,”⁶⁹ Derrida has in mind

⁶⁹ Derrida, *Edmund Husserl’s ‘Origin of Geometry’*, 92-93.

simply a point in the internal development of Husserl's philosophy. When, in *Voice and Phenomenon*, Derrida states that the true problem that will concern him is "the historical destiny of phenomenology,"⁷⁰ by "historical destiny" he again means merely that, as he sees it, phenomenology is the authentic realization of Greek metaphysics. By implicitly bracketing out the question of external historical destiny of Husserl's phenomenology, even at the moment of, as he dramatically writes, "the breaking through of history" into phenomenology,⁷¹ Derrida himself perpetrates an estrangement from history, just as he sees Husserl do in relation to the destiny of geometry. Similarly, when Carr examines the motivations for Husserl's turn to the question of history in the *Crisis*, he briefly considers external facts that might have influenced him, only to conclude that they are at best secondary to the long history of internal, logical development of Husserl's thought: "We intend to show, in fact, that the concept of historicity has its roots in reflections on various subjects going back as far as 1913, and that its emergence in the *Crisis* is the effect of an accumulation and confluence of trains of thought which ultimately *force* Husserl's new introduction to phenomenology to take on its *peculiar* form."⁷²

The noted "peculiarity" of the "force" of Husserl's new introduction perhaps signals the force with which both Carr and Derrida negate extrinsic historicity to reinforce Husserl's shield of internal historicity, thus preventing him from becoming – even if against himself – a critical theorist, one who negates the overall European reality that caused the "crisis of the European sciences" in the first place, instead of remaining a philosopher, desperately

⁷⁰ Derrida, *Voice and Phenomenon*, 26-27.

⁷¹ Derrida, *Edmund Husserl's 'Origin of Geometry'*, 27.

⁷² Carr, *Phenomenology and the Problem of History*, 67. My emphasis.

resuscitating a tradition that is complicit in the very unlivability of the world that he detects. In other words, it is not only that the reconstruction of the personal and historical context of the writing of *Crisis* reveals it as a work of a figure whose “turn to history” can be read on a par with Walter Benjamin’s “theses on history,” which arose in the midst of the same “crisis of the European sciences,” but that instead, this figure can be discerned in the drama between life and death, history and present, sediments and deposits, which the text itself stages, but which needs interpretive help to “come out.” Or not, as it does not in Carr’s and Derrida’s reinforcement of the shield against external historicity, and as it will also not come out, as will later argue, in Derrida’s and Levinas’s insistence on Husserl as an intentional and metaphysical thinker.⁷³ Ironically, as Heidegger’s “black notebooks” seem to have shown, Heidegger’s animosity towards Husserl the “metaphysical” thinker and his animosity towards Husserl the “Jew” were perfectly aligned.⁷⁴ In order for Husserl the critical theorist to come out, he must be brought to Omarska, but first, his own “Omarska” must be reconstructed.

Ronald Bruzina’s research into Husserl’s archives and the archives of his student and collaborator Eugen Fink reveals the utter fragility of Husserl’s own shield against external historicity, a shield in the form of an intentional, European philosopher-figure, which he could not but attempt to always (re)create, as the only remaining possibility of self-protection.⁷⁵ The challenges Husserl faced in the last decade of his life, from 1928 to 1938,

⁷³ That this shield against external historicity is strong anyway, even in a thinker such as Walter Benjamin, could be explored by further parallels between Husserl’s and Benjamin’s shared, although radically different, attachments to European cultural and intellectual tradition, from which they were both alienated. For Benjamin’s European investments see John McCole, *Walter Benjamin and the Antinomies of Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

⁷⁴ See Donatella Di Cesare, *Heidegger and the Jews: The Black Notebooks* (Polity Press, 2018).

⁷⁵ Ronald Bruzina, *Edmund Husserl and Eugen Fink*. By reconstructing the circumstances in which Husserl’s later works were created, with the dedicated help and contribution by Fink, Bruzina shows that “[t]his is anything than doing philosophy in a vacuum.” Bruzina, 46.

were both “internal” and “external,” that is to say, the *Crisis* did not only address a disillusioning “historical occurrence,” but a crisis of the very project of phenomenology. This crisis emerged not only with the discovery of inadequacies and paradoxes of static phenomenology (as discussed by Carr and Derrida), but also as a result of Husserl’s perception of his diminishing stature in the European community of philosophers.⁷⁶ The reading of a manuscript by Georg Misch, which comparatively examined life-philosophy and phenomenology, seems to have represented for Husserl a shocking encounter with a distorted mirror: phenomenology was depicted as “logic-centered intellectualism” with no thematizing of the “living historical movement” as in Dilthey.⁷⁷ Worse yet, in the discussion of phenomenology, the central place was not even given to Husserl, but to Heidegger.⁷⁸ Very soon, another shock followed: Husserl read for the first time Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, and realized that not only can he not “count the work within the framework of [his] phenomenology,” but that he also had to “reject it entirely as to its method and in the essentials of its content.”⁷⁹ In Bruzina’s words, Husserl realized that “instead of a follower, the Heidegger he had set in place as his successor was an opponent! And an extraordinarily gifted one at that, whose presence in the philosophic world was overshadowing his own in the real sense of that word: Heidegger’s brilliance made Husserl’s own work seem somber and dull.”⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Carr also briefly considers this factor, but only in order to dismiss it. However, Bruzina’s research presents evidence that reveals the full immensity of the pressures, challenges, and humiliations that Husserl was facing.

⁷⁷ Bruzina, 26.

⁷⁸ “The first part of Misch’s book that Husserl had before him dealt only with Heidegger and Dilthey in conjunction; the next part to come would continue this treatment, and only in the last part, yet a year away, would Husserl’s own position be fully discussed. Only then would Husserl see in more detail how he himself was being looked upon by an important part of the philosophical public.” Bruzina, 22.

⁷⁹ Husserl, in a letter to Ingarden, December 1929, cited in Bruzina, 23.

⁸⁰ Bruzina, 23.

By contrast, Husserl's other heir, his student and assistant Eugen Fink fought stubbornly for Husserl's philosophy, working on the bulk of his unpublished manuscripts, as well as on revising and extending the German version of *Cartesian Meditations*, which Husserl hoped would show to the German public the true meaning of his work. In addition, Fink worked on two essays, conceived as comparative readings – and defenses – of Husserl's phenomenology, in relation to two major, competing currents of German thought: neo-Kantianism and life-philosophy. He only managed to publish the first,⁸¹ but it seems that Fink's elaboration of the true meaning of phenomenology nonetheless failed to satisfy the new "taste" for life and existence among the German and European contemporaries, in contrast to the intimidating and arid "Sahara of phenomenology."⁸² Bruzina shows that this perception of Husserl's work as old-fashioned, overly intellectual, and lifeless was a major factor inciting him to start working on the *Crisis* in order to show "his phenomenology to be at grips precisely with what was most deeply and fundamentally concrete and originative in human life."⁸³

The vivification of the earlier phenomenological horizon of world in the *Crisis*, its refashioning into life-world, was therefore not simply a logical development of Husserl's earlier thought. It stemmed rather from Husserl's own struggle for life, when faced with his perceived symbolic death within the European philosophical community. In the last decade

⁸¹ Eugen Fink, "The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism," in *The Phenomenology of Husserl: Selected Critical Readings*, edited by R.O. Elveton (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), 73-147. Originally published in 1933 *Kantstudien* 38 (1-2): 319-383.

⁸² After reading Fink's text, Abbé Emile Baudin still professed to see nothing but an intimidating "Sahara of phenomenology," which he dreaded entering as he found himself to be too captivated by the world. Cited in Bruzina, *Edmund Husserl and Eugen Fink*, 46.

⁸³ Bruzina, 27. By tracing primarily the "extrinsic" facets of Husserl's relation to the philosophical climate of his time, I am certainly simplifying the story. For a detailed philosophical discussion on Husserl's relation to life-philosophy, specifically in the work of Wilhelm Dilthey, see Bruzina, 316-374.

of his life, Husserl was particularly troubled and motivated by the young generation's rejection of his philosophy: "A new generation has come on the scene that misinterprets the deepest sense in the fragments I've published and the incomplete beginnings I've made, that propagates a supposedly improved phenomenology and reveres me as the old dad who has now been left behind."⁸⁴ Based on his Prague lectures, in the spring of 1935 Husserl began working on the *Crisis*, which was to become the new fundamental introduction to transcendental phenomenology, and by means of which he hoped to "prove to myself and to the world that I do not by far belong to the past."⁸⁵

Husserl, then, turned to history, fashioning it as the interplay of original formations and sedimentations, at the same moment when he sensed that he himself was becoming a sediment of the past. But history "broke through" into phenomenology in yet another, and more sinister way. In April 1933, Husserl received the notice that as a "non-Aryan" he was being dismissed from the Freiburg University.⁸⁶ In the same month, Heidegger became the university's Rektor, followed by his joining of the Nationalist Socialist Party, as well as his infamous Rektor's address. While Husserl pondered the task of leaving a philosophical legacy to the German youth and thus satisfying their "vital need" for meaning and guidance in the unlivable world, the German Student Union initiated the burning of books in thirty-four German universities in the "Action against the Un-German Spirit," calling for pure national language and culture and denouncing "Jewish intellectualism."⁸⁷ In a letter to

⁸⁴ Husserl's letter to Gustav Albrecht, December, 1930, cited in Bruzina, 33.

⁸⁵ Husserl, cited in Bruzina, 60.

⁸⁶ The decision was later revoked due to rules of exemption, such as that referring to "officials who have been in service since August 1, 1914," which was valid for Husserl. See Bruzina, 37-38.

⁸⁷ "Nazi book burnings, *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_book_burnings. Last accessed June 22, 2015.

Dietrich Mahnke of May 1933 Husserl wrote of the “erection of the spiritual ghetto” into which he and his children were being driven. “We are no longer to have the right to call ourselves *Germans*, the work of our intellects is no longer to be included in German cultural history. They are to live from now on solely *branded as Jewish*’ ... as a poison that German minds are to protect themselves from.”⁸⁸

Husserl describes this as the most difficult experience of his life, precisely because it “touches [his] philosophical development,” which for him has been “a struggle over the life and death of the mind.”⁸⁹ Indeed, it was not only his worsening health and his own imminent death, but the extinction of the entire legacy of his work, which he saw approaching. Instead of being rewarded for his fifty-year-long work and contribution to German and European philosophy, he died in April 1938, completely marginalized, removed from all university positions, and even, “for racial reasons,” from his neighborhood.⁹⁰ Heidegger, his chosen and previously most cherished heir, would perform the final ritual of this attempt at annihilation when in 1941 he accepted to erase from the second edition of *Being and Time* the book’s dedication to his teacher, penned in 1926 “in admiration and friendship,” and when he failed to attend Husserl’s funeral.⁹¹ The previously posed question, via Derrida, of death, disappearance, and the conflagration of libraries, is more than just speculative. Husserliana in fact could have been burning. Husserl’s *Nachlass*, namely all he wanted to “leave *behind*,” was almost indeed *left* behind, without an heir. Fink’s acceptance of, and struggle for, this inheritance, his continuing commitment to Husserl and his archive,

⁸⁸ Cited in Bruzina, *Edmund Husserl and Eugen Fink*, 39.

⁸⁹ Bruzina, 39.

⁹⁰ Bruzina, 63.

⁹¹ Di Cesare, *Heidegger and the Jews*, 115-116.

as well as the intervention of the Franciscan Leo Van Breda, who transferred Husserl's archive to Louvain in 1938, were singular, oppositional gestures that prevented this threat of conflagration.⁹²

Fink's dedication to Husserl was not merely a philosophical, but also a political choice, in which he persisted despite all pressures and disadvantages that working with "the philosopher proscribed because of his Jewish origin" entailed.⁹³ Ironically, while Husserl lamented the state of modern science, which, due to its obsession with logic, became "insensitive to the problem of origin,"⁹⁴ the Nazi ideology found its anchor precisely in a science of origins, legitimizing the propaganda of biological and cultural supremacy of one nation over another. Carr writes that in the *Crisis* Husserl was not so much concerned with the failure of philosophy but with that of community, and the communal responsibility of philosophy.⁹⁵ Finding himself as an outcast, or the "poison" of German community and its cultural legacy, was likely to make him even more invested in the relevance of a universal community of philosophy, and its history – "our history" of the "we, philosophers" – to which he repeatedly declared his belonging.⁹⁶ Resisting the threat of marginalization within, or expulsion from, this community and its history, refusing to be "alone philosophically," to be nothing more than an "old dad" left behind,⁹⁷ is what became Husserl's own "vital need"

⁹² Of this faithfulness, and his unwillingness to accept compromises, Fink has written: "I always felt it a mark of distinction that I was given to know the fatherly friendship of the aged philosopher and by remaining faithful to him to mitigate the bitterness of an old age lived in ostracism." Cited in Bruzina, 36.

⁹³ Fink, cited in Bruzina, 36. Fink could not publish his Habilitationsschrift, which was Fink's elaboration of *Cartesian Meditations*, and he was also not able to publish the second of his two articles on Husserl for *Kantstudien* (the one about phenomenology and *Lebensphilosophie*).

⁹⁴ Husserl, "The Origin of Geometry," 367.

⁹⁵ Carr, *Phenomenology and the Problem of History*, 51.

⁹⁶ Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, 53-54.

⁹⁷ From a letter to G. Albrecht, cited in Bruzina, 33-34.

in the last years of his life. Fink was the one he hoped would facilitate its fulfillment, but let us recall that the fragments of *The Crisis* were “published in an obscure exile journal in Belgrade during Husserl’s last years,”⁹⁸ and that in Belgrade, perhaps, he is less “alone philosophically.”

A new language

As a public, collaborative platform, Monument Group began its activities in Belgrade during 2002, prompted by the City of Belgrade’s open competition for a “Monument to the fallen fighters and victims of 1990-1999 wars, including the NATO bombing, on the territory of former Yugoslavia.” Beginning with a series of discussions organized around this open call, the group articulated a critique of the competition and its implied historical, political and ideological presuppositions. They managed to take this critique beyond the usual scope of the museum walls and launch an extensive public debate, including meetings and discussions with the city officials, who ultimately decided to cancel the competition, citing a mistake in the title. The revised title in the second competition eliminated the mention of “fallen fighters,” and referred only to “victims” of the 1990s wars on the territory of former Yugoslavia, however it too ended up being annulled as no artistic solution was found adequate. Finally, in 2005 the third and last competition called for proposals for a “Monument to the victims of the wars and to the defenders of fatherland, 1990-1999.” If the two previous competitions gave reason to wonder whether Belgrade was, even if inadvertently, ambitiously attempting to commemorate all victims of the Yugoslav 1990s war

⁹⁸ Carr, “The Crisis as Philosophy of History,” 83.

conflicts, regardless of which side they belonged, the end result made clear that its commemorative concern was limited to the “fatherland,” an only seemingly more concrete signifier, which remained safely vague on the question of exactly whose “fathers” were invoked, which “land” was “defended,” and the identity of the nature of this “defense.” Was it referring to the defense of Yugoslavia from dissolution, to the defense of Serbia from the NATO invasion, Serbia’s struggle for Kosovo, or the struggle for the Serb autonomous territories proclaimed in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and maintained by means of force and ethnic cleansing of the non-Serbian population?

From the very beginning, then, the group was preoccupied with the problem of collective bestowal of meaning and the naming of a violent and troubling past. In 2006, they decided to stop their participation in the dialogue regarding the commissioned monument and declared that their own work, including the ongoing series of public discussion they initiated, in fact constituted a monument. This is also when the informal group of people gathered around the project decided to assume the name Monument Group. Initiating a call for collective, critical examination of the government’s first attempt at monumentalizing a narrative of the war conflicts of the 1990s, Monument Group forced the memory makers to immediately slip into a space of anxiety about their own endeavor. However, at the same time it performed a self-critique by posing a question of responsibility of cultural workers and intellectuals with regard to the same question. In the words of its member Branimir Stojanović, opening up the space for conversation is more relevant than building a monument as “it is impossible to relay upon any imaginable object the responsibility which

is ours.”⁹⁹ The acceptance of this responsibility is, moreover, articulated as a precondition for the very constitution of an “intellectual life” in the post-Yugoslav context, which had hitherto stalled because it had no language to address what happened in the 1990s: “We [the cultural and intellectual scene of ex-Yugoslavia] are all frozen in a pre-1990s situation. [...] we have no language, no theory, no poetry, no literature to account for what happened in the 1990s.”¹⁰⁰ In other (Husserl’s) words: “In our vital need, this science has nothing to say to us.”¹⁰¹ What Stojanović is calling for is the common labor of *Besinnung*, namely, the exploration of the sense of origins but one that does away with Husserl’s system of internal historicity, according to which philosophy should first reflect upon the total sense of its own history, in order to account for the meaning or meaninglessness of human existence. What the Monumen Group proposes is, on the contrary, that there can be no intellectual life, and thus no philosophy, without the labor of reflecting upon the extrinsic historicity of war and violence, whose logic still governs the present, and whose own hegemony over the meaning and meaninglessness of human life and death philosophy must first attempt to dismantle and re-appropriate.

But even inside the framework of Husserl’s intrinsic historicity, his and Monument Group’s have something in common, and this is not only the search for “sense” (*Besinnung*), but also a search for the kind of language that can encapsulate the results of this search. Because, if Fink was the one to save Husserl from obscurity, what was Fink’s primary task, what was the key problem Husserl was facing? The future looked bright, Husserl wrote in

⁹⁹ Branimir Stojanović, discussion transcript, following the lecture by Šejla Šehabović, in *Matemi reasocijacije*, ed. Branimir Stojanović (samizdat, 2010), 76.

¹⁰⁰ Branimir Stojanović citing the statement about the intellectual life as the attitude of the group, in *Matemi reasocijacije*, 74.

¹⁰¹ Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, 6.

1930, a year of intense reflections that brought optimism and confidence about his work; yet the greatest difficulty he still had to solve was “systematic presentation,” involving as well “the immense labor of the *consolidation*” of his voluminous manuscripts and research notes.¹⁰² He knew that the misunderstanding of his work stemmed from the fact he had published only “fragments” and “incomplete beginnings,”¹⁰³ and his plans for future contributions consisted in systematizing his notes and manuscripts, revising past work, and writing entirely new work. Everything already existing in printed form was deemed inadequate by Husserl: the German version of *Cartesian Meditations* needed extensive revisions and additions, just like the English translation of *Ideas* that he was getting ready to publish. In his article for the *Kant-Studien* journal, Fink wrote that the misunderstanding of Husserl’s phenomenology, which led to the conflation of its aims with those of neo-Kantian critical philosophy, was partly due to the text of the *Ideas* itself, whose terminology echoed that of Criticism, while the radical breakthroughs, the “genuinely phenomenological idea of philosophy,” were expressed “in a very cautious and reserved manner,” thus receiving an “inadequate formulation.”¹⁰⁴ Fink’s mission was precisely to compensate for this inadequacy, to come up with a viable *language* for phenomenology and to reinvent not its content, but its form(ulation).¹⁰⁵

In his preface to Fink’s text, Husserl wrote that he had carefully read the essay and was happy to state that “it contains no sentence which I could not completely accept as my

¹⁰² Cited in Bruzina, *Edmund Husserl and Eugen Fink*, 34. Original emphasis.

¹⁰³ Husserl’s letter to Gustav Albrecht, December, 1930, cited in Bruzina, 33.

¹⁰⁴ Fink, “The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism,” 88-89.

¹⁰⁵ Fink, however, according to Bruzina, exceeded the role of assistant and in fact made a significant impact on Husserl’s thinking.

own or openly acknowledge as my own conviction.”¹⁰⁶ Certainly, Husserl’s statement is a courteous encouragement and authorization of the young student’s work but, retroactively, it reads as if Husserl, after confronting the distorted mirror in Georg Misch’s writing, as well as the dissatisfaction with his own published work, now finally recognized in written form a faithful mirror image of his ideas and reflections. With time, Fink’s significance for Husserl would only grow, as he transformed from assistant to collaborator, the ongoing conversations with whom became indispensable for Husserl to see in his own philosophy “the intrinsic order where everything fits together beautifully.”¹⁰⁷ Bruzina notes the “frequent occurrence of the word *system* or *systematic* in reference to the work that Fink was doing for and with Husserl,” one of which was the planning of the publication “System of Phenomenological Philosophy.”¹⁰⁸ He also narrates the final phase of Husserl’s life, when his illness intensified and when moments of lucidity interchanged with periods of amnesia and confusion, during which he still kept regular contact with Fink. Husserl reflected on his life and work, regretting what he perceived as his mistakes as well as the now obvious fact that he wouldn’t have time to finish the projects he was working on. In a journal entry from this period he wrote: “My life is unintelligible. Perhaps you can explain it with Fink.”¹⁰⁹

Embodying for Husserl the hope for adequate articulation, systematic presentation, and elucidation of both his life and work, Fink – or “Fink,” as a signifier for both the actual person and what he came to represent for Husserl – could be seen to inhabit, in Derrida’s terms, the necessity of writing as a precondition for survival, for the possibility of

¹⁰⁶ Husserl, cited in Fink, “The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism,” 74.

¹⁰⁷ Husserl, cited in Bruzina, *Edmund Husserl and Eugen Fink*, 34.

¹⁰⁸ Bruzina, 32.

¹⁰⁹ Bruzina, 69.

transcendental subjectivity to inscribe itself beyond what Derrida understands as Husserl's ideal of the living present, epitomized, for Derrida, by Husserl's privileging of the voice over writing.¹¹⁰ Or, in Levinas's terms, "Fink" was the agent of the transformation of the "Saying into the Said," whereby the diachronic force of the Saying, which signals to (and from) the beyond of being, beyond synchrony and essence, is stifled and subordinated to the essentializing movement of "thematization," the attempt at achieving ideality and "possessing oneself."¹¹¹ I apply Derrida and Levinas's concepts, which tackle complex issues of auto-affectivity, alterity, and, ultimately, life, quite literally (and liberally) onto a perhaps prosaic fact of Husserl's tortured relation with writing and publishing. If writing was indispensable in order for Husserl's thought to survive, yet despite repeated attempts never seemed to give adequate form to his path-breaking philosophical ideas, a point that is evident also in his obsessive use of scare quotes and italics, then one has no choice but to imagine these ideas as abiding in their "true" form only somewhere in Husserl's (living) mind, in an imaginary place safe from language. This hagiographic curiosity, then, "confirms" in a way Derrida's claim of Husserl's philosophical insistence on the living present (*lebendige Gegenwart*), as a mode of privileging (and safeguarding) both presence and self-presence, so that any kind of re-presentation (*Vergegenwärtigung*) can only be defined as structurally derivative, despite Husserl's own insights into the inevitability of representation, caused by temporal regress, even on the basic level of self-consciousness.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Derrida, *Voice and Phenomenon*.

¹¹¹ Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 99.

¹¹² Derrida, *Edmund Husserl's 'Origin of Geometry,'* and *Voice and Phenomenon*. See also discussions of Derrida's reading of Husserl by Leonard Lawlor and Martin Hägglund, Leonard Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl. The Basic Problem of Phenomenology* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), Martin Hägglund, *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).

This hagiography then enables us at the same time to delve deeper into a consideration of the place of death in Husserl's philosophy, which Derrida unveiled behind the presence and self-presence of the living present, but which can now be understood as a force breaking through from the "external historicity" of Husserl's thought. Its contamination of the shield of internal historicity dismantles the mirage of a philosophy produced by a logically developing mind floating as an abstract bubble in cognitive universe, and reveals rather a mind of a man who is a philosopher precisely because he is also a dying man confronted with the "historical occurrence" of an unlivable world. It is this very "occurrence" that drives the "vital need" for theory and philosophy, while at the same time the very capacity of theory to liberate itself from the finality of historical occurrence enables "the students of Omarska," today, to inherit it as an indispensable tool in the not less disparaging historical condition and the "vital need" of the present. As Husserl wrote in the "Origin of Geometry," as well as showed by his own struggle with writing, the incarnation of thought in an adequately formulated language was indispensable for such procedure of inheritance to take place.

Monument Group were similarly concerned with representation and inheritance:

Can we make a matheme that is going to be understandable a hundred years from now? Without somebody having to go through all the historicisation, and you know without somebody even imaginatively having to go first through the visits to the labs, visits to the ICMP... Can we have something that can be shown and used, to witness to the particular politics and to transfer this knowledge, and to transfer the truth of genocide?¹¹³

This question is answered affirmatively and results in a number of postulates:

Matheme is not to be confused with the identification case number.
It contains the case number, but it is more than the case number itself.

¹¹³ Monument Group, "Mathemes of Reassociation."

It speaks about the whole of intersubjective relationships.
Matheme is oppositional to the logic of images.
Matheme is something that manages to be transhistorical.
Matheme carries the truth of genocide.¹¹⁴

The search for the matheme – a Lacanian formula able to express a transhistorical meaning of a historical relationship, which thus also protects Lacanian psychoanalysis from “free” and imposed interpretation – is analogous here to Husserl’s search for the transcendental phenomenological meaning of the life-world, which Husserl also seeks to express and bequeath to the future. Also, just as he needs to, as a first step remove the “garb of ideas,” that is the scientific *Ideenkleid*, a set of mathematical formulae that conceal their groundedness in the life-world, and thus that prevent access to its meaning, so Monument Group needs to place the matheme in opposition with the “identification case number,” a formula by which forensic sciences marks and interprets the bodily remains of genocide. The ultimate results of this marking will be the interpretation of the identity of the victim along with the existing keys of ethnic identification, according to which all genocide victims are marked as ethnic Muslims/Bosniaks, a procedure that, just like *Ideenkleid*, is normalized and thus conceals its ideological presuppositions. It is here, in these analogies drawn between Husserl’s and Monument Group’s search for a new conceptual language that is able to express the truth of a material reality that we find the central figure shared by both these attempts – the figure of the *Körper* (body/corpse). By the same token, both these quests for truth and meaning are thus revealed to constitute the oxymoronic procedure of the phenomenology of death, of dealing with the living presence of the *Körper*.

¹¹⁴ Monument Group, “Mathemes of Reassociation.”

Phenomenology of death

In “The Origin of Geometry” Husserl interprets language as the precondition for creating the virtual, intersubjective community of speakers and listeners, writers and readers, and so preserve the life of sense. At the same time, he construes language not only as derivative, but also as “seductive,” always threatening to lead astray, into the sinfulness of empty associations, by which the original sense is betrayed.¹¹⁵ Taking a cue from Husserl’s identification of language as the primary medium by which an originary subjective insight becomes ideal, objective and communal, Derrida makes his argument about writing as that which betrays and at the same time liberates ideal Objectivity, ridding it of its dependence on the actual life or death of individual subjects. In order to appear in the world, truth must incarnate itself, but this incarnation necessarily puts its intentional ideality in danger.¹¹⁶ Levinas makes a similar claim: “Language is ancillary and thus indispensable.”¹¹⁷ We can only say the unsayable, which, for Levinas is ultimately the task of philosophy at the price of its betrayal.¹¹⁸ Of course, for Derrida, language cannot be derivative, as there is no purity of the unsayable to betray in the first place; just the opposite, language (i.e. sign) is originary in its pervading contamination of sense and ideality. Truth can, therefore, never suffer a “fall toward language,” but only “a degradation within language.”¹¹⁹

The sign becomes “the worldly and exposed residence of an unthought truth.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Husserl speaks of “the seduction of language,” Husserl, “The Origin of Geometry,” 362.

¹¹⁶ Derrida, *Edmund Husserl’s ‘Origin of Geometry,’* 92.

¹¹⁷ Levinas, *Otherwise than Being,* 6.

¹¹⁸ “Everything shows itself at the price of this betrayal, even the unsayable. In his betrayal the indiscretion with regard to the unsayable, which is probably the very task of philosophy, becomes possible.” Levinas, 7.

¹¹⁹ Derrida, *Edmund Husserl’s ‘The Origin of Geometry,’* 92.

¹²⁰ Derrida, 92.

Because of this exposure, it is always in danger, but Derrida insists that the possibility of the death of sense is negated by Husserl. Despite the factual disappearance of the worldly incarnation(s) of sense, “its dormant potentiality can de jure be reanimated” and infinitely repeated.¹²¹ In *Voice and Phenomenon*, Derrida will develop this argument further and identify death as the hidden side of Husserl’s *lebendige Gegenwart* (living present). If the *I am* is defined as *I am present*, the relation of the *I* to itself is then “originarily the relation to its own possible disappearance.”¹²² The original meaning of the *I am* is, therefore, *I am mortal*.¹²³ This logic is at the very heart of signification: “the possibility of the sign is this relation to death” and the “erasure of the sign in metaphysics is the dissimulation of this relation to death which nevertheless was producing signification.”¹²⁴

As an instance of Husserl’s own work at such dissimulation, Derrida cites his rejection of the philosophical consequence of the body (*Körper*), in favor of the spirituality of flesh (*Leib*), which Husserl grants to language in “The Origin” as he animates it into *Sprachleib*, a linguistic living body. In *Voice and Phenomenon*, going back to *Logical Investigations*, Derrida discusses the distinction he argues that Husserl makes between indication and expression, where only the latter is able to embody an intention and so transform language from inert *Körper* into the animated, spiritual flesh (*geistige Leiblichkeit*), the flesh of the voice.¹²⁵ Despite the recognition of the evolution of Husserl’s work – marked by the “torture” that his later analyses of temporality and alterity inflict upon the initial

¹²¹ Derrida, 93.

¹²² Derrida, *Voice and Phenomenon*, 46.

¹²³ Derrida, 46.

¹²⁴ Derrida, 46.

¹²⁵ The *Bedeutung* is translated by Derrida as *vouloir-dire* (wanting-to-say). Derrida, 28.

phenomenological static analyses and the *epoché* – Derrida will identify a continuity of the labor of overcoming nonpresence and death as the hidden structural necessity of Husserl’s phenomenology from his first to his last work. Phenomenology, Derrida announces in the introduction to *Voice and Phenomenon*, is a philosophy of life, “not only because, in its center, death is recognized as having nothing but an empirical and extrinsic signification, the signification of mundane accident, but also because the source of sense in general is always determined as the act of a thing that lives, as the act of a living being, as *Lebendigkeit*.”¹²⁶

But what would it mean for sense to arise from a dead source? And what kind of encounter with this life-less *Körper* can be staged, if it is to forego the demiurge trick of violating its deadliness with life-giving *Bedeutung*? If I acknowledge, as Derrida does, that the remainder that Husserl sees but tries to cover over (this non-life, non-presence, non-perception, and non-now) nonetheless has “constitutive value,” it is again “I” who value it thus.¹²⁷ If I call it, as Levinas does, the unsayable, an-archival, creation, infinity, it is nonetheless “I” who call it, in an act of a living, philosophical bestowal of meaning. There is no escape from this structure of “an intending I” and “an Other,” even when, as Husserl’s research has shown, the Other is found to be within oneself, within the “I”, as a result of transcendental subjectivity’s basic labor of self-consciousness, and despite the fact that in the process one discovers that “I” isn’t even an adequate word for the one performing the *epoché*, and yet one has *no choice* but to say “I.”¹²⁸ At the heart of their alternative quests for

¹²⁶ Derrida, 9.

¹²⁷ Derrida, 7.

¹²⁸ “The ‘I’ that I attain in the *epoché*, which would be the same as the ‘ego’ within a critical reinterpretation and correction of the Cartesian conception, is actually called ‘I’ only by equivocation — though it is an essential equivocation since, when I name it in reflection, I can say nothing other than it is I who practice the *epoché*, I who interrogate, as phenomenon, the world which is now valid for me according to its being and being-such, with all its human beings, of whom I am so fully

equivocity, nonprimordially, and alterity, Levinas's and Derrida's critical deconstructions of Husserl's quest for the ideals of univocity, sense, and essence, count on the sublime power of the signifiers of absence and difference to suggest that their own philosophical acts of life-giving *Bedeutung* are by default more radical, or even, in Levinas's case, more ethical. This is why, for example, the defenses and fortifications of Derrida's reading of Husserl, such as that by Martin Hägglund, can claim the philosophical and political radicality of Derrida's "radical atheism," which is grounded in Derrida's "desire for mortal life" and the idea of "life as survival."¹²⁹ Despite the author's distancing from the biological meaning of the notion of autoimmunity, the elaborations come close to reducing Derrida's thought to not much more than a form of Darwinism. This is not to dispute the claim made of "life as survival," or even of Darwinism, for that matter, but rather the presupposed and unquestioned idea that a Derrida-like, "atheist" investment of desire is necessarily more "radical" and "critical" than that of Husserl's desire for meaning (with a finite origin and infinite destiny), or, even that of Levinas, whose desire is directed towards Other/Good/infinity/God, etc.¹³⁰ What if it is more "radical," both philosophically and

conscious; it is I who stand above the natural existence that has meaning for me, who am the ego-pole of this transcendental life in which, at first, the world has meaning for me purely as world, it is I who, taken in full concreteness, encompass all that. That does not mean that our earlier insights, already expressed as transcendental ones, were illusions and that it is not justifiable to speak, in spite of the above, of a transcendental intersubjectivity constituting the world as 'world for all,' in which I again appear, this time as 'one' transcendental 'I' among others, whereby 'we all' are taken as functioning transcendently." Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, 184.

¹²⁹ See in particular Chapter 4, in which Hägglund elaborates the difference between the religious idea of salvation as immortality and what he frames as Derrida's radically atheist idea of salvation as survival, based on autoimmunity. Hägglund, 107-163.

¹³⁰ In this regard, Husserl and Levinas are equated in their nonradicality. Despite Levinas's criticism and distancing from what he sees as Husserl's essentialism, Hägglund claims that both Levinas and Husserl insist on locating the ultimate origin of being, which ultimately undermines the place of alterity, even if Levinas claims it as originary. "Thus, Levinas's religious understanding of the other reintroduces the idea of an instance beyond diachronic temporality despite the fact that Levinas himself describes diachrony as the condition of alterity." Hägglund, *Radical Atheism*, 92. Derrida thus remains the only one truly faithful to the insurmountable radicality of alterity.

politically, to attempt to “make sense,” to insist, despite all odds, on the readability of its origin, to encounter the *Körper* and take responsibility for its *Besinnung*, for the (self)reflection that stubbornly insists on a search for knowledge and meaning, despite the noises and silences in the source material, which stage obstacles to this search?

In his *Introduction to the Origin of Geometry* Derrida describes Husserl’s idea of *Rückfrage*, or return inquiry, as “marked by the postal and epistolary reference or resonance of a communication from a distance.”¹³¹ I can send a return inquiry because there had been an event of “telecommunication,” a first posting. I was a receiver of an “*already* readable *document*” to whose primordial intention I can now inquire “*in return*.”¹³² We find here, then, in the survival of the incarnated sign, a testimony of *Körper*. Not merely the *Körper* as an inert graphic body irreducible and ever resistant to the animating attempt of its promotion into flesh, into *Sprachleib*, as Derrida writes, but rather the *Körper* as the ultimate flesh-less body, a corpse. For, it is not only that my own presence is necessarily determined by the possibility of my non-presence, my death, but that this very structural conditioning of life by death is something to which I had already been made an heir. The document that I had received, the document that is “*already* readable,” is a document sent out to me by the other, who is *already* a corpse, buried in the strata that form the subsoil of my life-world, which becomes what then must be called the life-death-world. Does the corpse inhabit the region of *Körper* or *Leib*? How can phenomenology encounter the corpse? Is the analogizing apprehension, by which my consciousness recognizes the alter ego as both the represented object and

¹³¹ Derrida, *Edmund Husserl’s ‘Origin of Geometry,’* 50.

¹³² Derrida, 50. Original emphasis.

appresented subject, a valid procedure here? Is the corpse merely an object, an inert collection of life-less bones? Or is it an object-ceased-to-be-subject, an object with a prehistory of subjecthood, and therefore an object that, therefore, confronts us with a particularly twisted set of temporal regresses? What kind of philosophical and political community can be formed in an attempt of the living to decipher this sense of being and signs arising from a dead source? A *Nachlass* “left behind,” an inheritance passed on? The corpse – as the fundamental form in which death acts as the hidden presupposition of Husserl’s reflections in “The Origin” and the *Crisis* – is the point at which the dynamic temporality of the static object and the enigmatic subjectivity of the alter-ego meet to exert additional pressure on phenomenology’s tormented movements and its zigzagging from the stability of its static explorations to the pitfalls of the genetic, Heraclitian flux. It pressures the need for a continued exploration of not only genetic phenomenology, but a phenomenology of death and generation, and its horizon, the life-death-world.

The work of Derrida and Levinas is an indispensable part of such exploration, not only because of their encounter with the question of death, but also because their questioning of Husserl’s phenomenology are at the root of their own philosophical systems. Their analyses of Husserl’s work have significantly expanded the philosophical, political and ethical potential of phenomenology, even while subverting it. At the same time, an identification of a number of hidden “presuppositions” of this critique, to use Husserl’s terminology, can reactivate and reaffirm some of Husserl’s key concepts and claims that are still viable and that remain occluded by such critiques. In what follows, I focus mainly on Levinas, before turning to Husserl and the question of the possibility of a phenomenology of death, explored in relation to the *Mathemes of Reassociation*.

Beginning with the discovery of death at the heart of the problem of signification in Husserl's phenomenology, in his late writing Derrida will develop this theme through his attention to notions of survival, death of the other, the revenant, etc., within a general preoccupation with what he called "hauntology."¹³³ In his early works Derrida speaks only of *my death*, even if, already in the "Introduction," he invokes spectral associations through an image of communication from a spatial and temporal distance. In "Rams: Uninterrupted Dialogue," written in 2003 in memory of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Derrida speaks of the responsibility that emerges with the death of the other. He defines death of the other as the end of "*the world*," leaving the survivor alone, "in the world outside the world and deprived of the world."¹³⁴ The survivor "feels solely responsible, assigned to carry both the other and *his world*, the other and *the world* that have disappeared, responsible without world (*weltlos*), without the ground of any world, thenceforth, in a world without world, as if without earth beyond the end of the world."¹³⁵ Discussing Derrida's notion of the "death of the other as the end of *the world*," Sean Gaston notes that "the link between the world, the other and death has its origins in Derrida's fifty-year engagement with the thought of Husserl," as well as Fink's reading of phenomenology as exploration of the origin of the world.¹³⁶ But it also cannot be considered beyond his engagement with Levinas, most explicitly articulated in Derrida's 1964 essay "Violence and Matphysics," as demonstrated by Derridian scholars and

¹³³ The first work dedicated to this set of themes is *Specters of Marx*, published in 1994. (Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, New York: Routledge, 1994). Leonard Lawlor describes the "turn" that takes place here in Derrida's thinking as the transition from the problem of the question to that of the promise (in relation to his overall preoccupation with the problem of genesis). Starting with the *Specters of Marx*, Derrida "conceives deconstruction as the keeping of a promise to a specter who needs to come inside, and thereby form a community." Lawlor, 212.

¹³⁴ Sean Gaston, *The Concept of World From Kant to Derrida* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2013), 105.

¹³⁵ Cited in Gaston, 105.

¹³⁶ Gaston, 100.

interpreters, including both Leonard Lawlor and Martin Hägglund.¹³⁷ However, neither mentions Levinas's 1975-76 lecture-course "Death and Time" in which he argued that the question of death cannot be separated from the question of the other, which in turn cannot be disassociated from the problem of the responsibility/culpability of the survivor.¹³⁸

Levinas defines death of the other as a scandal, disquietude, the unknown, pure affect that cannot be assimilated into knowledge, "death without experience and yet dreadful."¹³⁹ It is what challenges Husserl's principle of intentionality and intuitionism; death is not phenomenal, it is precisely the opposite, an enigma, "a pure interrogation mark."¹⁴⁰ For Heidegger, Levinas writes, death is, by contrast, the very origin of certitude and yet "he will not allow this certitude to come from the experience of the death of others," but only from the ownness of *my* death.¹⁴¹ Levinas rejects Heidegger's self-centered posing of the question of death, together with Husserl's overall epistemological and teleological ideal. Instead of epistemologically mastering the objects and other egos encountered in the world, Levinas defines the subject not as *conatus* but as "hostage, a hostage of the other."¹⁴² Such understanding enables the "passage to the ethical level," an alterity that affects the Same, and not, as he identifies in Husserl, the identity of the Same in the Other. The ethical response to the question of death can only be "my responsibility for the death of the other."¹⁴³

¹³⁷ Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl*; Hägglund, *Radical Atheism*.

¹³⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, "Death and Time," 1975 lecture course at the Sorbonne, published – together with the course "God and Onto-theology," which he taught at the same time – in Emmanuel Levinas, *God, Death and Time* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000). I am also not able to elucidate this link here, only point at the potentially rewarding result of doing so.

¹³⁹ Levinas, 10.

¹⁴⁰ Levinas, 14.

¹⁴¹ Levinas, 10.

¹⁴² Levinas, 21.

¹⁴³ Levinas, 117.

“Death and Time” introduces death as a modifier, or a new anchor, of the main themes of Levinas’s *Otherwise than Being*, which he continues to develop here. Prompted by his reflections on Bloch’s utopianism, Levinas proposes to reject Heidegger’s thinking of “time on the basis of death” and to instead “think death on the basis of time.”¹⁴⁴ Defined on the basis of death, time can only be a “relationship with the end,” and not, like Levinas proposes, a relationship with the Other, or diachrony. To think death on the basis of time would then mean to ground its meaning in the diachrony of time, in an inassimilable relationship with the Other.¹⁴⁵ Husserl’s idea of time is also submitted to critique: rather than evoking the image of time as flux, which is then assimilated into a subjectivized unity, time must be thought of in terms of “nonrest” and “disquietude,” a disquieting of the Same by the Other, impossible to identify by any quality.¹⁴⁶ The death of the other, then, is an intensified form of this persecution by the Other, a traumatizing disruption of the Same, which identifies me as not only affected by the other and the other’s death, but also as responsible for it. It is a “rupture of my I,” which is why “my relation with the death of another is neither simply secondhand knowledge nor a privileged experience of death.”¹⁴⁷ Bringing to mind Derrida’s later ruminations on death of the other as the end of *the* world, in his final remarks, Levinas evokes the theme of the world: death is “not of the world,” it is “always a scandal” and, therefore, “always transcendent in regard to the world.”¹⁴⁸

Levinas’s intervention into the Heideggerian being-death-time complex performs a

¹⁴⁴ Levinas, 106.

¹⁴⁵ Levinas, 106.

¹⁴⁶ Levinas, 109.

¹⁴⁷ Levinas, 13.

¹⁴⁸ Levinas, 13.

crucial step of deprivatizing death, snatching it away from the existential anxiety of an individual subject and defining it first and foremost through the relation with the other. It is not that death cannot be adequately thought if it doesn't *also* include the thinking of the death of the other, but rather that death *cannot* be thought *at all* outside of the relation with the other, which, for Levinas, is the relation with time defined as *unsynthesizable diachrony*. At the same time, however, Levinas's fetishistic obsession with unrepresentability – the impossibility to thematize, qualify, synthesize, rationalize, identify, coincide with, assimilate, etc. – produces a certain otherworldly, unreachable sublime of a fetish of the Other, which is poetically elevating yet leads to a dead end when attempting to articulate a viable politics, for lack of a better word, that could emerge from his groundbreaking thinking of death. Of course, Levinas would not even attempt to find this politics, because unlike ethics, politics is for him merely a rational way to negotiate peace between the multiplicity of “allergic egoisms” at war with one another. Such negotiation resembles commerce and calculation, where “beings remain always assembled.”¹⁴⁹ But once one embraces Levinas's ideal of disassembling, this “emotion par excellence,”¹⁵⁰ what does one further do with that which could “neither coincide with anything, nor form a present with anything, nor lodge itself in a representation or in a present,”¹⁵¹ with one's state of “being affected by the beyond-measure...more intimate than any intimacy, to the point of fission”?¹⁵² His answer could again be that the privilege of direction, of the ontological question “Where?” should be

¹⁴⁹ Levinas, 4-5.

¹⁵⁰ Levinas, 9.

¹⁵¹ Levinas, 109

¹⁵² Levinas, 15.

dismantled in the first place.¹⁵³ But what if the dismantling of this question was itself a privilege that cannot be afforded by those who are possessed precisely by the “vital need,” as Husserl recognized, to find a “science” that is able to point towards a meaningful (co-)existence in the unlivable world? And, what if the equally persisting – persisting despite Levinas’s rejection of it – vital need to *know and understand* “death without experience and yet dreadful,” in a life-death-world that proceeds as a concatenation of mass killings and violence, cannot be solved, and is, in fact, further obscured, by settling for the scandal of the “pure interrogation mark,” by exposing oneself to the pure effect of the sublime of the other’s death?¹⁵⁴

Throughout Levinas’s writings, Husserl remains a straw man figure, a preacher of a sort of dictatorial transcendental subjectivity, which assigns everyone and everything a strictly defined place and purpose. Husserl is the dark knight of thematization, essentialization, noematization, and correlation, banishing or assimilating whatever doesn’t fit the intentional consciousness of an autonomous subjectivity. This view, to say the least, is

¹⁵³ Levinas, 10.

¹⁵⁴ Levinas’s framing of the scandal of the death of the other, inassimilable to knowledge, is characteristic of a whole tradition of thinking, which arose in the wake of the Second World War and the Holocaust. In particular, the French tradition was marked by this trend, evident in the writing of Maurice Blanchot (*Writing and Disaster*) and Jean-François Lyotard (*Heidegger and the Jews*). Later on, it also became dominant in the production of work that examined culture, especially literature, in relation to historical trauma (the work of scholars such as Cathy Carruth, or Shoshana Felman, for example). For an excellent critique of the discourse of the unrepresentability of the Holocaust, see George Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008). The discourse of unrepresentability, to which Levinas also adheres, ultimately bears the danger of complicity with silence and negation, and is just the other extreme of Heidegger’s recognition of the death of the other as mere “perishing,” which could not be considered, in a true phenomenological way, as authentic death. See the section on “The Possibility of Experiencing the Death of Others...,” in Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, transl. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 229-231. Heidegger broke his otherwise consistent silence regarding the Holocaust only once, when he referred to the “fabrication of corpses in gas chambers and death camps,” however without referencing any concrete historical event, let alone victims and perpetrators. For Heidegger, those who perished in the death camps didn’t die an authentic death, they were rather “liquidated.” Cited in Todd Samuel Presner, “‘The Fabrication of Corpses’: Heidegger, Arendt, and the Modernity of Mass Death,” *Telos* 135 (2006): 84–108. In this article, Presner offers a critique of Heidegger’s distinction between authentic and inauthentic dying.

an injustice to Husserl's decades-long struggle to fathom and deconstruct the boundaries between subjective consciousness and the world, a struggle precisely because he increasingly saw these boundaries as intensely porous and hard to disentangle. Rather than a willful, singular, autonomous agent, the core of subjectivity is for Husserl nothing more than what he describes as an "ego-pole," a vector tying together myriad sensations, perceptions, and impressions, tied up in a complex web of internal and external temporal recesses. Rather than authoritatively endowing the world around it with meaning, transcendental subjectivity is able to identify precisely the provisional nature of the "how" of this meaning bestowal, which, nonetheless, cannot be escaped and is the defining property of subjectivity. Despite the discovery that the "I" itself is subject to temporalization and will always split into endless other "I's," and despite the fact that perceived objects can never be fully present and transparent in all their potential modes of appearance to consciousness, there still persists the "ego-pole," busy synthesizing and making sense out of chaos. This process is not merely subjective, but rather *intersubjective*, inseparable from the analogous labor of "cosubjects," other ego-poles, with whom a subject shares the world, thus necessarily inviting the question of not only the world's subjective, but also its objective validity.¹⁵⁵ Crucially, for Husserl the movement of synthesizing and totalizing as a way of creating meaning is not taken for granted, but is rather posed as an ideal, perhaps in a similar as way as the Yugoslav "optimal

¹⁵⁵ "The thing itself is actually that which no one experiences as really seen, since it is always in motion, always, and for everyone, a unity for consciousness of the openly endless multiplicity of changing experiences and experienced things, one's own and those of others. The cosubjects of these experiences themselves make up, for me and for one another, an openly endless horizon of human beings who are capable of meeting and then entering into actual contact with me and with one another," Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, 164. See also the discussion of the ego-pole as the subjectivity functioning constitutively, "but only within intersubjectivity," within the "I-you-synthesis," and "the more complicated we-synthesis," Husserl, 172.

projection,” as defined by Aleksandar Flaker. As he himself notes when discussing the endless levels of grounds and horizons of the “flux of Heraclitus,” it is impossible to “simply grasp and understand the whole,” rather, “the breadths and depths of this total meaning, in its infinite totality, take on valuative [*axiotische*] dimensions.”¹⁵⁶

To self-consciously ignore the axiomatic nature of Husserl’s quest for the totality and transparency of meaning, and ascribe to it a certainty and authority of what Levinas would generally call an “imperialist subject,”¹⁵⁷ is to obscure the fact that Levinas’s (and Derrida’s) persisting, impenetrable and unconquerable persecution by alterity, implying also an irrecoverable past, is likewise a philosophical axiom, and therefore, a fiction, an intentional, meaning-endowing act of philosophical consciousness. Such persecution is, in other words, already included as a potential result of philosophical explorations of transcendental subjectivity reached within the movement of transcendental reduction. Furthermore, Levinas’s insistence, despite his acknowledgment of Husserl’s explorations of alterity, on the centrality of intentionality and correlation in Husserl’s thought obscures the extent to which Husserl’s own idea of subjectivity is, just like that of Levinas, conditioned precisely by his explorations into the besiegement of self by alterity. Rather than building a philosophical empire on several basic presuppositions, Husserl continually returned to a few very basic questions, which led him into a continued confrontation with enigmas and paradoxes: the paradox of being a subject for the world and at the same time an object in the world, “a truly serious difficulty,”¹⁵⁸ as well as the enigma of the relation between subjects, the abyss

¹⁵⁶ Husserl, 170.

¹⁵⁷ Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 112.

¹⁵⁸ Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, 178.

separating the sphere of ownness and original experience from the sphere of appresented, and not originally experienced, other, who I nonetheless experience as a subject.¹⁵⁹ He would always offer a means for solving the paradox, but his constant dissatisfaction with his own solutions, and his repeated attempts to find new ones, restrain the very status of his answers and insist rather on the persisting validity of the questions. In Levinas, it is also precisely the search, the question, which has primacy.

Levinas's ideas, then, are not as far removed from Husserl as his insistence on the difference between his axiom of the Same persecuted by the Other vs. the Other assimilated by the Same in Husserl would suggest. Husserl's notion of subjectivity as a sort of formless mass shaped only by the force of an ego-pole is close to Levinas's idea of "the self without a concept."¹⁶⁰ However, perhaps more than the loudly proclaimed assimilation of Other by the Same, what in fact bothers Levinas in Husserl – or, more generally, in the whole tradition of Western philosophy of subjectivity – is precisely the reduction of subjectivity to (self-)consciousness, at the price of neglecting "what may be left irreducible after this reduction" and "forgetting what is better than being, that is, the Good."¹⁶¹ Levinas opposes the view that the self is "the ideal pole of an identification across the multiplicity of psychic silhouettes" because the self cannot form itself, "it is already formed with absolute passivity."¹⁶² However, for Levinas this passivity does not imply the contingency of subjectivity. On the contrary, the passivity is in relation to the Other as immemorial source, a

¹⁵⁹ Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1969), 121.

¹⁶⁰ Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 115.

¹⁶¹ Levinas, 19.

¹⁶² Levinas, 104.

Creator, which cannot be recuperated:

“This passivity is that of an attachment that has already been made, as something irreversibly past, prior to all memory and all recall. It was made in an irrecoverable time which the present, represented in recall, cannot equal, in a time of birth of creation, of which nature of creation retains a trace, unconvertible into a memory... The oneself is a creature, but an orphan by birth or an atheist no doubt ignorant of its Creator, for if it knew it it would again be taking up its commencement.”¹⁶³

Hägglund rightly places the key boundary between Levinas and Derrida precisely on the basis of Levinas’s attempt to positively define the origin of alterity (through figures of Infinity, the Good, Creator, God, etc.). Albeit unknown and unrepresentable, for Levinas this source *cannot not be*, and it can only be in an unreachable realm, which he defines temporally, as an immemorial past, but given its absolute theoretical discreteness from any attempt at recuperation, it must also be imagined as spatially distinct. In a similar way, the Same is so tortured and persecuted by the Other, not because it is contingently “without a concept,” as it is in Husserl, but precisely because it is overdetermined by this unidentifiable, yet ever persecuting origin. Levinas’s insistence on this persecution, despite his crusade against essence, ultimately yields a very stable and essentially incommensurate position of the Same and the Other. The Same can be tortured and persecuted to “the point of fission,” precisely because there was, or could be, a whole, identifiable Same in the first place, prior to fission, whose integrity is then constantly frustrated, in an exposure to “passivity more passive than all passivity.”¹⁶⁴ Levinas does not negate the unbreachable boundaries between Self and Other, he merely does not allow the origin of these boundaries to be located in consciousness; they originate from elsewhere, from “otherwise than being.” Levinas in fact

¹⁶³ Levinas, 105.

¹⁶⁴ Levinas, 15.

needs the amplified alterity of the sublime Other to legitimize the singularity of the Same, which ultimately makes Husserl's idea of subjectivity significantly less essentializing than that of Levinas.

Perhaps this sharp dichotomy between the self and the other is why Levinas ignores, or is unable to think, the "we," the question of community. And it is precisely the thinking of this question, which Husserl attempts in *Cartesian Meditations* and *The Crisis*, which is at the same time what gives his theory a far more ethical dimension than Levinas would admit, and which will finally make Husserl into a member of Monument *Group*. To settle for the scandal of the "pure interrogation mark," the torture of the unthinkable and unrepresentable, is at the same time to relinquish the responsibility for thinking within the boundaries of a possible answer, a possible representation, however painfully aware of the limits inherent in such quest, limits which derive from a historical situatedness in "our vital need."¹⁶⁵ As Husserl concludes in the *Crisis*, "our constant theme was the world and mankind as the subjectivity which, in community, intentionally brings about the accomplishment of world-validity."¹⁶⁶ The world-validity is not a given; it is a constant, individual and communal labor, a bringing about of a shared accomplishment. Husserl's invitation to pursue this accomplishment presents the imperative of the responsibility of philosophy, its responsibility for the world perceived as unlivable, and the responsibility for new generations who inherit the world.

To take on the work of *Besinnung* in Derrida's interpretation is to "make oneself

¹⁶⁵ In fact, Levinas himself claims this with the idea of the necessity of saying the unsayable. But why is his address of the Other as unsayable and unrepresentable any more less an assimilation and thematization of the Other by the Same, than the one for which he accuses Husserl?

¹⁶⁶ Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, 175.

responsible (*verantworten*) for the sense (*Sinn*) of science and philosophy... and put oneself in a position of *responsibility* for this sense starting from the total sense of our existence.”¹⁶⁷ A paradigmatic self-declared “beginner” – a recurring beginner, in fact – Husserl repeatedly cautioned that even the basic questions he posed still needed more work, before one could address the sphere of “higher problems,” such as the questions of “*accidental factualness, of death, of fate*, the possibility of a ‘*genuine*’ human life demanded as ‘meaningful’ in a particular sense.”¹⁶⁸ He noted that these problems could be called “ethico-religious problems,” but stated “in the realm where everything that can have a possible sense for us must be stated.”¹⁶⁹ To insist on this *possibility of sense*, then, isn’t merely an irresponsible act of cognitive assimilation. Husserl lists other difficult topics like insanity, children, animals, and transcendental historicity, but although acknowledging these subjects as abstruse, he insists that transcendental phenomenology can address these areas because “as something existing in the common world to all,” they have their “manners of ontic verification, of ‘self-giving,’” such that one must only pose “appropriate constitutional questions.”¹⁷⁰

What are these questions, and how is it possible to follow Husserl here in addressing the problem of death? Against Levinas’s proposal of death as a scandal rupturing all possibility of knowledge and intuition, how can Husserl’s invitation to approach death phenomenologically be adopted? I suggest that by joining Monument Group’s *Mathemes of Reassociation*, a series of public lectures and discussions in Belgrade in 2008, organized as part of an exhibition of contemporary art, the October Salon, Husserl can contribute to a

¹⁶⁷ Derrida, *Edmund Husserl’s ‘Origin of Geometry,’* 31.

¹⁶⁸ Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, 156.

¹⁶⁹ Husserl, 156.

¹⁷⁰ Husserl, 188.

communal and “grouped” artistic, intellectual, social practice dedicated precisely to exploring this question.

Monument Group’s program of discussions involved a number of lectures and presentations by invited guests from Bosnia and Herzegovina (mainly from the city of Tuzla), on the theme of “reassociation of identity,” a forensic term denoting the process of locating and identifying the remains of war victims and thus ending their previous status as “missing persons.” With *Mathemes of Reassociation*, Monument Group extended its theretofore existing membership (since 2005) beyond the Belgrade circle, as some of the participants in the discussion became members of the group.¹⁷¹ It also shifted its focus from a general preoccupation with the wars of the 1990s and their memorialization to a closer examination of a specific case, the Srebrenica genocide, one of the most catastrophic events of the war, in which the paramilitary forces of the Republic of Srpska executed over 8000 Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) men and boys. At the same time, as in the case of *Four Faces of Omarska*, the focus on the specific enabled an insight into the general: the truth about the Srebrenica genocide was posited to lead to the truth about the Yugoslav wars.

Although phenomenology is entirely absent from Monument Group’s theoretical references, their own theoretical postulates and research procedures, as I already argued, echo some of the basic tenets of Husserl’s phenomenology. The call for a shared effort of

¹⁷¹ The core membership of the group – or those who have consistently been its members, since the beginning of the project until today, consist of psychoanalyst and philosopher Branimir Stojanović and artist Milica Tomić. The group membership is not stable and fluctuates from one project to the next. Since 2008 two members from Tuzla, Damir Arsenijević, scholar working in the field of critical theory and psychoanalysis, and Jasmina Husanović, scholar working in the field of cultural studies, have participated in Monument Group projects on a regular basis.

Besinnung is one of them. Another is the postulate that “genocide IS speakable,”¹⁷² which can be read as a resistance to Levinas’s construction of death of the other as the epistemological scandal. The group explicitly posit such resistance, not in relation to Levinas, but in relation to cultural discourses on the Holocaust, which render it an unrepresentable historical event. To state that genocide is speakable is to counter this tradition of thought and to insist, just like Husserl did, on the possibility of sense. On the other hand, the Group is equally critical of the “rational,” scientific approaches of dealing with trauma, or what they also call “American pragmatism,” which are in the post-Yugoslav region implemented in the form of “transitional justice,” under the guidance of various international political, judicial, scientific and humanitarian organizations and experts.¹⁷³ Within this “pragmatic” constellation, the Group states, Srebrenica genocide has become “a complex object construed by contemporary science, religion, and crisis management administration.”¹⁷⁴ The starting point of their critique is forensic science, which, in the words of Jasmina Husanović, implements a bio-informational “governing of trauma through strategies of codification and mathematization,” ultimately effecting its utter depoliticization.¹⁷⁵ These strategies involve “the translation of human material from the diagram *blood – name – ethnicity – irrational affect* into the diagram *sample – bar-code – data archive – rational order*.”¹⁷⁶ In other words, what the

¹⁷² Grupa Spomenik/Monument Group, *Mathemes of Reassociation*, based on the performance *Pythagorean Lecture* in Zagreb, 2009 (samizdat, 2010), 15.

¹⁷³ In fact, Branimir Stojanović interprets this management of genocide in Bosnia as “the attempt of American pragmatism to in fact do away with the thirty-year-long metaphysics, with the European incapacity to deal with the Holocaust victims, which have been transposed into transcendence, into the untouchable, the impossibility of speaking about the Holocaust. The American response is: we can solve the mystics of mass crime with the help of hyper-productive administration and hyper-productive science.” Stojanović, discussion following the lecture by Jasmina Husanović, cited in *Matemi reasocijacije*, 54.

¹⁷⁴ Monument Group, “Kako misliti genocid” [How to think genocide], in *Matemi reasocijacije*, 3.

¹⁷⁵ Jasmina Husanović, “Ka emancipativnoj politici svjedočenja,” *Matemi reasocijacije*, 45.

¹⁷⁶ Husanović, 47.

nationalist, identitarian and genocidal discourses identify through the language of blood difference, which then also accounts for the difference in proper names that demarcate individual ethnicities/nations, as well as the proper names of individuals subsumed to those ethnicities/nations, and what ultimately results in the “unspeakable,” irrational “affect” of genocide, is tamed and mathematized by the forensic procedures in which blood becomes a bone sample, bar-code replaces the ethnic name, data-archive ethnic identity, with the ultimate result of producing the illusion and ideology of rational order.

Despite this attempt at taming the irrational affect of genocide, the process of excavating and identifying the bodies of victims of the Srebrenica genocide turned out to be, in the words of Sarah Wagner, a “forensic nightmare.”¹⁷⁷ In the attempt to cover up the crimes, the already buried bodies were dug out from mass graves and relocated to secondary graves, which was in some cases repeated twice, creating tertiary graves. Remains of one person could be dispersed in two or even three mass graves, and in addition, under the impact of heavy machinery the bodies were shattered and heavily intermingled. To address this, conventional forensic methods gave way to the primacy of DNA identification: a complex and expensive technological procedure was developed, in which bone samples are matched to blood samples of survived family members “on a scale never before attempted.”¹⁷⁸ This work has been conducted mainly by the International Commission for Missing Persons, in collaboration with a number of local bodies and organizations.

According to forensic anthropologist Kerry Ann Martin from the Center for Reassociation

¹⁷⁷ Sarah E. Wagner, *To Know Where He Lies. DNA Technology and the Search for Srebrenica's Missing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 4.

¹⁷⁸ Wagner, 4.

in Lukavec, the aim of their organization is “to reassemble and reconnect the remains of [the persons killed in genocide] and identify the various body parts which belong to one person, so that this person can be buried and left to rest in peace.”¹⁷⁹ The peace of the massacred person is thus explicitly equated with the piecing together of the violently scattered parts of his body.

Religious authorities were invoked to determine the degree of the wholeness of the body necessary as a precondition for regaining this symbolic integrity of personhood. It was decided that 75 percent of the skeleton should be reassociated in order for the funeral to take place. All victims of the Srebrenica genocide are buried at the same location, at the commemoration site in Potočari, during annual ceremonies involving the presence of international and local political elites, and masses of people from all over the region who come to pay their respect. All are buried according to Islamic rite, and all are declared “shahids,” Islamic martyrs, regardless of the fact whether they had in fact practiced religion during their life. Sarah Wagner reports of a woman who felt discomfort during the burial of her father, because he had been an atheist, which made her reluctant to bury him according to a religious rite. However, she eventually made a decision that “he should be buried with the others.”¹⁸⁰ In the burial ritual at Potočari, the wholeness of the body is thus transposed into the wholeness of the community, clearly defined in national and religious terms (Bosniak/Muslim) and used for what Wagner describes as “crafting the new ethno-religious nationalism.”¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ Kerry Ann Martin, “Procedure i procesi koji pomažu u konačnoj identifikaciji,” in *Matemi reasocijacije*, 16.

¹⁸⁰ Sarah Wagner, “Innovation and Intervention. The Forensic Work of Identifying Srebrenica’s Missing,” paper presented at the conference *Yugoslav Space Twenty Years After Srebrenica*, Stanford University, May 15, 2015.

¹⁸¹ Wagner, “Innovation and Intervention.”

Monument Group's critique of the confluence of religion and science in managing the trauma of genocide denounces this identity production as a repetition and perpetuation, by other means, of the politics of terror that originated genocide. Science first erases the historical and political event of genocide by renaming the victim of genocide as a "missing person," and then religion Islamicizes the victim, thus "holophrasing" the object of "collective hallucination, the 'Muslim-Islamic fundamentalist,'" which needed to be produced by the politics of terror in order to initiate and legitimize genocide in the first place.¹⁸² This "holophrasing," it could be added, is reflected also in the collective burial rite. Just as the Srebrenica men and boys were executed not as individuals, but as anonymous members of a group that needed to be annihilated, so are they here buried as a group, whose salvation is sought through sacralization. "He should be buried with the others," because he died with the others, and in thus dying, was also made to be just like the others. Hundreds of identical, green coffins gathered each year at Potočari, as new victims are identified, and the identical white tombstones, are visual markers of this anonymizing collectivization.

At the same time, however, the forensic and religious management of the corpses insists on the integrity of their individuality. As one of the main obstacles to reassociation, forensic experts cite "high commingling": the remains are so intermixed that one "case" (a bag with remains collected by archeologists on site) often contains "several individuals," which would as a rule be impossible to set apart using traditional anthropological methods.¹⁸³ However, even DNA analysis can't identify all the bones. Some of them are gravely

¹⁸² Grupa Spomenik, 8.

¹⁸³ Dragana Vučetić, "Podrinje identifikacijski projekt," in *Matemi reasocijacije*, 22.

deteriorated by environmental conditions, and others are “contaminated” by contact with other DNA, whether from bacteria or other mortal remains. “Intrinsic contamination” results from the “fact that the body lay in a mass grave where bodies are simply falling apart together.”¹⁸⁴ The lab workers, however, according to Kerry Ann Martin, “take all necessary precautions to prevent burying more persons in one grave,” as this is “*simply unacceptable*.”¹⁸⁵ Bones that remain unidentified, in some cases also because there are no surviving family members to give blood samples, are stored in the ossuary, together with remains that are identified but that await the “rest” of the body, so that the 75% of the body can be reassembled.¹⁸⁶ Ultimately, unidentified remains will most likely be buried in a common mausoleum, although, as forensic anthropologist Draga Vučetić points out, forensic teams plan to “work with family organizations and local authorities to determine the most appropriate treatment for these *elements that we have failed to connect* to an individual.”¹⁸⁷

“Elements that we have failed to connect” – with minimal editorial intervention, let these become “elements that [~~we~~] *have failed to connect*,” and Vučetić can be said to have unwittingly produced what could perfectly serve as a title for Monument Group’s manifesto, which conceives of the unidentified bones not as failures, not as something that is “simply unacceptable,” but the very elements of hope. It is precisely by failing to connect to an individual identity that they have also “failed” to connect to their recuperation by what the

¹⁸⁴ Šejla Idrizbegović, “Uloga DNA analize u identifikaciji nestalih osoba,” in *Matemi reasocijacije*, 32.

¹⁸⁵ Martin, 18. My emphasis.

¹⁸⁶ Despite the 75% rule, Vučetić points out that it is ultimately the family that decides when they wish to bury their deceased. They could choose to bury just a body part, instead of waiting for the rest of the body to be uncovered, which can take years. Re-exhumation and re-reassociation is carried out if new remains are found, after the body had already been buried. Re-exhumation and re-burial has been shown to be very painful for the families, she also notes. Vučetić, 26.

¹⁸⁷ Vučetić, 22. My emphasis.

Group identifies as the ideology of reconciliation, conditioned on reaffirming mutually distinct, pure ethnic/religious identities and their mutually tolerated coexistence. It is this “failure,” the scattered, excess bones, which are posited as the carriers of an emancipatory politics for the future:

For throughout the entire process of forensic analysis, quantification, and identification, an unpleasant surplus remains: the corporeal surplus that cannot be identified, quantified, buried, or sacralized – the surplus of debased matter, of scattered, excess bones! This unpleasant, radically inassimilable, material remainder opens up the real space of politics. It offers itself as, literally, the ground for a process of subjectivization that would not be identity-bound, and that would demand a different sort of memory-politics. We do not know the proper name of this political subjectivization tied to the non-identifiable corporeal remainder, but we do know that its mandate is to interrupt the “parallel convergence” of the contemporary constructions of identity and the politics of terror.¹⁸⁸

The “unpleasant surplus” holds the possibility to resist the positivism of science, the martyrological coercion by the state, and the metaphysics of religion. I would suggest more explicitly that it introduces a new type politics based on a new type of subjectivization grounded in a new type of community, a *group*. A group is formed neither by the conjoining of free, autonomous individuals, and, analogously, their isolated and idiosyncratic graves, nor by the subordination of individuals to a coherent collectivity, as the one represented by Srebrenica-victims well-ordered, identical graves. [Figure 50] Perhaps it is also not based on “subjectivization” at all, since this code, by default, entails an emergence of a coherent subject, regardless of how “new” and deconstructed it may be. It is precisely the ossuary, home of unearthed “bodies...falling apart together” that now “fail” to become “somebodies” that requires thinking beyond the necessarily heroic aspirations of subjecthood and to embrace the profane sociality of contaminated, “simply unacceptable”

¹⁸⁸ Grupa Spomenik, 20-21.

commingling. Here, again, the *Körper* is an “element” that radically disturbs the certainty of distribution of subjects and objects in the world. The discovery of the ossuary as the house of *Körper* by Monument Group is the ground of hope from which to begin thinking of *Mathemes of Reassociation* as the invitation to pursue an exploration of the phenomenology of death.

The key tenets of the project presented thus far implicitly pointed to other parallels between the approach of Monument Group and Husserl’s phenomenology, apart from those already explicated. The most obvious, perhaps, is the critique of both the scientific positivism on the one hand, and any form of metaphysics, on the other. Husserl’s philosophy, from *Logical Investigations* onwards, emerges as a critique of the scientification of the world, which had lost touch with the true meaning of life that only philosophy, as the science of sciences, can recover. Monument Group shares an analogous attitude, with the important addition that a new “politics” is to emerge as a result of philosophical, intellectual, and artistic elaborations. But even if Husserl’s thought is thoroughly and consistently unpolitical, in the sense of its non-alignment with any existing tradition of political philosophy or practice, he shares with Monument Group the idea, explicitly stated in the *Crisis*, that philosophy is the basis for an intervention necessary to remedy the world that has become unlivable. In addition, as I indicated earlier, his research on subjectivity and, in particular, intersubjectivity, and their ultimate grounding in the horizon of historical sedimentations and that of the life-world, should be examined, as well as inherited, as not only philosophical, or ethical, but also as a political question. Or rather, because the very term politics can itself be said to represent a “garb of ideas,” and has become vague and reified and thus perhaps even vacant of any usable meaning, we should not even say a

“political question,” but rather a set of questions for which, to echo Monument Group’s manifesto of unidentified bones, there is no name yet.

The other “phenomenological” feature of *Mathemes of Reassociation* is the very idea of the matheme as a transhistorical “truth of genocide,” which, as I argued earlier, parallels Husserl’s own explorations of eidetic meaning and the transhistorical transfer of sense. More importantly, what is also shared is the idea that a matheme is not a conceptually devised formula, but rather one that arises as a result of collective labor of *Besinnung*, enacted by a community – or, rather, a group, a group now also joined by Husserl – that acknowledges the challenges of facing the unlivable world and its grounding in endless layers of histories of war, expropriation and violence. What, finally, makes the aims of Monument Group determinedly phenomenological is the fact that this *Besinnung* is itself grounded upon the group’s encounter with the life-death-world of the “debased matter” of the ossuary, the “scattered, excess bones” that are incongruent with any system of hegemonic recuperation, and that thus fall out of the system as its “unpleasant remainder,” as well as a reminder of the system’s inadequacies to address the gravity of the past. This gravity, just like in Husserl, turns out to be both literally and metaphorically that – gravity, the force pulling towards the horizon of ground, towards the mass grave with its commingling bodies, contaminated mutually and by the DNA of the violence of the politics of terror, in the name of which the bodies of their former neighbors placed them there.

The community of those determined to make the ossuary, “literally, the ground” of a hope for the future, is by no means limited to Monument Group, nor its activities.¹⁸⁹ For

¹⁸⁹ Grupa Spomenik, 21.

the group itself exists as a continuous, but unstable “commingling” of a small number of more or less permanent, and a greater number of temporary, or recurring members, collaborators, activists, war survivors, local and international publics. Individual practice of each participant is necessarily embedded in the work of the Group, while at the same time the Group shapes their individual work and is expanded through it. This creates a constellation in which not only different people, but also a broad set of theoretical, literary, artistic, and other references enter the discursive field of the Group’s work and thus become part of its discursive “monument.” Poetry holds a special place, thanks to the work of Damir Arsenijević and his research on Bosnian-Herzegovinian postwar poetry and inclusion of poets in Monument Group’s works.¹⁹⁰ In particular, a poem by Jozefina Dautbegović, “The Unidentified,” resembles a poetic matheme of the work of the group as a whole. It, too, begins on the ground of the mass grave:

What is his collarbone doing / next to this frontal bone / And what will he look like / Reassembled from different parts / When the day of resurrection / comes. It is a particular question / From what will we reassemble ourselves / If again / we decide to love one another.¹⁹¹

Reassembling, or reassociation, is here transposed from a forensic procedure into the question of the possibility of assembling a future society based on a decision to reassemble, which is made on the contaminated ground of hatred, war, and genocide. If this re-assembling is to happen, a different kind of re-association needs to take place, a different kind of community, a group perhaps – Monument Group, Four Faces of Omarksa working

¹⁹⁰ See Arsenijević, comprehensive study *Forgotten Future: The Politics of Poetry in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Baden Baden, Germany: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2010.

¹⁹¹ Jozefina Dautbegović, cited in Damir Arsenijević, “Love After Genocide” in *Moments. Eine Geschichte Der Performance in 10 Akten / a History of Performance in 10 Acts*, eds. Sigrid Gareis, Georg Schöllhammer, and Peter Weibel (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2013), 472-79.

group, the group that Fink implicitly created when, despite Heidegger, he refused to give up on Husserl the “Jewish thinker” – as a novel way of living together in an unlivable world.

The initial move of this reassembling is the commingling encounter with the unidentified remainder of the past, with the *Körper*, retrieved and reawakened from sedimented deposits. What kind of an encounter is this? If it is the kind where – like in a classical phenomenological procedure – subjects encounter an object, then what kind of an object is it? Would Heidegger, for example, classify it according to the mode of *conspicuousness, obtrusiveness, or obstinacy*? The three modes are all variations of “unhandiness,” in which a thing either loses its familiar usability, or misses a part, or merely “gets in the way” of taking care of a task, which only further emphasizes the necessity of the task, revealing it in its obstinacy.¹⁹² The discovered unusability makes the thing conspicuously, or obtrusively present: “what is unusable just lies there,” disrupting the “constitutive reference of the in-order-to to a what-for.”¹⁹³ It could be said that the unidentified bones, which “failed to connect to an individual,” became both conspicuous and obtrusive in this way. They just lie there, and their “mere presence” is a disturbing reminder of the obstinacy of the task of making sense of the continuation of life upon the ground of violence and death, a task which neither science, politics or religion managed to resolve.

The unidentified bones are an index of parts still missing from reassociated skeletons, they are their contaminated phantom limbs, and at the same time the phantom limbs unsettling the body-schema of society trying to rebuild itself in the image of ethnic and

¹⁹² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 72-74.

¹⁹³ Heidegger, 72; 74.

religious wholeness. Examining the phenomenon of the phantom limb, Maurice Merleau-Ponty described it not as a recollection in the mind of an amputee, but rather as a thing that is “quasi-present,” something from the past that remains present in an ambiguous way, just like traumatic experience, or the death of a loved one.¹⁹⁴ Although he concludes that this enigmatic phenomenon cannot be reduced to either physiological or psychological factors, he brings it in relation to the structure of repression: the phantom limb is “like a repressed experience, a previous present that cannot commit to becoming past.”¹⁹⁵ The scattered, high-commingling, contaminated excess bones, a nightmare for forensics, stand for what is repressed and not accounted for in the process of victim identification, not because of technical, but because of ideological reasons. They inform an ambiguous presence of the impurity of identity, of the impossibility to “re-associate” it to the sacralized wholeness of ethnic belonging without a remainder.

What is this remainder? I propose that this is the remainder be thought of as the remainder of the repressed Yugoslav identity, the remained of the South Slavic “bare bones,” which Ugo Vlaisavljevic has theorized as the instable origin for South Slav identity, which thus accounts for Yugoslavism as an always failing nationalism. The remainder, in other words, of what I have in this dissertation called “a peoples.” It is not my intention to re-associate the unrecuperable remainder of the ossuary with the “Yugoslav” identity and thus effect a closure upon the nightmarish obstacles to identification, but rather to present Yugoslav identity as co-extensive with a universal rendering of the remainder of the “excess,

¹⁹⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London, New York: Routledge, 2002), 82-87.

¹⁹⁵ Merleau-Ponty, 88.

bare bones” as an obstacle and resistance to hegemonic identity formation – whether individual or communal. The South Slav bare bones emerge as one of the results of the phenomenology of death and of the labor of *Besinnung* of the ossuary, which reveals it not only as the repressed but as that whose destruction is the very hidden presupposition of the construction of the ethnically pure post-Yugoslav nation-states. As Isailović notes, the popular notion that there are as many Yugoslav identities as there are Yugoslavs, is not far away from the truth, as individuals could have very different motivations to embrace such an identification. Although Yugoslavism could have potentially also developed into a form of chauvinist nationalism, this did not happen partly because it was never really part of the official doctrine, which increasingly favored and benefited the political and cultural autonomy of the individual republics. In fact, Yugoslavism was at its peak in 1981 precisely following the 1974 Constitution, which gave republics even more autonomy, and during this time, it was strongest in ethnically-mixed parts of the country.¹⁹⁶ Just like the Muslim identity, Yugoslavism too represented a “weak” nationhood, a perversion of the idea of pure ethnic and national belonging. It is symptomatic, then, that the two genocides committed during the Yugoslav wars were those against the Bosnian Muslims and, as Isailović argues, against the Yugoslavs, albeit the latter was never even rhetorically claimed in public discourse, let alone adjudicated by any court.¹⁹⁷ The successful completion, during the 1990s, of the process of national constitution of Bosnian Muslims according to the conventional model of European nationhood, under the officially adopted name of the Bosniaks, is itself a

¹⁹⁶ Isailović, “Ko su bili Jugosloveni?”.

¹⁹⁷ The cited article by Isailović is a rare exception, and even in his article the claim of “silent genocide” is not central and is itself by no means expressed in a loud way.

confirmation of the logic of genocide, which strove to destroy precisely that which pointed to the impurity, and the undecidability of national and ethnic belonging, and submit the entire social and political life to the rule of hegemonic nationhood. Such conclusion is implied also by Monument Group's idea of reproducing of the politics of terror in the management of Srebrenica genocide, as well as by their interpretation of genocide as the destruction of "Yugoslav Muslims."¹⁹⁸ Although their thus far almost exclusive focus on the events in Bosnia and, in particular, the Srebrenica genocide, carries the danger of reducing the much more complex scope of the 1990s wars in Yugoslavia to a single event, as well as their motivation to the destruction of Yugoslav Muslims, their (historically imprecise, in the context of genocide) prefixing of Muslims with the attribute Yugoslav ultimately yields a productive concept. It is in itself a miniature matheme, a formula which can be used to condense the entire discussion on the phantom limb of the ossuary developed here.

However, to go back to the question of the nature of the encounter with this ossuary and Heideggerian frameworks to define this encounter, the scattered, excess bones, are not simply an object, let alone an object that "just lies there." They are rather, as Husserl might argue, "there too," the result of my apprehension of other "bodies" as "co-present."¹⁹⁹ In the famous "Fifth Meditation," the Monument Group member Edmund Husserl tries to unravel the enigma of how the Others can appear to me as Objects in the world, while at the same I acknowledge them as subjects for the world. The key procedure that enables this is "analogical apprehension," or a "pairing" by which "data" appears in its distinctness, yet in a

¹⁹⁸ "This politics of terror, a terror of abstraction over reality, attempted to destroy Yugoslav Muslims completely." Grupa Spomenik, 8-9.

¹⁹⁹ Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 109.

“unity of similarity.”²⁰⁰ A specific kind of epoché brings about a reduction to “my primordial ownness” whose content is the Here.²⁰¹ I am here, and the Other, who “enters my field of field of perception,” is discovered as an “an ego now coexisting in the mode There.”²⁰² What I see there is “a body ‘similar’ to mine” and, thanks to this pairing and the analogizing apprehension, “it *seems* clear without more ado that, with the transfer of sense, this body must forthwith appropriate from mine the sense: animate organism.”²⁰³ I see there a body in space, just like mine, and “[i]t brings to mind the way my body would look ‘if I were there.’”²⁰⁴ As a result, “empathizing happens” (in different emotional registers, anger, joy, etc.).²⁰⁵ The final result of the exploration is the discovery of the “transcendental intersubjectivity,” upon which the Objectivity of the world is conditioned.²⁰⁶ This intersubjectivity is formed by the “temporal community of the constitutively interrelated monads.”²⁰⁷

I propose that this “similarity” also has something to do with South Slav “similar singing” or its “muted tone” whose twentieth-century trajectory I have followed in this dissertation. In order to see that, we must ask Husserl to tell us how his phenomenological exercise would work when staged as an encounter between the temporal community of the living and the dead? When a body in the form of a skeleton, or its severed parts, enters my field of perception, how does the pairing with this data proceed? Husserl’s theory is

²⁰⁰ Husserl, 111-112.

²⁰¹ Husserl, 119.

²⁰² Husserl, 113; 119.

²⁰³ Husserl. Original emphasis.

²⁰⁴ Husserl, 118.

²⁰⁵ Husserl, 120.

²⁰⁶ Husserl, 156.

²⁰⁷ Husserl, 128.

dependent on the condition of intuitive analogizing among animate organisms – life and *Leib* are once again its hidden presuppositions. And yet, the theory seems to work as some form of pairing happens even in the encounter with the unidentified, fragmented bones. I am not able to dismiss them as mere objects, and I necessarily pair them with an ambiguous kind of subjecthood, for myself and for this world. I see there a body in space, and although not quite just like mine, it still “brings to mind the way my body would look ‘if I were there.’”²⁰⁸ The other body is not just there, it is “there, too,” and in being thus it is necessarily constitutive of the transcendental intersubjectivity, which in turn, conditions the objective world. A “temporal community of the constitutively interrelated monads” is formed, but one whose temporality is much more than simply a sharing of “a common time-form” in co-existence.²⁰⁹ The temporalities of the lifeworld, history and intersubjectivity meet and intersect in the *Körper* of a corpse, making the “living present” in which this encounter happens additionally strained by the weight of not simply the past, but also of death. The corpse is the key knot that ties together Husserl’s explorations of historicity and intersubjectivity.

In the “Origin of Geometry,” writing was presented as that which connects these two regions, as that which enables a virtual intersubjectivity to be constituted transhistorically. However, as Derrida emphasized, this intersubjectivity and its transhistoricity was so under the condition that the body of the graphic sign was not merely *Körper*, but a *Leib* endowed with the means to transport sense. On the contrary, a

²⁰⁸ Husserl, 118.

²⁰⁹ Husserl, 128.

Körper, this inanimate corpse with its ambiguous commingling of sense and its absence, of life and death, subjecthood and objecthood, the present and the past, imposes itself as the center of this relation, requiring its continued elucidation. Arising as unearthed matter from history's sedimentations, it disturbs Husserl's sequential ordering of layers, on top of which the living present stands in its attempt to make sense of inherited and available deposits. It reveals rather a perplexed co-existence of these layers, in which the past – as well as death – not only determines, but forms part of, and *takes place* in, the living present. It is *there, too*, which is why the temporal community of constitutively interrelated monads cannot be thought solely on the basis of the animate. Monument Group, who chose to make the scattered, mutually contaminated, unidentified bones of the ossuary a ground for the future, is a group, now with Husserl as its member, that enables us to think what that alternative way of constituting community, or intersubjectivity might be. It is not one in which the *Körper* were suddenly endowed with sense, in which *Körper* started to speak, but rather one in which the shared labor of *Besinnung* cannot go on, without taking into account that it is *there, too*, disturbing the neat ordering of the temporally categorized layers.

In his lecture for the *Mathemes of Reassociation* project, forensic archeologist Admir Jugo spoke of mass graves exhumations, which in some cases revealed “sites where the history of death of the twentieth century has been written out in one place.”²¹⁰ There are caves in which three different layers of human remains were found, the top layer with the remains from the wars of the 1990s, the layer below him from the Second World War, and the bottom layer dated from the First World War. Monument Group, then, is not merely

²¹⁰ Admir Jugo, “Primena forenzičkih tehnika na masovne grobnice u Bosni i Hercegovini,” in *Matemi reasocijacije*, 36.

standing on the ground determined by a singular historical event of violence and death, but is rather facing an ongoing tradition of mass killing and war. Indeed, there seems to be no more suitable word than “tradition” to describe the custom revealed to have been practiced in those caves. This tradition, moreover, is not limited to a specific time or place, which is why the work of Monument Group doesn’t hold relevance simply with regard to the post-Yugoslav situation. Bringing it in relation with the work of Husserl, itself significantly determined by its own historical constellation of the “crisis of the European sciences,” and their own complementary politics of terror and genocide, is a way of continuing the tradition whose task is to oppose the tradition of the death cave and its production of an unlivable world. At the same time, this cross-illuminating encounter in which phenomenology enabled a deeper grasp at the issues examined by Monument Group, while at the same time an analysis of the Group’s work in the field of art enabled an expansion of, and intervention into Husserl’s phenomenological procedures, shows that it cannot be merely the task of philosophy to fulfill this task. The grouping, then, is also a grouping not only among individual monads but also among individual “disciplines”: art, philosophy, critical theory, poetry, science, anthropology, which at the same time subverts the “discipline” as another “garb of ideas,” another reification to whose dismantling Husserl was not ready to commit. But he did concede, in a text which asserted the necessity of historical reflection: “I know, of course, what I am striving for under the title of philosophy, as the gold and field of my work. And yet I do not know. What autonomous thinker has ever been satisfied with this, his

‘knowledge?’²¹¹ Philosophy is about spiritual inheritance, about working, in the company of others, those who came before and who will come after, “in critical friendship and enmity.”²¹² As the *Crisis* further reveals, Husserl not only relativized – albeit unwillingly, defensively, as a Jewish “critical theorist” unwilling to “come out” – the “title of philosophy,” but also the title of “Europe” which is inherently tied to philosophy’s title and entitlement. According to Carr, one of the key paradoxes of the *Crisis* is the discovery of philosophy’s history as a specifically European tradition, which, however, understands itself as free of prejudices.²¹³ Husserl thus subverts – once again, initiating his own artillery against himself, just like he did by introducing a historical reduction into phenomenology – his own aim of reactivating the origins of philosophy as a universal, fundamental science, and provincializes Europe, as it were, *avant la letter* and albeit reluctantly, as a Jewish critical theorist who, in the midst of “crisis,” desperately clings on to the title of European philosopher.

Monument Group, who have chosen to make the scattered, mutually contaminated, unidentified bones of the ossuary a ground for the future, recently made a decision to cease its work and rearticulate it in the form of an archive. After working as an informal and unstable constellation of individuals and projects of different backgrounds, its members now plan to form a registered organization under the name Monument Group Archive, ultimately led by people who have not been part of the group. In fact, the Group wishes to institute and pass on its *Nachlass*, and leave it to younger generations to inherit its task. Another,

²¹¹ Edmund Husserl, “Denial of Scientific Philosophy. Necessity of Reflection. The Reflection [Must Be] Historical. How Is History Required?,” included as Appendix IX in the *Crisis*, 394.

²¹² Husserl, 394.

²¹³ Carr, “The Crisis as Philosophy of History.”

informal instance of this inheritance already exists, in the Four Faces of Omarska Working Group, which was founded by the Monument Group Member Milica Tomić, who invited students and young people to take part in the project, and who have subsequently taken it over. This transgenerational transfer is crucial as a way of insisting, as Monument Group did, that poetry, literature, philosophy, and art must address the “vital need” for knowledge and for making sense of the difficult questions of the past, and that life cannot simply go on without taking into account, and opposing, the politics that produces and perpetuates expropriation, violence and death.

Conclusion

In 2010 Dutch artists Jonas Staal and Vincent van Gerven Oei presented in Zagreb an installation and performance titled *Survivor*. The installation consisted of the official report on Srebrenica commissioned by the Dutch government, replicas of honorary insignia that the United Nations Dutch battalion (Dutchbat) received in 2006, and a video documentation of the award ceremony. With this ceremony, the Dutch government hoped to alleviate the negative perception of the role of Dutchbat in the Srebrenica genocide, and to acknowledge the difficult circumstances that the soldiers were in. By bringing together the award ceremony and the Srebrenica report – whose 3,875-page text is itself an account of Yugoslav history on which a dissertation chapter could be written – the artists have brought forth Dutch government’s reconceptualization of the notion of survivor as a victim of traumatic experience. Although the report uses the word survivor exclusively in relation to the Bosnian Muslim population of the Srebrenica region, the award ceremony, with its remedial insignia that was to boost the morale of Dutch soldiers following their historic failure to prevent genocide, at the same time implicitly took that word away as the property of Srebrenica survivors and attached it to their infamous “peacekeepers.”

The performance during the exhibition opening radicalized this strange transference further: the artists approached exhibition visitors and offered them the medals, which the visitors could either accept or refuse. [Figure 51] What was the medal for? This question imposed itself naturally, even more so since the Dutch soldiers seemed to have scandalously received it for “nothing.” The title of the performance, *Survivor*, provided one possible answer: the medal was for surviving. Staal’s and Gerven Oei’s initial idea was to replicate the

medals and go to Bosnia and former Yugoslavia in order to give them to those who truly “deserve” them, that is, actual survivors. However, their first stop was Zagreb, that is Croatia, which itself has an ambivalent role in the Yugoslav wars. The visitation to a Zagreb gallery by the two Dutch artists thus proved to be one in which survivor emerged as a particularly blurry, impure concept; everyone was suddenly a survivor: the Srebrenica families, the Dutch soldiers, Zagreb art audience of various ages and perhaps also of diverse backgrounds that define their own diverse relations to the 1990s war. What this relativizing move achieved – a move that destabilized the equalization of survivors with victims – was that everyone was forced to embrace a side that is inherent to any trauma survivor, that of guilt. More precisely, survivor guilt. As Primo Levi has testified with his life and everything that he wrote, it is such guilt that imposes the responsibility to write, speak, and testify, in the name of those who have not survived, and whose testimony will remain unheard. It is in analogy with this view that I have also attempted, in this dissertation, to think about Yugoslavia’s surviving generation.

What the Dutch artists’ intervention once more showed is that Yugoslavia’s history cannot be viewed in isolation, as with their Zagreb performance, the two Dutch artists – incidentally or not, also belonging to the age cohort born in late 1970s and early 1980s – themselves revealed that they are part of Yugoslavia’s surviving generation. With the present-day nationalist mobilization in countries as diverse as Poland, Hungary, Great Britain, the United States, Germany, and even Sweden, the political polarization that has once again brought Yugoslavia’s surviving generation to the fore must certainly not be seen as a specifically post-Yugoslav issue. The mirroring between the past and present, between the (post)Yugoslav and global, has, in fact, accrued almost farcical proportions. The

civilizing mission of the European Union, which was to lead what it saw as the doubly traumatized – by the evils of communism and the bloodshed of the 1990s war – Balkan nations first into the transitional waiting room of the “Western Balkans,” and then into full integration with Europe, has been turned on its head, giving new meaning to Harald Szeemann’s titular dictum that “future’s in the Balkans.” In place of the picture of the happily integrated, albeit somewhat troubled and troublesome, newcomers, the nationalist and Islamophobic redrawing of cultural, economic, and political boundaries and borders across the European Union (and the United States), seems to evidence Europe’s integration with the Balkans, and not the other way around. This slippage, although it only lately revealed its true proportions, was one of the starting points for an exhibition project that Antonia Majača and I began in 2009 in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in the framework of which a number of works that I write about in this dissertation were produced or exhibited.¹ Faced with the always self-exoticizing – unavoidable yet unavoidably relative – prerogative to use contemporary art to address the chronically acute political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we invited a group of international curators to join the exhibition team and proposed that Bosnia and Herzegovina might be seen not simply as a neuralgic point, but a position from which to view analogously neuralgic issues in the world, and especially, in the West. Interestingly enough, the opening of our second exhibition in “Bosnia” – a country still “supervised” by the Office of the High Representative (of the international community), the country lured by the vague promise of once catching up with

¹ Ivana Bago and Antonia Majaca, *Where Everything is Yet to Happen: ‘Can you speak of this? – Yes, I Can,’ & Exposures* (Zagreb: Delve, 2009; 2010)

Brussels, that is, the European Union – coincided in 2010 with the unresolved elections in Belgium, which was about to break the record (held by Iraq) of going almost a year without being able to form a government.

This dissertation has been greatly shaped by my earlier, collaborative and even collective “study,” which working as a curator and independent researcher based in Zagreb entailed, and just as much by my experience as a student within the scholarly community of Duke University. The geopolitical and epistemic displacement that has defined these two different positions has also meant a change of perspective: a shift from viewing “Brussels,” that is, the world, or the West, from Yugoslavia, to looking at how Yugoslavia appears from the “world,” in particular the US academic world as the still hegemonic producer of knowledge and its legitimate and legible forms (a dissertation, for example). I encountered an explicit mention of Yugoslavia for the first and likely the only time at Duke University during the first lecture in Walter D. Mignolo’s class on the decoloniality of knowledge, for whose “letter-writing” assignment I decided to write to Josip Broz Tito. I will quote a long segment of that letter, as it addresses my research process on which I wish to provide some concluding reflections:

Dear Comrade Tito,

It’s been a long time since I last wrote to you, probably for some homework in early elementary school. Well, I’m again doing homework here at Duke University in the US, and again I decided to write to you. What am I doing in the US, you ask? You remind me of that Armenian king in a film I recently saw, who trotted on his horse into the room of an Armenian immigrant in Berlin to ask him how he was doing there after all those years. All those centuries of glorious Armenian history ended up in a dismal room just opposite the screaming railroad somewhere in the Berlin periphery. I certainly seem to be doing much better than that guy, but still, all those years of our glorious socialist history, and here I am with American capitalists sponsoring my PhD. It must come as yet another blow to you, just like it did in the 1970s when our self-managed workers were increasingly becoming German guest-workers. Anyway, I’m sure you already know the whole story, and you have already

received thousands of letters about it. [...] In any case, don't worry about me, it is really wonderful here, they have everything here (except, perhaps, the red ink). [...]

So here I am and, paradoxically or not, I am taking a course on the decolonization of knowledge [...] I thought you might be happy to know that you were mentioned during the very first lecture [in a discussion of] movements of decolonization and de-Westernization after WW2 [...] I'm sorry to say that after that lecture, we haven't been mentioning you a lot, and it seems that our glorious history is not so important in the context of world geopolitical history after all. We were not the big ideologues, we were neither the colonizers nor the colonized, and even when we were colonized, it was by empires that the Eurocentric epistemic hegemony subsequently positioned as second-rate and irrelevant. What is more, even when we read Giancarlo Casale, who sought to re-establish the relevance of the Ottoman Empire and its own "age of exploration" on a par with the European one, we were not mentioned in any significant way. We were not on the way to India and there were no spices or any other exquisite natural resources to plunder. I guess we were just in-between, guarding the border on this or that side, the tampon zone between the "clash of civilizations," whether those of religion, or the political theology of the Cold War. And everybody says you were the master of balancing on that slippery border, you were the oxymoronic "American communist ally." Without even knowing it, you were in your own way championing "border thinking," a concept put forward by Professor Mignolo, albeit in your case in a much more pragmatic, diplomatic, and opportunistic, rather than epistemologically liberating way.

Border thinking is something that I adopted for my dissertation by necessity and not necessarily by intention. As is the case with any Yugoslav worthy of the name, the method came only as a result of "the work of overcoming reality," in this case, the fact that there were no scholars, or even students, of Yugoslav art and Yugoslav history at Duke University.² This is why, and greatly thanks to the invaluable advice by my supervisor Kristine Stiles, I resorted to "finding Yugoslavia" in each course I took, and each lecture I attended, regardless of how irrelevant they may have seemed at first glance. In the process, my own understanding of Yugoslavia and Yugoslav history was shifting in unanticipated, perhaps even surprising, directions. For once, while I knew I wanted to write about

² According to Dennis Rusinow, the Yugoslav experiment proved "nothing except the astonishing flexibility and adaptability of the Yugoslavs," cited in Jambrešić-Kirin, "Jugoslavenstvo osamdesetih: kriza višestrukih identiteta ili kriza dijaloga," 68, an opinion which again plays into the stereotype of the Meštrović-like, Dinaroid energetic stride in the face of difficult circumstances.

contemporary post-Yugoslav artistic practices and while I knew I was also interested in critical theory, I would *never* have imagined that Miroslav Krleža – that nagging name on the list of my high-school obligatory readings, as well as the writer against whose cultural authority the generations of artist active in the 1960s and the 1970s, and with whom I solidarized, rebelled – would come out as a central character of my dissertation.³

If it is true that “Balkan” realities have become globalized, then I hope that this dissertation has shown that “Yugoslavia’s” claim, its surviving generation and generativity, can contribute to still insisting to think the world differently. This, as I have shown, also necessarily implies to think the past differently. If generation is, as Fredric Jameson has argued, primarily an attempt to say “we,” the “we” of the Yugoslav surviving generation speaks the language of return to Yugoslav history, but only in order to find there some answers for acute questions in the present. This return is also a return of refugees: despite the radically different experience between those who were forced to or decided to leave Yugoslavia and those who stayed, every former Yugoslav is, in fact, a Yugoslav refugee, because each one of its citizens was expelled from Yugoslavia. And even despite the fact that for some this expulsion was voluntary, unlike the collective trauma of war, which is acknowledged, and which not all suffered equally, there is an unacknowledged trauma of the loss of country, and a loss of common history, which may unconsciously be affecting even those who celebrated and who still celebrate, Yugoslavia’s destruction.

In relation to that celebration, it should also be said that this dissertation is not an attempt to raise from invisibility and darkness unknown aspects of Yugoslav history and art.

³ I speak more of the particular encounters of my research with the Duke scholarly community in Acknowledgements.

Rather, this is a staged encounter with the canon of Yugoslav history, or rather, what used to be its canon, while Yugoslavia still existed. Obviously, the interruption of that canonization contributed to the necessity to stage once again the encounter. When I began working on this dissertation, I defined it as a minoritarian project, tracing the activities of a small number of artists and intellectuals of the post-Yugoslav generation. It can no longer be presented as such, because the number of those who undertake parallel endeavors has grown to the extent of constituting a post-Yugoslav cultural and academic space, which I am part of and which is at the same time the topic of my work. It is not surprising that the same names and stories reappear in their own encounters with the canon, and their own attempts at (re)constructing Yugoslav history: Krleža, Andrić, socialist modernism, self-management, non-alignment, etc. The post-Yugoslav generation discontinued the post-1989 work of catching up with the West because it realized it needed to catch up with its own history, even if this meant identifying, or overidentifying, with its fossilized contours. This is not to say that the work of historicization that would step beyond these well-trodden, albeit abandoned, lines — lines marked mostly by the names and ideas of “great men,” and mostly of the Serbo-Croatian and to a lesser degree, Slovene and Bosnian, cultural imaginary — is not necessary, nor that it is not taking place. It is both necessary and it is taking place, in art and research that looks at issues such as sex, class and race in Yugoslavia, the relationship of its minoritarian nations and nationalities to Yugoslavism and Yugoslav culture, etc. I, however, felt that a synthesis must come first, but not because I am privy to any claim of this or that methodological — and necessarily ideological — supremacy; just the opposite, the methodology is claiming me. Because the picture of Yugoslav history has been so violently shattered, I — or, at least, “I personally,” as one strangely says — cannot afford to begin at

its margins, even if my own biographical, and even more, my autobiographical narrative, has done nothing but pushed me to those very margins.

One more remark to that, however. Even if I do find convincing the overall argument, made by Andrew Wachtel, that one problem of Yugoslavia was that there in fact was no overarching, “Yugoslav” culture, that is a canon or synthesis, still, from the present-day perspective and our need to reconstruct this history, it is clear that there indeed was such a canon, and a whole tradition of Yugoslavist thinking to be repaired – and reparative reading is another method that, in contrast to paranoid reading, I adopt from Eve Kossofsky Sedgwick. My own variant of the Yugoslav canon is necessarily the product of my trajectory in the labyrinths of the (post)Yugoslav republics, municipalities, nations, and nationalities: a childhood immersion in what was probably a truly common Yugoslav music and popular (including folk) culture, and a (mostly lost) thread of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian elementary school curriculum, which was then interrupted by the war, and the resumption of my education in a war-time West-Herzegovinian high-school but under the curriculum of the newly seceded Croatia. Finally, this was followed by my post-war specialization at the Zagreb university albeit in a school (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences) that, in contrast to the newly instituted “Croatian Studies,” was infamously marked with the stamp of the “former country,” inscribed in its history. All these curricula were then followed by an active engagement in the post-Yugoslav art scene in Zagreb and, finally, another curricularization at the US, or rather, global academia. My Yugoslav canon is therefore decidedly Croatian, with some persisting (Bosnian-Herzegovinian) unease, the kind that is felt by those who, as Walter Benjamin would say, are convinced that they have misplaced something for which they must return but do not know what it is.

Yugoslav (art) history is full of returns, among which is Miroslav Krleža's novel *The Return of Philip Latinowitz*, whose implication in the century-long, although always shifting, attempt to create a Yugoslav, or "our," aesthetics, I discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation. However, it is perhaps best crystalized in Božidar Gagro's 1966 theoretization of what he called "peripheral structure" – an aesthetics of retardation (understood without negative connotations), hybridity and otherness, an analogous, although much less spectacular, proposition to the Brazilian "anthropophagy." Gagro is interested in the fact that some of "our" painters have demonstrated both talent and capacity to work on par with the reigning European trends of the day, yet they nonetheless abandon those modern trends, reverting to styles that are more traditional and hybrid. And so, Gagro narrates, Marino Tartaglia is at one point happily consuming, so to speak, his "organic" relationship with coloristic expressionism in Italy but as soon as he returns home there is a sudden interruption and a change of course, as if "some unfulfilled obligations have surfaced in the midst of his development." It could similarly be said that, following the contraction of Yugoslav (art) historiography by means of a series of post-war national-historiographical entrenchments of the 1990s, and its parallel decomposition within the overwhelming, global-contemporary heart of darkness of the *East Art Map*, the art hitherto known by proper names *Croatian, Serbian, Slovenian* (and, more rarely, *Bosnian(-Herzegovinian), Macedonian, Kosovar, Montenegrin*), or, alternatively, by general, yet particularly exoticizing names such as *radical, socialist, unofficial, impossible, invisible*, etc., has returned home and once again responds to the name *Yugoslav*. The task of this dissertation was to inquire into the nature of the "unfulfilled obligations" that have surfaced in the midst of this global-contemporizing development, and

to which the historical and historiographical return to the Yugoslav proper name is a response.

I have proposed in this dissertation to view those “obligations” as those that answer to the ungrammatical claim of those who are not represented by any existing societal titles, which I have called “a peoples.” In a text in which he writes about Balkan reality as overdetermined by war, storytelling (of war), and “the regime of proper names,” Ugo Vlaisavljević identifies the Yugoslav “ethnic resistance” as the attempt to “release the oldest ethnic Self,” a “proto-Self,” whose identity is defined as South Slav. However, since “no proto-culture remained historically operative,” this proto-Self “was found to have but bare bones.” This is, in essence, why Yugoslavism, as a form of nationalism, fails, and why it is overwritten by those other proper names, who could add meat to the bones, so to speak. Although Vlaisavljević’s text is bereft of any attempt to attribute any kind of potentiality to either the individual South Slavic proper names or to Yugoslavism, his analysis nonetheless opens up the space to view Yugoslavism as something that fails as nationalism, but succeeds precisely as a form of insisting on the claim of those “bare bones,” which otherwise do not have historical and historiographical validity. Even if today one could not – and perhaps also should not – imagine a political “grouping” under the proper, Yugoslav name, its history can nonetheless, as also revealed by the “nameless” work of artist groups such as Monument Group, inform new ways of thinking through the encirclements of the present.

One issue that has been imposing itself in relation perhaps also to my current own position a “border thinker” between (post)Yugoslavia and the US, the place of “America” in all this. I have not yet explored this place further, but my research has constantly presented me with its traces. First of all, in his 1993 book on Yugoslavia’s cultural politics in the

twentieth century, Andrew Wachtel ended his conclusion by a reflection on American politics. Since he concluded that Yugoslavia disintegrated because it stopped insisting on the idea of unified Yugoslav culture and let both culture and politics develop along republican, that is, ultimately national and nationalist lines, he found an analogy to that in American culture which increasingly divides itself along the lines of race, that is, as a multiracial, and no longer a multicultural, society. He saw in this increasingly insistent division – which is expressed also in official and statistical data, just like Yugoslav censuses – into whites, African Americans, Asians, Hispanics, and Native Americans, an emergent reaction of defensive, aggressive, populist white nationalism and racism, which he compared to the similar nationalist reaction that led the majority of Serbian population (who were also the historically dominant Yugoslav population) to support the aggressive war in Yugoslavia. In 2018, his thoughts on how to, as he said, “generalize the Yugoslav experience,” seem to be illuminating. Furthermore, in relation to my critique of Derrida’s closure of the emancipatory implications of Husserl’s philosophy, I recently read a masterful analysis by Tatjana Jukić on “Derrida’s Jefferson,” and a rejection by Derrida of Jefferson’s political thought, and by implication, of the emancipatory potentials opened up by the American Revolution. Ironically, in her analysis, Jukić finds Derrida’s standpoint to be precisely a “metaphysical” one, and a defensive stance shielding the superiority and the purity of the European intellectual tradition. At the same time, Fred Moten’s defense of society over politics to think about what he stages as “a refusal to be a single being” could productively be brought to bear on the kind of “grouping” that I only hinted towards in the final chapter, just as his notion of black study certainly links the ways in which (post-)Yugoslav artists and thinkers approach the idea of Yugoslav studies, not as an academic, but a social, political, and

liberatory endeavor. Among the missing parts of this dissertation is a further engagement with the notion of grouping, in the sense of its more explicit political elaboration, and perhaps the encounter between “Yugoslavia” and “America,” in particular between black study and Yugoslav studies, could, be the place to explore that. After all, as I noted in the first chapter, Ivan Meštrović ended his career of a “Southern Slav Sculptor” as an “American sculptor,” perhaps similar to my own trajectory, since in the meantime, between embarking on this dissertation research and now, I also gave birth to a now almost three-year old American citizen. Incidentally again, my own partner in crime, Antonia Majaca, with whom my curatorial and critical exploration of the (post)Yugoslav life-death world started, but with whom I have only shared friendship and not work in the meantime, just opened an exhibition on the Congress for Cultural Freedom and American Cold War “parapolitics.” This open set of associations is by no means a “conclusion,” but perhaps this is precisely why I should leave it at that, and add only that the mottoes I used in the beginnings of my chapter belong to Francis Quarles’s (1592-1644), epigram from *Respice Finem* (1635), which the Dutch Srebrenica report used in its reconstruction of Srebrenica genocide:

My soul, sit thou a patient looker-on;
Judge not the play before the play is done:
Her plot hath many changes; every day
Speaks a new scene; the last act crowns the play.

This poem was inserted in the part of the text, on page 1599, when after a long reconstruction of Yugoslav history and of the Yugoslav wars, the report finally had to address the day of the Srebrenica genocide and the position of Dutchblatt within it.

From the departure lines that were occupied on 5 July around Srebrenica, the Bosnian Serbs were to complete the last act in what would be the drama of Srebrenica, although no one yet knew what this last act would involve, and especially how it would end:

'Judge not the play before the play is done;
Her plot hath many changes; every day
Speaks a new scene; the last act crowns the play.'

The two Dutch artists were struck by this sudden irruption of poetry into the otherwise dry discourse of the report. Evidently, something more than classical historical narration was needed to address the event that would honor Dutch soldiers with a medal. This something more seems to be art. However, upon finding the original text, the artists realized that the report elided the first line: "My soul, sit thou a patient looker-on" – which at the same time was the line hosted the truth of the United Nations involvement in Srebrenica: sitting down, and looking on. [Figure 52] Ultimately, this "sitting down" is precisely what the soldiers, years later, had to face and "survive" and for which they were given a remedial mark of honor, a mark as much of victimhood and guilt.

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Biography

Ivana Bago is an art historian, writer and curator. She earned her B.A./M.A. degree in Art History and English Language and Literature from the University of Zagreb in 2005. Together with Antonia Majača, in 2009 she co-founded Delve | Institute for Duration, Location and Variables, dedicated to exhibitions, research and publishing in the field of contemporary art and theory. She has published extensively on contemporary art, including conceptual art, history of exhibitions, performance, feminism, Yugoslav art, post-1989 art. Her peer-reviewed articles appeared in *GAM – Graz Architecture Magazine* (2018), *Journal of Urban History* (2017), *Museum and Curatorial Studies Review* (2014), and *ARTMargins* (2012), where she currently serves as member of the editorial board. Her article on Sanja Iveković and Yugoslav feminism was included in *Art and Theory of Post-1989 Central and Eastern Europe: A Critical Anthology* (Duke University Press, 2018). As a curator at Galerija Miroslav Kraljević, KONTEJNER collective, and Delve Institute, she has curated, organized, and produced numerous solo and group exhibitions, including *Moving Forwards, Counting Backwards*, MUAC, Mexico City, 2012; *The Orange Dog and Other Tales*, 2009; *Stalking with Stories*, Apexart, New York, 2007; *Where Everything is Yet to Happen*, Spaport Biennial, Banja Luka; 2009/2010. She was also selected as a researcher for Croatia for the exhibition *Gender Check: Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe*, MUMOK, Vienna, 2009.



Figure 1: "In 1991 against Yugoslavia, in 2014 against the Yugoslavs," protest of Croatian Homeland War veterans in Zagreb, 2014.

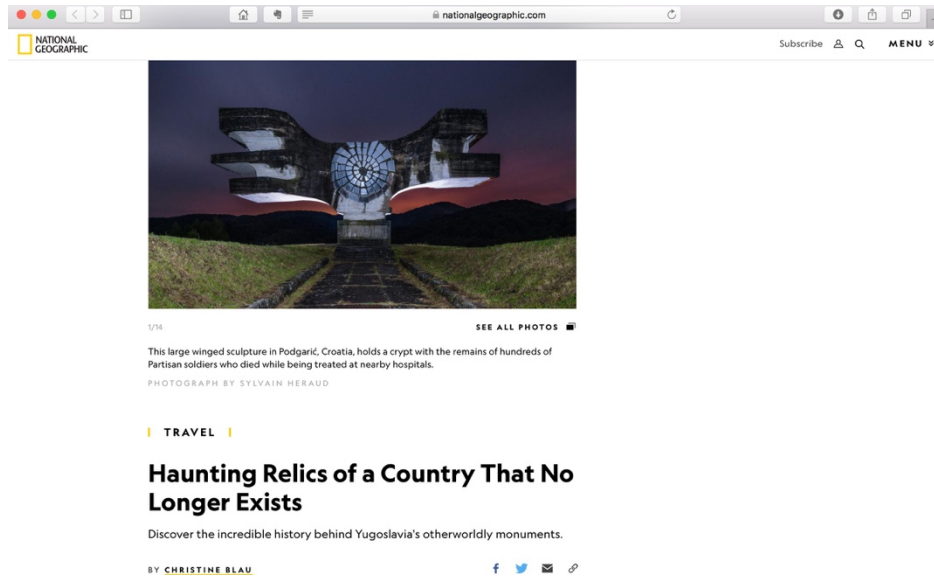


Figure 2: "Haunting Relics of a Country That No Longer Exists," <http://www.nationalgeographic.com>, computer screenshot



Figure 3: *The Top List of the Surrealists* (the ritual of omlečivanje), TV series, 1991 (?)



Figure 4: Sve je pitanje principa / It's a Matter of Princip, T-shirt, 2014.



Figure 5: *Vlak u snijegu* (The Train in Snow), dir. Mate Relja, based on the children's novel by Mato Lovrak (1931) (above) *Murder on the Orient Express*, dir. Sidney Lumet, 1974, based on a crime novel by Agatha Christie (1934) (below)



Figure 6: *Vlak u snijegu* (The Train in Snow), 1976. Film stills.



Figure 7: *Murder on the Orient Express*, film still.

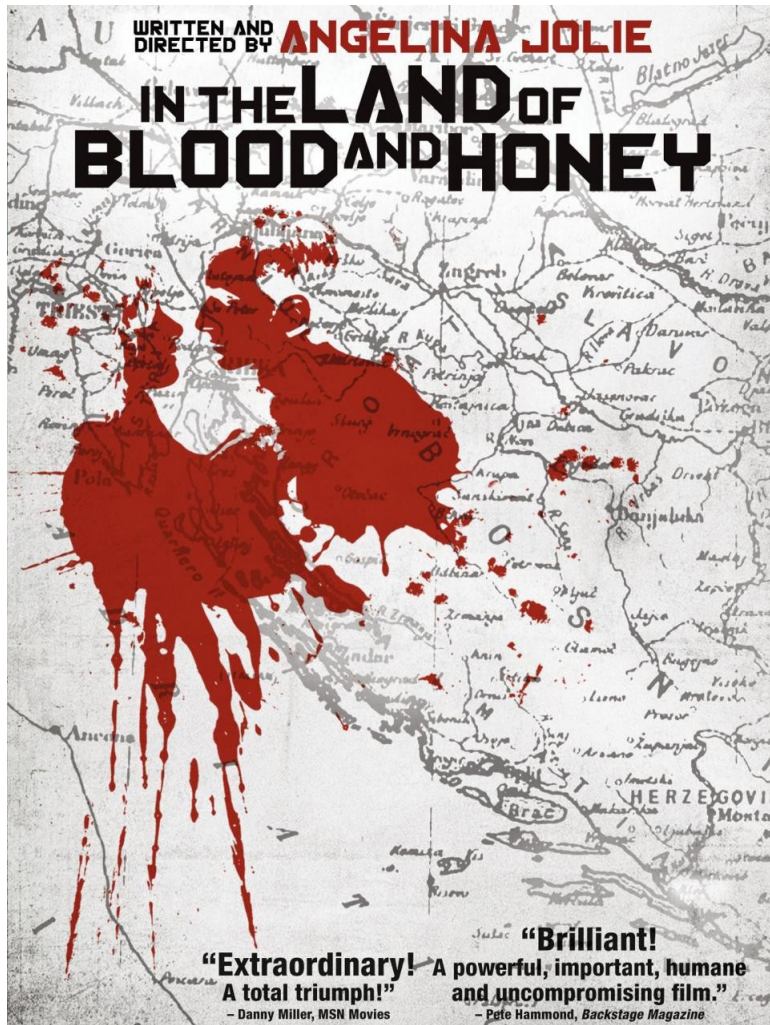


Figure 8: *In the Land of Blood and Honey*, dir. Angelina Jolie, 2014. Film poster.

TRAIN Programme 2014: Call for Applications

Fostering policy dialogue in the Western Balkans

15/01/2014

Category: Balkans



TRAIN Programme 2013 at the EU Commission in Brussels

The German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) is launching its call for applications for the 2014 edition of the **TRAIN** programme (Think Tanks Providing Research and Advice through Interaction and Networking).

Providing think tanks from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia with training and networking opportunities, the TRAIN programme seeks to foster a fruitful policy dialogue between think tanks and political actors in

the **Western Balkans**. During a series of seminars, participants will receive training on the conduct and efficient communication of policy research and will have the opportunity to exchange their research findings with decision makers in Brussels as well as at the national level.

Each participating researcher is expected to draft a **policy paper relevant to the EU integration process** of his/her respective country or the region as a whole. The **general theme** of the TRAIN programme 2014 is the **rule of law** in the **candidate countries and potential candidate countries** of **South Eastern Europe**.

The TRAIN programme is funded by the Federal Foreign Office (Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe) and run by the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP).

Figure 9: TRAIN Program call for applications, January, 2014. Computer screenshot.



Figure 10: "My father, too, is a Croatian soldier," war-recruiting poster, Croatia, between 1991 and 1995.



Figure 11: "Do you love Croatia?" war-recruiting poster, Croatia, between 1991 and 1995.

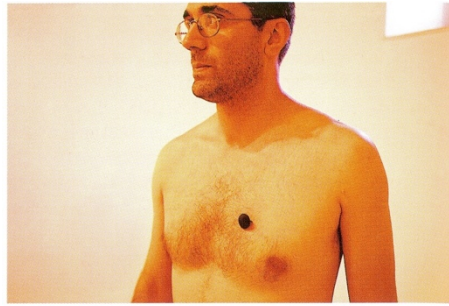


Figure 12: Slaven Tolj, *Valencia-Dubrovnik-Valencia*, 1993. Performance documentation.



Figure 13: Milica Tomić, *I am Milica Tomić*, 1999. Video still, 9' 58''



Figure 14: Igor Grubić, *Black Peristyle*, 1998. Documentation of public intervention.



Figure 15: Mladen Stilinović, *Spectacles*, 1992 (left); *Protected Nothing*, 1995 (right)



Figure 16: Mladen Stilinović, *White Absence* (1990-1996), installation view at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, 2012



Figure 17: Sanja Iveković, *Resnik*, installation, 1994

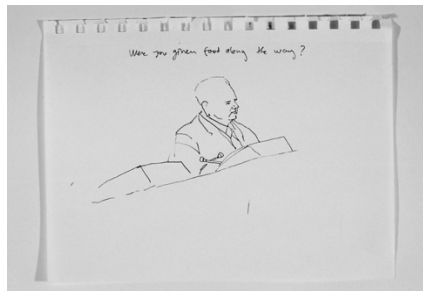
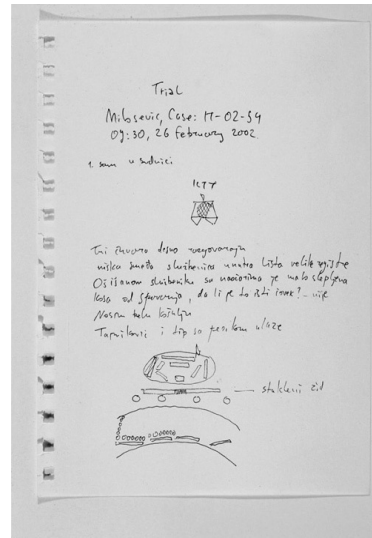
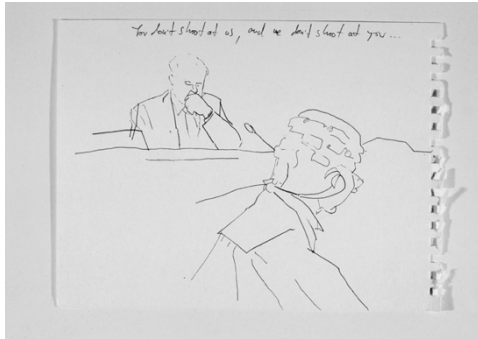


Figure 18: Ivan Grubanov, *Visitor*, 2002-2003. Drawings series

Ivan
G-Story
Kam

Figure 19: Ivan Grubanov, *G-series*, 2010. Drawings series.



Figure 20: Bojan Fajfrić, *Theta Rhythm (While my father was sleeping)*, 2008-2009.



Figure 21: Bojan Fajfrić, *Theta Rhythm*, video, 16:48 min, 2010

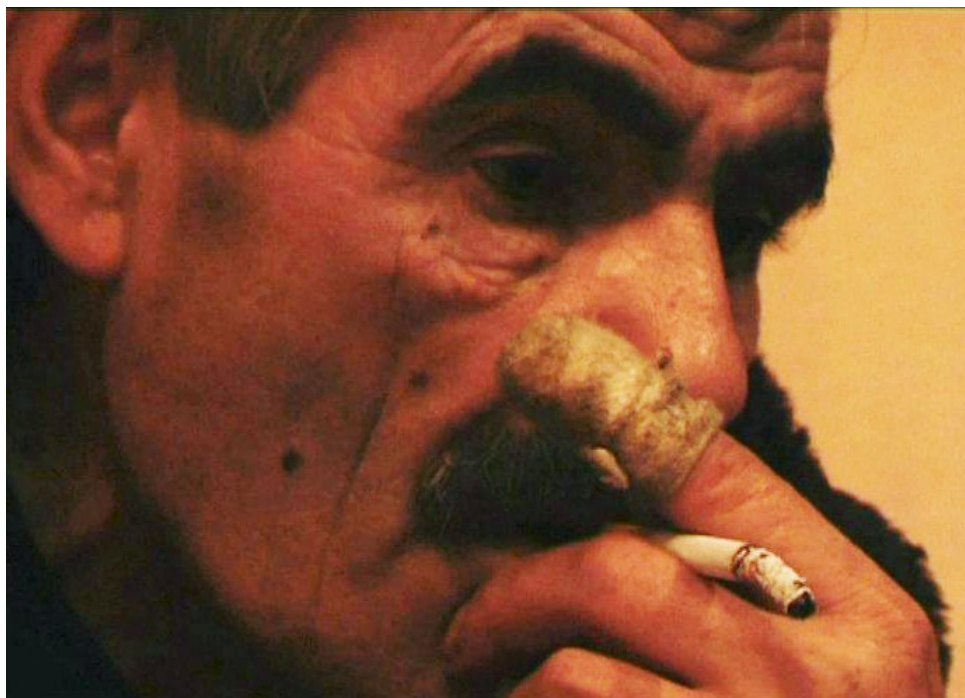
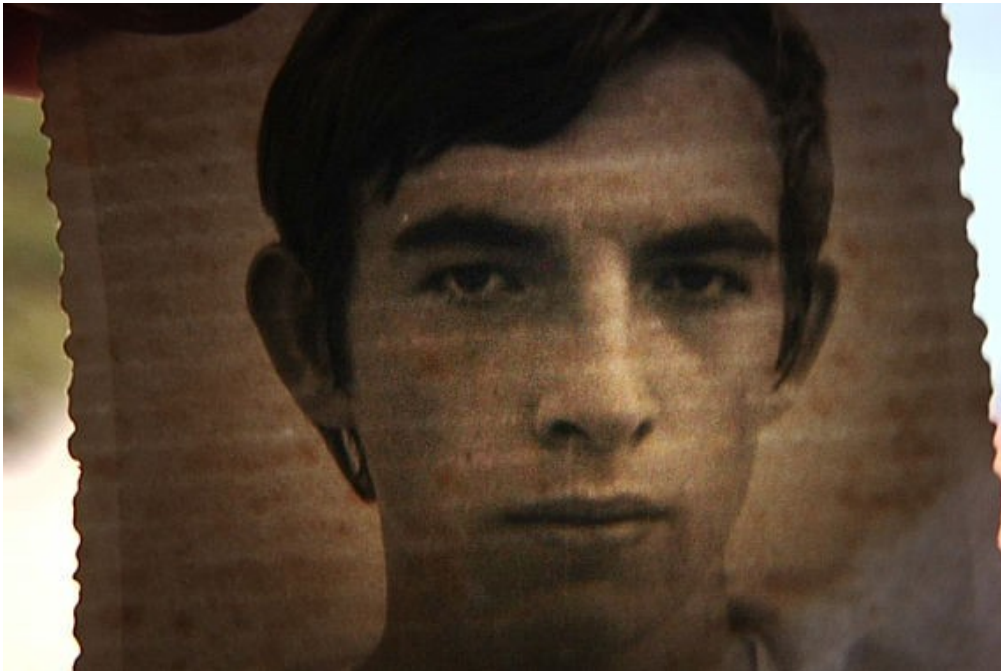


Figure 22: Srdjan Keča, *Letter to Dad*, 2011, 48 min.



Figure 23: Adela Jušić, *The Sniper*, 2007, 4:09 min.



Figure 24: Ron Haviv, Defaced photograph of a family from a Sarajevo suburb, Winter, 1996



Figure 25: Generation 91-95: Croatian History Class, 2009

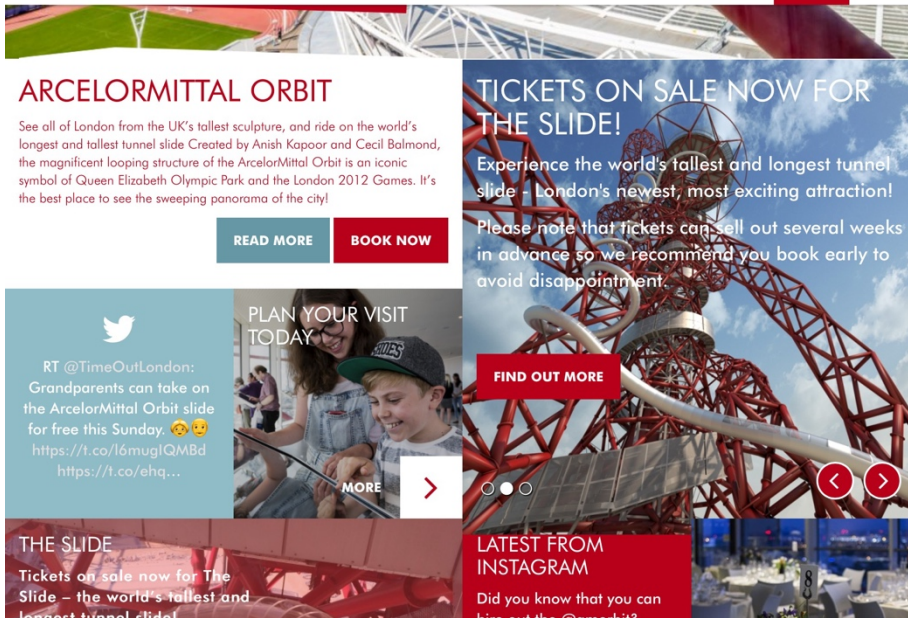
Director: Borut Šeparović, dramaturgy: Goran Ferčec. Based on a novel by Boris Dežulović



Figure 26: *Four Faces of Omarska* working group, public meeting, *Where Everything is Yet to Happen: Exposures*, Spaport Biennale, Banja Luka, 2010



Figure 27: *A Memorial in Exile*, public action by Omarska camp survivors, Four Faces of Omarska working group, Forensic Architecture Research Group



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Figure 28: Computer screenshot of the website of Arcelormittal Orbit, September 12, 2018



Figure 29: The first workers, prisoners of war during WW1, building the Ljubija mine, 1916



Figure 30: "Smoking kills," the mandatory sign on cigarette packages in Bosnia-Herzegovina

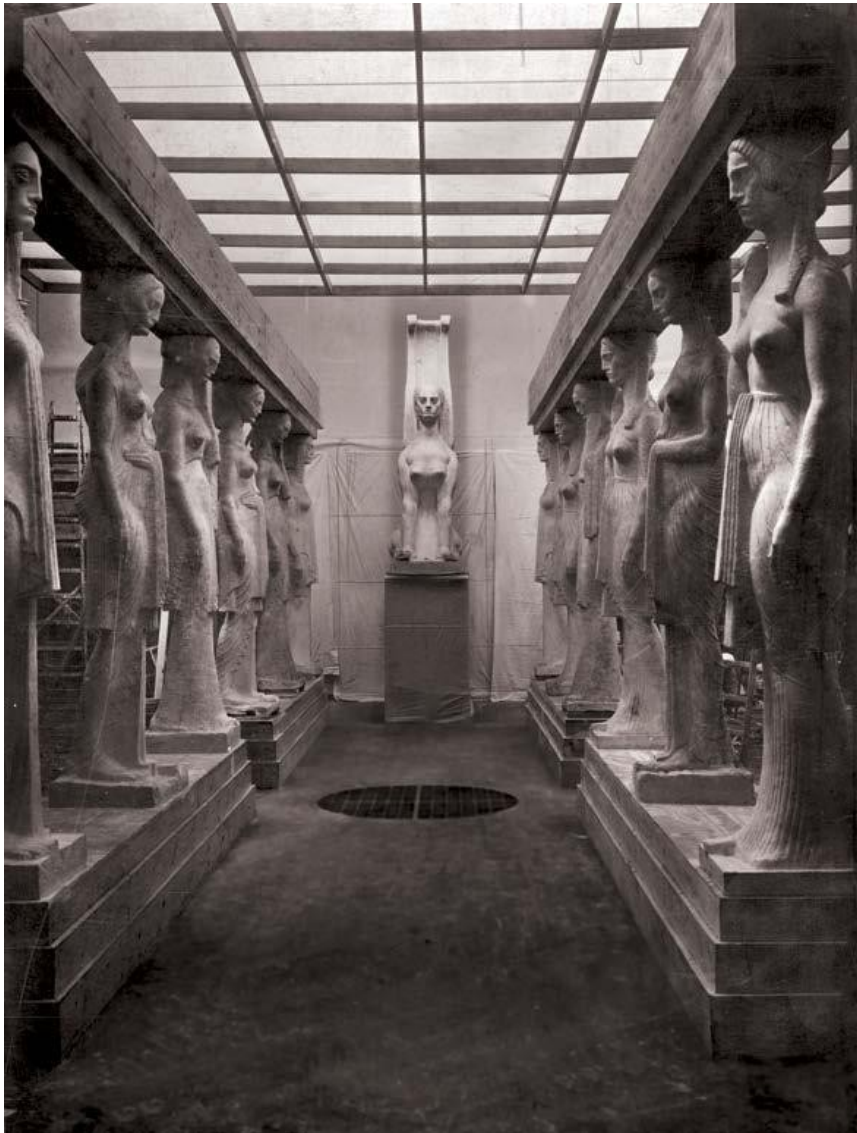


Figure 31: Ivan Meštrović's solo presentation at the 35th exhibition of the Vienna Secession, 1910. Detail.

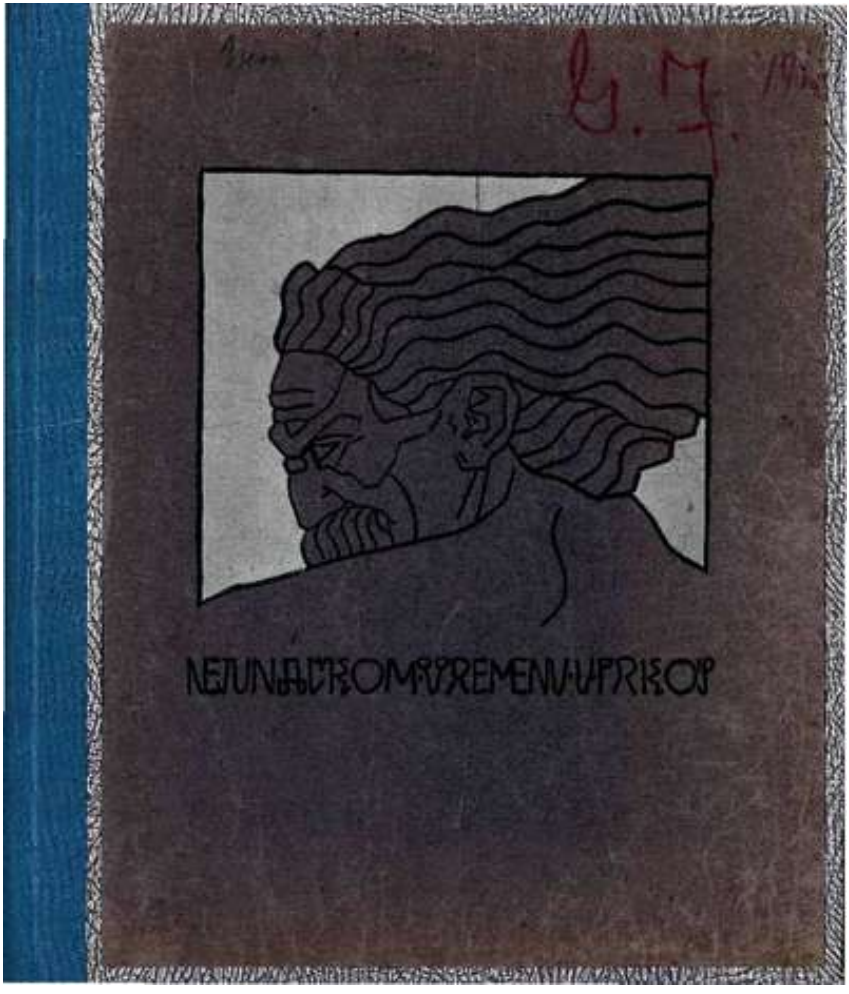


Figure 32: *In Spite of Non-Heroic Times*, exhibition catalogue cover, 1910.

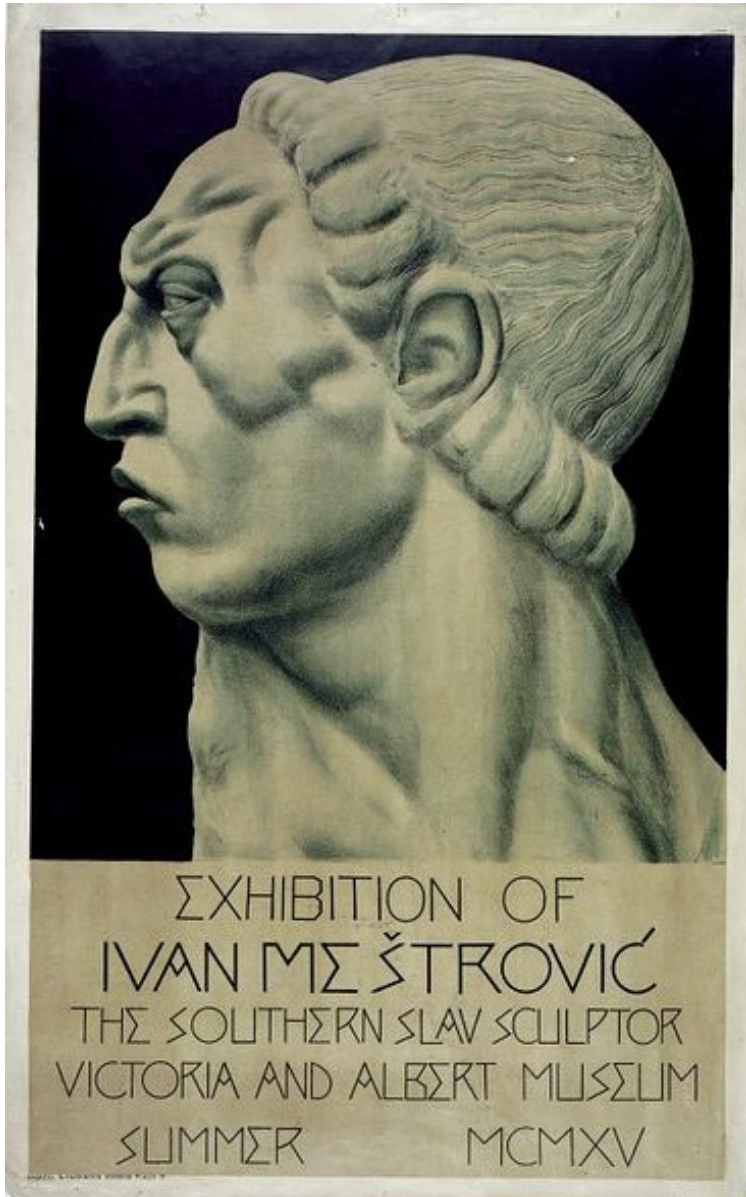


Figure 33: Ivan Meštrović, Exhibition poster, Victoria & Albert Museum, 1915.

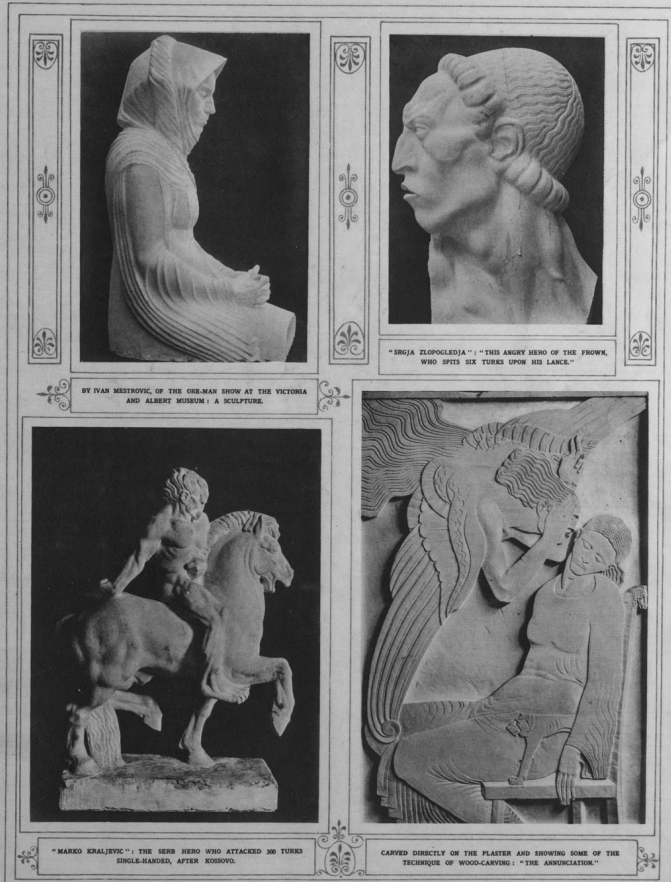


Figure 34: Ivan Meštrović, Exhibition view at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, 1915.

(the wooden model of the Temple is in the foreground)

THE ART OF IVAN MEŠTROVIĆ: THE ONE-MAN SHOW AT A MUSEUM.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY E. G. HOVEY



The fact of a one-man show being held in the Victoria and Albert Museum has sufficed to draw all London to South Kensington, where flocks of visitors criticize, admire, or simply wonder at work of a power and daring rarely found in that house of more plastic forms of art. The sculpture of Ivan Meštrović has been described as "inspired by a single fury of national memories and aspirations," and as having "a haunting spirit within it" that seems to "throb and gesture through these forms as a tempest speaks

through the new and fantastic shapes it gives to the trees in its grasp." The inspiration of Meštrović was "the noble and great folk-arts of his own country, and something of the sturdiness and grandeur and will that distinguishes the work of the old masters. One thinks of his art rather as feeling what he has to say than as saying it in forms of beauty." Meštrović was born in 1878 of a peasant family. He spent his childhood in the village of Makarska, where he was

FIRST WORLD WAR

Figure 35: Ivan Meštrović, "The Art of Ivan Meštrović: The One-Man Show at a Museum," *The Illustrated London News*, July 10, 1915.



Figure 36: Ivan Meštrović, *Miloš Obilić* (1908)



Figure 37: Ljubo Babić, *Black Flag* (1916)



Figure 38: Ivan Posavec, Ivan Vaništa with Ljubo Babić's painting *Black Flag*, 2011.



Figure 39: Ljubo Babić, studies of folk costumes from *Boja i sklad. Prilozi za upoznavanje seljačkog umieća* (Color and harmony. Contributions to the research of folk art, 1943)



Figure 40: Ivan Meštrović, *Rob (Slave, 1908)*, plaster, 74 x 47 x 85 cm.



Figure 41: Ivan Meštrović, *Remembrance*, 1908.

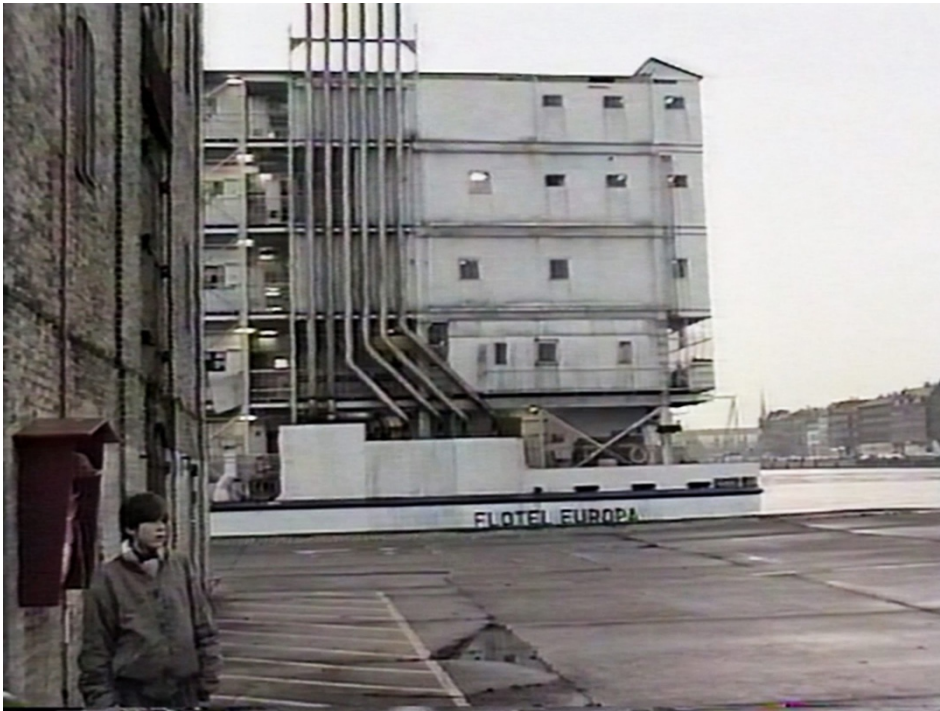


Figure 42: Vladimir Tomić, *Flotel Europa*, 2015, 70 min.



Figure 43: *Plamen* (Flame) magazine. Designed by Ljubo Babić, 1918

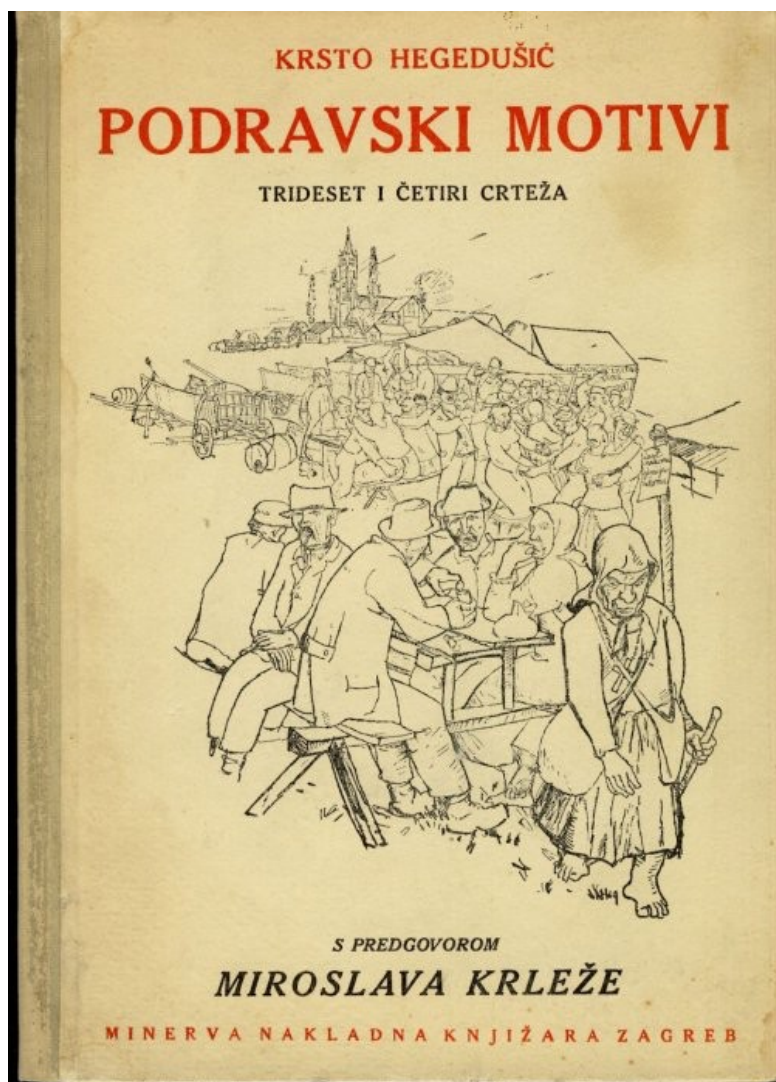


Figure 44: Krsto Hegedušić, *Podravski motivi*. S predgovorom Miroslava Krleže (Drava Motifs. With a foreword by Miroslav Krleža). Book cover.



Figure 45: Krsto Hegedušić, *Flood*, 1932.



Figure 46: *Political Practices of (Post-)Yugoslav Art: Retrospective 01*, exhibition opening, Museum of Yugoslav History, November 29 – December 31, 2009.



Figure 47: David Maljković, *Scene for a New Heritage*, 2006, video stills.



Figure 48: *Four Faces of Omarska*, research trip in the Prijedor region, Bosnia-Herzegovina, June, 2009



Figure 49: *Four Faces of Omarska*, research visit to the ArcelorMittal, Omarska mining complex, June, 2009



Figure 50: Srebrenica victims burial

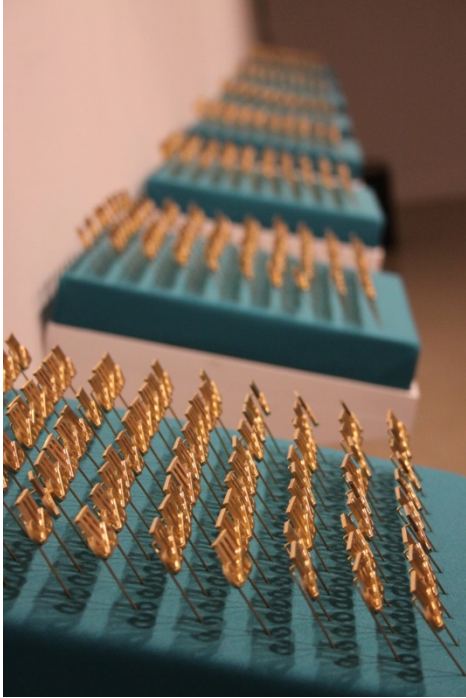


Figure 51: Jonas Staal and Vincent van Gerven Oei, *Survivor*, installation and performance, Galženica Gallery, Velika Gorica, 2011

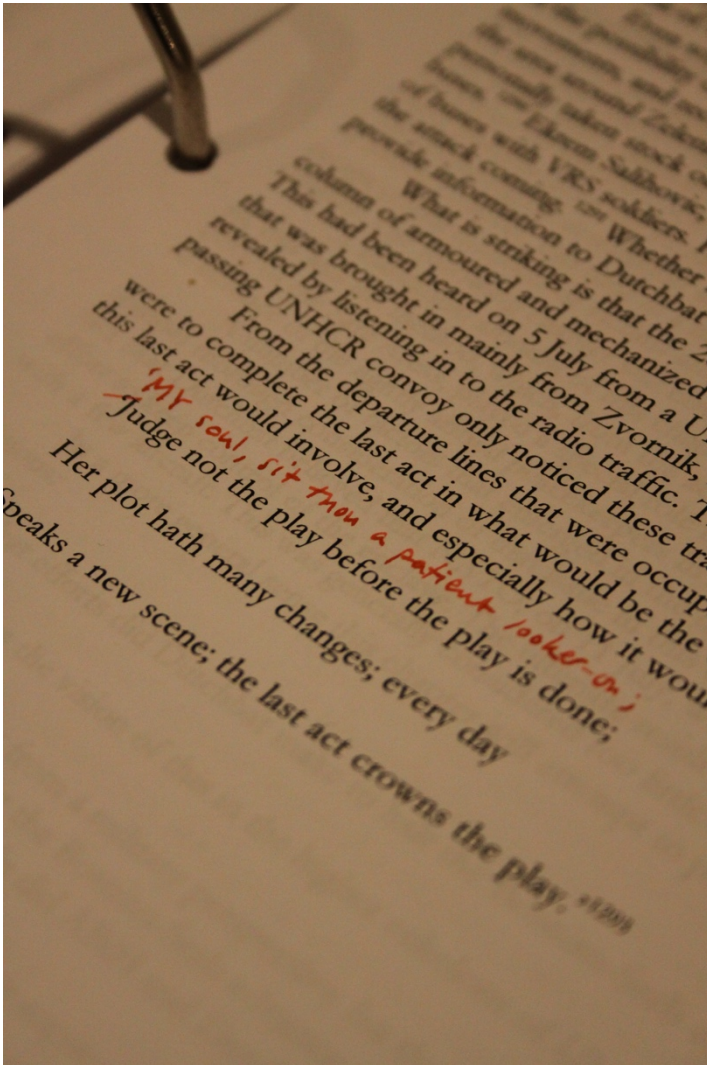


Figure 52: Jonas Staal and Vincent van Gerven Oei, *Survivor*, installation, detail from the Report on Srebrenica. Galženica Gallery, Velika Gorica, 2011.