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To all of my authors and filmmakers, with gratitude and with the fervent hope that I have done right by you on these pages.

Especially to Danilo Kiš: mentioned here just once, you have never been far from my mind's eye.

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ABSTRACT

Since the beginning of the war in Bosnia (1992), pundits, legislators, and international and domestic workers have focused on the political crises, humanitarian tragedies, and psychological traumas of the war. These same decades have been marked, in both the academic and popular imagination, by the increasingly prominent place given to the legacy of trauma, theories of trauma, and cultural production that attends to traumatic pasts. Looking at the way narrative follows, coexists with, and outlives a traumatic event like the war in Bosnia reveals the extent to which trauma is conceived of in various, often conflicting, ways. This dissertation seeks to articulate a robust theory of trauma that is equally informed by textual and visual analysis of literature and film as by observations and theories of the operation of social practices and cultural channels in contemporary Bosnia.

In the specific cultural and historical aftermath of individual and social trauma wrought by the war in Bosnia, artistic texts exist in a mutually constitutive relationship with both individual memories of the wartime past and wider social memorial practices in contemporary Bosnia. This dissertation details how rhetorical strategies and artistic devices work in conjunction with, clarify, or undermine reigning ideas about the politics of memory in contemporary Bosnia. Varied acts of figuring trauma can and do participate in, and continue to operate at the forefront of, discussions taking place in Bosnian public spheres. The texts and contexts analyzed in this dissertation provide focused insight into the relationship between historical events and artistic production; the role of fiction in the negotiation of individual, regional and national identities; and both the cultural value and aesthetic shaping of private and public memories of trauma in contemporary Bosnia.

This dissertation demonstrates, through its focus on the Bosnian case, that interpretations of trauma and conceptions of narration can be linked and employed in a multiplicity of ways and to highly contrasting ends. The manner in which individual and collective traumas are told – and, importantly, what is included and excluded from their telling – exists in a mutually constitutive relationship with the image, scope, and import of traumatic experience itself. Moreover, as this dissertation maintains, the narration of trauma frequently refracts and implicates wider social conceptions of temporality, spatiality, identity, community, and memory.

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most justice to my material. Without these timely interventions – and, in fact, without Gerry – this dissertation would have been missing its spine.

INTRODUCTION

You know, kids,
we're all in search
of lost time.

my *petites madeleines* are
water canisters
those three Siege years
from which I drank, washed, and bathed
with joy

even today!

(Ferida Duraković, "A Professor of Literature
Remembers Sarajevo in 1992")¹

¹ "Znate, djeco,/ Svi mi tragamo/ Za izgubljenim vremenom:/ moje *petites madeleines* su/
kanisteri s vodom/ one tri godine Opsade/ iz kojih pijem, perem i kupam se/ sa radošću/ i
danasm!" See: Ferida Duraković, "Profesorica književnosti sjeća se 1992. godine u Sarajevu," *Locus
Minoris: Sklonost Bosni kao melanholiji* (Sarajevo: Connectum, 2007), 75. Unless otherwise
specified, all translations from Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian are my own.

One of the most striking aspects of the Bosnian war, waged from March 1992 to December 1995,² is the simultaneity of event and representation: authors, artists, and filmmakers were literally narrating and creating images of the war as it was taking place. Most of them wrote in many types of media: fiction, journalism, poetry, essayistic nonfiction, film, memoir, and polemics. Despite its difficult publishing conditions, the war period in Bosnia was marked by a surge in artistic productivity.³ This type of defiant cultural production seen as a way to combat the brutality of war, a form of what was more generally termed “cultural resistance.” For example, the establishment of a

² December 14, 1995 marks the date on which the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (known better as the Dayton Accords or Dayton Agreement) was signed in Paris, thus formally ending the war in Bosnia. Sporadic violence continued in the country until early spring of 1996, including the infamous shelling of a tram in Sarajevo on January 9, 1996. Bosnian Serb tanks and forces did not completely withdraw from their positions around the capital city until February 29, 1996 – the date that many Bosnians, particularly in the Federation, consider as the actual end of the war (which coincided, incidentally, with the fourth anniversary of the first Bosnian referendum on independence).

³ It is a well known, and much championed, fact that the newspaper *Oslobodenje* continued to be published throughout the siege. In addition to journalistic prose, it also published books (primarily nonfiction). Kemal Kuršpahić, editor of the newspaper, discusses the history of *Oslobodenje* and, in particular, its wartime operations in his *As Long as Sarajevo Exists* (Stony Creek, CT: Pamphleteer’s Press, 1997). See also: Tom Gjelten, *Sarajevo Daily: a City and its Newspaper* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994).

In addition to *Oslobodenje*’s important role in reporting and narrating the war, the cultural and political magazine *BH Dani* [*Bosnian-Herzegovinian Days*], was founded by Semezdin Mehmedinović, Senad Pećanin, Karim Zaimović, and others in the early part of the war and was called *Ratni dani* [*War Days*], which was later changed to *Naši dani* [*Our Days*]. This publication is discussed in Chapter One and the conclusion.

In terms of book publishing, options were severely limited. Under the auspices of Josip Osti, Ljubljana-based Vodnikova domačija published the series “Kulturni vikend djece iz BiH” and “Biblioteka egzil-abc” and remained an option for those writing in occupied Sarajevo. “Bosanska riječ/Das bosnische Wort” was set up in 1993 in Wuppertal (Germany) and published authors from BiH. “Međunarodni centar za Mir” was hugely important to publishing during war. “Sarajevo Publishing” (successor to “Veselin Masleša”) was established in 1993. “Svjetlost” was active before, during and after the war. “Bosanska knjiga” and “Oko,” two Sarajevo publishing houses, published some things during the war and, in 1995 received funding from the Soros Foundation, which established them as major publishers in the war’s final years and afterwards. The Zagreb-based Durieux was committed to publishing authors from Bosnia both during and after the war; its founder, Nenad Popović, translated articles from a number of Bosnian authors for publication in German periodicals during the war. For further information on publishing in wartime and postwar Bosnia, see: Michael Biggins and Janet Crayne, *Publishing in Yugoslavia’s Successor States* (New York: Haworth Press, 2000).

PEN center in Sarajevo in the first year of the siege was explicitly seen as a way of protecting pre-war forms of culture. Part, if not the bulk, of its *raison d'être* was to organize events dedicated to "tolerance and culture" and to "numerous forms of spiritual and cultural resistance."⁴ Likewise, in fall of 1993, the FAMA media outlet – famed for its ironic *Sarajevo Survival Guide* [*Vodič za preživljavanje*] and for its "Survival Map [Mapa Opstanka]," both of which are discussed at length in Chapter One – summed up the major principles of a broad "cultural resistance" movement in its series of four "Cultural Survival" newsletters.

Coexisting with and participating in the same ethos of "cultural resistance" as highly visible and organized campaigns (like FAMA's) were a large number of artistic works by Bosnian authors, artists, and filmmakers that documented, commented upon, and refracted the war's individual and social traumas. As this dissertation argues, cultural products of the wartime and postwar period worked together to mediate the social memory of war in crucial and lasting ways.

⁴ "I pored teških uslova preživljavanja u opsadi, pisci su nastavljali sa vlastitim stvaralaštvom, kao što su i organizovali manifestacije tolerancije i kulture, brojne oblike duhovnog i kulturnog otpora." See: <http://penbih.ba/o-p-e-n-u/> (Accessed 10/13/2016).

The Bosnian film director, Srđan Vuletić, was one of these artists who immediately turned his camera on the besieged city and its unfolding trauma. Vuletić made his first film in April of 1993, under Sarajevo's siege conditions, thirteen months into the war. With this documentary short, entitled *I Burned Legs* [*Palio sam noge*], Vuletić used cinema's visual and narrative tools to represent the texture of widespread trauma that was being experienced by Sarajevo's inhabitants.⁵ Vuletić worked alongside a large number of other Bosnian artists, most of whom, during the war period, also chose to focus on the trauma unfolding before their eyes. In fact, the vast majority of wartime and postwar Bosnian works produced from 1992 to the present, the period covered by this dissertation, approach this war as a context or a theme, engaging narratively and visually with the widely recognized, televised and polemicized traumas that took place during and after the war in Bosnia – from genocide to the destruction of property, debilitating injury to forced migration, economic ruin to widespread Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Meanwhile, contemporaneously with the war in Bosnia, new directions in trauma and memory studies were being promoted, primarily in the fields of literature in the American academy.⁶ These theories were spearheaded by the literary theorists

⁵ Vuletić would go on to produce several other short documentaries with the Sarajevo Group of Authors (SaGA) studio during the war, including *The First War Cinema* [*Prvo ratno kino*] (1993), *Eighth of March* [*8. mart*] (1993), and *Electricity* [*Struja*] (1995). After the war, he wrote and directed several critically acclaimed fictional shorts and feature films, including: *Trip to the Moon* [*Put na mjesec*] (1998), *Hop, Skip, and a Jump* [*Troskok*] (1999), *Ten Minutes* [*10 minuta*] (2002), *Summer in Golden Valley* [*Ljeto u zlatnoj dolini*] (2003), and *It's Hard to Be Nice* [*Teško je biti fin*] (2007).

⁶ At times, theories of trauma that emerged during this period were seen as separate and separable from theories of memory. Increasingly, however, “trauma” became a shorthand for “traumatic memory” and, likewise, “memory” was held to be synonymous with “memory of trauma,” in the specific academic context of psychoanalytical and deconstructionist theories of trauma.

Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, and Geoffrey Hartman as well as the psychiatrist Dori Laub. All of these scholars were affiliated with Yale University and, more specifically, all of them were trained in or sympathetic with the strong tradition of de Manian deconstructionist literary criticism that was *de rigueur* at Yale in the 1980s. The fact that the seminal texts of this school of trauma theory approached trauma through its representation in literature and art launched renewed scholarly attention to both trauma and memory, primarily in the fields of literary and film studies. This focus on trauma and memory using textualist and psychoanalytical methods cast these topics in very particular ways, ones that have shaped the field to the present day.

Two crucial notions about trauma and memory, as conceived and popularized by these theorists, have had particular purchase on humanistic work in trauma and memory studies. First is the idea that trauma is not immediately experienced or remembered by a subject, that trauma constitutes both a gap in memory and a destabilization of the sovereign subject. Trauma, as something that is not understood and integrated into the subject's conception of self through ordinary processes of thought and memory, becomes, in these theories, an almost sublime experience and one which, moreover, can only be articulated in the presence of a listener. The one who listens to the telling of a traumatic narrative is positioned as a (necessary) secondary witness, in this model. This rigid understanding of trauma and its memory has had implications for studying traumatic memory through literature and art: it has created a *de facto* canon of works that excludes texts that do not foreground the unexperienced nature of trauma, its overpowering sublimity, and the figure of the witness in processes of understanding and representing trauma. Second, and related, the idea that trauma can be known and represented only belatedly, and that this knowing emerges as a

result of a literal return of the original traumatic event in the form of symptoms, has critically influenced how the experience of trauma is conceptualized.

These theories developed precisely as the war in Bosnia unfolded, but the fact that their theorists did not consider this war as an important moment in the articulation of how trauma is represented in texts indicates a failure to grapple with alternative and constantly developing conceptions and representations of trauma. The criticism developed in my dissertation with regard to these theories of trauma that became dominant in the 1990s does not merely rest on the disturbing fact that Caruth and her fellow trauma theorists did not reflect on contemporary Bosnian representations of war trauma. What is of far more import, as my dissertation details, are the fault lines and fundamental lacunae these Bosnian representations of trauma expose in the a-historical and, at times, anti-historical, psychoanalytical, textualist, and poststructuralist theories of trauma that became canonical in the 1990s.

It is, thus, illustrative to return to Vuletić's *I Burned Legs*, which constructs a narrative of trauma that both counters Caruthian theories of traumatic memory and, in addition, does so with recourse to features that, as this dissertation will demonstrate, are characteristic of Bosnian artistic production, particularly that of the wartime period. First, the film uses extensive footage of Sarajevo's ruined cityscape. It employs a first-person witness (Vuletić himself, as both on- and off-screen narrator), whose testimony is bitterly ironic in tone; this irony, moreover, becomes a powerful method of claiming the experience of trauma and, thereby, reckoning with it representationally. *I Burned Legs* is a reflexively mnemonic work: it articulates both its own cinematic potential to shape traumatic memories of war, as well as an obligation, linked to its specific artistic medium, to remember and, more specifically, to remember in a particular way. Finally,

both the institutional context of Vučetić's film as well as its reception history make it representative of other wartime Bosnian artistic works. It was one of the first films produced by the Sarajevo Group of Authors (SaGA) film studio, which was established during the war by filmmaker Ademir Kenović, among others.⁷ Moreover, *I Burned Legs* was showcased in November 1993 at the first Sarajevo Film Festival. It was screened back to back with Kieślowski's *Three Colors: Blue* (1993) and in the company of foreign films like Robert de Niro's *Bronx Tale* (1993) and Jim Sheridan's *In the Name of the Father* (1993) and the wartime documentaries of Bosnian directors such as Zdravko Grebo, Ademir Kenović, Mirza Idrizović, and Antonije Žalica [FIGURE 0.1].

⁷ The SaGA studio as an institution and the prominent works that it produced are discussed at further length in Chapters One and Three.

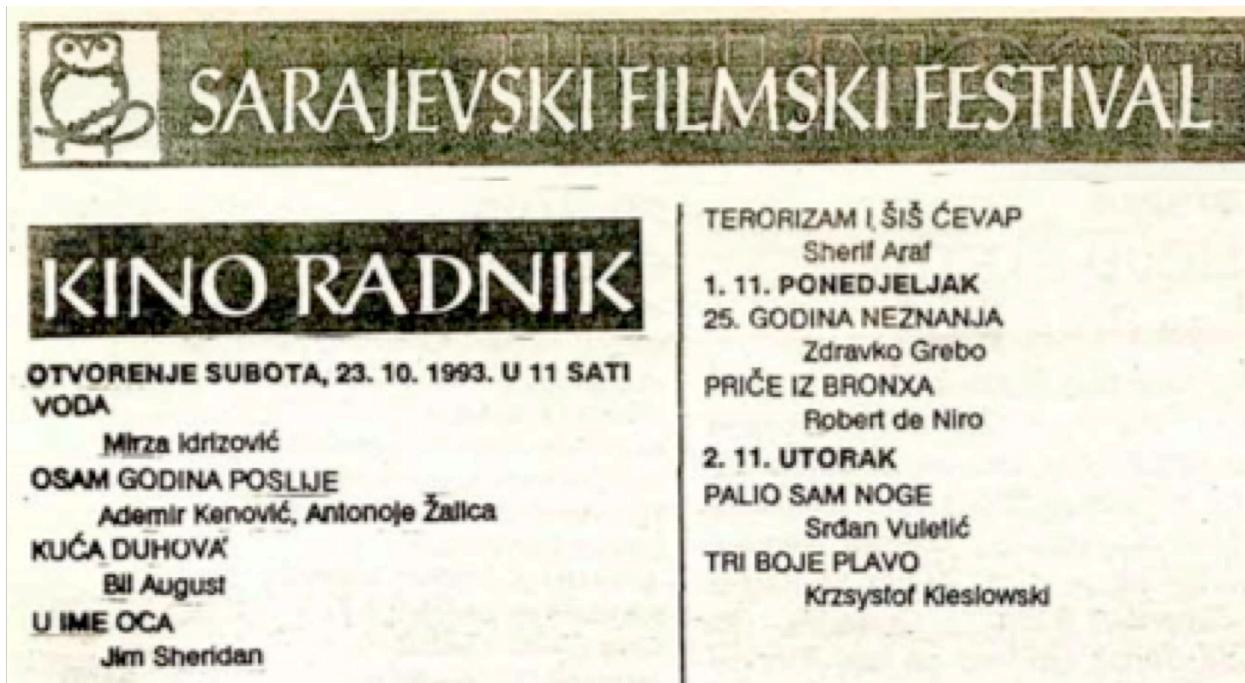


FIGURE 0.1: 1993 SARAJEVO FILM FESTIVAL PROGRAM

Left column: Mirza Idrizović's Water, Ademir Kenović and Antonije Žalica's Eight Years Later, Bill August's House of the Spirits, and Jim Sheridan's In the Name of the Father. *Right column:* Sherif Arafa's Terrorism and Shish-kebab, Zdravko Grebo's Twenty-five Years of Ignorance, Robert de Niro's A Bronx Tale, Srdan Vuletić's I Burned Legs, and Krzysztof Kieślowski's Three Colors: Blue.

The aesthetic features of the film worked together with its wide viewership, allowing *I Burned Legs* to memorialize the felt sense of trauma in besieged Sarajevo, to participate in an artistic dialogue with other wartime works that memorialized trauma, and to establish a set of representational tropes for memorializing trauma that would be reproduced for decades to come – both in later artistic works and in discussions of trauma in postwar Bosnian public spheres.

Vuletić's *I Burned Legs*, on the surface, details an autobiographical anecdote from the director's own work as a hospital mechanic, where he is responsible for, among

other tasks, carrying amputated limbs to the hospital crematory. But the film opens with an extensive series of shots at locations around the city. The camera pauses at snowy intersections around Sarajevo, depicting bombed-out trams, abandoned where they were their electricity was finally cut.⁸ It then pans over several of Sarajevo's well-known architectural masterpieces, shown in various states of destruction: the Academy of Performing Arts,⁹ Sarajevo's Main Post Office, the Marindvor neighborhood with its public clock on a street median, and the Koševo Hospital. These characteristically Sarajevan features of the built environment – to which others can and will be added in the course of this dissertation – are used, in *I Burned Legs*, to establish visually and narratively the sense of traumatic destruction that changed the cityscape.

Visible changes to physical structures serve as a dominant device for representing trauma in *I Burned Legs*. And this trauma fundamentally inheres not only in the way in which Sarajevo has been altered by the war's violence and destruction, but also in how its recognizable, but drastically marred, cityscape is perceived, inhabited, and integrated into new wartime forms of sociality. As Vuletić maintains in a voice-over

⁸ Sarajevo's trams ceased to function when the city was besieged on May 3, 1992. They started running again in March of 1994, although they were again stopped for weeks at a time until the end of the war. In an issue of the war version of the magazine *BH Dani* that can be seen as marking the first anniversary of the war, journalist Mladen Krstić compiled interviews with Sarajevans, many of whom expressed the sentiment that they would only feel like the city had returned to normal when its the trams were again running and, in addition, its famous discotheques had been re-opened (Krstić, *Ratni Dani*, 06/17/1993, 45). For further discussion of the role and image of trams in the wartime and postwar cultural memory of Sarajevo's traumatic siege, see Chapter Two and Chapter Four.

⁹ The Academy of Performing Arts, with its green dome and neo-Byzantine features, is a striking Sarajevo landmark. It was built in 1899, while the city was under Habsburg occupation, by the influential architect, Karl Paržik (who also conceived of several other important Sarajevo institutions, including the Vijećnica [Town Hall, later National and University Library], the Zemaljski Muzej [Ethnographic Museum], the Marindvor block, the Ashkenazi synagogue, the Sharia Law School, the Law Faculty of the University of Sarajevo, the National Theater, and Hotel Europe. The Academy of Performing Arts was only housed in this structure since 1972, before which it had served its original purpose as an evangelical church.

as the camera pans over a sequence of images showing immobile trams, “when I see... a broken-down tram in ruins, that is, to me, in my mental state [now], a normal image.”¹⁰ The world around the narrator has become strange and he, himself, has changed within it as a result of traumatic circumstances.

The camera comes eventually to rest on the two primary sites the film uses to represent and memorialize Sarajevo’s trauma: the interior of the hospital¹¹ where Vučetić works and a formerly wooded park that has been notably decimated. The film uses these scenes, and the tension between them, to represent the way siege conditions have changed the city and its inhabitants – and, moreover, how these changes are perceived as traumatic. Panning over patients and medical equipment, Vučetić, as narrator, claims that, “everything has been smashed to smithereens.”¹² Not only does this comment pertain to the obvious physical destruction of the city, but also to what the film identifies as a common social symptom of the war: a generalized desensitization of Sarajevans towards circumstances and towards others. Vučetić notices this lack of sensitivity in himself, describing a scene in which, during the middle of the night, he carries an amputated leg through empty hospital corridors to the crematory. He feels none of the fear or discomfiture that he would otherwise expect in such a circumstance. Moreover, within the emotional detachment that characterizes his mental state, Vučetić notes that he began to think only about the fact that the leg was “very

¹⁰ “Kad vidim... tramvaj koji ne radi, koji razvaljeni, to je, u mom mentalnom sklopu, normalna slika.”

¹¹ The brief exterior shot indicates that this is the Koševo Hospital, not the Military Hospital (discussed as a site of memory in Chapter Three).

¹² “Sve se razbilo u parna parča.”

heavy, like a child.”¹³ He does not, meanwhile, consider to whom the leg had once belonged. This sequence of realizations bears a striking narrative correlation with Vučetić’s earlier statement that the sight of a ruined tram no longer evokes strong feelings, that it has become normalized, its representation of trauma domesticated after repeated viewings.

Meanwhile, the film uses the site of the former park to represent the texture of emotional emptiness that Vučetić identifies as a prominent symptom of trauma. The park’s own emptiness can, of course, be seen as an obvious symbol of Vučetić own “internal emptiness.”¹⁴ But *I Burned Legs*, it is worth remembering, is not only a work of autobiographical testimony; it does not transparently or literally reproduce the psychological experience or effects of trauma. Instead, as a cinematic work, it artistically represents and critically engages with this felt experience of numbing or emptiness, using both general artistic techniques such as metaphor, analogy, irony, and emplotment, as well as film-specific devices such as the visual sequencing of moving images and the editing and deployment of diegetic and extra-diegetic sound.

I Burned Legs uses the setting of the park that has been stripped of its trees to represent the way landscape and experiential reality has changed under wartime circumstances. It also edits into the film’s narrative a still image from the past of the wooded park, to establish a “contrast,” as Vučetić maintains in his intra-filmic discussion about the choice of this image. The photograph recalls the past and aesthetically commemorates it within the space of the film. It also forms a visual bridge

¹³ “[K]o dijete...jako je teška noga.”

¹⁴ As the filmmaker overtly states, “I feel that the park’s emptiness accords with my own internal emptiness [osjećam da praznina koju [park] daje poklapa se sa mojom unutrašnjom prazninom].”

to commemorate the traumatic present – to conceptualize and to memorialize cinematically a trauma that is unfolding in Sarajevo simultaneously with the film's production. To achieve this seemingly paradoxical work of contemporary memorialization, *I Burned Legs* superimposes the same photograph of the park from the past, recognizable with its golden and red hues, behind a sequence of shots of patients in the hospital [FIGURE 0.2].



FIGURE 0.2: FILM STILL FROM SRĐAN VULETIĆ, *I BURNED LEGS* (1993)

Vuletić's short documentary, thus, incisively demonstrates how artistic media can both represent the felt experience of trauma and, moreover, participate in cultural forms of memory. Vuletić elaborates his particular method of memorializing trauma

cinematically. In addition to composing the aforementioned series of images – past and present, still and moving – Vuletić narratively lays claim to a particular memory of trauma established through these images. Standing in the park, in a scene that falls precisely between the first insertion of the photographic image as a “contrast” and its editing into the hospital scene, Vuletić articulates how artistic representations of traumatic landscapes can express the felt sense of this trauma and can, moreover, claim the experience of trauma, integrating it conceptually into larger notions of self and environment:

[this park] is more beautiful to me [now] than it used to be, all these tree stumps are more beautiful. I really get this park... precisely because when I walk through [it], I feel like I'm walking through something that's mine. This park that's been razed.¹⁵

Piecing together the film's narrative becomes, for Vuletić, not only an act of remembering trauma, but also of claiming it and integrating it into larger notions of space, time, identity, and belonging. And such an act of claiming trauma crucially hinges on the rhetorical work of artistic representation.

This dissertation, thus, investigates the interplay between trauma, memory, and representation in wartime and Bosnian fiction and film. The three critical concepts of its title – “claiming,” “figuring,” and “narrating” – frame and introduce a constellation of thematic and methodological issues that run through each of its five chapters. “Claimed experience” is borrowed from Cathy Caruth’s groundbreaking work of literary trauma studies, *Unclaimed Experience*. Using a pointedly positive formulation, I engage in critical dialogue with Caruthian conceptions of trauma – particularly those that

¹⁵ “Meni je [park] ljepši nego je bio. Meni je mnogo ljepši svi ovi panjevi tog drveća.... Meni stvarno leži... baš zato, kad hodam kroz park, tačno osjećam da hodam kroz nešto, što je moje. Taj posjećeni park.”

conceive of trauma as something beyond the limits of understanding, which arrives too late and in literal form, and which is, ultimately, unclaimed and unclaimable. My own investigation engages the way in which Bosnian fiction, by contrast, narratively claims traumatic experience in a multiplicity of ways. “Figuring trauma” and “narrating memory,” meanwhile, allude to all of these ways in which experience is claimed and, more importantly, emplotted. I take “figuring” from Hayden White.¹⁶ Figuring conveys a broad range of activities, and includes the act of narration. In the variety of meanings it sustains, figuring is also the lens through which I wish to approach the many things that literature and film of this period do. As literary scholar and trauma theorist Petar Ramadanić notes, literature, as a mode, is capable of serving as a

privileged, but not the only, site of trauma [because of] the fact that literature as an art form can contain and present an aspect of experience which was not experienced or processed fully. Literature, in other words, because of its sensible and representational character, because of its figurative language, is a channel and a medium for a transmission of trauma which does not need to be apprehended in order to be present in a text or...in order to be witnessed. (Ramadanić, Introduction to *Trauma and Crisis*, np)

Film is another of these sites of trauma; although its visual mechanism is different from that of the written text, it is no less figurative. It is, thus, in “figuring” that we can most fruitfully see and appreciate the highly varied interplays between rhetorical methods, generic forms, historical concerns, navigated identities, and other acts of claiming that have been marshaled to treat the war in Bosnia and its socio-cultural legacy in fiction and film.

¹⁶ Hayden White, *Figural Realism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999) and “Figural Realism in Witness Literature,” *Parallax* 10:1 (2004), 113-124. Here and elsewhere, White borrows the “figure” and its “fulfillment” from Auerbach. See: Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1953).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was the third in the series of conflicts to take place in the course of Yugoslavia's disintegration. Slovenia and Croatia both declared independence from Yugoslavia on June 25, 1991, following referenda.¹⁷ The secession of Slovenia and Croatia took place in the context of the rise of nationalist and authoritarian parties and individuals in each of the Yugoslav states. In particular, the regimes of Serbian President Slobodan Milošević and Croatian President Franjo Tuđman were characterized by inflammatory nationalist rhetoric and separatist policies – some overt and others covert. Serbia drew up a new and fundamentally Serbian nationalist constitution, ratified by a vote and implemented by the Serbian Parliament on September 28, 1990. This constitution, which bore the distinct marks of Milošević's wide-ranging emphasis on what he saw as Serbian interests within Yugoslavia, legally redefined Serbia's position within the federation of Yugoslavia. It claimed Serbian sovereignty and independence while formally advocating for Yugoslavia's territorial integrity in the face of other republics' separatist ambitions.¹⁸ Tuđman, too, consistently spoke in public about the importance of an undivided Yugoslavia, while advocating in semi-private for Croatian autonomy within the federation and, increasingly, for its outright independence.¹⁹ In March of 1991, just prior to the secession of Slovenia and Croatia, Milošević and Tuđman held a secret meeting in the town of Karađorđevo,

¹⁷ Slovenia held a referendum on independence in December 1990 and Croatia in May of 1991.

¹⁸ For further discussion of this constitution and its effects on the outcome of Yugoslavia's breakup, see: Srđa Popović, *Put u varvarstvo* [The Road to Barbarism] (Beograd: Zagorac, 2000) and "The Breakup of Yugoslavia: Part I" (Peščanik.net, 8/10/2008); Marko Attila Hoare, *The History of Bosnia* (London: Saqi, 2007), 360-362.

¹⁹ See, for example, Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* (New York: Penguin USA, 1996), 144.

Serbia. As part of the resulting “Karađorđevo Agreement,” they discussed partitioning Bosnia between Serbia and Croatia (Hoare 362).

Slovenia’s exit from Yugoslavia prompted a brief ten days of conflict in which forty-four Yugoslav National Army [JNA] soldiers, eighteen Slovenes, and twelve foreign nationals were killed, and several hundred wounded. The Croatian declaration of independence, by contrast, launched a bloody and divisive four-year-long war. To a large extent, as Susan Woodward notes, the Milošević government saw Slovenia’s independence from Yugoslavia as inevitable and relatively unproblematic (Woodward 475). Slovenia had, before its referendum, passed amendments to its republican constitution that constituted its first step towards an exit from Yugoslavia’s federated structure.²⁰ Slovenia had carefully planned and organized for independence, including preparing major institutions to function in a post-Yugoslav context and mobilizing a Territorial Defense force that was able to quickly defeat the part of the JNA fighting in Slovenia. Other major reasons Slovenia’s bid at independence did not launch a protracted period of war included the fact that Slovenia was the most ethno-nationally homogenous Yugoslav republics: its population was 87.8% Slovene, with only tiny Serb, Croat, Muslim, Hungarian, and Roma minorities.²¹

As the Milošević regime’s national project shifted from one that conceptualized a legally sovereign Serbia within a formally federal Yugoslavia, the Serbian government increasingly turned to imagining, supporting, and creating a “Greater Serbia.” The

²⁰ For further discussion of the legal issues involved in Yugoslavia’s break-up, see: Robert Hayden, *Blueprints for a House Divided: The Constitutional Logic of the Yugoslav Conflicts* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

²¹ See: Piotr Eberhardt, *Ethnic Group and Population Changes in Twentieth Century Eastern Europe* (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 378.

Greater Serbian idea held that ethno-religiously Orthodox Serbs belonged in a single nation state, the borders of which were to be drawn to include, at minimum, the majority areas of this population and, beyond that, further territory that could be claimed by an Orthodox population after driving out other ethno-religious groups. In this respect, Slovenia, with only 2.4% of its population self-designating as Serb in 1991, could be allowed to leave Yugoslavia, as it was not seen by the Milošević regime as integral to the “Greater Serbia” project. The exit of Slovenia was not interpreted as posing challenges to Milošević’s ambitions to create a “Greater Serbia,” since its Serb population was very small.

By contrast, the war in Croatia, where whole sections of the republic was Serb-majority, however, was cast in explicitly blood-and-soil nationalist terms. Thus, the large number of ethnic Serbs in Croatia (particularly in the so-called Krajina region that spanned territory on the Bosnian-Croatian border and in Eastern Slavonia) meant not only that the war in Croatia was a hotly contested land-grab couched in stridently nationalist terms, but that this war was characterized by the “ethnic cleansing [*etničko čišćenje*]” of territory.

Both Serbian-backed Bosnian Serb and Serbian-led opposition to Bosnia’s independence within its former Yugoslav territorial boundaries used the same underlying ethno-nationalist rationale as motivated the war in Croatia, as well as its tactics of ethnic cleansing. The wars in Croatia and Bosnia were presented as ethnic conflicts in the local media, which used photographic and film images and divisive rhetoric to fan existing fears.²² In many cases, the same photographic image or film clip

²² For further discussion of the role of the media during the Wars of Yugoslav Succession, see: Louise Branson, “Brutal Rumours: Propaganda Fuels Ethnic Fears,” *Maclean’s* (October 7, 1991, 104:40), 48. For excellent analysis of the wider context of the “media wars” that accompanied

of death, violence, and destruction would be used by Bosnian, Croat, or Serb media outlets as evidence of ethnically-motivated crimes and used to accuse and vilify another group. As Susan Woodward points out,

to generate war hysteria, both Serbian and Croatian television stations showed footage of war atrocities by the other side that was as likely to have been taken from their own side, or even from World War II films. All sides used attacks (and mutual recriminations of blame) on cultural monuments, on civilians in breadlines, on wedding and funeral parties, on busloads of orphans, and on international troops to mobilize sympathies and hostility at home and abroad. (Woodward 236)

The wars in Croatia and Bosnia were also presented as ethnically motivated in powerful strains of the international media. Influential foreign correspondent Robert Kaplan voiced early on a conclusion that all of the wars in former Yugoslavia could be explained by supposedly “ancient ethnic hatreds” between Bosniaks [Bosnian Muslims], Croats, and Serbs (Kaplan 1993).

Arguments like Kaplan’s held powerful international sway, both in the popular press and in corridors of power (cf. Kurspahić 1997, Kaufman 2001, Magaš and Žanić 2001). But, as Professor of Politics Chip Gagnon has convincingly argued in his *The Myth of Ethnic War* and elsewhere, the framing of these wars as ethnic conflicts was a strategy used to mask their fundamentally political and economic bases (Gagnon 2004). Susan Woodward identifies as roots of the wars in the former Yugoslavia the global economic recession of the 1980s, the Euro-American geopolitical instability that resulted

and fueled the wars in the former Yugoslavia, see: Mark Thompson, *Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Luton: University of Luton Press, 1999); Kemal Kurspahić, *Prime Time Crime: Balkan Media in War and Peace* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2003); Dubravka Žarkov, *The Body of War: Media, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Break-Up of Yugoslavia* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007); and Pål Kolstø (ed), *Media Discourse and the Yugoslav Conflicts: Representations of Self and Other* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2009).

from the collapse of Communism and, in particular, the Yugoslav economic crisis of the 1980s that resulted from local and international austerity measures put in place as conditions of Yugoslavia's receiving further loans from the IMF (Woodward 1995).

With Slovenian independence all but finalized and Croatian independence a matter of an ongoing war, by the fall of 1991, only Bosnia, Serbia, and Montenegro remained in Yugoslavia. The war that broke out in Bosnia after it, too, declared independence from Yugoslavia had primarily political and economic roots. Nonetheless, the war in Bosnia was, from the start, cast explicitly as an ethno-national conflict. Two referenda, in February and March of 1992, registered a preference for Bosnian independence; large numbers of Orthodox Bosnians boycotted these referenda and, thus, considered their results invalid. Following these referenda, violence between Orthodox and Muslim Bosnians in the Eastern part of the country gained strength, frequency, and organization. Yugoslav National Army (JNA) vehicles and personnel, withdrawing from the newly independent Croatia, had been strategically concentrated on Bosnian territory. This allowed for the nominal demobilization of the JNA and its reconstitution as the Army of the Republika Srpska, under the control of the parastate of Republika Srpska whose autonomy had been declared in January of 1992. This meant that virtually all of the resources of the former Yugoslav JNA were now in the hands of the Republika Srpska (itself backed organizationally and financially by the Milošević regime), which used these vastly superior weapons, equipment, and soldiers to attack the non-Serb population of the now-independent Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Starting in the spring and summer of 1992, the Bosnian Serb JNA army and Serb paramilitary forces drove non-Serb Bosnians out of large swaths of territory (primarily in eastern and north central Bosnia). Indeed, the term "ethnic cleansing," which quickly

passed into common parlance, was first used to describe the atrocities carried out in Bosnia on the basis of purported ethno-religious identity.²³ Bosnian Serb forces set up concentration camps, death camps, and mass rape camps. The most infamous of these camps were Omarska, Trnopolje, and Manjača, all of which were in the vicinity of Banja Luka and Prijedor in northwest Bosnia. These same militaries planned and carried out the genocide in Srebrenica and its surrounding region during the summer of 1995.

In addition to this first wave of violence in the spring of 1992, which took place primarily in Bosnia's rural east, the war came to its urban capital city between April 4 and 6. Bosnian President Alija Izetbegović mobilized a Territorial Defense force and, later, a full-fledged army to combat the incursions of the Bosnian Serb army. Sarajevo was completely besieged by May 3, surrounded on all sides by heavily armed Bosnian Serb troops.²⁴ The remainder of 1992 in Sarajevo was characterized by almost continuous shelling from Bosnian Serb positions in the surrounding hills as well as sniper attacks from locations throughout the city. Moreover, Sarajevans experienced severe shortages of food, water, and basic necessities as the city was completely cut off from the rest of Bosnia and the world. UN-backed humanitarian intervention began in late June, including airlifted supplies to different regions of Bosnia as well as refugee assistance – measures that treated the symptoms, but did little to remedy the causes or consequences of the war.

²³ Meanwhile, the term “cleansing the territory [*čišćenje terena*]” was used to describe processes of forced migration and murder during the war in Croatia (Silber and Little 171).

²⁴ For a more detailed description of the events surrounding the besiegement of Sarajevo, and the controversies that mire historiography about these events, see Chapter Four.

By the end of the war, nearly 100,000 Bosnians of all nationalities had been killed. The bodies of 9,000 of these remained missing in 2014.²⁵ Two million became refugees, taking up residence either beyond Bosnia's newly inscribed borders or elsewhere within the country (as so-called "internally displaced persons").²⁶ The country had been divided into three semi-autonomous regions (two entities and a district): in the center and west, the Bosniak and Croat majority "Federation;" in the north and east, the "Serb Republic [Republika Srpska];" and a third unit in the northeast, the "Brčko District," governed by neither entity. By and large, the borders of these postwar Bosnian zones were drawn on the basis of, and matched the pattern of, the war's ethnic cleansing [FIGURE 0.3]. Bosnia's population had fallen from 4.38 million in 1991 to 3.79 million by 2013.²⁷

²⁵ According to a 2014 report by the International Commission on Missing Persons. This is down from a reported 30,000 in 2012. See:
<http://www.ic-mp.org/icmp-worldwide/southeast-europe/bosnia-and-herzegovina/>
(Accessed 12/01/2015).
https://www.icmp.int/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/StocktakingReport_ENG_web.pdf
(Accessed 05/09/2017).

²⁶ In 2012, roughly 113,000 of these refugees had yet to return to their prewar homes, according to the most recent Human Rights Watch report detailing Bosnia's postwar demographics (<http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2012/bosnia-and-herzegovina>).

²⁷ Bosnia carried out its first postwar census in 2013, the previous one having been conducted in 1991. Touted as providing long-awaited data about the country's postwar demographic shifts, the census agencies have only published the total population counts. From its prewar population of 4,377,033, Bosnia's 2013 population had shrunk to 3,791,622. The full results, detailing the self-ascribed ethno-religious national identity of Bosnia's population, have still not been published. Statistical agencies of the Federation and Republika Srpska have cited "methodological" differences as grounds for the delay, while it is clear that this is but a pretense to conceal the degree to which the Federation, in addition to Republika Srpska, carried out ethnic cleansing policies. In particular, Sarajevo's clear postwar demographic shift, from a truly multi-national city to a predominantly Muslim one, threatens to undermine claims that only Muslims and Croats were driven out of particular regions in Bosnia during the war, or that only Bosnian Serbs killed civilians on the basis of their purported ethnicity.

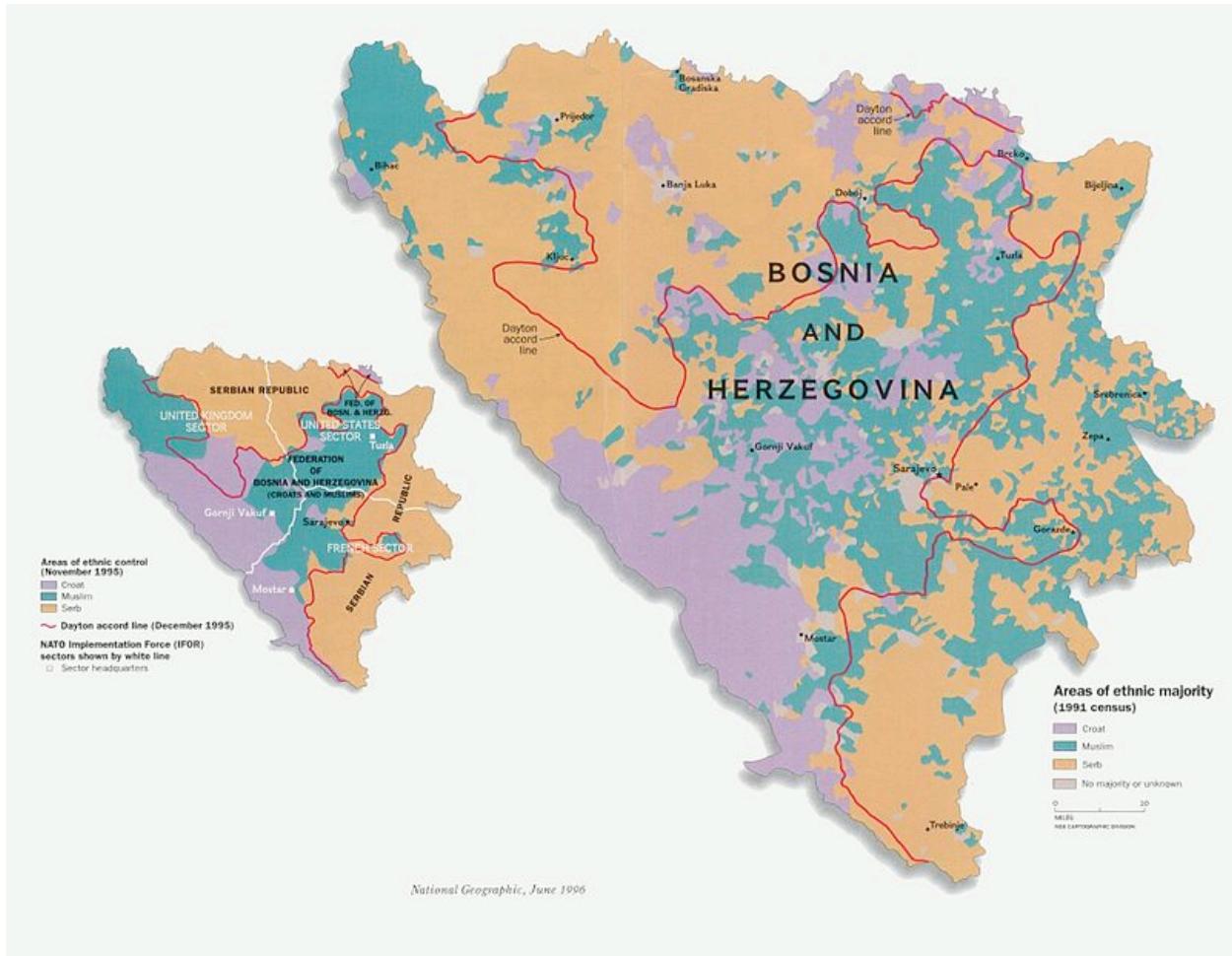


FIGURE 0.3: BOSNIA'S ETHNO-NATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS, 1991 AND 1995
(SOURCE: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, JUNE 1996)

The war in Bosnia and its aftermath has been widely perceived as individually and socially traumatic by Bosnians who lived through the war. These traumas are well documented by local and international health workers (cf. Đapić 1993; Weine 1999; Čaušević 2001; Smith 2002; Arcel et al. 2003; Mooren et al. 2003; Nelson 2003). According to a *Dnevni list* article from October 2015, which used WHO statistics as well as those compiled by local doctors, more than 10% of Bosnia's population (roughly 400,000 individuals) suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Not only were individual Bosnians left psychologically traumatized by events they experienced and witnessed during the war. Unrelenting war had vastly changed both Bosnia's population and physical landscape. The architectural face of towns and countryside alike were devastated in lasting ways by years of war. Along with residential dwellings, institutions of social welfare, civic buildings, and important architectural landmarks, including notable Ottoman and Habsburg-era buildings, had been intentionally targeted and razed (cf. Riedlmayer 2002, Walasek et al. 2015). The loss of prewar communities, institutional safety nets, economic stability, freedom of movement, and a functioning government was widely felt to be traumatic on a social level.

Sarajevo occupies a special – and also metonymic – place in conceptualizing these traumas. The city of Sarajevo was consistently imagined, in the prewar, wartime, and postwar periods, as a cultured, tolerant, and multi-ethnic European capital.²⁸ Crucial to the prewar, wartime, and postwar image of a multi-ethnic Sarajevo that successfully defied political trends was a notable urban cultural scene for which the city was famous from the early 1980s onward. Sarajevo was ingrained in the minds of both locals and those in a broader Yugoslav and European context as the city of both old and new forms of religious tolerance, ethnic coexistence, historical significance and cosmopolitan modernity. It was the city of Isak Samokovlija (1889-1955), a Bosnian writer, primarily known for chronicling in his fiction the everyday lives and culture of the Sephardic Jewish population of Sarajevo. It was also the site of the 1984 Olympics. It

²⁸ See, for example: Adam Seligman (with Rusmir Mahmutćehajić), *Tolerancija i Tradicija* (Sarajevo: Forum Bosnia, 2000); Cynthia Simmons, "Urbicide and the Myth of Sarajevo," *Partisan Review* 68:4 (2001), 624-630; Robert Donia, *Sarajevo: a Biography* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006); and Fran Markowitz, *Sarajevo: a Bosnian Kaleidoscope* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010).

brought forth the Ottoman chronicler, Mula Mustafa Bašeskija (1731-1809), as well as a vibrant alternative music, radio, and television culture of the 1980s. Late Yugoslav Sarajevo pop culture centered around the New Primitivs cultural/artistic movement, which included the rock bands *No-Smoking*, *Red Apple*, *Blue Orchestra*, *Bombay Press*, and *Elvis J. Kurtović and His Meteors*, as well as the *Top Chart of Surrealists* television show.²⁹ This palimpsestic, eclectic, harmonious, and lively self-image of the city became and remained a deep and fertile source of cultural identity for many Sarajevans.

The nearly four-year Siege of Sarajevo during the war in Bosnia was explicitly figured as an affront to the city's foundational cultural prowess. By threatening and destroying Bosnia's capital and its institutions and habits of cultural production, the war in Bosnia and, in particular, the Siege of Sarajevo, was felt to be traumatic not only because of the obvious wartime privations, violence, and death, but also because it threatened to destroy Sarajevo's vibrant cultural life. Participating in acts of cultural creation that were interpreted as characteristically Sarajevan amidst wartime circumstances was overtly seen by many as a way to mitigate the traumas of loss and hardship – as well as to re-assert, re-establish, and even re-define what was seen as a characteristically "Sarajevan spirit [*sarajevski duh*]."

In the increasingly nationalist character of dominant political structures in the late 1980s, many prominent Sarajevo-based writers, artists, film-makers, and musicians affirmed and subscribed to a "fourth side," a non-nationalistic Bosnian and Herzegovinian identity that stood in contrast to the three major ethno-religious

²⁹ *Zabranjeno Pušenje*, *Crvena jabuka*, *Plavi orkestar*, *Bombaj štampa*, and *Top lista nadrealista*.

categories (Croat, Bosniak, Serb).³⁰ To a great extent, the ethno-nationalist politics of the wartime period were institutionalized in Bosnian political and social structures of the postwar period, especially in the Dayton Agreement itself. This has continued the war's traumatic legacies by further circumscribing the possibilities for a group identity that was not ethno-nationalist or religious.³¹

TRAUMA AND MEMORY STUDIES: A PARTIAL GENEALOGY

In the context of the Bosnian War, then, "trauma," became and has remained a prevalent term used to describe many aspects of the Bosnian lived experience during the war, from the violent death of loved ones to the dissolution of multiethnic communities. The term "trauma" is used primarily in international, but not infrequently also in local contexts to describe these wartime events and legacies. The wartime and postwar study of these varied individual and social traumas is dominated by analyses of suffering in the social sciences, especially the fields of anthropology, political science, and psychology (cf. Glenny 1994, Mostov 1995, Ramet 1995 and 2006, Burg and Shoup 1999, Hedges 2002, Žanić 2007, Skjelsbæk 2012).

This dissertation, however, approaches trauma during and after the war in Bosnia from a humanistic perspective, investigating how literature, film, and commemorative ritual both derive from and contribute to nuanced portraits of trauma and its mediation in cultural memory. Before detailing how each of its five chapters cast

³⁰ For a discussion of the ways the New Primitivs, among others, challenged dominant ways of thinking about identity (both communist and nationalist), and gave powerful backing to the viability of the "fourth side" see: Pavle Levi, *Disintegration in Frames* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), in particular Chapter Two, "Yugoslavism Without Limit."

³¹ See: Fran Markowitz, "Census and Sensibilities in Sarajevo" (*Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49:1, January 2007), 40-73.

particular aspects of represented trauma and memory in relief, it is necessary to outline briefly the history of how trauma and traumatic memory have been conceptualized and studied. My work on culturally mediated traumatic memories in Bosnia references and builds on prior scholarship that has dealt with the development of the concepts of trauma and memory, the contexts in which these terms have been applied, the groups for whom these notions have been useful ways of describing experience, and the various relationships between experience, history, and creativity that have been imagined through understandings of trauma and memory.

Trauma, from the Greek “to wound,” has historically referred to the experience of physical and psychological puncture, shock or injury and, moreover, to the after-effects of the traumatic event of rupture: the way life and thought are structurally changed after, and because of, this wound. As a field which, broadly speaking, emerged in response to the various and variously interpreted traumas of putative modernity, the study of trauma has undergone significant revisions since its beginnings in the 19th century as a theory to account for the diverse and mysterious symptoms of railroad passengers.³² Trauma studies originally drew from the fields of medicine, psychology,

³² The neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot, who also worked for French railroad, was the first to identify and classify a set of symptoms, together which indicated to him a particular traumatic neuroses he termed “railroad-spine.” Charcot’s research and theories would go on to influence Freudian psychoanalysis and, in particular, Freud’s conception of trauma. For further discussion of Charcot and “railroad spine,” see: Lynne Kirby, “Male Hysteria and Early Cinema,” in Constance Penley and Sharon Willis (eds), *Male Trouble* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 57-86; and Paul Dell and John O’Neil (eds), *Dissociation and the Dissociative Disorders: DSM-V and Beyond* (New York: Taylor and Francis Group, 2009).

and law, and eventually drew from fields that investigate representation, such as literature and art.³³

Theories of the unconscious, advanced by thinkers like Sigmund Freud, Pierre Janet, and Jean Laplanche, were crucial to 20th-century understandings of trauma. Freud contributed to the field of trauma studies the foundational notion that the traumatic event motivated, if not created, lasting memories in the traumatized subject.³⁴ These traumatic memories, in Freud's view, were not accepted into the subject's consciousness. Instead, they were repressed and, in their place, the subject was beset with pathological symptoms. The traumatic memories could, however, return later in literal or symbolic ways – either through symptoms (melancholia) or through the “talking cure” (mourning). In fleshing out a notion of trauma that is primarily rooted in the painful remembering of the original traumatic event and, more importantly, of psychoanalysis as a way of approaching these subsequent effects, Freud set the stage for later thinking about trauma. Freud's therapeutic model was monumentally significant: language, it suggested, could mediate between the unconscious and the conscious mind

³³ For excellent overviews of trauma as a changing social scientific and humanistic concept and crucial developments in the field(s) of trauma studies, see: Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Jeffrey Alexander et al., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (London: Routledge, 2008); and Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman, *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

³⁴ Freud's view of trauma changed several times throughout the course of his career. He originally thought that all traumas could be related to childhood sexual “seduction,” or parts of the unconscious in conflict with each other; later, he allowed for a type of external trauma. The navigation between these two poles, and the repeated oscillation in Freud's thought, was important not only for him as a thinker, but for the later development of trauma studies, and its inherent inconsistencies and tendency to tack between extreme positions. See, for example: Kurt Eissler, *Freud and the Seduction Theory: A Brief Love Affair* (New York: International Universities Press, 2001); and John Fletcher, *Freud and the Scene of Trauma* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), particularly chapters 3 and 4.

and, moreover, could integrate traumatic effects into the conscious present of the subject.

Further, Freud's articulation of contrastively defined mourning and melancholy became touchstones in a developing field of trauma studies.³⁵ Freud conceptualized mourning as the ideal, or healthy, way of managing grief and the experience of trauma: by putting it to rest symbolically, by "working through" it.³⁶ For Freud, mourning meant knowing what one has lost, and being able to substitute the lost object with another. Melancholia, in contrast, indicated an unfinished, unhealthy response to traumatic experience: a melancholic patient refused to give up the lost object and therefore "acted out" this loss in symbolic terms. The idea that a traumatic event motivated, and even required, certain types of responses – and that these responses were, above all, explicitly narrative – opened up trauma as a field of study beyond psychology.

In addition, Freud's idea of *Nachträglichkeit*, the belatedness or "afterwardsness" of traumatic effects in relation to its event, was singled out in later investigations of trauma.³⁷ What was interpreted as the delayed nature of trauma – the fact that trauma itself named the appearance after as well as the originary event – allowed later theories of trauma, such as Caruth's, to use *Nachträglichkeit* as an organizing principle, often in a metaphorical way that was untethered from the strictly Freudian usage. The union of temporal delay and symbolization gave rise to a type of analysis of trauma that focused

³⁵ See: Sigmund Freud, *On Murder, Mourning, Melancholia* (London: Penguin Books, 2005 [1917]).

³⁶ Rendering the German *trauer* as "mourning" preserves the notion of an activity that is both the affective experience of grief as well as its display, as a ritualized or outward manifestation.

³⁷ Freud articulated this idea most concisely in his *Studies on Hysteria* (1895). The idea was picked up later by both Laplanche and Lacan. It is used in an extremely diffuse sense by Caruth and others.

on trauma's capacity to spur narrative and, in particular, on the types of narratives created out of traumatic experiences.

The experience of war remained central to thinking, in psychology and elsewhere, about trauma as both motivating event and reaction. Shell shock, a malady that dates from the First World War, was a large and problematic topic of analysis.³⁸ Over the course of the 20th century, shell shock would become a powerful shorthand for the experience of war trauma, largely because the condition so clearly brought together the physical and the psychological in a wartime context. The birth of modern psychoanalysis in conjunction with and, to a large extent, out of studies on war trauma had important effects on general understandings of trauma's relationship with narration. Shell-shocked soldiers were compelled to narrate their own experiences as a form of palliation, to take, as psychological anthropologists Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman put it, "the long and tortuous path of intimate confession through psychoanalysis" (63) in order to figure out why they, in contrast to others, suffered the effects of shell shock. Thus, "self-confession came to represent the central motif of the trauma narrative" (Fassin and Rechtman 64).³⁹

The legacy of World War II and, specifically, the Nazi genocide cannot be underestimated in the development of modern Euro-American trauma studies.⁴⁰ The

³⁸ Shell shock, incidentally, caused Freud a great deal of consternation because it, as a phenomenon, seemed to negate his previous theory about trauma as subsumable to libidinal development. It is no coincidence that the greatest revisions to Freud's thinking about trauma occurred during and immediately after World War I, e.g., in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920).

³⁹ While, of course, the genre of confession pre-dates this, it took on new forms when linked to the concept of trauma.

⁴⁰ Prompting Robert Eaglestone to wonder whether "trauma theory" could, in fact, more accurately be called "Holocaust theory." See: "Holocaust Theory?" In Robert Eaglestone and Barry Langford (eds), *Teaching Holocaust Literature and Film* (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 28-36.

psychic trauma of victims was recognized and treated in the immediate aftermath of World War II. However, it was not until years later that European and American societies at large, and their academies, would register or “come to terms with” the material, personal, and epistemological effects of what would, in the 1960s, come to be termed the Holocaust.⁴¹ Likewise, in addition to being recognized as suffering from trauma neuroses, those who survived concentration camps were only later seen as victims of “concentration camp syndrome” or “survivor syndrome.”

Narrative treatments of Holocaust traumas shaped the limits and meaning of trauma and the ways in which it was, and could be, represented. Primo Levi’s 1946 memoir, *If This is a Man*⁴² [*Se questo è un uomo*], for instance, figures the structure of camp life as defying normal rules. In an oft-quoted scene near the beginning of *If This is a Man*, a guard maintains that “there is no why here” when the narrator questions why the guard has taken away an icicle the former has found to drink (29). In his later explication of the guard’s answer, Levi maintains that there exists no “why” in the camp for the simple reason that it, as a traumatic institution, is simply made that way.⁴³ In theories stemming from Levi’s conceptualization, trauma is seen to stem both from

⁴¹ The term is a translation of the Hebrew *sho’ah*, which was already being used in the 1940s.

⁴² Highlighting the increasing significance of the term “survivor” and its function as the basis of a subjectivity or identity, Levi’s original title is omitted from a popular English translation of the text, which is, instead, titled *Survival in Auschwitz*.

⁴³ This famous Primo Levi scene is integrated verbatim into one of Bosnian author Semezdin Mehmedinović’s wartime works of short prose, “Photographers [Fotografi].” The conclusion of this piece substitutes Sarajevo intellectuals for Levi’s narrator and the guard with Mehmedinović’s implied first-person narrator: “After ten months of war, you can hear ‘intellectuals’ in Sarajevo asking, ‘why has this happened to us? And why so brutally?’ Idiots, they don’t realize that the answer is, simply: ‘because!’ Just ‘because. And ‘because’ is the answer because it’s too late for all the questions [Nakon deset mjeseci rata, u Sarajevu možeš čuti ‘intelektualce’ koji pitaju: zašto nam se ovo desilo, i zašto tako brutalno? Nepametni, oni ne vide da je odgovor: Zato! Upravo zato. I zato jer sva pitanja sada dolaze prekasno]” (Semezdin Mehmedinović, *Sarajevo blues* [Sarajevo: BH Dani, 2004], 65).

the opacity of the event's logic and from the fact that, in its very incomprehensibility, the event nonetheless imposes itself upon the traumatized subject. This notion strongly influenced one direction in post-World War II trauma studies.

In such a conception of trauma, the traumatized subject was positioned as privy to a special knowledge that otherwise lies beyond the bounds of ordinary experience and remains incomprehensible. As Roger Luckhurst points out, "this echoes a long psychoanalytic tradition of believing traumatic experience gifts the patient heightened, even supernatural powers" (Luckhurst 64). This knowledge was capable of leaving lasting traces on the survivor. These traces, in the form of "scars," were conceptualized in a two-fold manner: they were at once the permanent records of those individuals who did not survive and they were the moral traces "in the collective consciousness that should prevent humanity from repeating its horrific mistake" (Fassin and Rechtman 72). In this way, we see the emergence of several significant threads in the discourse on trauma and its narration: the incapacity of normal modes of expression to register events that are extreme in both scale and type, the notion of traumatic experience as that which elevates the survivor to a higher plane of knowledge, and the ethical responsibility of the survivor to testify for those who are absent.⁴⁴

The legacy of the Second World War and its widespread individual and social traumas was, thus, important to developments in the field of trauma studies in the second half of the 20th century. In addition, the postwar articulation of two powerful doctrines of trauma's representational ethics strongly shaped later theories that

⁴⁴ Robert Jay Lifton first developed the concept of survivor's responsibility, which is related to what is colloquially known as "survivor guilt," although the two differ. See: Robert Jay Lifton, *Home from War: Vietnam Veterans: Neither Victims nor Executioners* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973).

approached memories of trauma through literature. Theodor Adorno's 1949 statement that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric"⁴⁵ pointed not only to a definite temporal rupture between pre-Holocaust and post-Holocaust, but placed this rupture firmly in the sphere of representation and, moreover, the ethics of representation. In addition, Elie Wiesel's 1975 statement that "there can be no novels about Auschwitz" further excluded from the experience of trauma and its narration specific types of aesthetic practice.⁴⁶ For Wiesel, these aesthetic norms not only reaffirmed the uniqueness of the Holocaust, but also strongly proscribed certain types of literary, filmic and artistic treatments. In this way, the idea that an extreme event like the Holocaust had either phenomenological or prescriptive bearing on the type of narrative produced either in its wake, or produced as an explicit attempt to deal with the traumatic personal and social effects of the genocide, proved fundamental for later conceptualization of trauma.

⁴⁵ This dictum is much debated and often quoted out of context. The passage in which it is found is the following: "Even the most extreme consciousness of doom threatens to degenerate into idle chatter. Cultural criticism finds itself faced with the final stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism. To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today. Absolute reification, which presupposed intellectual progress as one of its elements, is now preparing to absorb the mind entirely. Critical intelligence cannot be equal to this challenge as long as it confines itself to self-satisfied contemplation" (Adorno, "An Essay on Cultural Criticism and Society," 1949). Adorno himself revised the statement at least twice after making it. For our purposes here, what is particularly important are these different interpretations, and the way in which several seemingly contradictory readings of the sentence laid the groundwork for trauma studies in the later part of the century in which it was published.

⁴⁶ The larger context of this oft-quoted line is the following: "Whatever can we say looking at Auschwitz? Everything we say is false; whether we say yes or no, it is false. Sometimes all we can do is to weep or to pray, to close our eyes in silent prayer. Any commentary, any interpretation, and especially any explanation, is doomed in advance to fail. Jews and Christians have tried to create a theology from Auschwitz, the way that everything of late gets turned into theology. Others have sketched out a psychology or psychiatry of Auschwitz, even a literature of Auschwitz. They all founder. There can be no novels about Auschwitz" (Elie Wiesel, *Hope Against Hope* [New York: Paulist Press, 1999], 76).

The type of trauma studies that emerged in the last quarter of the 20th century was, therefore, strongly influenced by the twinned notions of trauma's aporia and its fundamental inability to be known or understood. In general, these theories held that the Holocaust victim's experience of trauma (which, by this time, had become generalized and generalizable to other events and subjects, even as the singularity of the Holocaust was nominally upheld) could not be approached or known, at least through ordinary rhetorical and epistemological means. At the same time, this experience of trauma was seen to demand testimony and witness. And, in the aftermath of Adorno's and Wiesel's rhetorical prescriptivism, this testimony was required to take the form of a literal realist narrative or else remain unspoken. The continued linkage of representation of trauma with ethical, or at least prescriptive, injunctions about the act of narration and its adequacy or inadequacy to the original event was carried through into later interdisciplinary studies of trauma.

The 1980 edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* was the first to identify Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder as a named and specified malady.⁴⁷ The DSM-III is widely recognized as a document born out of a particular time and place, that of a post-1960s American society whose political and social sphere was increasingly shaped by an unpopular war in Vietnam, on one hand, and the "identity politics" born of the civil rights movement, second wave feminism, and LGBT activism, on the other. PTSD, as defined by the DSM-III, was seen as a response to events "outside the range of usual human experience" and which caused "significant symptoms of distress in most people," among which are: recollection or re-experience

⁴⁷ American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 3rd edition (1980). For further discussion of PTSD, see: Dan Stein, Matthew Friedman and Carlos Blanco, *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

(in the form of dreams, flashbacks and intrusive images), numbing (loss of interest in activities), avoiding situations that may trigger symptoms, or hyper-arousal (sleep disorders, anxiety).⁴⁸ In this way, a temporal-causal relationship between the etiological event and symptoms was posited (Young 7-9). PTSD was framed in the DSM-III as a specific psychiatric condition, diagnosing and naming it in a way that made it an individual, social, and medical reality. In her popular psychological support manual, *Trauma and Recovery*, psychiatrist Judith Herman noted that acknowledging “traumatic reality...require[d] a social context that affirms and protects the victim” (9). In the American social context of the 1980s and 1990s, the PTSD patient was increasingly seen as both a victim and a survivor, manifesting symptoms and acting them out in a way that both allowed for diagnosis and, more importantly, made it possible to “read” the foundational traumatic event through the language and logic of symptoms.⁴⁹ PTSD sufferers, whether seen as victims or survivors, were, in this social context, encouraged to speak out, to give narrative shape to their traumatic memories. The proliferation of trauma accounts, testimonies, and general books on the subject of individual and collective trauma is evidence of this development.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ The DSM-IV (1994), however, added the requirement that a traumatized individual manifest intense fear, helplessness, or horror immediately after the event. The more recent DSM-V (2013) removed such a stipulation altogether.

⁴⁹ For an excellent discussion of the history of the creation of PTSD as a disorder, see: Allan Young, *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

⁵⁰ The proliferation of so-called “misery memoirs” (memoirs or autobiographies with trauma as a central, or singular, focus) occurred during this time, and has continued on apace. For further elaboration of this phenomenon, see: Leigh Gilmore, *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women’s Self Representation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Suzette Henke, *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women’s Life-Writing* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998); Leigh Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000); Jan Campbell and Janet Harbord, *Temporalities, Autobiography and Everyday Life* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).

At the same time, however, when “trauma is asserted as a principle in whose name indignation is expressed and legitimized [this also] at the same time annuls other moral or political positions” (Rechtman and Fassin 98). This is a point of significant importance in discussing the creation of Bosnian identities in the wartime and postwar period. The way in which trauma was stitched into the fabric of identity construction in primarily American contexts had a great deal of influence on trauma studies until the end of the twentieth century and beyond. These historical and intellectual factors not only made possible the line of thinking about trauma that Cathy Caruth and others pursued, but made this view both uniquely American and, at the same time, disguised as something that could be – and was – applied globally.

In the early 1990s, a group of loosely allied scholars began to articulate a set of ideas and methods that directly addressed the issue of trauma, as it came to the fore in the constellation of psychoanalysis and Holocaust studies. PTSD and identity politics were seemingly missing from their treatment of trauma, even as they were omnipresent in a metatextual way.⁵¹ At the center of this group were literary critics, Shoshana Felman and Cathy Caruth, and psychologist Dori Laub. Above all, as mentioned at the outset of this introduction, the work of these scholars was emblematic of a growing deconstructionist type of trauma studies. I focus here on Caruth, who is often seen at the center of the Yale school of trauma studies. We see emergent in Caruth’s thinking a balancing act between interpreting trauma through the lens of psychoanalytic tradition, with its (implicit or explicit) focus on the amelioration of traumatic symptoms, and that of deconstruction, where trauma can be seen as an embedded and knotty text to be

⁵¹ This framing revealed a move away from the pathologization and particularities of individual trauma and, instead, towards its universalization, normalization, and even ubiquity.

endlessly read and re-read, but which neither can nor should be resolved. Caruth attempts to elude the apparent contradiction between these two modes by reading Freud selectively and by taking for granted the idea that trauma can be viewed as a text. Thus, when she claims in *Unclaimed Experience* that “if Freud turns to literature to describe traumatic experiences, it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing” (Caruth 1996, 3), she effectively flattens differences between literary and psychoanalytic treatments of trauma, subsuming them all under the thesis that trauma, in fact, constitutes a “relation between knowing and not knowing.” The idea of trauma as rupture or aporia certainly has its precursor in thinking about and narrating Holocaust trauma. In Caruth’s introduction to *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, she underscores these qualities as forming a basis for an “all-inclusive” trauma that, in her view,

brings us to the limits of our understanding: if psychoanalysis, psychiatry, sociology, and even literature are beginning to hear each other anew in the study of trauma, it is because they are listening through the radical disruption and gaps of traumatic experience. (Caruth 1995, 4)

Caruth makes two claims about trauma that are crucial to understanding both her thought and also the trajectory trauma studies has taken under her influence. First, she focuses on the structure of the traumatic experience and, in particular, its temporal aspect. Seizing on the idea of *Nachträglichkeit*, of the belatedness of symptoms, but taking this further and in a slightly different direction, Caruth defines trauma as the “*structure of its experience* or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it” (ibid, italics in the original). Trauma is that which occurs later, elsewhere, or otherwise than the event which caused it. In her later *Unclaimed Experience*, Caruth extends the idea of the belatedness of trauma, the fact of its being witnessed only later, to the

question of survival and, indeed, what she terms a “crisis of survival,” the living on after trauma’s “crisis of death” (Caruth 1996, 7). Caruth configures this temporality into an idiosyncratic view of history. History, for her, becomes the story of the “unbearable nature” (ibid) of the event itself and the experience of surviving this event.⁵²

This “unclaimed” experience, recognized only later, Caruth argues, can be recognized because of its literality. Trauma remains “true to the event” (Caruth 1995, 5), as Caruth puts it in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, by returning to the traumatized subject in literal, rather than symbolic, form. Because of this, trauma causes a problem for consciousness, resisting integration, representation, and understanding. Without knowing what, how, or why, the traumatized subject repeats, or acts out, in a performative way the literal event of trauma. Here we see the temporal structure of trauma and its unknowability synthesized into a model of trauma’s representation. And trauma, in this model, can only be represented in a non-straightforward, literary way. Caruth develops a notion of how trauma can and should be expressed out of an idiosyncratic reading of Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*:

I would propose that it is through the child’s words – through this literary, not fully articulated language of theory – that Freud’s text speaks, moreover, most powerfully, in its full historical relevance, to us. For it is through the child’s own stammer – the stammer of Freud as he faces the encounter with World War I, the reduction of the theoretical mind to the stammering struggle of the child – that Freud will first tell us about the necessity of witnessing the effects of death in the century of trauma. But it is also through the creative transformation of this stammer into a new language of psychoanalysis – not only the language of departure...but the very future language of psychoanalysis itself, in the rethinking of psychoanalysis, for example, around the individual’s capacity for play – that the possibilities of Freud’s not yet articulated insight are handed over to us. (Caruth 2003, 61)

⁵² Inserting a view of history that bears little resemblance to the discipline is a way of both seeming to talk about the real world while, at the same time, remaining firmly within a textualist paradigm. Thus, Caruth can claim, for example, that PTSD is a “symptom of history” rather than of the unconscious (Caruth 1995, 5), without having to account for the fact that this claim does not make much sense from a properly historical perspective.

This understanding of trauma and narrative is only possible if the narrative voice attests to an experience that is and remains perpetually unclaimed, and which preserves and protects trauma as unknown and un-owned.

A second aspect of Caruth's work, which is both useful for this dissertation and unsettling in its implications, is the degree to which her thinking attempts to universalize the experience of trauma, making everyone a victim and, moreover, the experience of trauma as that which is common to all. Caruth famously claims that

trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures: not as a simple understanding of the pasts of others but rather, within the traumas of contemporary history, as our ability to listen through the departures we have all taken from ourselves. (Caruth 1995, 11)

The universalizing strain of Caruthian deconstructionist trauma theory does not simply identify trauma as an experience that unites individuals across time and space. In fact, this ahistorical formulation of trauma reifies and idealizes the notion of a traumatized subject. Moreover, this seemingly rhetorical move has social, as well as conceptual effects. First of all, the universalizing tendency in trauma theory makes everyone into a victim of trauma; trauma itself becomes a commonplace description of any kind of shock, pain, or inconvenience. Second, and alongside this conceptual universalization of the traumatic experience, in deconstructionist trauma discourse, as Hal Foster points out, "the subject is evacuated and elevated at once" (Foster 123). Which is to say, Caruthian trauma theory both renders the subject mute and his/her trauma inarticulable even as the experience of trauma is held up as sublime and the victim of trauma as revered, even sacred.

Meanwhile, in parallel with – and, at times, in polemical response to – these prescriptive Caruthian theories of traumatic memory and its representations, more

nuanced treatments have been developed that take into account the specificities of historical and cultural context as well as shifting representational norms. For instance, the work of historian Dominick LaCapra has brought a welcome rhetorical and historical specificity to the study of individual and social traumas, their representation, and their role in shaping both ideas about the past and conceptions of communal identity. In his 2001 *Writing History, Writing Trauma* LaCapra focuses on the ethical, political, and rhetorical stakes inherent in narrating trauma. By looking at how modes of conceptualizing and framing traumatic events influence how trauma is experienced and figured, LaCapra underscores a need for rigor in studying trauma – as an event and as it is represented.

Moreover, the process of theorizing local rather than universal treatments of traumatic memory within culturally-specific frameworks has gained traction and momentum since the early 2000s. These new directions have largely been undertaken within the disciplines of media studies and postcolonial literary and cultural studies and using their methodological approaches. Scholarship by Eugene Arva, Michelle Belaev, Stef Craps, Alan Gibbs, and Allen Meek has systematically interrogated some of the most disturbing presuppositions of deconstructionist literary trauma theory. These and other thinkers have meaningfully reconfigured established methods and modes of studying trauma and its representation in works of art across the globe.⁵³

⁵³ See: Kathleen Nader et al. (eds), *Honoring Differences: Cultural Issues in the Treatment of Trauma and Loss* (Philadelphia: Brunner/Mazel, 1999); George Rhoades and Vedat Sar (eds), *Trauma and Dissociation in a Cross-Cultural Perspective: Not Just a North American Phenomenon* (Binghamton: Haworth Press, 2006); John Wilson and Catherin Tang (eds), *Cross-Cultural Assessment of Psychological Trauma and PTSD* (New York: Springer, 2007); Stef Craps and Gert Buelens, "Introduction: Postcolonial Trauma Novels," *Studies in the Novel* 40:1-2 (2008), 1-12; Allen Meek, *Trauma and Media: Theories, Histories, and Images* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Irene Visser, "Trauma Theory and Postcolonial Literary Studies," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 47:3 (2011), 270-282; and Stef Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* (Hounds Mills: Palgrave

In its attempt to identify and analyze methods of narrating trauma in wartime and postwar Bosnian contexts, my dissertation owes a vast theoretical debt to theories of cultural memory that have been eloquently articulated, primarily in the Western European academy, over the past several decades. Rather than privileging (particularly Freudian) notions of individual traumatic memory, thinkers like Jan and Aleida Assmann, Astrid Erll, Susannah Radstone, and Ann Rigney foreground the social and communicative nature of these memories, and, in particular, the work of cultural mediation that shapes and disseminates memories synchronically and diachronically.⁵⁴ Cultural memory studies draw originally on two seminal works: Maurice Halbwachs' 1952 *On Collective Memory*, which elaborates the social and collective "frames" of memory, and Pierre Nora's 1996-1998 *Realms of Memory* project, which identifies the crucial role of sites, objects, and concepts in social memory. The scholars mentioned above focus on the cultural and, in particular, literary techniques and channels used by societies and individuals to remember and narrate the past.

The widespread and unambiguous focus on war and its consequences in recent Bosnian fiction and film makes an analysis of its texts with the tools established and

Macmillan, 2013). Michelle Balaev (ed), *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory* (Hounds-mills: Palgrave Macmillan: 2014).

⁵⁴ Foundational texts in the field of cultural memory studies include the following works: Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992 [1952]); Pierre Nora (ed), *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996-1998); Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity" (*New German Critique* 65, Spring-Summer 1995), 125-133; Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture* (London, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (eds), *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008); Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney (eds), *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009); Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (eds), *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010); and Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

popularized by trauma and memory studies seem logical, even obvious. Both writers who had established their reputation before the war⁵⁵ (some long before it) as well as those who came to prominence during and shortly after the war⁵⁶ were inspired to represent the ongoing conflict. As this dissertation demonstrates, however, their individual treatments of traumatic experience and formulations of trauma as a concept vary widely.

Such different accounts of trauma have implications for narratives that engage with traumatic pasts. If trauma is seen as a wound or a rupture, narrative can exist both as that which erases, ameliorates, or even heals the wound – or that which locates and describes, or preserves, or even evaluatively elevates or exacerbates the wound. A psychologically or psychoanalytically inflected view of trauma may see a trajectory between traumatic event and cure, enacted through a type of narration, which restores order to an otherwise disrupted symbolic universe. The act of narration then re-integrates the chaotic and pathological symptoms of trauma into the subject, who is no longer traumatized by their repetition. Narrative can serve a mnemonic or memorializing role in trauma, as the subject regains his/her physical and psychic integrity and wholeness as a result of narratively working through the event and signs of trauma. It can also be cathartic: a scream is language that provides emotional release, or which re-organizes the world and the subject. Trauma narrative can also be seen as an act of bearing witness. Whether witnessing, as an isolated act or a principled

⁵⁵ In literature we have: Abdulah Sidran, Semezdin Mehmedinović, Miljenko Jergović, Dževad Karahasan, Ferida Duraković, Josip Osti, Marko Vešović, among others. Ademir Kenović, Abdulah Sidran are among those in film.

⁵⁶ These include: Alma Lazarevska, Goran Samardžić, Nenad Veličković, Igor Štiks, in literature. Almost all the film directors under analysis here got their start after 1992.

practice, attends to the legacy of trauma on psychological, religious or political grounds, it becomes an important way of thinking about the link between trauma and narrative, as well as extra-textual responsibilities and social codes. By contrast, a deconstructionist inspired view of trauma reads the traumatic scene as a text, and conceives of narrative as having neither capacity nor obligation to “solve” trauma. A view of trauma that focuses on its extremity, its being “beyond” the limits of normal experience, cognition and affect, might position narrative as that which approaches the extreme by speaking the unspeakable, by knowing what cannot be conventionally known or articulated. In a related way, a notion of trauma as that which conveys special knowledge of the subject who goes “beyond” entrusts narrative with the task of attending to sublime experience in language. Trauma can be seen as that which, in its rupture, engenders the subject as a subject whose symbolic reality is, thus, punctured; the trauma of the Real (as Lacan and Žižek have put it, each in slightly different ways) that impinges on a subject is, then, that which confers identity.⁵⁷

POST-YUGOSLAV CULTURAL STUDIES: KEY TRENDS AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

This dissertation is methodologically positioned at the intersection of contemporary trauma theory, cultural memory studies, and Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav cultural and area studies. Thus, in addition to relying on theorists of memory and trauma studies, it draws on scholarship on Bosnian language, literature, and culture.

⁵⁷ See: Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (New York: Norton, 1978); Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989); and Slavoj Žižek, *Plague of Fantasies* (London: Verso, 1997).

Over the course of the past two decades, a number of anthropologists have begun to chart new courses for research on Bosnia. Several of these studies, including Ivana Maček's (2000, 2007, 2009) groundbreaking ethnography of wartime Sarajevo, Ger Duijzings' (2007) work on history and memory in Srebrenica, and Elissa Helms' (2007, 2012, 2013) work on gender, art, and the political construction of victimhood in contemporary Bosnia have been of crucial importance for conceiving of this dissertation.⁵⁸ These investigations highlight the pivotal role of media in shaping individual and collective identities in the postwar period. Moreover, they offer nuanced understandings of how traumatic legacies have been lived, narrated, and deployed in Bosnian social and political spheres.

"Trauma" has been taken as a given category for assessing both personal lived experience in the context of the Bosnian war and narratives thereof, primarily because of the large number of anthropological, medical and legal discussions that surrounded the war's human suffering as a result of massive violence, ethnic cleansing, genocide, rape, and torture. These types of works, along with the majority of journalistic accounts, have focused on the physical and psychological trauma of victims. Moreover, because war figures so prominently as a theme and a context in Bosnian fiction and film, and because these artistic works coincide temporally with studies that do not problematize "trauma" as a category, recent Bosnian fiction and film is largely seen as "about trauma" (and often only "about trauma"). This dissertation resists an the easy coupling

⁵⁸ The following edited volume provided pivotal scholarly guidance in the early stages of my dissertation research: Xavier Bougarel, Elissa Helms and Ger Duijzings, *The New Bosnian Mosaic: Identities, Memories and Moral Claims in a Post-War Society* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007).

of war and trauma, focusing instead on how texts articulate trauma, as well as on the implications that fictional treatments have for memories of war.

My study shares important methodological features (as well as some of its central texts) with Jim Hick's 2013 *Lessons From Sarajevo: A War Stories Primer*, although I only discovered Hick's important book after the bulk of the dissertation was written. To date, his is one of the clearest and most useful texts for investigation representations of war across media, time, and space. Using the hyper-mediated nature of Bosnia's war, as well as the specific artistic and social context that it created for Bosnian artists and authors, as a starting point, Hicks critiques dominant rhetorical strategies used to represent war. Too often, he argues, these "war stories" merely retell a common, clichéd story of innocent victims, brutal aggressors, and helpless observers – a sentimental narrative born in the eighteenth century that does not do justice to the way wars have been conducted in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Not only does this primer, as Hicks maintains, uncover the "grammar behind the language of war stories... [it also] teaches a language in order, first, that it be recognized, then better understood, and eventually changed" (Hicks xiv). The titular lessons from Sarajevo, he argues, are meant to motivate the telling of different kinds of war stories, ones that more adequately address the modern, diffuse, and mediated wars in which these stories find their impetus.

This dissertation also draws on scholarship in the field of Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav literature, film, and culture more generally. Of crucial significance is the work of Gordana Crnković (2012), Dijana Jelača (2016), Dragana Obradović (2012), Cynthia Simmons (2001, 2010, 2011), and Stijn Vervaet (2011, 2016). To a large extent, these and other works that treat wartime and postwar Bosnian literature and culture engage with

notions of trauma, although trauma is often not their major theoretical focus. My work is also in dialogue with cultural criticism of the former Yugoslavia that focuses explicitly on trauma and memory. For instance, Jasmina Husanović investigates trauma, art, and politics in a number of her works,⁵⁹ while Damir Arsenijević writes on poetry, memorial practice, and socio-political processes in Bosnia's traumatic postwar present.⁶⁰

Looking at the way narrative follows, coexists with, and outlives a traumatic event like the war in Bosnia reveals the manner in which trauma is comprehended in various, and often conflicting, ways. This dissertation, thus, seeks to articulate a robust theory of trauma that is equally informed by textual and visual analysis of literature and film as by observations and theories of the operation of social practices and cultural channels in contemporary Bosnia.

⁵⁹ See, for example: Jasmina Husanović, "Reckoning with the 'Bosnia Troubles': Trauma, Witnessing, and Politics," *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 22:2 (2004), 15-21; Jasmina Husanović, "Bosanska formacija: Pitanje nostalгије i/li pitanje pripadanja [A Bosnian Formation: A Question of Nostalgia and/or a Question of Belonging]," *Razlika* 10/11 (2005), 95-111; Jasmina Husanović, "Etičko-politička zaviještanja lica i oziljaka: bosanske priče i traume kao imenice ženskog roda u množini [The Ethico-political Legacies of Faces and Scars: Bosnian Stories and Trauma as Feminine Plural Nouns]," *Treća* 9:1 (2007), 57-68; Jasmina Husanović, "The Politics of Gender, Witnessing, Postcoloniality and Trauma: Bosnian Feminist Trajectories," *Feminist Theory* 10:1 (2009), 99-119. Jasmila Husanović, *Između traume, imaginacije i nade: Kritički ogledi o kulturnoj produkcije i emancipativnoj politici* [Between Trauma, Imagination, and Hope: Critical Reflections on Cultural Production and Emancipatory Politics] (Beograd: Edicija REC, 2010).

⁶⁰ Damir Arsenijević, *Forgotten Future: The Politics of Poetry in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2010).

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Through each of its case studies, this dissertation analyzes a number of diverse ways in which trauma is narrated and, thus, culturally remembered in Bosnian fiction and film. By situating these works of art in their social and commemorative contexts, this work also demonstrates how acts of figuring trauma can and do participate in, and continue to operate at the forefront of, discussions taking place in Bosnian public spheres. The texts and contexts analyzed in this dissertation provide focused insight into the relationship between historical events and artistic production; the role of fiction in the negotiation of individual, regional and national identities; and both the cultural value and aesthetic shaping of private and public memories of trauma in contemporary Bosnia.

Chapter One, “Sarajevo for Beginners: Practical Genre, Ironic Stance, and Provisional Commemoration,” looks at the use of innovative and practical genres (the guidebook, the field guide, the survival guide, the glossary, and the map) in fictional and documentary prose, poetry, and visual art produced during the war. It advances the thesis that emblematic works like Ozren Kebo’s *Sarajevo For Beginners*, Semezdin Mehmedinović’s *Sarajevo Blues*, short wartime films like Mirza Idrizović’s multi-part *Diary of a Writer* and the Top Chart of Surrealists’ wartime *oeuvre*, the graphic art of the TRIO group, and the FAMA *Sarajevo Survival Guide* are successful in narrating trauma almost immediately as it emerges because of their central commitment to irony. Using irony’s shifts between closeness and distance, these texts both create communities of readers and model an accessible and imitable commemorative tone or stance. In this way, the texts in question function as lasting acts of memorialization, which are actively and frequently recalled and reiterated decades after the war.

Chapter Two, “Chronotopes of Trauma: Time, Space, and Memorial Practice,” engages with Aida Begić’s *Snow*, Aleksandar Hemon’s “A Coin,” and Alma Lazarevska’s “The Feast of the Rosary.” This chapter relies on Bakhtin’s notion of the literary chronotope, in which time and space are inextricably linked. The chosen works use strongly textual features – quotation and allusion, visual rhetoric, and fantastic modes – to detail specific aspects of the constellation of time and space after trauma. By highlighting chronotopic features, this chapter maintains that its chosen texts model various and distinct textures of trauma. Interwoven with the literary and filmic works in this chapter is a visual and rhetorical analysis of several prominent public memorial ceremonies whose own strategies of narrating and working through loss complement those of the chapter’s fictional texts. Azra Akšamija’s “Monument in Waiting,” an unfinished textile project in the tradition of the Afghan war rug, blending traditional Bosnian motifs and war imagery, highlights the chronotopic function of weaving in Begić’s film. The 2012 “Sarajevo Red Line” memorial, with its 11,541 red chairs representing the victims of the siege, is in dialogue with the chronotope of Hemon’s story.

Chapter Three, “Haunting Narratives: Present Absence and Absent Presence in Postwar Fiction and Film,” studies postwar fictional traumascapes that blur the world of the living with that of the dead. As in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, the presence of “ghosts” becomes a major theme and rhetorical device for tracing out the nature of survival. This chapter looks at Ademir Kenović’s *Perfect Circle* and *Sarajevo: A Street Under Siege*, Faruk Šehić’s “There is This Story,” and Danis Tanović’s *Luggage*, arguing that, these texts both animate and narratively bury the dead. It analyzes these fictional memorial texts in the context of postwar Bosnian cemeteries and memorials

commemorating the dead, as well as alongside ongoing efforts to locate and ritually bury the war's missing persons. In this way, Chapter Three argues that these texts, in their wider social memorial context, participate in forms of working-through that neither conclude, nor uplift, nor normalize the traumatic loss of people, places, livelihoods, and familiar habits.

Chapter Four, "Collected Memory, Collective Memory: Recall, Collaboration, and Belonging in the Bosnian Commemorative Project, *It Was a Fair and Sunny Day*," moves squarely into the field of memory studies. It looks closely at a multi-authored volume that attempts to narrate events from the war roughly a decade after its end: the 2008 *Modul Memorije* documentary and theatrical project, *May 2, 1992: It Was a Fair and Sunny Day*. The project is explicitly structured as a collective memory project, involving multiple contributors/authors and their different points of view. Thus, the chapter highlights the distinction between "collected memory" and "collective memory," arguing that *It Was a Fair and Sunny Day* is best characterized by a notion of socio-cultural memory that blends the two. Moreover, the project revolves around a specific site of memory: the day on which Sarajevo became completely besieged. Its circumscribed starting point becomes a formal structuring mechanism for conceptualizing both the traumatic past and an uncertain postwar future. Finally, the project deals with meta-textual anxiety about the nature of "accurate" memory and recall, the divergence of individual from collective memory, the role of mediation in processes of remembering, and the search for a narrative or visual mode that adequately or ethically attends to the traumatic events.

Chapter Five, "Trauma Market: Transmissions and Transactions of Trauma in Postwar Bosnian Commemorative Landscapes," critically analyzes the overlap and

interplay between ubiquitous practices of “dark/trauma tourism,” theories of and issues in the socio-cultural transmission of trauma, and texts that pointedly thematize the spectacle and marketability of trauma to publics in wartime and postwar Bosnia. A large part of this chapter is devoted to contextualizing the legendary barb that opens Adisa Bašić’s “Trauma-Market” (“aren’t you just a victim/ peddling her own trauma”). It also engages Jasmila Žbanić’s *Pictures From the Corner*, Semezdin Mehmedinović’s “Bernard-Henri Lévy,” and Ferida Duraković’s “A Writer Regards Her Homeland As the Learned Postmodernist Enters Her Town.” It identifies the way these poetic and cinematic works exist within, and offer critiques of the social and rhetorical context, of the postwar dark tourism that dominates the Bosnian commemorative sphere. Analyzing key moments and texts that bring to light problematic intersections between experienced and ascribed trauma, this final chapter delineates the discursive and social roles that local and international “trauma markets” play in the memorial landscape of contemporary Bosnia.

As this dissertation’s focus on the Bosnian case endeavors to show, interpretations of trauma and conceptions of narration can be linked and employed in a variety of ways. The manner in which individual and collective traumas are told – and, importantly, what is included and excluded from their telling – exists in a mutually constitutive relationship with the image, scope, and import of traumatic experience itself. Moreover, as this dissertation argues, the narration of trauma frequently refracts and implicates wider social conceptions of temporality, spatiality, identity, community – and, indeed, of memory itself.

CHAPTER ONE

SARAJEVO FOR BEGINNERS: PRACTICAL GENRE, IRONIC STANCE, AND PROVISIONAL COMMEMORATION

This chapter looks at a variety of literary, filmic, and artistic works produced during the siege of Sarajevo, building its central argument around two collections of short prose: Ozren Kebo's *Sarajevo for Beginners* [*Sarajevo za početnike*] and Semezdin Mehmedinović's *Sarajevo Blues*. These works are two among many contemporaneous texts which bore witness to the trauma of Sarajevo's nearly four-year besiegement. By using *Sarajevo for Beginners* and *Sarajevo Blues*, while referring at critical junctures to works in other media, I delineate how wartime cultural production sets up textual expectations and webs of associations for readers. The rhetorical and contextual shaping of these works, I argue, is crucial to understanding the commemorative work that they both instigate and help to define.

The proximal impetus behind and constant referential focus of all of the works I discuss in this chapter is the traumatic experience of the war. These works of wartime Bosnian literature are marked by a sense of immediacy towards unfolding events. They evince a "real need for precision" (Mehmedinović 1998, 111).¹ They are politically and ethically engaged. They are difficult to fit into established genres, and often push at the boundary separating fiction from non-fiction.² They are frequently gritty, sometimes

¹ In an interview with Ammiel Alcalay, Mehmedinović uses this phrase to describe his own generation of authors and artists who were, "simply fed up with the kind of obscure, metaphorical style that was the dominant model. We were completely attuned to the exterior world, and wanted to make ourselves understood" (Mehmedinović 1998, 111).

² As Mehmedinović claims later in the same Alcalay interview, "I am interested in the whole question of form and mixing of poetry, prose and journalism that characterizes so much of the work I did during the war. I am very conscious of the disintegration of my reality, the extinction of a whole world" (Mehmedinović 1998, 121).

crude. They are published amid wartime shortages and are distributed with great difficulty. They are intertextually rich, and employ a wide variety of media (often within a single work). They are compact, and their elements are often short and fragmentary.

Both Kebo and Mehmedinović moved to Sarajevo as adults from elsewhere in Bosnia, the former from the central Herzegovinian city of Mostar and the latter from the small town of Kiseljak (near Tuzla).³ In paratextually introducing themselves to their readers, both Kebo and Mehmedinović ironically abbreviate and recast their lives in ways that reflect back on their respective, and collective, documentary projects. The biographical note at the end of *Sarajevo for Beginners* reads:

And now a little about the author, his person, background, and character, related to different cities: Ozren Kebo, 1959, no criminal record; sign: Gemini, Ascendant sign: unspecified. Born in Mostar, in love with Dubrovnik, spent the largest part of his life in Sarajevo. It seems that there is a hidden curse in his path: whatever city his steps took him to was later destroyed.⁴ (Kebo 2000, 215)

Meanwhile, one version of *Sarajevo Blues* includes a note about the author, which claims that Semezdin Mehmedinović “unwillingly writes his own biographical notes, unwillingly writes in general, and feels a sense of unease at what writing reveals. He ultimately considers writing a personal activity that has meaning only if it entails practicing for the *last sentence*”⁵ (Mehmedinović 1993, 59). As authors, they were heavily

³ Kebo currently lives in Sarajevo and works as a journalist. Mehmedinović emigrated to the United States shortly after the war ended and now lives in Washington, DC, where he writes poetry, prose, and columns.

⁴ “A sad malo o piscu, njegovoj osobi, porijeklu i karakteru veze sa raznim gradovima: Ozren Kebo, 1959, neosuđivan; znak Blizanci, podznak neutrvrđen. Rođen u Mostaru, zaljubljen u Dubrovnik, veći dio života proveo u Sarajevu, smatra da je u njegovom koraku skriveno prokljetstvo: u koji grad kroči, taj biva razoren.”

⁵ “Nerado sâm piše vlastitu biografsku bilješku; nerado uopće piše i osjeća nelagodu zbog toga što napisano pokazuje. Smatra da je pisanje krajnje ličan posao koji ima nekog smisla samo ako je vježbanje za posljednju rečenicu.”

involved in the dynamic and celebrated cultural scene in Sarajevo that defined the urban landscape and made the city famous from the early 1980s onward.⁶ During the war, this cultural activity was marshaled for anti-war movements, and it was channeled into a huge number and variety of “cultural resistance” projects.⁷ *Sarajevo for Beginners* and *Sarajevo Blues* belong among the countless contemporary artistic projects that protested the bitter violence raging in Bosnia.⁸ Like many of these wartime projects, the two volumes also reflect on the way art preserves highly valued qualities of prewar life in Sarajevo, and also how art and culture allow for intellectual engagement with the circumstances of war.

During the war, many of the most influential literary works were published serially in journals and magazines, often in several different versions.⁹ For instance, *Sarajevo for Beginners* was published repeatedly over almost a decade, and with each new publication its elements were reordered and changed (in superficial or profound ways). During 1994, many of the pieces from *Sarajevo for Beginners* were, like selections from *Sarajevo for Beginners*, prominently showcased on the inside of the back cover of

⁶ For more on the lively and unique Sarajevo artistic and cultural milieu, see: Pavle Levi, *Disintegration in Frames* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007); and Fran Markowitz, *Sarajevo: a Bosnian Kaleidoscope* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010).

⁷ In his analysis of “engaged” literature in wartime Bosnia, Enver Kazaz links literature and criticism to a largely anti-nationalist type of political outlook and critical stance. For this reason, Kazaz claims that the semantic basis for so-called “war literature” is anti-war, even if its theme or setting is war (“Prizori uhodanog užasa [Scenes of established horror]”).

⁸ These projects include, but are obviously not limited to: the Sarajevo Film Festival, FAMA’s Survival Art Museums (1992, 1994, 1996), Alma Suljević’s “Kentaur” tram installation, Radio Zid’s programming, TRIO’s postcard-sized pop-art posters, the “Miss Sarajevo” beauty pageant, the exhibitions at Obala Art Center, and the approximately ninety literary and scholarly texts published during the war years.

⁹ It would be the work of a different essay to further, and more substantively, detail the type and import of these variations. I work with the Feral Tribune version of *Sarajevo for Beginners* and the Durieux version of *Sarajevo Blues*, using material published earlier in *BH Dani* and by Biblioteka egzil-abc when the textual variation is critical for my argument.

the cultural and political magazine, *BH Dani* [Bosnian and Herzegovinian Days] (which was called, during the war, *Ratni Dani* [War Days]).¹⁰ The pieces were collected in book form by Biblioteka Dani in Sarajevo just after the war, in 1996. Two further versions were put out, one by Feral Tribune in Croatia (2000) and one by Zoro in Sarajevo (2003). Similarly, *Sarajevo Blues* was published by the well-established prewar Sarajevo publishing house, “Svetlost,” in 1992. Another version was put out in 1993 by Biblioteka egzil-abc, founded by Josip Osti in Ljubljana to publish works coming out of Bosnia during the war. Both of these versions were chapbook printed on plain paper and stapled in the middle. The second was, by its own admission, published “without permission of either the author or the publisher” and “distributed free of charge” so as to reach a large number of people although its official run was one thousand copies¹¹ (Mehmedinović 1993, 2). During 1993, many of the pieces from *Sarajevo Blues* were prominently showcased on the inside of the back cover of the cultural and political magazine, *BH Dani*. Thereafter, it was published in a greatly extended form by the Zagreb-based Durieux in 1995. Ammiel Alcalay translated it into English and it was published by City Lights in 1998. It was republished by Biblioteka Dani in 2004, the version in which it is still available.

In addition to this protean nature, and their constant revision and development over time, the texts I deal with in this chapter are also notable for their fragmentary quality. The works that I will discuss are characterized by brevity, urgency, aphorism,

¹⁰ *BH Dani* has been published throughout its history with variable frequency. Before the war, it came out monthly. During the war years, it was published less frequently and usually sporadically. Nonetheless, its front matter continued to claim that it came out monthly.

¹¹ “Istodobno se ispričavamo autoru i izdavaču što to činimo bez njihove suglasnosti i naknade i što čitaocima, u njihovo i svoje ime, sugeriramo da knjigu daju i drugima na čitanje, a, po mogućnosti, i sami je umnožavaju. Knjige pripremamo za štampu i dijelimo besplatno.”

and a narrow subjective, rather than a grand totalizing, perspective. We can read such literary production as directly emerging out of circumstance: wartime privations often complicated and inhibited the physical act of writing, and, as Judith Herman maintains, “people who have survived atrocities often tell their stories in a highly emotional, contradictory, and fragmented manner” (Herman 1). Instead of foregrounding such an interpretation, I focus here on how the fragmentary qualities of the works I analyze exist in a dialectical relationship with traumatic experience; the works’ textuality is influenced by atrocity, violence, and death, but it also pointedly responds to circumstance. Here I employ a notion of fragments similar to that of Camelia Elias, who views the fragment as a performative textual act, and one that is “habitually defined, not as an object in itself, but in relation to notions of either the period or aesthetics/genre in which it appears” (Elias 4). In this, the choice of the fragment form becomes both a generic as well as a critical – even polemical – gesture. If, as Adorno famously puts it, “the whole is the untrue [*Das Ganze ist das Unwahre*]” (50), then the fragment seems poised to textually ally itself with truth.

The aesthetic underpinnings of the fragment allowed it to express something about the experience of war. And, indeed, Bosnian wartime narratives often took the form of fragments, in scope and organization. The way in which the physical city is broken into pieces finds its narrative correlate in the fragmentary form. Notions of “part” and “whole” link the experience of destruction and its narration. As Mehmedinović puts it in *Sarajevo Blues*, “reality is recognized in its wholeness only as it crumbles to bits. Glass on the street, meanwhile, illustrates a ‘shattered image of reality’ less than do the brown strips of Sellotape with which ‘whole’ windows are held together in Sarajevo.... Nothing has remained whole; not even the whole panes of glass,

held together by tape”¹² (30). The aesthetics of the fragment, and intense focus on the individual pieces of shattered reality, becomes for Mehmedinović – and, I would argue, for many of the artists whose wartime production I discuss here – a way in which to document and address the violence and destruction of Sarajevo.

There are clear borrowings from, and allusions to, Cubism in these works. Both in its analytical and its synthetic varieties, Cubism offers a number of conceptual and representative modes for understanding and portraying parts and wholes in time and space. In another piece, which also focuses on broken glass, Mehmedinović observes a professor of aesthetics “reflected in the blue façade of the Jugobank, in the shattered glass that turns the scene into a live Cubist painting”¹³ (63). The broken window links both the act of destruction and the visual effects of this destruction. Sarajevo in its destruction has literally taken on qualities of fragmentation, distortion, and rearrangement that recall Cubist representational techniques. Overlaying the damaged image of the city with an artistic device highlights the profound type and degree of violence wrought, and its traumatic legacy.

The trauma of war affects how art and literature were produced in besieged Sarajevo, and how these works were viewed. First of all, relationships between author and reader, artist and spectator were altered by the circumstances of war. As Mehmedinović articulates in an interview with his translator and colleague, Ammiel Alcalay,

¹² “[S]tvarnost je saglediva u svojoj cjelini tek pošto se raspala u djeliće. Staklo na asfaltu, međutim, manje ilustrira srušenu sliku stvarnosti od široke, smeđe trake selotejpa kojom su oblijepljena ‘čitava’ stakla prozora u Sarajevu.... Ništa nije ostalo cijelo; ni čitava stakla na prozorima, oblijepljena selotejpom.”

¹³ “[Gledam ga] odraženog u plavoj fasadi Jugobanke, u napuklim staklima koja od prizora tvore živu kubističku sliku....”

the war brought a very specific state of being with it. For me, it was the first time in my life that I had a lot of time and it gave me the chance to work. I wrote...[and] I saw that [writing] really did have a purpose because that primal instinct of the storyteller continues even though the flames were all around.... And this is a way in which writers were truly enriched, by returning to this primary function. Things were read.... The relationship between reader and writer was very complete. (Mehmedinović 1998, 117)

Cultural productivity at this time in Sarajevo was not only intense, it was also characterized by meta-textual commentary on the type, scope, and influence of works written during the war. Many of these works are introduced with paratextual clues that, according to Gerard Genette, present the text in a particular way to its readers.¹⁴

The texts I am working with here take specific forms, and display aesthetic as well as philosophical commonalities. They are short and fragmentary, as noted above. In their status as works of mixed genre, they borrow rhetorical and stylistic features from practical or didactic genres: the field guide, the glossary, the book for beginners, the map, the survival guide, and the chronicle figure prominently.

As is immediately apparent, for instance, Kebo's title highlights a particular approach to the relationship between narrative documentation and memorialization. It overtly addresses a novice reader, a "beginner" or "dummy" in need of a guide to the city during its wartime perils. Meanwhile, Mehmedinović's text bears the subtitle, *Glossary of a Besieged City* [*Pojmovnik opsjednutog grada*]. It likewise addresses an inexperienced reader searching for definitions, concepts, or technical terms with which to make sense of the lived experience of siege. However, the seemingly straightforward manner in which each of these works employ paratextual framing to establish a clear

¹⁴ Genette includes in the general category of "paratext" all those elements that accompany, surround, and present a text while existing outside (temporally or spatially) the text itself. For example: titles, subtitles, illustrations, tables of contents, indications of genre, illustrative facts about the text's author, etc. It might be argued that, in Genette's definition, scarcely anything can be excluded from the category of paratext. The concept, primarily as it relates to title and genre markers, is nonetheless useful for my argument.

relationship between narrator and reader, and between literature and traumatic experience, is meaningfully complicated by the tone, the fragmentary nature, and the lived experience to which these works refer.

I seek to demonstrate, first of all, that textual features employed in the works I discuss, albeit in different ways, allow the two works to fit into a number of overlapping genres. At times, they address beginners; other parts can be read as field guides, or as survival guides; they employ mapping techniques; and they can be read as chronicles or calendars. These heavily stylized genres are all characterized by an eminently practical relationship between text and experience; moreover, they are fundamentally delimited rather than encyclopedic. While delineating the varied generic contours of the wartime works in question, I argue that these textual practices function ironically: they address critically the experiential traumas that wartime artistic works represent, and reflexively engage with the dialectical relationship between textual structures and the acts of memorialization in which these works participate.

In the context of genocidal war, the use of the defined relationships between narrator and reader that grounds these practical genres both relies on and produces a marked sense of irony. To approach and analyze the function and import of irony in these works, I rely on Linda Hutcheon's *Irony's Edge*, a seminal study of irony's discursive contexts, political entanglement, and ethical stakes. As she maintains, "irony is a 'weighted' mode of discourse in the sense that it is asymmetrical, unbalanced in favor of the silent and the unsaid.... [It] involves the attribution of an evaluative, even judgmental attitude" (Hutcheon 1995, 35). For this reason, and because it relies on relationality, inclusivity, and differentiability (56-57), ironic texts can be dexterously employed to bring textuality and social reality into the same critical sphere. Because,

“[u]nlike metaphor or allegory, which demand similar supplementing of meaning, irony has an evaluative edge and manages to provoke emotional responses in those who ‘get’ it and those who don’t, as well as in its targets and in what some people call its ‘victims’” (2). The omnipresence of irony in the wartime works of art I detail in this chapter gives them their characteristic and, moreover, generative “edginess.”

Just as traumatic circumstance interacts with textual practice in the type of Bosnian witness literature I discuss here, so too are textual features implicated in conceptions of memory and, more specifically, commemorative practices. As Geoffrey Hartman argues, “memory, and especially the memory that goes into storytelling, is not simply an afterbirth of experience, a secondary formation: it *enables* experiencing” (158). Here, it is crucial to keep in mind Astrid Erll’s explication of how literature functions as a medium of cultural memory. Beyond the intertextual mechanisms by which literary texts recall and memorialize (Lachmann 1990), I am here particularly concerned with the notion of memory’s mediation through specific generic or rhetorical practices. Such mediation is indicative of the way in which memory is “stabilized” through narrative symbolization (Assmann 2003). Literary texts take particular genres and styles: they might represent the past in experiential, monumental, antagonistic, historicizing, or reflexive modes (Erll 2011, 158). The medial frameworks used in recounting or engaging with the past constitute not only modes of narration but, equally and inseparably, “modes of remembering” (Erll 2008, 7). Mnemonic and commemorative practices in culture influence the possibilities for literary representations, and vice versa. A work can be, in Erll’s terms, “memory-reflexive” insofar as it uses the concepts of memory as a narrative theme or trope, meta-textually contemplates the structure and function of memory, and demonstrates the mediation involved in representing memory. On the

other hand, a work can be “memory-productive” to the extent that it employs powerful images and tropes about the past. Memory-productive works do not necessarily address the concept of memory, but can shape and disseminate representations of the past that are incorporated into, and shape collective memories (Erll 2011, 137-151).¹⁵ The works I discuss are both memory-reflexive and memory-productive. As I will argue, these seminal works produced in wartime Sarajevo both explicitly comment on memory and employ powerful images that resonate with commemorative activity in Bosnia during and after the war. I maintain that the capacity to shape widely held conceptions of the siege of Sarajevo rests to a large extent on how these wartime works are textually framed, the expectations they both elaborate and subvert, and the ironic and meta-textual manner in which they engage with genre, readership, and commemoration.

Indeed, one of the most striking aspects of the wartime texts discussed here is the near temporal coincidence of the witnessed event and its narration. This tendency slightly complicates theories of traumatic experience and literary representation that foreground belatedness. Influenced by Sigmund Freud’s conception of *Nachträglichkeit*, we see this conviction advanced in both Jacques Lacan’s and Jean Laplanche’s psychoanalytic understandings of trauma, as well as in Cathy Caruth’s work in the field of literary trauma theory. A well-established view in trauma theory holds that trauma is not experienced in the present, but appears later and only belatedly can be worked through and identified (Caruth 1995, 1996). The models for representing trauma that emerge out of the material I present here add nuance to the notion of belated experience and the way traumatic memories are worked through in narrative. Tracing out how

¹⁵ Erll uses the following examples from film: *Blade Runner*, *Total Recall*, and *Memento* can be seen as memory-reflexive works, while *Apocalypse Now*, *Schindler’s List*, and *Saving Private Ryan* might be seen as memory-productive films.

these works employ alternative strategies for representing the memory of trauma allows for a reconceptualization not only of the relationship between trauma and text, but also leads to a broader understanding of the mutual implication of traumatic experience and memorial practice.

“SARAJEVO, THAT’S A REGULAR CLUSTER-FUCK FOR YOU”: A LITERARY FIELD GUIDE¹⁶

Many of *Sarajevo for Beginners*’ component pieces can be read as belonging in a field guide to Sarajevo under siege. A field guide pertains to an extensive and detailed, but strictly delimited, category of objects or phenomena.¹⁷ It is portable and useful in particular situations, and primarily helps readers identify something by its (predominantly visual) characteristics. Part of the work of a field guide is to present a relatively coherent analytical image of a range of related things so that particular examples of this range can be picked out and identified *in situ*. A field guide to Sarajevo attempts to represent its characteristic elements and, in doing so, present Sarajevo as a particular, defined ecosystem. Therefore, in answer to the large question, “what is Sarajevo?” Kebo’s text describes it as “a city that flows out. There’s a little hole at the edge of the city, where there is a constant crowd [of people leaving]”¹⁸ (110). This is the language of taxonomy and identification: seeing a stream of people, always leaving and never returning, means that the reader is looking at Sarajevo. The import of the passage vis-à-vis the field guide hinges on paradox: the city is characterized by those who are, in

¹⁶ The first part of this heading is the title of one of *Sarajevo for Beginners*’ fragments: “Sarajevo, to ti je opći pičvajz” (Kebo 16).

¹⁷ We would therefore see a field guide to the birds of North America, but not a field guide to birds in general.

¹⁸ “Šta je još Sarajevo? Sarajevo je grad koji curi. Ima na kraju grada jedna mala rupa.”

fact, leaving it. However, Sarajevo can also be identified by its inhabitants: those who choose to wash their clothes in the river, exposing themselves to shelling, preferring to be clean and dead than dirty and alive (86); those who assiduously clean their hands, lest, should they require amputation, the surgeon might see dirt beneath their nails (44).

We see Kebo relying on a similar mechanism of describing Sarajevo in an article published in *BH Dani* with the subtitle, “everything you always wanted to know about Sarajevo but were afraid to ask”¹⁹ (9/10/1993, 38). In spirited prose, the piece identifies a number of statements about Sarajevo as either true or false. “Sarajevo is where East meets West. False! It is where urban meets rural”²⁰ (*ibid.*). “Water is the most valuable liquid in the world. False! Beer is. Water is the heaviest liquid in the world”²¹ (39). In *Sarajevo for Beginners*, a list of psychological changes found in wartime Sarajevo is organized into a seemingly neat list:

1. Water from a canister is sweetest.
2. Plain rice is tastiest. Rice without anything on the side.
3. The wood that burns the best is the kind brought down from Trebević on one's back.²² Best, therefore fastest.
4. There's nothing better to smoke than tea, but only if it's rolled well.
5. Electricity is unnecessary. You sit at four o'clock and wait in the dark until eight. At eight, it's time for bed.
6. The best spinach pie is made from nettles.²³ (24)

¹⁹ “Sve što ste oduvijek htjeli da znate o Sarajevu, a niste smjeli da pitate.”

²⁰ “Sarajevo je grad u kojem se susreću istok i zapad. Pogrešno! Sarajevo je grad u kojem se susreću urbano i ruralno.”

²¹ “Voda je najdragocjenija tečnost na svijetu. Pogrešno! Najdragocjenija tečnost na svijetu je piva. Voda je najteža tečnost na svijetu.”

²² Trebević is one of the mountains surrounding Sarajevo. It is located to the southeast, and it is infamous for being an ideal position from which to shell Sarajevo.

²³ 1. Najsladča je voda iz kanistera.
2. Najukusnija je solo riža. Riža bez priloga.
3. Najbolje gore drva koja se na leđima donesu sa Trebevića. Najbolje, dakle, najbrže.
4. Nema ništa bolje za pušenje od čaja, samo ako se dobro smota.
5. Struja je nepotrebna. Sjesti u četiri sata i u mraku čekati kad će osam. U osam – na spavanje.
6. Najbolja je zeljanica od koprive.

This list not only catalogues items found in Sarajevo, but also indicates how to pick out the best example in a given category. Meanwhile, the specific items pointed to are deeply and bitterly ironic. Everything outlined here is on the surface untrue; indeed, every superlative could be turned into its opposite, and would result in a more “accurate” summing up of wartime circumstances. However, the effect of such a passage rests precisely on a consistent and unrelenting ironic distance between its recognizably brisk and didactic form and the tragic details it communicates. The prominent use of lists in *Sarajevo for Beginners* thus imposes a rigid structure on the description of events that are outside the range of usual experience. Kebo’s text both employs the confident and encompassing language of a field guide, and ironizes the idea of making sense of traumatic experience with recourse to such a schema.

Reading *Sarajevo for Beginners* as a field guide to the city, the reader expects – and finds – an epistemological and narrative perspective on the topic of Sarajevo that balances specificity and generality. When we read the following description of Sarajevo, which consists of nothing except identifying features, we see nothing but purportedly identifying features.

Sarajevo is: abandoned, left alone, naked, barefoot, besieged, haggard, inexperienced, drenched, frozen through, moldy, wretched, stunted, spent, starved, abject, despised, uncertain, ill-tempered, melancholy, doleful, unstable, weepy, pathetic, kitschy, written-off, silly, paranoid, anemic, blasphemous, god-fearing, dignified, condescending, tolerant, intolerant, lost, and wrecked.²⁴ (106)

This rhetorically vivid and pathos-infused list of adjectives, however, does not give the reader a visually specific picture of the city. The fact that many of these are analytical

²⁴ “Sarajevo je: napušteno, usamljeno, golo, boso, opkoljeno, unezvijereno, goluždravo, pokislo, promrzlo, ubuđalo, jadno, zakržljalo, rashodovano, izgladnjelo, prezreno, labilno, plačljivo, patetično, kičasto, otpisano, budalasto, paranoično, anemično, blasfemično, bogobojažljivo, dostojanstveno, snishodljivo, tolerantno, netrpeljivo, izgubljeno i upropašteno.”

qualities, rather than straightforwardly perceptible features, immediately raises the question about the adequacy of the text to serve as a field guide to navigating the city. Indeed, the fragment from which the list is drawn thematizes and, in doing so, problematizes the adequacy of a guide that relies on visually observable characteristics, maintaining that “Sarajevo can best be taken stock of by night, in total darkness, when illusions recede into the shadows”²⁵ (106). Such a description and method for encountering Sarajevo under siege belongs in an especially peculiar field guide, one that requires an unusual type of effort on the part of the reader. And, indeed, in the last sentence of this description, the narrative voice shifts. After the catalogue of adjectives, the author commands: “Write also: destroyed”²⁶ (106). He may be addressing himself, reminding himself to include this last description, however difficult it may be to get down on paper – or how similar it might be to the others already listed. However, the narrator might also be ordering the reader to write, thereby implicating the latter as one who contributes to – or ought to contribute to – the guide.²⁷

“BECAUSE! JUST BECAUSE”: A GLOSSARY WITHOUT DEFINITIONS²⁸

By positioning *Sarajevo Blues* as a “glossary,” Mehmedinović chooses a rigid and practical genre that immediately establishes expectations about how it should be read.²⁹

²⁵ “Sarajevo se najbolje može sagledati noću, u totalnom mraku, kad iluzije ustuknu pred tamom.”

²⁶ “Piši propalo.”

²⁷ The way in which this phrase echoes with a similar formulation in the Elizabeth Bishop poem, “One Art,” is as evocative as it is illustrative. The last two lines of her poem read: “the art of losing’s not too hard to master/though it may look like (*Write it!*) like disaster.”

²⁸ The first part of this heading comes from a piece in *Sarajevo blues* entitled “Photographers”: “Zato! Upravo zato” (Mehmedinović 65). As mentioned in the introduction, Mehmedinović echoes a sentiment from Primo Levi’s *If This is a Man*.

The titles of the vast majority of its short pieces take the form of entries in a glossary: “Deserter,” “Expulsion,” “Grenade.” On one hand, a glossary is like a dictionary or an encyclopedia: it gives definitions, explanations, and examples.³⁰ On the other, however, it does not contain – or aim to include – a total set of lexical items. Instead, a glossary is limited in scope, aimed at explicating only a certain realm of knowledge (for instance, a text or textbook or a technical article). A glossary is appended to a work that is *generally* understandable, while addressing those parts which a reader might find unfamiliar. In this sense, unlike a dictionary or an encyclopedia, a glossary is highly contextual: it does not make sense unless seen alongside the text it aims to elucidate. We see this tension between an encyclopedia and a glossary in an early review of *Sarajevo Blues*:

‘glossary of a besieged city’ is an alternative title and maybe because of it [the title], or maybe because of [the book’s] encyclopedic form, it appears that the book pretends to an all-encompassing representation of the war in Sarajevo. But actually...[it] is again about a completely personal experience...and, far from being all-encompassing, is aimed, first of all, at its author, and then at a circle of people who are in the position to recognize the situations described....³¹ (Finci 59)

I maintain, however, that Mehmedinović opts neither for a “personal,” nor an “encyclopedic” scope. The choice of a glossary, a form that fits between the personal and the encyclopedic, is what allows Mehmedinović’s collection to achieve its powerful effect. By foregrounding the generic requirements of the glossary, *Sarajevo Blues* sets

²⁹ The Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian *pojmovnik* comes from the word *pojam*, meaning “concept” or “term.”

³⁰ One section of the pieces that were serialized in *BH Dani* in 1992 has, above “glossary of a besieged city,” an additional paratext: “Encyclopedia Bosnica.”

³¹ “‘Pojmovnik opsjednutog grada’ je alternativni naslov i možda zbog toga, a možda i zbog enciklopedične forme, može izgledati da knjiga ima pretenzija sveobuhvatnog prikazivanja rata u Sarajevu. A zapravo (u što su se mogli uvjeriti svi čitaoci ovog lista), riječ je u toj knjizi ponovo o sasvim osobnom doživljaju, o sličicama izdvojenim iz samo jedne vizure-one autorove; riječ je o knjizi koja je, daleko od toga da bude sveobuhvatna, namijenjena najprije njenom piscu, a onda nekom krugu ljudi koji su u stanju prepoznati opisane situacije....”

itself up to be read alongside a larger “work”: the war and the lived traumas that Mehmedinović, as biographical figure and author, both experienced and observed. *Sarajevo Blues* is, needless to say, not actually a glossary. The particular discrepancy between the terms it sets out, and the lack of definition it provides, gestures in a highly critical and often ironic way to the fact that a glossary cannot, and even should not, be written for besieged Sarajevo.

If we take *Sarajevo Blues* as a glossary to the besieged city, then “War” certainly seems like a key term in the compiled list. The poem housed in this entry begins: “it’s war/ and nothing’s happening/I go into town to bum us cigarettes” and ends with: “not a single pane of glass is left in our windows”³² (29). The reader is also introduced to phrases commonly employed, and used in the media, during wartime. For instance, the daily news reports term a day on which only a few people have been killed, a “Relatively Calm Day [*Relativno miran dan*].” People are “relatively normal, or relatively nuts since death has been accepted as a statistic”³³ (56). Here we see the way in which traumatic violence has practically and affectively restructured both how reality looks, and how language is used to describe it. These two pieces, together, thus trace out a picture of war in which nothing is out of the ordinary, and everything is. In many ways, this ambivalent and laconic tone becomes a recurrent idiom for glossing experience in *Sarajevo Blues*.

One section in particular lays bare the glossary device, and also underscores the aesthetic and ethical imperatives that concern Mehmedinović as a writer. This entry,

³² “Rat je/ i ništa se ne događa-/ u grad idem da nam izmolim cigarete.... ni jednog stakla na našim prozorima nema....”

³³ “Ljudi su relativno normalni, ili relativno ludi od kada su smrt prihvatili kao statističku numeru.”

somewhat longer than most others in *Sarajevo Blues*, was published as a column in the “Sarajevo Blues” series in *BH Dani* as “A Dictionary of the Imam’s Solitude [Rječnik imamove samoće].” It was included in the book versions of *Sarajevo Blues* under an alternate title, “the Imam of Bey’s Mosque [Imam Begove džamije].”³⁴ The piece takes the form of a dictionary because it consists only of imam Spahić’s answers to unrecorded questions. These “answers are complete, so that, gradually, a small dictionary of the imam’s solitude distinguishes itself from the conversation”³⁵ (60). The dictionary contains a number of disparate elements: “Army [armija],” “Bosnian Muslim [Bosanski Muslimani],” “Mudjahideen [Mudžahedin],” “Islam,” “the spirit of Sarajevo [Sarajevski duh],” and “Emir Kusturica.” Despite being called a dictionary, nothing is defined. The imam thinks “in a literary way, in pictures”³⁶ (ibid). Moreover, the point of view from which the piece is narrated is not entirely that of the imam, or of the narrator; its point of origin is the conversation, both what was said and the lasting effect it has on the narrator: he leaves “calmer than when he arrived. When the imam spoke about his own misfortune [the death of his wife, three children, and grandchild], his eyes slightly narrowed – as if from cold. Nothing else”³⁷ (57). These two things, his own calm and that of the imam, are associatively and meaningfully linked for the narrator. This linkage rests on multiple levels of inscription: the imam’s entries are contained within a

³⁴ Gazi Husrev-begova džamija [Gazi Husrev Bey’s mosque] is located in the center of Sarajevo’s Old Town. Built in 16th century Ottoman Bosnia under the patronage of local governor Gazi Husrev Bey (who also sponsored many contemporaneous buildings in Sarajevo), the mosque is an important cultural and geographical landmark.

³⁵ “Odgovori su cjeline, tako da se, polako, iz razgovora izdvaja mali rječnik imamove samoće.”

³⁶ “Književno, u slikama.”

³⁷ “Kad je o svojoj nesreći govorio efendija Spahić, njegove oči su se – kao od hladnoće – blago smanjivale. Ništa više.”

single entry within the glossary that is *Sarajevo Blues*. The larger “entry” in Mehmedinović’s glossary derives from the core of serenity that is of superlative importance to the meeting with the imam captured in the narrative. Meanwhile, the imam’s entries, identified and inscribed by the narrator, relate meaningfully to the larger theme only insofar as their troubling details are articulated with the imam’s scarcely perceptible emotional coloring. In this way – indirectly, and minimalistically – the very genre that Mehmedinović employs addresses traumatic experience.

Mehmedinović’s use of the glossary form echoes a broader tendency in cultural production during the years of siege. A number of amateur documentary films made during the war by the SaGA [Sarajevo Group of Authors] production company utilize, in parts or in their entirety, this thematic and generic structure. The 1993/1994 *Diary of a Director*, directed by Mirza Idrizović and produced by Ademir Kenović and Ismet Arnautalić, is organized according to episodes that focus on a single object in conditions of war. “Window” shows Idrizović (the documentary’s protagonist as well as director) and others repairing a damaged window with UNHCR-issued plastic sheeting. The episode ends with an establishing shot of the building’s exterior followed by a zoom to the repaired window, while the diegetic sound of shelling interrupts the Wagner music that has formed the film’s soundtrack. “Water” follows Idrizović’s trek through the city with a water canister. And “Fire” gives an intimate kitchen scene in which a woman (Zlata Kurt, who collaborated on the film script and the directing) starts a fire in one of the tin can stoves that were ubiquitous in wartime Bosnia, cooks soup, and serves it to Idrizović and two others. Instead of being organized temporally as a diary, the film is structured by vital objects; its plot wordlessly develops in a way that foregrounds their elemental importance. The “glossary” structure integrates these items into the

chronotope of the war and, more importantly, demonstrates how common objects function metonymically to approach, schematize, and narrate war.

While it works to very different ends than either of the films cited or Mehmedinović's text, Nedžad Ibrišimović's *The Book of Adem Kahriman* [*Knjiga Adema Kahrimana*] employs features of a glossary, which are titled "explanations" and set off from more narrative passages of the short book. Bosnia is defined as "a good land"³⁸ (11). Explanations of the terms "Chetnik," "Drina," and "Sarajevo" are given. Much like in Mehmedinović's texts that take the paratextual format of a glossary, the prose within each entry given in this section of *The Book of Adem Kahriman* defines these terms using poetic license. For instance, in the entry on "Sarajevo," after defining it as "the capital of Bosnia,"³⁹ the text takes a detour through the city's cultural heritage – which, of course, was being destroyed as Ibrišimović's book was being written (10). The definition of Sarajevo then takes another cultural detour, this time into South Slavic folk epic, two metrical feet of which are placed within the entry itself. Sarajevo's founding itself is attributed to Gazi Husrev: "as the folk song describes him, 'swords were brandished, endowments were established"⁴⁰ (11).

³⁸ "Bosna. To je jedna dobra zemlja."

³⁹ "Sarajevo je prijestolnica Bosne."

⁴⁰ "[S]abljom mahnu, podiže haire, veli za njega narodna pjesma." The first four-syllable foot (*sabljom mahnu*) is a commonly heard phrase in the *narodna pjesma* [lit: "folk song"] that folklorist Milman Parry termed the "Serbo-Croatian heroic epic." Indeed, the whole line strongly conveys both the formula, the themes, and the meter of this oral genre. For further discussion of its formulas, metrics, and social context, see: Milman Parry, *Serbocroatian Heroic Songs* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953); Albert Lord, *A Singer of Tales* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960); and William Hansen, "On Middle-Range Structures in Heroic Epic," in Ray Cashman, Tom Mould, and Pravina Shukla (eds), *The Individual and the Tradition: Folkloristic Perspectives* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), 287-302.

In addition to these glossary entries that treat subjects artistically rather than strictly defining them, Ibrišimović's work takes the form of fragments of conversation between the author and the character, Adem Kahriman, who is writing a book in order to prevent crimes that have already occurred.⁴¹ At one moment, we see the author opining to Adem that "this is just the beginning of [Adem's] book, and many things are not clear, despite the Explanations and Explanations of Explanations"⁴² (23). Here the didactic function of a glossary comes to the fore, as does its utility for readers. The failure of a glossary explanation to achieve its purpose – to give the reader a useful and coherent understanding of the term or concept in question – takes on severe consequences in Ibrišimović's work: inadequate representation impairs the ability to prevent atrocity.

THE THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS: A PROCEDURAL AND ETHICAL BEGINNER'S GUIDE

A glossary takes as its implied reader a different kind of novice than an introductory guide "for beginners," which is intended to be read by someone with little or no knowledge about the topic to which it pertains – a topic in which, meanwhile, its narrator (typically identical to its author) is an expert. Such a beginner's guide may vary in the degree of abstractness or specificity, but it is organized according to a careful taxonomic or procedural structure and is more often than not accompanied by a detailed table of contents and index; it can easily be used as a reference guide when a

⁴¹ The crimes are the mass killing of Bosnian Muslims by royalist Chetnik forces between 1941 and 1942 in Foča, eastern Bosnia, and the ethnic cleansing of Bosnian Muslims from Foča in 1992. The convergence of place and the repetition of wartime atrocities form one of Ibrišimović's book's central themes.

⁴² "Ovo je tek početak vaše knjige, a mnoge se stvari već ne vide i pored Pojašnjenja i Pojašnjenja pojašnjenja rekoh."

reader is no longer a true novice. The tone of its prose is conversational and personal. It is casually direct, and pointedly avoids confrontation or intimidation. A book designated for beginners sets powerful and immediate expectations on the part of the reader. Therefore, in giving his literary introduction to the wartime city the title *Sarajevo for Beginners*, Kebo sets up an immediate relationship between narrator and reader that involves the former educating, or passing on selected useful information to the latter – at least ostensibly.

When *Sarajevo for Beginners* first appeared as a serial in *BH Dani*, its two columns of text were separated on the page by a striking composite image [FIGURE 1.1]. This graphic depicts the young sleepwalker, Malik, from Emir Kusturica's hugely popular 1985 film, *When Father was Away on Business* [*Otac na službenom putu*] beneath an image of Sarajevo's war-torn skyline. This skyline is a compressed version of the TRIO graphic art group's "Sarajevo 1992: Summer," a postcard which formed a pair with "Sarajevo 1992: Winter" [FIGURE 1.2]. The choice of images is intertextually and critically evocative: either the TRIO image or the figure of Malik, by itself, would have been immediately recognizable to readers of *BH Dani* and would have elicited a number of associations and highly-charged emotions.



FIGURE 1.1: COMPOSITE IMAGE ACCOMPANYING
OZREN KEBO'S "SARAJEVO FOR BEGINNERS" COLUMN IN *BH DANI* (1993)



sarajevo 1992
summer



FIGURE 1.2: TRIO, "SARAJEVO 1992: WINTER" AND "SARAJEVO 1992: SUMMER"

The image of Malik functions as a metonym for Kusturica's film, which thematizes the turbulent socio-political climate in Yugoslavia following Tito's 1948 break with Stalin. The film is told from the point of view of the young Malik, who remains largely unaware of the political causes and ramifications of his father's imprisonment. The magical realism of Malik's sleepwalking becomes a metaphor for a naïve and unknowingly victimized perspective on reality. Kusturica's film was known, loved, and celebrated at home and abroad.⁴³ Yet at the time *Sarajevo for Beginners* appeared in *BH Dani*, controversy raged about Kusturica, who had decided to move abroad (first to France and then, more problematically, to Serbia).⁴⁴ Through statements he made in the local and international press, Kusturica had distanced himself from Sarajevo society and openly critiqued former colleagues and neighbors. In the opinion of many in Bosnia and abroad, including many actors and artists who had contributed to *When Father Was Away on Business* and who continued to live and work in besieged Sarajevo, Kusturica had turned his back on his native city.⁴⁵ An image of Malik, therefore, metonymically recalled Kusturica's film career, and his fall from beloved son to traitor. Moreover, Malik could be read ironically as a paradigmatic naïve "beginner" to whom the text of *Sarajevo for Beginners* was overtly addressed.

⁴³ The film won a Palme d'Or and FIPRESCI prize at Cannes, and was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film in 1985. When the film won the Palme d'Or, Yugoslavia declared a national holiday. For discussion of this reception, see: Kenneth Turan, *From Sundance to Sarajevo: Film Festivals and the World They Made* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 98-99.

⁴⁴ See, for example: Alain Finkielkraut, "L'imposture Kusturica," *Le Monde* (2 June 1995); Adam Gopnik, "Cinema Dispute," *The New Yorker* (5 February 1996); Dina Iordanova, "Kusturica's Underground: Historical Allegory or Propaganda?" in *Cinema of Flames* (London: British Film Institute, 2001); Slavoj Žižek, *Plague of Fantasies* (London: Verso, 1997), in particular, the chapter on Kusturica, "The Poetry of Ethnic Cleansing."

⁴⁵ These include, for example: Abdulah Sidran (scenarist), Mustafa Nadarević (actor), and Emir Hadžihafizbegović (actor).

The Sarajevo skyline at the top of the composite image, meanwhile, refers to the entire *oeuvre* of postcard-sized prints produced by the TRIO graphic design group. TRIO – a collaboration of the artists Bojan Hadžihalilović, Delila Hadžihalilović, and Lela Mulabegović – became active in the 1980s, but rose to particular prominence during the war. Building on its pre-war pop-art aesthetic, Trio's wartime works pointedly critiqued society and politics with wry black humor. TRIO relied on the appropriation of well-known images and slogans, altering the meaning of these by situating them in the new context of wartime Sarajevo—and thereby commenting on the war. TRIO's use of pop-art as an aesthetic medium can be seen in their use of advertising (integrating low-cultural" elements into the typically "elite" medium of fine art), mass production (providing a commentary on the singularity of the artistic object), and their creation of a sense of detachment from everyday objects through distortion or aestheticization. The most famous of their wartime posters, to which the skyline series belongs, commented on many aspects of the city's dire situation: the lack of UN/NATO intervention, the spectacle of violence in global media, the contrast between Sarajevo's prewar cosmopolitan sophistication and its wartime deprivation. Each of these small prints bore the inscription: "This document has been printed in war circumstances: no paper, no ink, no electricity, no water. Just good will."

The TRIO image of Sarajevo's skyline printed between the two columns of *Sarajevo for Beginners* thus both paratextually and intertextually links Kebo's texts with a specific type of ironic critique. Further, it helps to situate *Sarajevo for Beginners* in both a place (the city of Sarajevo, albeit viewed as a site of memory and myth rather than as geographical location) and in a defined "present moment" (one that, like the figure of Malik, is irrevocably linked with a sense of the past). In this way, the accompanying

graphic establishes a clear cultural and generic field that organizes the readers approach to the text.

Sarajevo for Beginners sets clear parameters of what a beginner might learn from such a volume. First, the focus and topic of the guide is the city itself. The text seems to promise a coherent portrait of Sarajevo to an uninitiated reader. However, the portrait is not laid out for the reader in a way that is consistent with or expected from introductory guides. The temporal framework moves between Sarajevo as it was, as it was thought and written about, and as it is now under siege. Moreover, the text's scope moves haphazardly between the general and the particular, and it uses irony to subvert apparent claims to comprehensive knowledge. For instance, several general (and generalizing) sections appear with identically structured titles at intervals throughout the book. The work opens with "something about war in general"⁴⁶ (11), moves to "something about illusions in general"⁴⁷ (27), "hell in general"⁴⁸ (95), "something about memory in general"⁴⁹ (132), and "something about the meaning of life"⁵⁰ (139). These individual pieces, however, fail to provide the reader with a systematic understanding of their ostensible topic. "Something about war in general" identifies the first day of war as the "beginning of suffering" for Sarajevans, who passed from "a period of

⁴⁶ "Nešto o ratu uopšte."

⁴⁷ "Nešto o prividu uopšte."

⁴⁸ "Džehennem uopšte."

⁴⁹ "Nešto o pamćenju uopšte."

⁵⁰ "A evo sad nešto o smislu života."

unbearable uncertainty to a period of blessed unhappiness”⁵¹ (11). When outlining the topic of illusion, the reader is met with the injunction to “never believe in reality.... This world rests on an illusion and nothing is how it seems in our absurdity” (27). The section “hell in general” focuses on Henri Barbusse’s *L’Enfer*, although the discussion does not completely exclude comparisons with Dante’s *Inferno*, at least as an intertext, in the context of Sarajevo’s burning libraries. “Something about the meaning of life” is an ironic commentary on the way siege life is reduced to securing and eating three meals per day, and then, also daily, eliminating this food. War brings oxymoronomically blessed unhappiness, reality is unbelievable, and “the biggest whore of all is human memory”⁵² (132). The rhetorical thrust of each of these otherwise different statements about an aspect of lived experience in besieged Sarajevo involves linking general maxims with specific circumstance in a way that deflates, overturns, or otherwise complicates the general rule.

Kebo imagines and addresses a “beginner” reader in another formal way: he includes in *Sarajevo for Beginners* a fairy tale about two brothers, one of whom stays in Bosnia while the other emigrates to Norway (25-38).⁵³ Explicitly employing the language and structure of a fairy tale establishes another facet of the expert/beginner relationship between narrator and reader. If a beginner’s guide conveys practical knowledge in a simple and accessible way, a fairy tale traces out moral or ethical

⁵¹ “Rat je u Sarajevu počeo šestog aprila 1992. godine.... od tog dana računa se početak patnje.... [M]i smo upravo tog dana, šestog aprila, iz perioda neizdržive neizvjesnosti prešli u period blažene nesreće.”

⁵² “Najveća kurva je ljudsko pamćenje.”

⁵³ The fairy tale unfolds in a number of fragments, which are grouped – along with other fragments – into a chapter entitled “The City of Multi-layered Beauty [Grad višestruke ljepote].” The city in question is actually Mostar, not Sarajevo; likewise, the brothers are from Mostar.

lessons in a similarly accessible way. These two genres have obvious differences, and in no way do I seek to conflate them.⁵⁴ However, it is useful to keep in mind the shared didactic goal of both the beginner's guide and the fairy tale and, moreover, the way in which each of these is achieved by presuming a beginner reader (whether or not the actual reader is, in fact, a novice).

While war might enter into a fairy tale as a plot device, what I am concerned with here is the way the formal elements of a fairy tale can be used both to structure a narrative and, more importantly, to create and sustain meaning by meta-textually underscoring the genre conventions. A 1994 sketch on Sarajevo's *Top List of Surrealists*, a well-known satirical television program, illustrates clearly how the synthesis of fairy tale structure and wartime context can achieve powerful effects.⁵⁵ The sketch, "Sarajevo Cinderella [Sarajevska Pepeljuga]," was broadcast during the siege and belongs to the *Wartime Surrealists* repertoire.⁵⁶ It begins with one of the Surrealists asking his uncle Ahmo for a story. The boy rejects *The Tale of Military Intervention*, *The Thousand and One Nights Without Electricity*, and "the one about no man's land"⁵⁷ because he has read them

⁵⁴ For further discussion of fairy tale forms and functions, see: Ruth Bottigheimer, *Fairy Tales: A New History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009) and Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968).

⁵⁵ For more on the *Top List of Surrealists* in alternative and mainstream Yugoslav (and post-Yugoslav) culture, see: Pavle Levi, "Yugoslavism Without Limit," *Disintegration in Frames* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 57-84.

⁵⁶ Episodes attributed to the *Ratni nadrealisti* [Wartime Surrealists], rather than to the *Top List*, were aired during the war, and focus heavily on the challenges facing those in besieged Sarajevo. Besides this historical fact and thematic focus, it was and is common for viewers to divide the group's work into prewar and wartime periods. This stems largely from the fact that the group's composition changed during the war, as several key members of the group left Sarajevo: most famously, Branko "Đuro" Đurić, who emigrated to Slovenia, and "Nele Karajlić" (Nenad Janković), who left for Belgrade in the early months of the war. See: Boro Kontić, "Crk'o nam maršal [Our Marshall Has Croaked]," *Dani* (February 28, 1995), 78.

⁵⁷ "[P]riča o ničijoj zemlji."

and, besides, they are boring.⁵⁸ Finally, uncle Ahmo finds a suitably new and interesting story to read. The story of Sarajevo Cinderella (played by Saša Petrović) begins “in a distant and forgotten city, beyond seven minefields and seven trenches.”⁵⁹ The familiar Cinderella story is thus populated with the equally familiar hardships of daily life in Sarajevo under siege. The prince (played by Zenit “Zena” Đozić) is a UN peacekeeper. Cinderella’s tasks include fetching water and giving a “radio broadcast” of the day’s news with only her own voice. The fairy godmother first demonstrates her power by turning on the electricity and producing water from a hose before transforming Cinderella’s old clothes into a ball gown. Only in its moral does “Sarajevo Cinderella” differ from the one advanced by the original fairy tale: Sarajevo Cinderella does not marry her UN prince and the previous evening’s merriment is revealed to have been a dream. Nonetheless, the sketch does not completely occlude a happy ending, although it greatly strips down expectations for what constitutes an ending worthy of a fairy tale. The lingering effect of the fairy godmother’s magic means that Sarajevo Cinderella no longer waits in a queue for water or food for more than thirty minutes, and her blood pressure level is always good.

Irony is produced here, as in many other *Top List of Surrealists* sketches, by juxtaposing the rags-to-riches fairy tale and the chaos and trauma of war. More

⁵⁸ Literary, journalistic, and anecdotal allusions to *The Thousand and One Nights* were widespread. The link between storytelling and staving off death, which serves as a framing device and one of the major motifs of *The Thousand and One Nights*, became a way of narrating the experience of siege, and a useful metaphor for the relationships between words and violence, and between story and power. Moreover, the sheer length of the siege (1395 days) brought into focus literary works that emphasize the passing time, waiting, and being subject to the decisions of outsiders. For example, in addition to *The Thousand and One Nights*, we see in literature and journalistic prose frequent references to Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, Borges’ “The Babylon Lottery,” *The Day After* (1983 film), Spielberg’s *Schindler’s List*, and even Eco’s *The Name of the Rose*.

⁵⁹ “U jednom dalekom, zaboravljenom gradu, iza sedam minskih polja, iza sedam rovova....”

specifically, this irony is sustained by propounding and then slavishly adhering to a rigid generic structure, despite the seeming lack of fit among the details in the genre. Here, the framing device of the child hearing a story read by his uncle at the beginning of the sketch becomes doubly important. The boy, on one hand, stands in for an “everychild,” a novice in need of the moral truths metaphorically passed along. On the other, he is anything but a beginner, as evidenced both by the list of stories he has already read and the way he sleeps through the shelling with which the sketch concludes. From Malik to the nephew begging his uncle for a new story, the child reader figures prominently in wartime generic conceptions of the beginner to whom these literary guides present themselves.

“GEOGRAPHY IS NO TEACHER AT ALL!”: A MAP OF CHANGED SPACE⁶⁰

Mehmedinović often refers to the space of Sarajevo, both the way it is laid out as a city and the way a person experiences this space while moving through it. Thus, wartime changes to the cityscape impact both how the city is reorganized in space, and how its inhabitants conceptualize and traverse its streets and landmarks. While the distance between parts of the city has not, objectively, changed between the prewar and wartime periods, they seem to be calibrated according to different measurements. For instance, Tito street, the main thoroughfare that runs from the old Ottoman center of the city to the adjacent Austro-Hungarian part, once seemed so long as to require a tram or

⁶⁰ The first part of this heading is taken from Kebo's *Sarajevo for Beginners*, a section entitled “Geography or a Hundred Years of Sanctions [Geografija ili sto godina sankcije]”: “Zemljopis nije nikakva učiteljica” (Kebo 14).

taxi ride; in wartime, Tito street can be traversed “in two steps” (149).⁶¹ Likewise, the routes that people use to get around the city have changed during the war. Instead of open pavement, Sarajevans use ad hoc “war paths” that do not have the “finality of asphalt”⁶² (6). These paths, created in parallel and opposition to the urban-planned sidewalks and streets, are worn down and rerouted, abandoned and picked up again, depending on their changing exposure to snipers and shelling. In both of these cases, the logic according to which Sarajevo is organized spatially has undergone a major shift with wide-ranging repercussions. The prewar imperative to “be seen” has been revoked and replaced with its opposite: “don’t be on display”⁶³ (8). Thus, the city of wide boulevards full of casually promenading pedestrians has been turned into an unstable, cramped, and unpredictable space that one runs through with all possible speed.⁶⁴

A strong sense of place infuses many works. Many of the fragments in *Sarajevo Blues* are named after quarters or landmarks in Sarajevo: Alifakovac, Grbavica, Lapišnica, [Hotel] Bristol, Lion [cemetery]. Others refer to spaces that have sprung up, and become important during the war: Martyr’s Cemetery, no man’s land, tunnel, and the Chetnik position. This type of paratextual and intertextual organization creates a spatial framework for the work of description and analysis that makes up *Sarajevo Blues*.

⁶¹ Alcalay renders “u dva koraka” as “in just a few minutes,” thus exchanging the original spatial referent for a temporal one.

⁶² “Ali, nove staze nemaju svoju asfaltiranu konačnost....”

⁶³ “Ne biti izložen, to je sav saobraćajni kodeks i on je u potpunoj suprotnosti sa zahtjevima u miru....”

⁶⁴ For an excellent discussion of changing conceptions of space in direct reference to the famous practice of strolling on Tito street, see: Fran Markowitz, “Practices of Place: Living in and Enlivening Sarajevo,” in *Sarajevo: a Bosnian Kaleidoscope* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010). See also Chapter Two of this dissertation.

The “city has flattened out, like a military map” (141), Mehmedinović’s narrator asserts in *Sarajevo Blues*. And, indeed, a sense of changed spatial relations between points in the city, and the experience of living in space gives rise to the explicit use of maps in wartime cultural production. Some of these well-known maps are visual, and others are verbal; some are both. Having recourse to a real or metaphorical map allows this sense of “flattening,” as well as other kinds of distortion and focalization, to be productively employed to depict, analyze, and convey traumatic changes to the physical and epistemological geography of Sarajevo.

Mehmedinović’s choice of a military map is not an idle one: it highlights the fact that notions of space were changed, and mental cartographies adjusted, because of the painfully literal “flattening” being done to the city by its besieging army. Looking down on the city from its hills or sniping from tall buildings within the city, soldiers in the Yugoslav National Army [JNA] saw the city stretched out like a military map.

Thus, when TRIO’s famous “Enjoy Sarajevo” poster was first printed on an old JNA military map [FIGURE 1.3], the print achieved an additional level of irony. A paper shortage in Sarajevo motivated this palimpsest, but the visible original background only amplifies the already arresting image, which, in characteristic TRIO fashion, ironically repositions familiar icons and symbols in the context of Sarajevo in order to mount both a pointed critique and a particular type of commemoration.

An urban legend maintains that, with this particular poster, the members of TRIO hoped to provoke Coca-Cola into taking legal action against them and bringing them to the United States for a trial, thereby allowing them to escape besieged Sarajevo. The lawsuit never materialized. Meanwhile, this kind of “copyright infringement” was hardly unique: TRIO freely borrowed and adapted all manner of other artistic works.



FIGURE 1.3: TRIO, “ENJOY SARAJEVO” POSTER (1992/1993 VERSION)

Another well-known wartime map is the “Sarajevo Survival Map,” produced and disseminated by FAMA. The striking map, designed by Suada Kapić, illustrated by Ozren Pavlović, and with commentary by Nihad Kreševljaković, depicts besieged Sarajevo graphically (in both senses of the word), its well-known landmarks ringed by hand-drawn tanks [FIGURES 1.4 and 1.5].

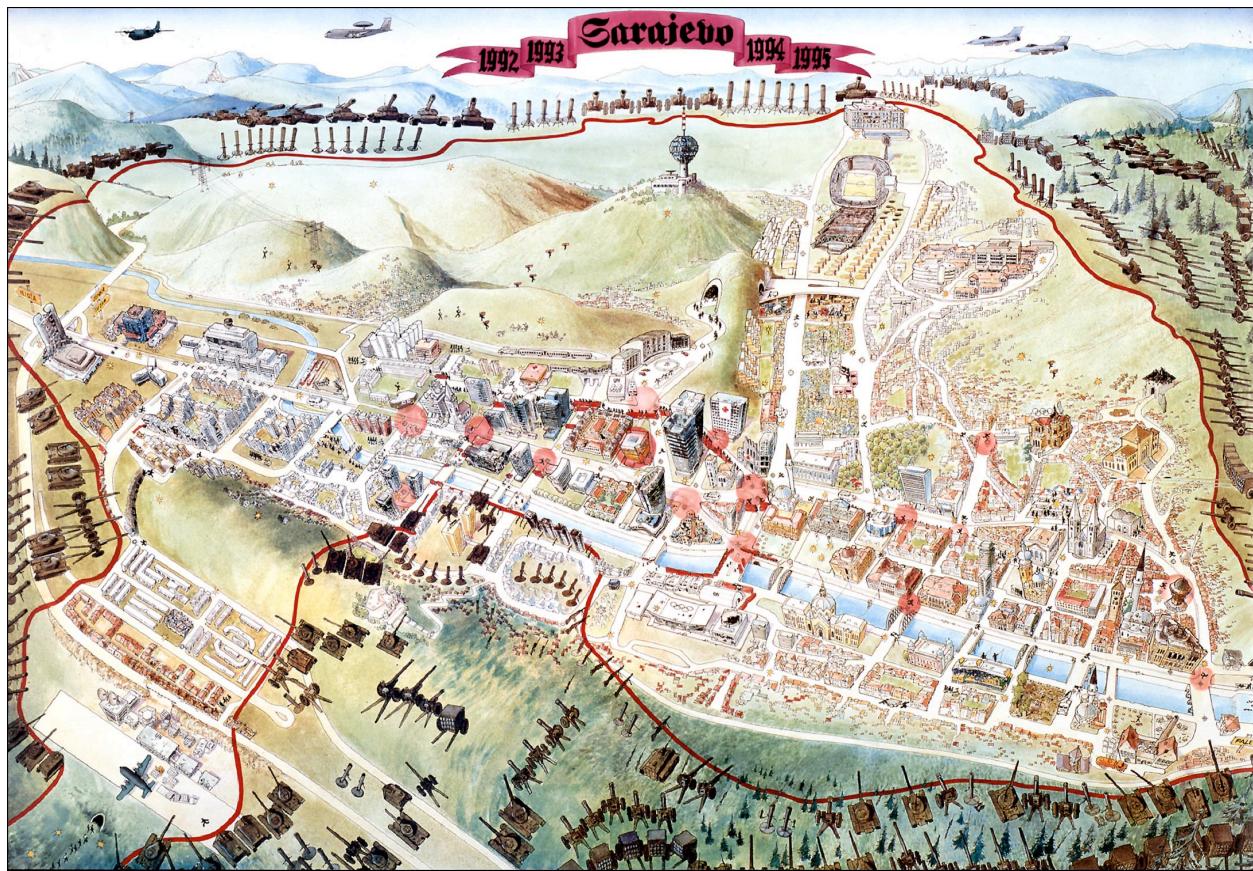


FIGURE 1.4: SUADA KAPIĆ, “SARAJEVO SURVIVAL MAP” (© FAMA 1996)

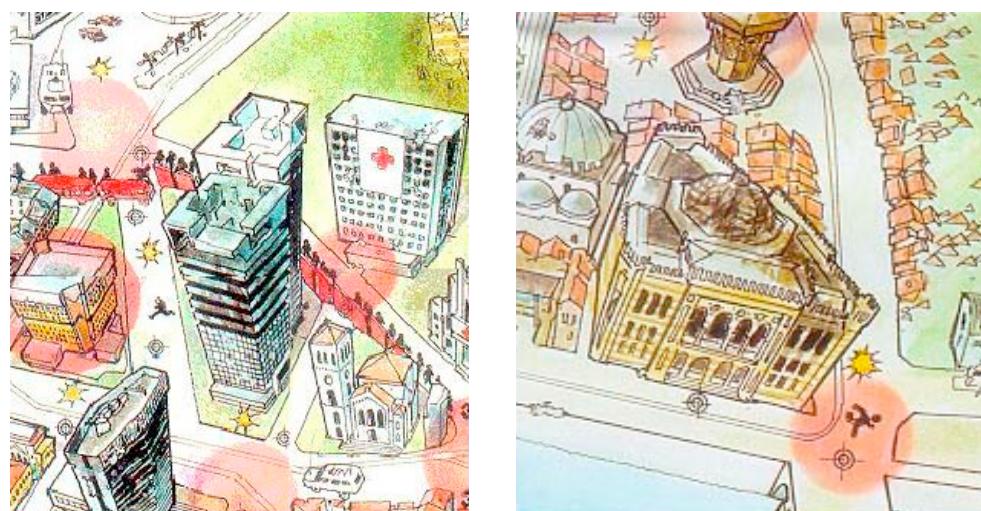


FIGURE 1.5: “SARAJEVO SURVIVAL MAP” DETAILS (© FAMA 1996)

Left: Marindvor neighborhood (Holiday Inn, Parliament, St Josip Church)
 Right: Sarajevo Vijećnica (Habsburg-era town hall, repurposed in 1949 as the National Library)

The editors realized that “an accurate map would be an invaluable asset for moving around the city” (Kapić et al.). The map, thus, appears to serve a primarily practical function. It highlights the “danger zones” most vulnerable to snipers, while both portraying the new wartime spatial layout of the city and providing extensive commentary on the way buildings, space, and movement were repurposed, changed, and resignified to the circumstances of war.

Created on the basis of documents and photographs taken during the siege, in order to produce an image of altered geography of a city isolated from the rest of the world although under the eye of the world media. The map is a testimony to the city’s survival thanks to a whole new civilization created on the ruins of the old one, a testimony to the city’s recycling, usage of the solar energy, water purification pills, and satellite communications. The map contains all the details of survival, describing also how facilities essential for every city managed to function.... When future generations start to research this phenomenon and the period of disintegration of Yugoslavia, this map will make it easy to understand the city’s geography and its limitations during the siege. (Kapić et al. 1996, np)

However, the Survival Map was not finished and distributed until 1996. Thus, the act of mapping the city with the explicit focus on survival became both an act of documentary witness – but also, in its retrospection, an act of memorialization. The aesthetic treatment of seemingly practical advice serves to convey through irony the texture of war and, simultaneously, to commemorate it.

We see even more strikingly in Dževad Karahasan’s 1993 *Diary of Exodus* [*Dnevnik selidbe*] the meaningful interplay between space and narrative. He employs ekphrasis in his portrayal of Sarajevo. Karahasan does not simply describe the contours or salient physical characteristics of the city, but verbally inserts a map into the text itself. For this reason, the effect produced particularly by the essay which opens the book, “Sarajevo, Portrait of an Inward City,” and a later essay, “Hotel Europe,” is ekphrastic rather than merely descriptive. Both of these essays inscribe in narrative the

structural layout of the city and, in doing so, create meaningful symbolic place from physical space. By reconstituting in narrative that which has been physically destroyed, while providing bitter commentary on the substitution of ideas for material objects, these essays represent the trauma of loss and memorialize the city in a way that foregrounds space.⁶⁵

Karahasan's ekphrastic inscription depends upon what he sees as the "internal" nature of Sarajevo: the fact that the center of the city, the *čaršija*, is closed off from the rest of the world both by the hills surrounding the city and the residential neighborhoods, the *mahale*. These old neighborhoods, by contrast, border and are exposed to that which lies beyond Sarajevo. The internality of the center is related, however, to a type of openness to the world—while the peripheral spaces of the neighborhoods are characterized by particularity and what Karahasan calls semantic closedness. The main part of the city is divided by the Hotel Europe into Turkish and Austro-Hungarian parts. The Hotel, thus, functions as the "semantic center" of the city. The spatial and semantic centrality of the Hotel is reflected in its cultural centrality: "to know Sarajevo means both to be accustomed to and to need to go to the Hotel Europe quite regularly"⁶⁶ (93). Only by tracing out in words the way in which the city works, and how its parts fit together, does the reality of urbicide become, for Karahasan, truly traumatic. The trauma of the city's physical destruction changes the semantic structure of physical space—but also how meaning is constructed through this geographical awareness. Through trauma, and more specifically, through its narration in Karahasan's

⁶⁵ For further discussion of artistic techniques used to represent trauma spatially, see Chapter Two of this dissertation.

⁶⁶ "Znati Sarajevo znači imati naviku i potrebu da se relativno redovno odlazi u hotel 'Evropu.'"

use of ekphrasis, the physical internality that defined Sarajevo in a spatial sense becomes, through violence, the psychological internality of a city that no longer exists. The movement from “material to conceptual reality, from its valley surrounded by hills to the realm of memory, of remembrance, of ideas”⁶⁷ (21) is the legacy of trauma. Thus, *Diary of Exodus* recuperates as narrative place the loss of the spatial city.

“FOR AN INSTANT, SOMETHING IN DEATH’S DOMAIN SERVES LIFE”⁶⁸: A SURVIVAL GUIDE

Beyond providing the specificity and taxonomy of a field guide, or the accessible wide-ranging overview of a beginner’s text, *Sarajevo for Beginners* invites readers to approach it as a survival guide. Such a text contains specific knowledge, as in a field guide. However, in striking contrast, a survival guide is solely focused on describing the processes by which essential tasks ought to be carried out (often in difficult or extreme circumstances), developing a set of precise skills. Rather than a field guide’s thorough description, a survival guide provides background information only when such background would be immediately germane to the survival task in question. If *Sarajevo for Beginners* read as a field guide gives the reader a sense of how the destroyed city looks and behaves, then as a survival guide, it shows the reader practically how to survive in and navigate the besieged city.

Bosnian readers of *Sarajevo for Beginners* during and after the war would have seen a clear intertext between its own use of the conventions of a survival guide and the famous *Sarajevo Survival Guide* [*Vodič za preživljavanje*], put out by the FAMA

⁶⁷ “[I]z materijalne u idealnu stvarnost, iz svoje kotline okružene brdima u pamćenje, u sjećanje, u idealno.”

⁶⁸ “Na trenutak služi životu nešto što je u vlasti smrti” (Semezdin Mehmedinović, “Lav [Lion’s Cemetery],” 49).

independent media company in 1993. Many aspects of tone, theme, and purview are shared between the two works. In bitterly ironic detail, the *Sarajevo Survival Guide* describes daily activities and difficulties: how to collect water, the importance of having a staircase to hide under, the imbalanced supply of and demand for common medications during war, what to give as a gift (a bar of soap, a bottle of clean water, an onion), a price list with reasonable prices for common items, sports and recreation (running, tree-cutting, rock-climbing on the faces of burning buildings, exchanging recipes with no ingredients), an overview of transportation in the city, advice about where to develop film and make photocopies, and important aspects of cultural survival. It includes a recipe book that details how to make common Bosnian dishes from nettles, rice, flour, and humanitarian aid lunches. In its last pages, the *Sarajevo Survival Guide* entreats an implied foreign visitor to Sarajevo, saying

When you come to Sarajevo, be prepared and be mature. It might prove to be the most important decision you have ever made in your life. Bring: good shoes which let you walk long distances and run fast, pants with many pockets, pills for water, Deutsche Marks (small denominations), batteries, matches, jar with vitamins, canned food, drinks, and cigarettes. Everything you bring will be consumed or exchanged for useful information. You should know when to skip a meal, how to turn trouble into a joke and be relaxed in impossible moments. Learn not to show emotions and don't be fussy about anything. Be ready to sleep in basements, eager to walk and work surrounded by danger. Give up all your former habits. Use the telephone when it works, laugh when it doesn't. You'll laugh a lot. Above all: don't hate.⁶⁹ (Kapić et al. 1993, 95)

⁶⁹ "Napomene: Kada dođete u Sarajevo, budite spremni i zreli. Može se to pokazati najvažnijom odlukom u vašem životu. Ponesite sljedeće: dobre cipele kako biste mogli hodati dugo i trčati brzo, pantalone s mnogo džepova, pilule za vodu, njemačke marke (u malim apoenima), baterije, šibice, bočicu s vitaminima, konzerviranu hranu, piće i cigarete. Sve što donesete će se upotrijebiti ili razmijeniti za korisnu informaciju. Treba da znate kako da preskočite obrok, kako da nevolju pretvorite u šalu i da se opustite u nemogućim trenucima. Naučite da ne pokazujete emocije i ne gundajte zbog svačega. Budite spremni da spavate u podrumu, voljni da hodate i radite okruženi opasnošću. Odustanite od ranijih navika. Koristite telefon kada radi, smijte se kada ne radi. Vi ćete mnogo smijati. I pored svega, ne mrzite."

In many ways, the *Sarajevo Survival Guide* and *Sarajevo for Beginners* work in tandem within particular didactic textual practices to establish and then destabilize the reader's expectations, document experiential reality, and, through irony, provide a critique of the war. It is as a survival guide that *Sarajevo for Beginners* vividly documents the way practical and ethical codes have been updated by the harsh reality of war. If, as seen in the quotation above, the *Sarajevo Survival Guide* gives lists of useful objects and instructions for how they might be employed to save or improve lives, *Sarajevo for Beginners* focuses also on objects that have lost their immediate utility. Not only objects, but also habits and attitudes, can be rendered unnecessary in wartime circumstances:

tablecloths (absolutely non-functional and unnecessary), *tapestries* (ugly concoctions that serve only to take away the sight of those who make them and sour the appetite of those who look at them), *books* (read and pass them along), *paintings* (anyone who wants art should go to a gallery), *figurines* (their primary purpose is to prettify a room; laughable), *electric orange juicer* (what a degenerate a person must be who does this juicing with electricity that can otherwise be done by hand; and why juice oranges anyway, they aren't lemons), *juicers* (fruit is best consumed in its natural state), *wallpaper* (it looks ugly and prevents the walls from breathing, the paste evaporates; altogether unnecessary and too much), *drapes* (blinds are sufficient), *table service for eight, twelve, or twenty five people* (most often housed in apartments that can hold a maximum of four guests; more than this should be invited to a bar, not one's home)....⁷⁰ (Kebo 92)

This passage gives a sense of how *Sarajevo for Beginners* rhetorically strips down the setting for the reader; this functions as a narrative correlate to the systematic way in which Sarajevo, as a modern European capital, is emptied of superfluous (and not-so-

⁷⁰ "Evo šta ne treba: *stolnjaci* (apsolutno nefunkcionalni i nepotrebni), *gobleni* (ružni, izmišljotina za gubljenje vida onih koji ih prave i kvarenje ukusa onih koji ih gledaju), *knjige* (pročitaj i daj dalje), *umjetničke slike* (kome je do umjetnosti, nek ide u galeriju), *pseudoskulpture* (prvobitna namjera im je da uljepšaju prostor; smiješno), *električni cijedac narandži* (koji degenerik čovjek treba biti da bi uz pomoć struje cijedio ono što inače može rukom; a zašto uopšte cijediti narandže, nisu limun), *sokovnik* (voće je najbolje jesti u prirodnom stanju), *tapete* (ružno izgledaju, sprečavaju zidove da dišu, isparavaju ljepilo; sasvim nepotrebne i suvišne), *zavjese* (dovoljne su roletne), *servisi za osam, dvanaest i dvadeset pet osoba* (najčešće se drže u stanovima čiji je optimum četiri gosta; sve preko toga zove se u kafanu, a ne kući)...."

superfluous) objects. The book proceeds, in various ways, to engage with a reality that has been razed and made dangerous.

In addition to providing detailed instructions, survival guides urge readers and users to employ common objects creatively to make the best of the circumstances in which they find themselves. Therefore, their tone is often optimistic and motivational. We see this synthesis of practical skills and encouraging tone at several points in *Sarajevo for Beginners*. With five liters of water, we read, “one can work miracles”⁷¹ (87). The text goes on to instruct the reader in the art of “bottling”: showering using a hanging PET bottle.⁷² Here we are reminded, in a slightly more detailed and practical way, of the recipes for nettle pie and tea cigarettes depicted in both *Sarajevo for Beginners* and the *Sarajevo Survival Guide*. Another piece in Kebo’s work urges readers to follow a series of rules when walking or running in the city. This piece is entitled “In the [rifle] scope,” a phrase that recurs again and again in the text (74-75).⁷³ The fragment gives instructions in several different categories: how to walk (don’t walk, run; or walk “like a Serb”⁷⁴), what to carry with you at all times (your ID), what to wear (never anything flashy, nothing green, and certainly not a headscarf).⁷⁵ Above all, the text implores, “you must know every crossroad by heart”⁷⁶ (75).

⁷¹ “S pet litara vode mogu se napraviti čuda.”

⁷² “Flaširanje.”

⁷³ “Na nišanu.” Indeed, many elements of the text could thematically and stylistically be characterized by the title of another piece, “Ja nisam čovjek, ja sam samo meta na nišanu snajperiste [I am not a man, I am just a target in the scope of a sniper].” (Kebo 77).

⁷⁴ “Kao Srbin.”

⁷⁵ The color green and headscarves are visible links to Islam.

⁷⁶ “Treba u dušu znati svaku raskrsnicu.” Crossroads were one of the most hazardous areas to walk in besieged Sarajevo, and certain crossroads were infamously dangerous.

Throughout passages that could be read as elements in a survival guide, readers find allusions to a specific relationship between experience and knowledge. The narrator dissects the sequence of sounds that follow a grenade on its path: first the launch sound, then the whistle, then the detonation, then the “plop” sound of someone being hit. Added to this are additional sounds: screams, sounds of crying, and a hum of voices from the cemetery (60-61). The tone of practicality becomes ironic here: a reading of the text itself is informed both by the fact that its instructions are aimed at someone learning for the first time to avoid grenades, as well as the implied extra-textual knowledge, that Bosnian readers were already skilled in listening to and dodging grenades. It asserts that “anyone who has lived through a detonation even once should be regarded as a wise person.... Perhaps these people know the secret to life. A sound is one of the great secrets. The sense of hearing is the superior sense”⁷⁷ (59). The dire and trying circumstances under which Sarajevans are living are connected, at times, with a superior practical insight.

However, the English blurb on the back cover of the *Sarajevo Survival Guide*, written by author Bora Ćosić, recasts and complicates this idea that the material included in a survival guide – or its generic presentation of information – truly helps one to guard against death. “How to survive,” it begins,

but also how to die in the city? This is the first guide-book of death in recent history, a guide-book which puts an end to our lighthearted wanderings across the globe.... This guide-book will certainly deepen our sadness, but it might also dampen the false optimism of charitable games. There is no help. There are no rescue teams and no life preservers: the ambulances are prime targets, and the red cross on a sleeve is a suicidal invitation to those who are going to shoot. This is why we have to stay where we are. (np)

⁷⁷ “Ko je makar jednom doživio detonaciju treba ga smatrati mudrim čovjekom.... Oni možda znaju tajnu života. Zvuk je jedna od velikih tajni. Čulo sluha je vrhunsko čulo.”

The lack of a direct causal connection between instructions given in a detailed way, and the perfect mastery of skills outlined has tragic consequences in lived experience. Because in a besieged city, “skill” is no guarantee against a chance encounter with death, particularly with the nature of the threats leveled against those who remained in Sarajevo. In this respect, a section that instructs readers in the best way to dive for the ground during an attack is illustrative. They can either follow the “Sarajevo” model, which involves immediately, inelegantly, but efficiently lying down without taking any time to contemplate the action; the “London” model, wherein one removes one’s coat, carefully lays it down, and only then lies on top of it; or the “Sokolac” method, which has not been used often enough for it to have developed its own characteristics (most Sarajevans who practiced it have moved to Pale and have no need to dive to the ground).⁷⁸ In reality, however, because grenades are falling in rapid succession, there is no time to follow either the “London” or the “Sokolac” model, leaving the “Sarajevo” as the only viable option (64). Further, through absurdist allegorical framing, the technique of falling on the ground is correlated with a choice to abandon Sarajevo (in either the “London” or “Sokolac” manner), or to remain in the city. Those who remain are the only ones required to cultivate these skills, and having these skills are characteristic of being Sarajevan.

Both the *Sarajevo Survival Guide* and *Sarajevo for Beginners* call attention to the grave state of affairs in Sarajevo in an unexpected way. By using the familiar form and rhetoric of a survival guide, the passages establish a degree of irony that brings

⁷⁸ Sokolac: a village northeast of Sarajevo that was ethnically cleansed during the war and incorporated into the larger Republika Srpska municipality of “East Sarajevo.” Pale: the wartime capital of Republika Srpska.

devastation and death almost unbearably close to the reader. Meanwhile, however, the texts insist on rhetorically sustaining an uncomfortable ironic distance.

TELLING STRANGE TIME: THE CHRONICLE

Wartime cultural production was marked by thoroughgoing, albeit varied, attempts to chronicle events and to structure them in time. Everyone, Mehmedinović's narrator in *Sarajevo Blues* claims, "is besieged by the present"⁷⁹ (30); they do not talk about the past. This word, *opsjednuti* ("besieged") is the same one found in the subtitle of *Sarajevo Blues –Glossary of a Besieged City*. And, indeed, the siege takes on both spatial and temporal dimensions for Mehmedinović, as well as other authors.

The notion of a timeline or chronology is conceptually linked with that of a calendar. When "war has buried time," Mehmedinović's narrator eventually questions even "what day is today? When will Saturday arrive?"⁸⁰ (7). The progression of previous days into subsequent days loses its meaning in a context where the present occludes both past and future. As we will see, a chronology can indeed be traced out. However, conceptualizing the future – much less hoping that it will include an end to the war – is a different exercise entirely. Who, "in December [of 1992] will print calendars for 1993?"⁸¹ (7), the narrator of *Sarajevo Blues* wonders. The calendar is both an object and a narrative device.

⁷⁹ "Ljudi koje srećem ne govore o onom što je bilo, svi su opsjednuti ovim što je sada...."

⁸⁰ "...[K]ao što je ratom zatrpano vrijeme; koji je danas dan? kad dolazi subota?"

⁸¹ "... [K]o će u decembru štampati kalendare za 1993. godinu?"

For this reason, the 1994 calendar, produced by TRIO, serves an important symbolic and commemorative function [FIGURE 1.6]. The months of the year are divided into days as in any calendar. These days, however, are numbered not with dates, but with ordinal numbers that begin (off the frame of the calendar) on the first day of war in Sarajevo. The simple and familiar framing device clashes ironically with the traumatic background referred to and represented in this image. Moreover, the TRIO calendar intertextually refers to *The Thousand and One Nights*, thereby inserting the notion of a story that can stave off death.



HAPPY COUNTING IN 1994, Counting by Aleksandar Kordić, Design 'Trio' Sarajevo

FIGURE 1.6: "HAPPY COUNTING IN 1994," TRIO

Sarajevo for Beginners includes a number of the timelines detailing events in a “normal day.” In addition to the one discussed below, *Sarajevo for Beginners* includes a daily schedule of an old woman from morning to night. It is, tellingly, entitled “The Thousand and One Nights [Hiljadu i jedna noć]” (171-172). The attempt to present a routine event certainly fits within the genre conventions of both the field guide and survival guide; it serves either to prepare readers for what they might encounter on any given day in Sarajevo, or to retroactively view the events they encounter as habitual, normal, and expected. At the same time, it provides some elements of practical advice for someone who finds him or herself in a similar situation.

8:17 – a girl on the bridge, right in the head. She didn’t let out a sound.

9:00 – the sniper doesn’t stop. The body of the girl is still over there, no one can get to it.

9:30 – grenades all around the Velepekara [bakery]. Anyway, there’s no bread.

10:00 – grenades around the tram stop. Anyway, the trams aren’t running.

10:22 – a boy runs up to the body, the one up above shoots twice at him. The boy ducks behind a container and doesn’t appear again.

10:45 – journalist for the *Sunday Telegraph*, Con Coughlin, on BBC: ‘Anyone who has been to Sarajevo and has seen how the Serbs behave was in favor of military intervention. Such haughtiness can’t be conceived of by anyone who didn’t live through it.’

10:53 – the boy emerges from behind the container, crawls towards the girl, grabs her with his left hand and then, crawling further, pulls her back. A difficult sight: the bloody head hanging, the cries of people watching the scene from their windows, the boy once again disappearing behind the container.

11:00 – grenades, grenades, grenades....⁸² (43)

⁸² “Uobičajeni dan:

8,17 — djevojka na mostu, pravo u glavu. Glasa nije pustila.

9,00 — snajper ne prestaje. Tijelo djevojke još je тамо, нико му не може приći.

9,30 — granate по ‘Velepekari.’ Јонако нema хлеба.

10,00 — granate по tramvajskoj stanici. Јонако не rade tramvaji.

10,22 — jedan mladić trči do tijela, onaj odozgo dvaput puca na njega. Mladić se sklanja iza kontejnera i više se ne pojavljuje.

10,45 — Con Coughlin, novinar ‘Sunday Telegrapha’, na BBC-u: ‘*Ko je god bio u Sarajevu i vidio kako se Srbi ponašaju, poželio je vojnu intervenciju. Takvu bahatost ne može shvatiti niko ko je nije doživio.*’

10,53 — mladić izviruje iza kontejnera, puzi do djevojke, obuhvata je lijevom rukom i onda, i dalje puzeći, vuče nazad. Težak prizor: krvava glava koja visi, krići ljudi koji to gledaju sa prozora, mladić koji opet nestaje iza kontejnera.

11,00 — granate, granate, granate....”

The ironic framing of this piece as an “ordinary day” occurs on several levels and influences the particular commemorative work it does. First, the series of events listed are outside the range of “ordinary” prewar experience and, more importantly, recognized as such in Kebo’s prose. This is a portrait of a potentially traumatizing three hours for the wounded (or dead?) girl, the boy, and the onlookers. However, on another level, the piece’s irony rests in the fact that this scenario is all too “ordinary.” Only the BBC reporter, and his direct quote, provide a sense of specificity.⁸³ All other details (names, places, dates) are sufficiently abstract that the timeline of events might apply to many days. Moreover, the violence which bitter understatement describes as a “difficult sight” has indeed become, over months and years of repetition, a new kind of “normal.”⁸⁴ A similar “everyday conversation”⁸⁵ recounted between the narrator and a young boy, Dino, later in the book, highlights the process of re-normalization. When asked if his family is healthy and well, Dino replies, “Yes, except that my mom died,

⁸³ Con Coughlin was a journalist working for the *Daily Telegraph* as its Middle East correspondent during this period.

⁸⁴ Zlata Filipović, *Zlatin dnevnik* [Zlata’s diary] (Zagreb: Znanje, 1994); Mirko Marjanović, *Živjeti smrt: sarajevski ratni dnevnik* [Living Death: A Sarajevo War Diary] (Zagreb: Hrvatsko slovo, 1996); and Elma Softić, *Sarajevski dani, sarajevske noći* [Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights] (Zagreb: VBZ, 1994).

Similarly, literary, autobiographical, and scholarly accounts testified to the importance of actively maintaining a degree of “normalcy” through habit: “Sarajevans survived under siege by adhering to their normal routine and rhythms of everyday life to the greatest possible extent. Social scientists and psychologists have noted that preserving a sense of normalcy is a common response to violence.... The city in wartime was filled with stories of people taking extraordinary measures to preserve ordinary habits...” (Donia 2006, 317).

See also: Ivana Maček, *Anthropology in Wartime* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), particularly chapters 2 and 3; Rita Rosner, Steve Powell, and Willi Butollo, “Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Three Years After the Siege of Sarajevo,” *Journal of Clinical Psychology*. 59:1 (2003), 41–55; and Stevan Weine, *When History is a Nightmare* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999).

⁸⁵ “Svakidašnja konverzacija.”

grandma was killed, dad was wounded in the leg yesterday, and my sister's in the hospital with jaundice”⁸⁶ (161).

CONCLUSION: PRE-FIGURING AND RE-FIGURING COMMEMORATION

The issue of time is intimately connected with that of memory. And, in all of the works I have detailed here, literary memorialization equally attends to traumas of the recent past, narrative symbolization in the present, and an awareness of the future in which both the “present” of the textual artifact and the “past” of trauma will be integrated into commemorative practice. The way in which temporality can be imagined, and perspectives on time can be adopted at will, is elucidated well in the following passage. “Every year,” the narrator of *Sarajevo for Beginners* maintains, “we excused ourselves for one delusion, only to pass into a new one. Our desires became ever more meager, more humble, and more real:

- 1992: How we'll get drunk as soon as this is over.
- 1993: When this passes, how we'll eat until we're stuffed.
- 1994: If this ever lets up, then at least we'll get a good sleep.
- 1995: If I get shot, then at least this will stop.⁸⁷ (202)

On one level, this complicated temporal structuring partakes of the generic demands of the field guide and the survival guide, which often open with brief chronologies. It identifies a characteristic pattern of ordering and positioning oneself in time that is, presumably, shared widely among Sarajevans. It also contains elements of a strategy

⁸⁶ “Jesu, samo mi je mama umrla, baba poginula, tata je prekjucen ranjen u nogu, a sestra je u bolnici, ima žuticu.”

⁸⁷ “Svake godine opraštali smo se od jedne zablude i prelazili na novu. Naše želje bivale su sve oskudnije, sve skromnije, sve realnije. Istorija našeg otrežnjenja zapravo je bolna priča o našoj naivnosti. Evo kako smo se trijeznili:

- 1992: Kako ćemo se napiti, čim ovo stane.
- 1993: Kad ovo prođe, kako ćemo se najesti.
- 1994: Da se ovo hoće zaustaviti, da se bar naspavamo.
- 1995: Da me hoće pogoditi, pa da ovo već jednom prestane.”

that is implied by the tone of the passage, and which is indeed cultivated through an ironic stance: to optimally calibrate expectations about the future with real conditions in wartime Sarajevo.

The documentary stylistics of these pieces illuminate the way in which things that are vital to remember must be condensed, selected, and organized in narrative and in memorial practice. The primary mechanism of such stabilization of experience into memory is narrative. However, we also see glimpses where other forms of symbolization are employed. For instance, returning to *Sarajevo for Beginners'* extensive list of objects that have been rendered unnecessary in the new circumstances of war, we find the following inclusion:

photos (a hyperproduction of photos; throughout our lives, a thousand of them are taken; roughly a hundred is enough. Actually, just fifty-odd. Actually, ten of each family member), souvenirs (what purpose do these have? To prettify the room? They're usually kitsch. To remind you fondly of some trip you took? This associative dimension is very quickly lost and they take on a new dimension: the non-associative collection of dust)....⁸⁸ (92)

As has been widely theorized, photography has been instrumental in and fruitful for conceptualizing memory; as a representational medium, photographic conventions and practices exist in a mutually constitutive relationship with acts of memorialization that employ photographs.⁸⁹ Here, however, we see an almost Benjaminian dismissal and distrust of the photograph, at least in large mass-produced numbers. Photographs can be meaningfully incorporated into memorial practice, the passage asserts, only in small

⁸⁸ "...[F]otografije (hiperprodukcija fotografija; u toku životu napravi ih se hiljade; dovoljno je stotinjak. U stvari, pedesetak. U stvari, deset po članu obitelji), suveniri (koja im je svrha? Da uljepšaju prostor? Obično su kič. Da podsjetete na neko drago putovanje? Ta asocijativna dimenzija vrlo brzo se gubi i oni dobivaju novu dimenziju neasocijativnog skupljača prašine...."

⁸⁹ See: Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Andrea Liss, *Trespassing Through the Shadows* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); and Damian Sutton, *The Crystal Image of Time* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

numbers of highly individual photographs. Similarly, souvenirs that might otherwise serve a mnemonic function have lost their importance and their capacity to organize memories.⁹⁰ Included here in the form of a list that overtly focuses on their (lack of) practical function, the surplus photograph and the kitschy souvenir are fit into a new mnemonic framework: their ekphrastic treatment allows them to participate in a sort of alternative memorial, or anti-memorial. Whereas they used to mediate meaningfully between past and present, in conditions of war their only use is to collect dust. Neglected photographs and souvenirs serve as indices of how memorial practice has itself been reworked in relation not only to traumatic lived experience, but also to its textual emplotment.

One way of addressing the overwhelming presence of the present is, in fact, to chart out a chronology of minutes, days, and years. A fragment of *Sarajevo for Beginners* entitled “Something about war in general” states simply that “the war began in Sarajevo on the sixth of April, 1992.” The version published first in *BH Dani* enjoins its readers to “remember that date”⁹¹ (Kebo 1994, 54), while the manuscript version substitutes for the injunction a pithy evaluation: “A landmark day”⁹² (11). Here we can clearly see textual practice intersect with that of memorialization. Indeed, commemorative practice hinges on remembering and raising a physical or metaphorical monument.

The didactic rhetorical stances of the beginner’s text, field guide, and survival guide are intertwined with the injunction to memory in such a way that they cannot be separated from each other. In order to understand wartime cultural production in

⁹⁰ See: Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

⁹¹ “Upamtite taj datum.”

⁹² “Prelojni datum....”

Sarajevo, it is crucial to view generic structure as allied to mnemonic function. These works highlight the way in which literature can be both memory-productive and memory-reflexive, and how literary witnessing can prefigure, configure, and refigure – or premediate, mediate, and remediate – memorial practice, and vice versa (Erll 2011, 152-156; Ricoeur 1984, 1985, 1988).

The focus on memory and, in particular, memory as a discipline or practice in *Sarajevo for Beginners* emerges through the practical genres discussed at length, and also helps to explicate the choice of such genres. The wartime text vividly and provocatively claims,

the biggest whore of all is human memory. My memories vanish....The whole war, everything that we went through, has been condensed into a couple of images: a few grenades, a little hunger, a few art exhibits, some water queues, a handful of massacres, and that's everything.⁹³ (132)

Not only is memory faulty and deceiving, but it generalizes where one might crave specificity. In addition, it threatens to become a passive process in which “we don’t decide what is for forgetting, and what for remembering. The scenes choose us, not we them. Just like the snipers”⁹⁴ (72). Yet this commentary on memory is written while the war is still going on: it anticipates the dialectic of memory and forgetting, and fears the limits of memory in advance. Here textual practice becomes of primary importance: not only does writing down serve a basic mnemonic function, but the stylistic and thematic strictures of genre become a way through which to “choose scenes” actively. Moreover, the ironic futurity of Kebo’s stance towards the faulty nature of memory, the

⁹³ “Najveća kurva je ljudsko pamćenje. Moja sjećanja nestaju.... Cio rat, sve ono što smo prošli, zgušnulo se u par slika: malo granata, malo gladi, malo izložbi, malo reda za vodu, malo masakra i to je sve.”

⁹⁴ “Ali ne odlučujemo mi o tome šta je za zaborav, a šta za pamćenje. Prizori biraju nas, a ne mi njih. Isto kao i snajperisti.”

porousness of the human brain – especially in traumatic circumstances – adds an additional layer of emphasis on the selective and mediated quality of narrative memory.

The act of specific narrative witness, then, becomes not only one of cultural resistance, but also an assertion of literature's multi-faceted capacity to function mnemonically. In this way, we can view the epigraph at the beginning of *Sarajevo for Beginners* as doing more than simply establishing expectations for the reader. It explicitly links narrative witness, pragmatic genres of literature, and possibilities and mechanisms for commemoration:

A chronicle about Sarajevo
that encompasses and praises
its marvelous history,
bitter fate
and bright future,
all of which was carefully
examined, considered, and set down by
one Ozren Kebo from Mostar.
Very pleasant reading, in fact,
and useful for everyone;
read and remember.⁹⁵ (7)

While rehearsing the ironized notion of practicality that I have discussed, this passage also contains a striking intertextual reference to the chronicle written by Mula Mustafa Bašeskija, a famous eighteenth-century Ottoman Bosnian chronicler. The opening statement of Bašeskija's own chronicle, begun in 1756, reads, "here I will take down and record the dates of some events that happened in the city of Sarajevo and in Bosnia's vilayet, because, as it is said: what is written down remains, while what is remembered

⁹⁵ Ljetopis o Sarajevu / koji sadrži i veliča/ njegovu čudesnu povijest,/ gorku sudbinu/ i svijetlu budućnost,/ što je sve pažljivo/ istražio, razmotrio i utemeljio/ onaj Ozren Kebo iz Mostara./ Naime, vrlo ugodno / i za svakog korisno čitanje;/ čitaj i pamti.

disappears!”⁹⁶ (Bašeskija 1997, 36). Kebo not only alludes to an ancient relationship between writing and memory but also develops Bašeskija’s oft-quoted conclusion further. As a chronicle, the mnemonic potential of *Sarajevo for Beginners* explicitly includes the social and the ethical: a community of readers must read and must remember. Moreover, its mnemonics perpetually and ironically undercuts itself, both asserting and doubting the utility of writing and reading for that “whore” of human memory, with its caprice and limitations.

As a bookend to this epigraph, the “warning to the reader” that concludes *Sarajevo for Beginners* cautions that “the story about Sarajevo is just about at an end. Just a little more...the fact that we are all injured and there is no cure except in one thing. Everyone has to decide for himself what that thing is, and whether it can help him”⁹⁷ (205). This warning forcefully recapitulates the collection’s central hypothesis about the structural similarities and mutual reinforcement of reading, memorialization, and narration – while offering a faint hope that these practices might someday heal. Neither Kebo nor his readers know exactly what this fragmentary, but potentially restorative “thing” might be. But it is certainly the final essential object in the survival guide’s list, and Kebo provides his postwar “beginners” ironic directions about how to use it.

⁹⁶ “Ovdje će navesti i zabilježiti datume nekih događaja koji se zbiše u Sarajevu gradu i bosanskom ajaletu, jer kao što se kaže: Što je zapisano ostaje, a što se pamti iščezne!”

⁹⁷ “Upozorenje čitaocu: Storija o Sarajevu pred samim je krajem. Još samo malo... o tome da smo svi mi unesrećeni i da nam nema lijeka osim u jednoj stvari. Svako neka sam zaključi koja je to stvar i može li mu pomoći.”

CHAPTER TWO

CHRONOTOPES OF TRAUMA: TIME, SPACE, AND MEMORIAL PRACTICE

This chapter examines three texts, each of which employs a specific relationship between time and space as a conspicuous narrative means of tracing out the aftermath of trauma. The individual methods of innovatively framing of time and space that shape Aida Begić's film *Snow* [*Snijeg*], Aleksandar Hemon's short story "A Coin," and Alma Lazarevska's story "The Feast of the Rosary [*Blagdan krunice*]" allow for a nuanced understanding of how these categories function both in apprehending and in narrating trauma. My investigation is in conversation with recent works of trauma theory that identify place and landscape as central to the representation of trauma in fiction (Balaev 2012) and outside of it (Young 1993), as well as those that illuminate how temporality functions in narratives of trauma (O'Brien 2007, Pozorski 2006). However, because I insist on treating time and space, as they are fictionally depicted and inhabited in these three works, as inseparable from each other, the basis for my unfolding analysis is simply the Bakhtinian notion of chronotope: "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature.... Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (84). When Bakhtin claims that a chronotope is "where the knots of narrative are tied and untied" (250), this is more than a beautifully evocative phrase. The chronotope of a text can be more or less crucial to an understanding of the work of a text, but it is always present and always contributes to the text's capacity for representation.

On account of its capacious, but nonetheless specific concept, the chronotope can illuminate aspects of trauma that might otherwise remain out of sight. To date, only a few authors have undertaken investigations of how fictional representations of trauma might be analyzed using the notion of the chronotope. Michael Berry, Petra Eckhard, and Abigail Ward have each addressed this intersection in a somewhat tangential way. Eugene Arva, in his *The Traumatic Imagination: Histories of Violence in Magical Realist Fiction*, most substantially argues for the existence of what he calls the “shock chronotope” as a meaningful way of understanding how certain narratives of trauma treat and occupy time and space. Such a chronotope, Arva maintains, exists as “traumatic time-space made artistically visible through an act of imagination [in which] re-presented or reconstructed truth will *not* be of what actually happened, but of what was *experienced* as happening” (Arva 5-6, 40, italics in original). Arva’s study looks at the specific imaginative work of texts that employ magical realist techniques. However, as I will demonstrate, a rigorous understanding of chronotope helps to trace other rhetorical strategies used in Begić’s, Hemon’s, and Lazarevska’s works.

Tracing out fictional chronotopes of trauma, the way time and space might cohere after unimaginable loss, fosters an understanding of how trauma might look, or might feel, to an individual or social group impacted by great violence. In this respect, I correlate the fictional works in this chapter with significant extra-literary works, ranging from art exhibitions and public memorials to testimonial work of rape survivors during the war in Bosnia. Physical memorials occupy and bring together space and time in the lived world, as Andreas Huyssen convincingly demonstrates in his *Present Pasts*. Treating the sites and ritual timing of commemorative practice and built memorials alongside the chronotopes of fiction, I seek to highlight the way these

two worlds intersect and enrich each other. By drawing explicit parallels between the literary/filmic and social memorial spheres, I aim to demonstrate how works of fiction both contribute to and draw upon larger discourses used to narrate the recent traumatic past in Bosnia. In my investigation of these works' chronotopic features, the social context in which they exist is crucial because these works are intimately connected with historical traumatic legacies as they are commemorated outside of fiction.

As I shall demonstrate through this series of case studies, the inseparability and particularity of time and space in the works treated here allows them each to convey in stark relief the way trauma changes the usual working of time and space. Moreover, these texts effectively integrate other techniques – for instance magical realism, intertextuality, meta-textuality, and visual language – into their overall portrayal of rich and specific chronotopes. In this way, they demonstrate not only different structural elements of traumatic chronotopes, but also how a strong and visible chronotope houses or enables other narrative elements. Indeed, as I seek to show, fictional chronotopes of trauma can be inhabited and explored in ways that meaningfully coexist with, but do not replicate non-fictional acts of memorialization.

SNOW: THE TIME, SPACE, AND MAGIC OF SURVIVAL

The extended title sequence of Aida Begić's film *Snow* employs a constellation of visual and narrative techniques to situate the film's drama geographically and temporally. An intertitle establishes a particular chronotope: "Eastern Bosnia, 1997,"¹ it reads, paratextually indicating both that its action will be set in the war's immediate aftermath and that it will take place in a region whose population and socio-economic

¹ "Istočna Bosna, 1997."

structure was almost completely destroyed by the techniques of ethnic cleansing discussed in the introduction. These initially capacious markers are narrowed to the village of Slavno and a sequential series of days (beginning on Friday and continuing until the following Thursday). However, upon further consideration, these seemingly specific temporal and spatial points fail to uniquely define the film's context: "Slavno" functions as a stand-in for any number of similar villages in the isolated and mountainous region, architecturally and economically destroyed, sparsely populated by traumatized inhabitants (primarily women).² Similarly, the passing days are recognizably autumnal, both on the basis of landscape and the fact that the film's characters are busy making in making preserves, a characteristically autumnal task in the region. By using a simultaneously paradigmatic and nonspecific setting, and a relative and likewise nonspecific time period rather than a historical one, *Snow's* chronotope is ambiguously suspended between realist and fantastic understandings of time and space. As I will demonstrate, the weaving together of time and space in the film traces out the texture of how trauma and postwar memories are grounded in time and space and alter the affective sense of both.

It is, in fact, the film's first scene that establishes a relationship between time and space that the remaining film will come to inhabit. In this opening scene, five of the six remaining Slavno women and five children (four of them orphans) are gathered at Nadija's house, the film's primary communal indoor setting. It quickly becomes clear

² My own extensive scouring of prewar and postwar maps reveals no village with such a name, either in the vicinity of Zvornik (as the film suggests) or elsewhere. Similarly, in all film reviews and descriptions, the toponym is often omitted in favor of the film's written geographical marker, Eastern Bosnia, or it is used either nonspecifically or archetypally. See, for example: Cynthia Simmons, "'Women Engaged' in Postwar Bosnian Film" (*Kinokultura* 14, 2012). *Snow* was filmed in the village of Žigovi, near Goražde.

that they are playing a guessing game, in which Nadija pantomimes one of the Slavno men killed during the war. Nadija uses characteristic gestures, or even a mustache made of a snipped lock of hair, to prompt the gathered women and children to name the husband, father, or son. This game functions mnemonically in that it communally enforces accurate recall even among those who have forgotten those who died. Zehra, for example, does not remember Faruk. For those who purport to remember, the details they recall diverge: some women object to certain guesses (saying, for instance, “[he] didn’t have a mustache!”³). The game is also an indication of the dominant presence of the traumatic past for these women. At several points, two women seem unable to bear the game. Jasmina, a woman who lost both her husband and children, removes herself to smoke, gazing meanwhile in sorrow at a photograph of young boys and a small pile of objects later implied to have belonged to her murdered husband. Alma, the film’s protagonist, prepares to leave for her own home after Nadija, with the help of the young Zehra, plays the part of Alma herself and her husband, Faruk, in the ongoing role-playing game. Visible in the background of the scene are photographs of Nadija’s husband, as well as the jars of preserves that will come to play a vital role in the villagers’ imagination of an economically sustainable future.

The presence of these dead men, whom we soon learn are missing and unburied, clearly haunt the village and the inhabitants left behind. Moreover, the filmic chronotope established in Slavno is one in which the span of months and years of waiting to bury these men thickens and becomes inseparable from the space of waiting. And Slavno, as a space inhabited by its survivors, comes to depict, both spatially and

³ “Nije Avdo imao brkove.”

temporally, the intrusion of the past into the present, the seemingly undifferentiated nature of days, and the foreclosed quality of the future.

The space inhabited by the film, in Slavno and its surroundings, bears witness to this sense of overlapping temporalities. The village bears the telltale marks of war: the mosque is heavily damaged (lacking a roof and walls, its interior space is turned into an exterior one), houses are ruined and haphazardly patched, and a nearby forest is rumored to be filled with unexploded landmines. Yet these spatial markers, which seem to have been rendered uninhabitable and consigned to the past, are actually occupied in the film's present. The villagers pray in the mosque, gather in each others' houses, process plums for jam in courtyards with broken walls. An apparent synthesis of past, present, and future in the lived space of the film reveals itself to be misleading. Here, color plays an important role in bridging time and space: the dull hues of mountainous Bosnia's short autumn days convey an "eternal present" in which the film's characters are seemingly caught. Most of the villagers remain in Slavno out of a sense of obligation to the dead or missing. Not only does their life in the present contain constant references to the past, but the living take or refrain from action based on a sense of duty to the past. Jasmina's acerbic melancholy embodies the wartime past being converted into an ethical compass for the postwar present. The past inheres in particular objects – a husband's razor, eyeglasses, pajamas – transforming them from objects for common use into "holy objects."⁴ Jasmina and, to a lesser extent, many of the other women in the village, inhabit the present by revering these relics of the past. They are committed to remaining in Slavno because it is the site of these embodied memories of the past, those which have been unearthed and, perhaps more importantly, those which remain

⁴ "Svetinje."

hidden. The landscape itself becomes a shrine, commanding vigilant reverence and focusing attention on the lost past.

Likewise, the future exists in the film primarily as a vague and threatening presence, as evinced in the film's thematic concern for impending winter. The titular snow, thus, stands as a metonym for an uncertain and destructive future. However, the villagers have established an almost exclusive focus on the past, both as their chosen manner of commemorating the dead and as what they consider their ethical duty. Anticipating and working to build a future is interpreted by several characters as a violation of this duty. Nadija's daughter, Lejla, sees her mother's cooperation with Alma in the small preserve business as an indication that Nadija does not want her husband, Lejla's father, to return. The scene in which Nadija provides justification for her daughter's fear is chronotopically rich. Nadija is framed by the ruins of a house along the highway where Alma and Nadija are preparing to set up their stall. The abandoned and wrecked space forms a "scary"⁵ context that Nadija hesitantly investigates (for unexploded ordnance and "Chetniks") before entering.⁶ As she speaks, Nadija passes articles of "village" clothes through the erstwhile window of the ruined house. Putting on "city" clothes, loosening and grooming her hair, and applying make-

⁵ "Strašno."

⁶ Here and elsewhere the term "Chetnik" refers to Serbian or Bosnian Serb soldiers. It is also used as a derogatory term for ethno-national Serbs more generally. The term comes from World War Two, when *Četnik* (pl. *Četnici*) referred to Serbian royalists who eventually sided with the Nazis against the communists (*Partizani*) under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito. The term *Četnik* was laden with offensive connotations during the Yugoslav period, when it was used to refer to Serbs, especially combatants. Some of those who had fought on the royalist side considered themselves legitimate heirs of this movement in the postwar period, continuing to voice allegiance to its World War Two-era leader, Dragoljub "Draža" Mihajlović, who was captured and executed in 1946. In the period covered by this dissertation, both the appellations *Četnik* as well as *Ustaša* (pl. *Ustaše*), referring to members of the Nazi-allied Croatian fascist forces during World War Two, were revived by the warring parties during the Yugoslav Wars of Succession. The terms are used with some frequency in the postwar press and everyday speech on the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

up to appeal to potential roadside buyers can be seen as acts of future-mindedness. Nadija's words, however, trace out a micronarrative mythologizing the past, when her husband was handsome, the TV soaps were entertaining, and they "lived well."⁷ Nadija's idealization of the past contains a different sort of obligation to the dead than does Jasmina's sacralization, but Nadija's stance nonetheless impacts her interpretation of the present and future. Her hopes for their business are mere subsistence ("just a carton of cigarettes"), not the hopes for productivity and sustenance that compel Alma's creativity and pride in innovation.⁸

In addition to *Snow*'s general linkage of represented space and time, the film's chronotope is further refined by the subtle incursion of magical realist features into the film's narrative and visual landscape. These elements contrast with the primarily narrative style of the film, serving to focus attention on the strange and unfamiliar connections traumatized protagonists draw between temporal and spatial categories. One such magical realist phenomenon thematizes an alternate sense of time: the young orphan boy, Ali, has hair that grows faster than usual when he is afraid. Another conspicuous use of magical realism focuses primarily on a recast notion of space, wherein physical laws no longer apply: a woven carpet is unfurled before the villagers, becoming suddenly a solid suspension bridge.

In tracing out the particular interruption of non-realistic elements into a generally realist film, I choose to identify these moments as exemplifying a magical realist mode for two reasons. First, *Snow* contains what Wendy Faris calls an

⁷ "Lijepo [smo] živjeli...."

⁸ Alma says: "Napravit ćemo biznis." To which Nadija replies: "Biznis? Da zaradimo za šteku cigara, bila bih presretna."

“irreducible element of magic” (167). Further, the existence of this subtle magic is undeniable and, to the film’s characters, unproblematic; the presence of a magic that punctuates and organizes the film is “not a simple or obvious matter, but it *is* an ordinary matter” (Zamora and Faris 3, italics in original), one that is “recounted largely without comment, in a matter-of-fact way...without undue questioning or reflection” (Faris 177). Thus, the magical realism that comes to define the chronotope of *Snow* encompasses what Tzvetan Todorov calls “the fantastic.”⁹

According to Todorov, the fantastic mode displays an indeterminacy about the nature of supernatural phenomena: in a fantastic text, these phenomena are neither explanatorily integrated into common understandings of reality (as they are in uncanny texts) nor are the laws governing reality narratively changed to account for these happenings (as they are in marvelous texts). The fantastic is characterized by the “duration of uncertainty” (Todorov 25) it sustains for both text and reader about the nature of these un-real phenomena. Unlike texts that can be described as uncanny, in which seemingly supernatural events may be explained rationally (as, for instance, being merely a dream or a trick of the imagination), or marvelous, which inhabit an alternate reality with its own organizing principles, fantastic texts permit neither characters nor readers from determining whether events taking place are real or

⁹ This is detailed in: Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973). As Todorov – and others who employ his structuralist schema in slightly less rigid ways – articulates, the fantastic, the uncanny, and the marvelous constitute modes of representing events, beings, and themes that do not belong to the world as we know it. These modes differ not in the degree or prominence of the non-realist elements they contain, but in the textual stance they inhabit towards the presence of seemingly supernatural, un-real, or magical occurrences. Todorov is primarily interested in the fantastic because it resists the type of comforting interpretive resolution offered by the modes of the uncanny and the marvelous that flank it on the spectrum he traces out. Todorov also details two hybrid modes: the fantastic-uncanny and the fantastic-marvelous (44-53).

illusory. This “hesitation” between the poles of certainty is at the core of Todorov’s understanding of the fantastic.

Departing in a helpful way from Todorov’s rigid and exclusively textual taxonomy, Rosemary Jackson conceives of the fantastic mode as intimately tied to notions of the individual unconscious and to socio-cultural values. In Jackson’s model, the fantastic mode’s refusal to “observe unities of time, space and character” and its “doing away with chronology, three-dimensionality and with rigid distinctions between animate and inanimate objects” (Jackson 1) have powerful textual as well as extra-textual effects. However, it is precisely because the fantastic mode does not deal with the transcendental, because it represents – albeit with striking additions, subtractions, or alterations – a world that is familiar to both reader and character, that it opens up new and meaningful understandings of psychic activity and allows for pointed critiques of accepted truths governing social and cultural landscapes. The fantastic “invert[s] elements of this world, re-combining its constitutive features in new relations to produce something strange, unfamiliar and *apparently* ‘new,’ absolutely ‘other’ and different” (8, italics in the original). In this regard, Jackson’s understanding of the fantastic hinges less on absolute conformity to the Todorovian ideal, with its focus on hesitation, and more on the capacity fantastic modes – and fantastic moments – have to recast the familiar world in surprising and strange ways that generate new understandings of this world.¹⁰

¹⁰ This idea that, in rhetorically and representationally undoing seemingly inexorable laws of physics, literature might reveal truths about the world we live in is not a new one. Nor is it limited to the modes of the fantastic or magic realism, or even the uncanny or the marvelous. The same can be said about art of all kinds, including (and perhaps especially) works that aspire to realism. As Victor Shklovsky famously maintained, the “purpose of art” itself is “to make the stone *stony*.... to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known.... to make objects ‘unfamiliar,’ to make forms difficult” (Shklovsky, in Lemon 12).

The film *Snow* evinces a kind of “magic... [that] refuses to be assimilated into...realism. Yet it also exists symbiotically in a foreign textual culture – a disturbing element, a grain of sand in the oyster of that realism” (Faris in Zamora and Faris 168). Thus, even as *Snow*’s use of magical realism rests on an inviolable core of magic that is nonetheless ordinary and requires no special attention, this is not a neutral or complacent magic. It causes viewers to hesitate in their assessment of its reality or supernaturality. Characters do not hesitate, simply because they know that it is both very real and very magical; the chronotope of the film permits this as the natural, and perhaps even necessary, ordering of time and space in the postwar landscape it traces out. However, this “grain of sand” that refuses to be dissolved into realism persistently empowers the characters in *Snow* to mourn wartime losses and to recuperate a sense of community that has been threatened and destroyed. In this way, the film’s magical realist chronotope indicts postwar Bosnia.¹¹ It stages, through the stubborn presence of magic in an otherwise recognizable world, a powerful “cultural corrective, requiring readers to scrutinize accepted realistic conventions of causality, materiality, and motivation” (3). In this way, *Snow*’s particular chronotope casts the legacy of communal trauma in new ways, illuminating unconventional methods of ameliorating real wounds that plague the world beyond the film.

One of the most striking uses of magic realism in the film inheres in the figure of the young boy, Ali, whose hair, as mentioned above, grows rapidly when he is afraid,

¹¹ Here I use “indict,” a term that frequently occurs in discussions of magical realism’s capacity to level potent political critiques. Elleke Boehmer, for example, notes that “magic effects, therefore, are used to indict the follies of both empire and its aftermath” (235), while Zamora and Faris identify the way “hallucinatory scenes and events, fantastic/phantasmogoric characters are used in... magical realist works... to indict recent political and cultural perversions” (6).

thus violating understood behaviors of time and space. In an oft-quoted interview concurrent with *Snow's* 2008 screening at the Toronto Film Festival, Aida Begić mentions that she was influenced in her creation of the theme of Ali's remarkable hair growth by a friend who lived through the war and who, at that time,

had long hair and looked like a girl and that saved his life; but, he saw his father murdered. That inspired me to imagine a witness to murder whose hair would grow long to disguise him as female whenever he was afraid. That's why in the last scene the young boy finally has short hair, because he no longer has to hide. (Begić, quoted in Guillen, np)

My reading of this magical realist element does not focus on the way hair growth disguises Ali, but how its function as a physical manifestation of psychic activity serves not only as a symptom of the boy's own enduring trauma, but one that, because of its exaggerated and fantastic quality, goes a long way to establishing the film's reigning chronotope. Not only does Ali's hair function according to an alternate temporal framework than the one familiar to either *Snow's* other characters or to viewers of the film, but this element works to symbolize an understanding of time as it thickens into meaning in the film.

Ali's miraculous hair growth is mirrored by his inability to speak.¹² He utters not a single word throughout the course of the film, but acts out his thoughts and feelings through individual play, silent but expressive observation, and, most strikingly, by running away. Ali's silence is clearly recognized as a symptom sharing an etiology with his hair growth. Ali's grandfather, Mehmed, is responsible not only for the child but also for cutting his hair.¹³ In one such haircutting scene, Alma speaks to Ali as she

¹² In a remarkably similar characterization, Kerim, one of the young boys in *Perfect Circle* (discussed in Chapter Three), is both rendered mute as a result of trauma and exhibits a set of additional "symptoms" that are of a slightly fantastic nature.

¹³ Viewers are led to assume that Ali's parents, along with many other Slavno villagers, were killed during the war.

sweeps up the locks that Mehmed is trimming from Ali's head. Mehmed explains to Alma that Ali's hair has never grown so long during a single night.¹⁴ Alma posits that the mystery would be resolved, "if [Ali] could just tell us...."¹⁵ She continues the unspoken logic of this wish for healing through verbalization, saying to Ali as she smiles encouragingly up at the boy, "you'll tell me someday, won't you?"¹⁶ Here we see a classic Freudian understanding of trauma at work in which, as the result of a psychic wound that the subject does not fully grasp in the moment, he then acts out in nightmares and the compulsion to repeat certain acts. Freud privileges the act of speech in his model of working through trauma: by narrating the traumatic event, verbalizing what has remained inarticulate and perhaps inarticulable, the traumatized subject can move beyond its symptoms. Thus, Alma – and the film as a whole – sees in Ali's recounting of the cause and circumstances of his crippling fear, with its magic symptoms, an ultimate cure.

The magical realism of Ali's hair bears on the larger chronotope established in the film, particularly its temporality, because this remarkable growth is not only a symptom of a young boy's traumatic past, but of the entire community's enduring trauma. Likewise, Alma and Mehmed's wish for Ali to articulate the events surrounding his traumatic retreat into silence are echoed by the other villagers and, indeed, Ali's cure is linked to the communal cure of Slavno as a totality. That cure, and the unresolved tension of the film, rests in uncovering the missing bodies of Slavno's murdered inhabitants. And, as becomes evident, Ali's trauma stems from his being a

¹⁴ "Nikad duža...."

¹⁵ "Kad nam da rekao...."

¹⁶ "Pričaš mi jednom, jel' da?"

primary witness to the murder of at least two men, one of which is Nadija's husband and Lejla's father. The postwar chronotope of Slavno is one that is demarcated not only by past events, but also by the uncertainty of whether those presumed dead are, in fact, dead. This temporality is bound up with notions of space, as the unknown location of the mortal remains of Slavno's men bears equally upon the villagers' sense of time. Ali's hair growth, and the traumatic knowledge it stands in for, functions at the nexus of time and space in the film: Ali's hair grows as he runs away from Miro and Marc, who have returned to pressure the villagers to sell off Slavno, and, later, Ali wordlessly compels Miro's feverish revelation of the location of the missing mortal remains. Thus, the insertion of the magical realist element serves to characterize both the changed nature and interrelation of time and space after trauma, as well as creating an alliance between traumatic symptoms and traumatic knowledge that, through narration, can allow for individual and communal "working through."

The film's chronotope is both exemplified and developed in further specificity in its treatment of the theme of locality versus globality. In addition to its isolated geographical position and the degree to which its infrastructure was damaged during the war, the type of reconstructive and subsistence labor its inhabitants carry out underscores its chronotope. Throughout the film, Slavno residents restore the village's damaged structures (principally the mosque), communally process fruits and vegetables for village use during winter and for sale beyond Slavno, and weave textiles by hand. The manner in which these activities punctuate the film depicts the degree to which village life revolves around manual labor with hand-powered tools. Moreover, these efforts to rebuild the physical village and to support the community that still exists in Slavno are carried out in gendered ways: Grandfather Mehmed, often

accompanied by Ali, works with woodworking and brick-laying tools to repair the mosque, while the women use kitchen implements (notably a food mill and a huge wooden pot stirrer) to process plums, bobbins to make lace, and a floor loom to weave *ponjava*-style rugs.

This type of difficult and time-consuming labor is intimately tied with notions of belonging to the community of Slavno and, moreover, to conceptions of “a good life” in late 20th century postwar Bosnia. Nadija, for instance, complains as the group prepares plums for jam that she “doesn’t want to work like a donkey... and not even have enough for a cigarette.”¹⁷ In response, Alma chastises Nadija, saying, “it’s pathetic what you consider to be ‘[a good] life.’”¹⁸ For Alma, “a good life” means “the village, us.”¹⁹ Meanwhile, Jasmina indicates that if Slavno was once a site where “a good life” was possible, it no longer is. Jasmina’s facial expressions and tone convey regret at being forced to contemplate abandoning the village, but she nonetheless speaks her desire to give the three orphans in her care “a normal life.”²⁰ This sense that postwar Slavno is only partially capable of sustaining its community becomes not only a theme and plot point, but also fleshes out the chronotope of Slavno as provincial and even anachronistic.

¹⁷ “Neću da rintam k’o magarac. Za šta? Za to da nemam ništa za cigara.”

¹⁸ “Jadno je to što ti smatra životom.”

¹⁹ “Ovo što imam: selo, nas.”

²⁰ “Ona siročad su sad moja briga. Ja hoću da su školovani, da imaju normalan život.”

It is into this context that Miro and Marc, as semi-local “Serbs” and agents of semi-global capital, enter.²¹ Their mission to purchase the village land “all in one package”²² is presented to the villagers with the use of a map, highlighting Slavno’s extreme locality on two counts. Along with the entire surrounding region of Eastern Bosnia, Slavno is isolated by both distance and mountainous topography from the nearest urban centers, either Sarajevo or Belgrade. Second, it is the last village that remains to be sold to G&G, the development firm brokering the sale. Thus, the village stands as a final bastion of locality in a newly and rapaciously capitalistic country and region. In this regard, it is particularly notable that Miro makes his first visit to the village alone, as though paying a social rather than business call. Sitting with the villagers, many of whom continue with their domestic labor, Miro reveals kinship ties through which the villagers identify him familiarly and locally. He navigates hospitality and conversational rituals with ease, only brings up the true nature of his visit when

²¹ It becomes clear through the conversations with the villagers that Miro Jovanović is a Bosnian Serb originally from Zoranovac (another seemingly fictional village, eponymously named after the characteristically Serbian given name, “Zoran”) who has relocated to “the city” (presumably Zvornik). Incidentally, the contrast between Miro’s generic markers as a Bosnian Serb from Eastern Bosnia and the strong Sarajevo accent of the well-known actor Jasmin Geljo creates a slight cognitive dissonance. Miro fought in the Bosnian Serb army and witnessed at least some of Slavno’s men being killed after he successfully saved one of them, Hajro Čatić (by purchasing the man’s house “in a rush [*frku-frka*]” and helping Hajro to get papers for America). He is thus viewed with a mixture of suspicion and cautious trust by the Slavno villagers. Jasmina and Alma view him skeptically (although for different reasons: Jasmina distrusts Serbs in general as a result of wartime atrocities she has suffered, while Alma is resistant to him as someone involved in potentially selling the village). Nadija and Lejla (particularly the latter) begin to believe that Miro might have information about Omer, their missing husband/father and a friend of the man Miro saved during the war (this is confirmed: Miro saw “with his own eyes [*svojim očima*]” Omer being killed and was unable to save him). Marc (probably born “Marko”) is a former Yugoslav expatriate, who works for the foreign company (with implied Serbian investment) seeking to buy up land in postwar Eastern Bosnia. In contrast to Miro, Marc is decidedly non-local: he prefers to speak in English, turning to the local language only when necessary, and views the villagers with open disdain.

²² “Sve završavaju u paketu.”

asked, and even then only after a long period of pro forma questions.²³ In this way, Miro positions himself between acquisitive quasi-colonialism and rural local belonging, acting almost as a mediator between these forces. Unlike Marc, who calls the inhabitants of Slavno, “fucking villagers” (English in original) and remains a consistent outsider, Miro highlights his own belonging to the region (which he calls “our land”²⁴), even as he advocates for its sale. In this way, on the basis of his stance and his problematic investment in the local past, Miro inhabits the chronotope of Slavno as the film ties together the problematic coexistence of capitalism and local subsistence, past wrongs and future possibilities.

The film’s other major use of magical realism occurs at its denouement, and facilitates a move into a new chronotope. After the scene in which Miro reveals that Slavno’s men lie in the “Blue Cave,”²⁵ the camera immediately cuts to Grandmother snipping her rug, which she has been weaving out of collected scraps of cloth belonging to the other women, off the loom. The next shot cuts to a mountain stream, which the Slavno villagers are crossing by foot. As she approaches the stream, Grandmother unfurls the rug, which becomes a solid bridge for the remaining villagers to cross without drenching their feet. The montage created by this sequence of shots, all of which contain ambient noise but in which no character speaks, establishes a strong sense of causality and resolution. The lack of knowledge about the location of the mortal remains of Slavno’s dead has, up until this point in the film, served not only to

²³ In a typical postwar manner, some of these work to uncover Miro’s wartime activities and, thus, conversationally fit him into a social context (for further discussion on this ubiquitous practice of interlocution, see the final paragraphs of Chapter Four).

²⁴ “Kupili bi našu zemlju za dobre pare.”

²⁵ “U plavoj pećini.”

drive its plot but, as I have sought to argue here, has brought together time and space into a recognizable chronotope of traumatic loss, subsistence, and waiting. The information Miro reveals, the truth of which is confirmed through Ali's hair growth and demeanor, promises to allow the villagers to find the missing men, bury them, and, through such memorial activity, alter the terms of the chronotope in which they exist. If it is this crucial piece of knowledge that allows the villagers to make a trek up to the cave and, as occurs off screen, locate the bones of their missing loved ones – a trek that is arduous but which can be completed with mundane flashlights and walking sticks – what mimetic purpose does the pointed use of Grandmother's magical realist carpet serve?

This seemingly whimsical gesture is, as I will demonstrate, actually crucial to the film's construction of meaning, for it allows the traumatic chronotope of Slavno to change through the actions of the village women themselves, rather than because of actors or circumstances imposed on them from without. In this way, the subtle use of unnecessary magic allows the film to level a sustained political critique. As has been demonstrated, key characteristics of the chronotope established in the film are represented through traditionally women's labor, the making of preserves, offering hospitality in the form of coffee and bread, and weaving rugs. These tasks become a lens through which the interconnections between traumatic landscape and temporality unfold, largely because they demonstrate the precariousness and anachronism of such subsistence labor in a wider modernizing context. Throughout the film, traditional village craft, such as making preserves, is cast as economically unviable, because of its small scale and inability to tap into wider consumer networks. This local form of production is also opposed in methodology, scale, and implied muscle by the working

of multinational capitalism, as embodied in the proposed sale of the village to a Serbian development company.

The film's chronotope is built on the way in which postwar time and space have become melancholically fixed on the past, devaluing and enervating creative attempts to navigate into other chronotopes, thereby allowing for different forms of activity, or different categories through which to judge such activity. Attempts to shift from melancholy to mourning, to use Freud's terms, are difficult and fraught with tension in the film. For instance, when Alma's dream of and attempts at establishing a small business brings her into contact with those outside Slavno (particularly Hamza, a truck driver from Zvornik), the change is viewed with suspicion by some of the villagers. Jasmina and Safija exchange a telling and judgmental glance when Nadija mentions that Hamza seems to have taken a romantic interest in Alma beyond their potential business partnership. Jasmina and Safija's judgment seems strongly to inhere in the fact that Alma is a widow and that, as mentioned above, making plans for the future – whether falling in love again or developing business opportunities outside of Slavno – is seen as an abandonment of the traumatic memory of the past and an ethically-charged failure to commemorate the dead properly.

Grandmother's rug, therefore, makes a powerful entrance into the established chronotope of *Snow's* Slavno. Insofar as it is a recognizably traditional art form and, moreover, both literally and figuratively, a work made up of cloth that once belonged to each of the villagers, the rug stands as a symbol of local capacity and resilience. Endowing the rug with magical and real qualities, moreover, the film makes the case in this crucial scene that it is in the "myths, legends, rituals" – the "collective (sometimes oral and performative, as well as written) practices" held in common that "bind

communities together" (Zamora and Faris 3) – that communities should seek chronotopic change.

Grandmother's rug also recalls, through form and filmic function, a textile memorial by Azra Akšamija, her 2008 *Monument in Waiting* [FIGURE 2.1].²⁶ Akšamija is a Bosnian American artist who works primarily in sculpture and textiles, as well as contributing as a major critical voice in the field of Bosnian cultural heritage policy.²⁷ Akšamija's rug, a traditional Bosnian *cilim* made of wool, tells the story of ethnic cleansing during the war in Bosnia, focusing particularly on one of the major techniques of such "cleansing," the destruction of Bosniak architectural heritage and of material culture testifying to the coexistence of Bosnians of all faiths and ethnic backgrounds.

²⁶ For a detailed description of Akšamija's project, as well as further images of its creation and finished form, see:
<http://www.azraaksamija.net/project-8/> (Accessed 10/03/2016)

²⁷ For example, Azra Akšamija has been a leading figure lobbying for change in how key institutions of culture are treated, legally and socially, in postwar Bosnia. Akšamija, along with historian and art historian Maximilian Hartmuth, spearheaded the 2012 "Culture Shutdown" initiative on behalf of the Sarajevo Zemaljski Muzej, which had been closed in 2011, and other museums in Bosnia. The aim of this activist group was to prevent the closure of further institutions of culture in Bosnia-Herzegovina and thereby "prevent destruction of cultural heritage that belongs to all the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and enriches World heritage." Practically speaking, this meant that the members of Culture Shutdown have worked with directors of museums, curators, researchers, and other specialists to map the status quo of the seven institutions mentioned above, to pinpoint the causes and wide-ranging social implications of the museum crisis, and to suggest ways out of the untenable situation. This "solution" includes putting together a unified legal case that includes all of the institutions, lobbying for secure percentage-based financing from the state, entity, and canton to cover institution's unavoidable overhead costs, to combine institutions with similar missions and purviews, to otherwise change the operational structure of institutions to lower their necessary budgets, and to foster a sense of responsibility by civil authorities and individual citizens for institutions of culture. It also involved staking out a series of highly visible advocacy campaigns to garner attention to the serious threats facing institutions of culture in Bosnia.



FIGURE 2.1: MONUMENT IN WAITING (2008), AZRA AKŠAMIJA

The 1.8 x 3.3 meter *Monument in Waiting* consists of both folk patterns and geometric symbols. The rug's main narrative center, with its overt religious iconography, is surrounded by three concentric borders and ritually hung with ninety-nine prayer beads, the standard number used in Muslim rosaries.²⁸ These additional layers, primarily through their literal rather than abstract use of imagery, work in dialogue with the rug's center to create meaning. The three borders employ both traditional patterns and stylized versions of military paraphernalia. These icons of planes, grenades, and barbed wire are employed in such a way that, as Akšamija argues, "locally found patterns and symbols [are] converted into signifiers of political, military aggression and threatened collectivity, while providing a multitude of outlooks into the future" ("Monument in Waiting" description, np).

Akšamija studied two hundred and fifty different mosque sites in Bosnia to create a symbolic language for the eventual rug. The central rectangle uses a pattern of diamonds, one for each damaged or destroyed mosque, that are woven together in ascending branches to imitate a "tree of life" design, which is common in Balkan textiles [FIGURE 2.2]. This pattern symbolically represents Islamic religious tenets, insofar as it visually recalls both "the paradise garden and eternal afterlife" of Islamic belief while its layout's strong sense of direction becomes a *mihrab*, pointing the way to Mecca ("Monument in Waiting" description, np).

²⁸ This number represents the ninety-nine beautiful names of Allah [‘Asmā’ Allah al-Husnā], which is referenced both in the Q’uran and in Islamic tradition.

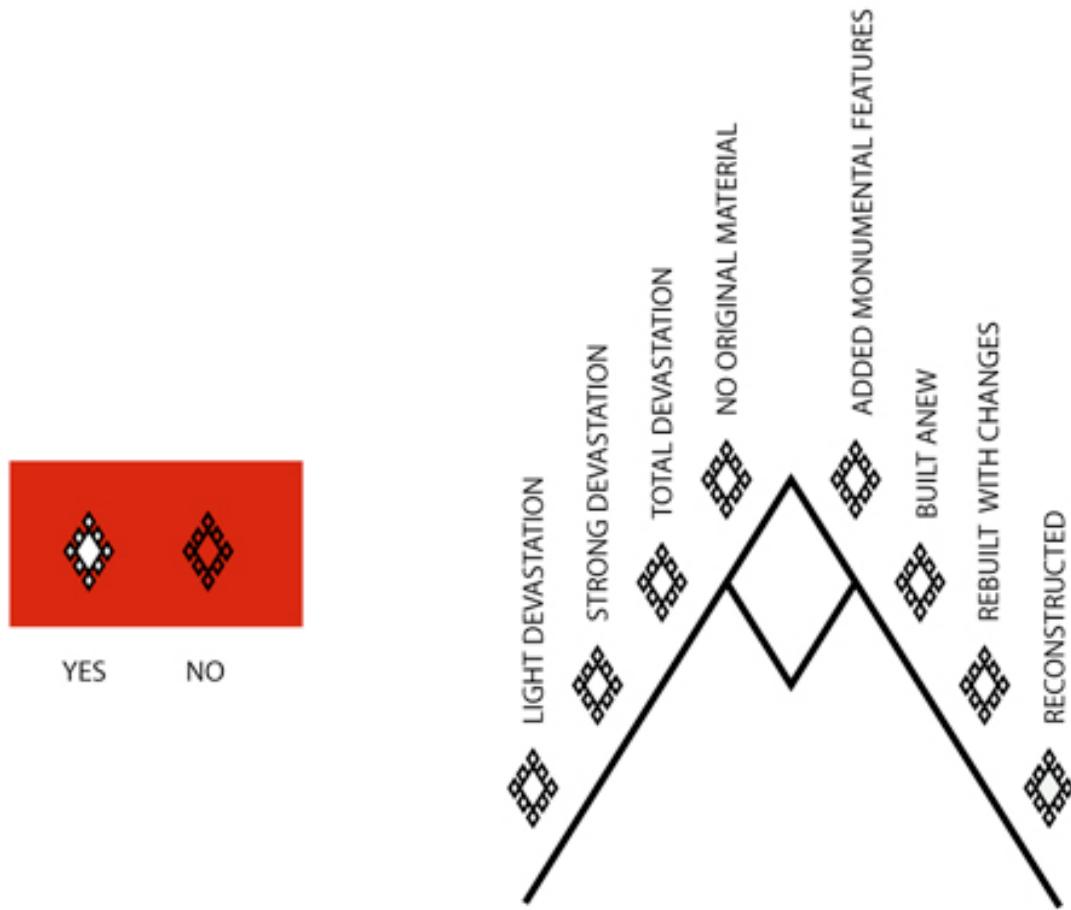


FIGURE 2.2: ARTISTIC SCHEMA REPRESENTING MOSQUE DAMAGE, *MONUMENT IN WAITING*

The particular symbols Akšamija weaves into the rug's different sections emerged as the result of a long period of archival and oral history research into both the original characteristics of mosques that were destroyed during the war and also into the structural and stylistic choices featured in mosques that had been rebuilt or were in the process of being restored. Additionally, Akšamija interviewed community members and architects alike, in order to glean information about the history of the mosques, as

well as individual war experiences. In this way, the rug can be seen as a symbolic “bridge between the internal and personal and the external and public spheres of the war” (Cooke and MacDowell 8).

The borders of Akšamija’s rug recall the tradition of Afghan “war rugs” which have been produced, almost exclusively by women, in the region since the 1980s and which portray images of war, including AK-47s, grenades, tanks, and bombers in a variety of hidden or overt ways.²⁹ As has been argued, these Afghan rugs display how the traditionally gendered labor of rug weaving syncretically includes images of modern technologies of war alongside traditional forms as a way of narrating war and, in transforming it into a usable art form, highlights the impact and experience of traumatic individual and social violence.³⁰ As Jasleen Dhamija maintains, “by weaving the feared form [women] could capture it and take away the powerful evil.... Thus the simple rug is transformed into an expression of faith in their ability to hone from irrational, petrified anachronistic images a world of their own” (quoted in Deacon and Calvin 186). In a similar way, Akšamija’s use of borders – which, as she points out, “usually symbolize levels of ‘cleansing’ and ‘protection’ of the central [panel]” – function in a way that domesticates and brings symbolic order to objects and

²⁹ For excellent overviews of the fascinating topic of these rugs and in-depth analysis of their use of imagery and participation in traditions of memorializing traumatic legacies, see: Ariel Zeitlin Cooke, “Common Threads: The Creation of War Textiles Around the World,” in Ariel Zeitlin Cooke and Marsha MacDowell (eds), *Weavings of War: Fabrics of Memory* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Museum, 2005), 3-29 (in particular, 4-5, 7, 14-15, 19, 24-25); Deborah Deacon and Paula Calvin, *War Imagery in Women’s Textiles* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2014), especially 182-188; Enrico Mascelloni, *War Rugs: Nightmare of Modernism* (Milano: Skira, 2009).

³⁰ These rugs are exemplary, but not unique. Indeed, as both Deacon and Calvin as well as Cooke and MacDowell argue, hybrid traditions that use textiles (often created by women) to comment upon, argue against, and recover from the violence and upheaval of war have been present for centuries and across the globe.

experiences that are unfamiliar, dangerous, and capable of great destruction (“Monument in Waiting” description, np).

At the same time, however, Akšamija’s rug does not fully domesticate or work through the trauma of war. The work remains incomplete in two important senses. First, its topmost section remains unfinished, its warp threads still attached to the upper beam on which it was woven (in contrast to the threads on the bottom, which have been cut into a fringe on which the prayer beads are hung). Second, the rug, on display either at its original exhibit, the Den Haag group show, *Since We Last Spoke About Monuments*, in Akšamija’s studio in Boston, or on loan to other institutions, continues to seek its intended position: as the artist claims, the rug is “waiting to be displayed in the [International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia], where it will actualize its function as a monument” (ibid). This unfinished state, and transitional location, creates a chronotope for the work and, referentially, for the lived experience of rebuilding and recovery after trauma. The rug’s deliberate incompleteness,

indicate[s] the continuing process towards closure through therapeutic means such as weaving, and that working to restore the architectural and emotional devastation in Bosnia-Herzegovina could become an endless process. The initiation of this process is visually communicated through the motif of the growing ‘tree of life,’ to which new branches with new stories can be woven. Yet, these stories would need to encompass all the destroyed mosques, churches, and all other lost monuments in Bosnia-Herzegovina. (ibid)

Its “utopian” quality, which coexists with its self-reflexive commentary on the nature of an artistic work’s completion, provides artistic insight into the chronotope of enduring traumatic legacies and the felt experience of the memory of waiting after trauma.

Grandmother’s rug, and its weaving that spans the whole duration of *Snow*, differs from either Akšamija’s piece or the Afghan war rug tradition. It is not, strictly speaking, recognizable as a “war rug” insofar as it lacks the kind of overt imagery and

artistic commentary that would confirm that it narrates wartime events. The rug is an example of a simple rag *ponjava*, rather than an ornamental *ćilim* like Akšamija's. Bosnia has both *ponjava* and *ćilim* weaving traditions, but each occupies a particular niche and status. *Ponjave*, because of their simplicity and relative ease of production, are often used for everyday purposes, in the heavily used parts of homes, and in particular, in rural dwellings. *Ćilimi*, because of their elaborate style and complexity of materials and weaving process, are considered both decorative and functional. They are often placed atop tables and on walls, and thus subjected to less wear and tear and preserved for longer periods than the readily replaced *ponjave*. These two kinds of rugs, as symbols of two distinct but overlapping spheres of domesticity, have acquired a broader socio-linguistic significance in the period during and following the war in Bosnia, when millions were driven from their homes and only thousands made the difficult decision to return. For example, a 2013 article detailing the living conditions of returnees to Bosnia in the postwar period is entitled, "From *ponjave* to *ćilimi*: A Return to BiH." This simple contrast immediately conveys a deep sense of ambivalence about return.³¹ Only a small fraction of individuals and families have chosen to return to Bosnia, and many who do end up in refugee centers rather than their original homes. The "returnee issue," as a prominent manifestation of zero-sum ethno-religious particularist interpretations of national identities and interests, has plagued Bosnian politics, as well as attempts at international intervention, since the institution of the Dayton Accords. Finally, and perhaps most importantly for the context of the film, Bosnians who have returned – and, I should add, those who stayed – almost unanimously express the

³¹ Here I leave aside the valid issue of whether such a "return" is possible, given the destruction of space, economic possibilities, and social structures of former homes.

sentiment that their life in the postwar country is worse in a great many categories. Even if they are (back) home, this home is furnished with only a shabby *ponjava*, instead of the *ćilim*, along with its accompanying resources, opportunities, and social capital, that they owned in the prewar era.

At the same time, the choice of a *ponjava* rug to occupy such a central role in *Snow* is a meaningful one both chronotopically and mnemonically. In contrast with the *ćilim*, a *ponjava* is a particularly homely article, in both senses of the word. In her *Peacebuilding in the Balkans*, Paula Pickering transcribes a proverb from one of her returnee informants, “God, give me my own rag rugs rather than someone else’s *ćilim* carpet,”³² indicating that “‘good people’ cannot be comfortable in someone else’s home” (109). Grandmother’s *ponjava*, as a plain and utilitarian textile, thus highlights the particular time and space of Bosnian postwar reality. Moreover, its mode of construction further highlights Slavno’s chronotope as poised between staying and leaving. The floor loom Grandmother uses is heavy and fixed, occupying a room heaped with cloth and finished textiles. Unlike Safija’s lace-making and the milling of plums, the tools of which can be moved, the manufacture of rugs is rooted in a specific place. The loom, then, becomes a symbol of the resistant choice to remain in Slavno against all odds, while Grandmother’s rug itself metonymically takes on these same qualities of solidity and constancy.

Meanwhile, the fact that this object is portrayed in a fully realist – almost naturalist – way until the scene in which it becomes a bridge renders its magical realist transformation even more surprising, and indicates how this use of magical realism is

³² Pickering’s transcription is misspelled and her translation is somewhat inaccurate, so I have corrected the proverb and retranslated it above. The original proverb reads: “daj mi Bože moje ponjave radije nego tuđi ćilim.”

bound up with notions of community, belonging, and commemoration. As has been well demonstrated, this literary mode has been often involved in bringing together aesthetic form and issues of belonging (Sasser 2014; Zamora and Faris 1995). More specifically, magical realism has been, rightly or wrongly, allied with many of the concerns of the “postcolonial encounter” (Bhabha 1990; Brennan 1989; Warner 2014) and even, as Homi Bhabha famously asserted, as “the literary language of the emergent post-colonial world” (7). Theorists like Anne Hegerfeldt and Stephen Slemon have tilted the balance of Bhabha’s claim from a focus on geography to a set of shared stances, preoccupations, and political implications. As Hegerfeldt argues, “magic realist fiction indeed is decidedly postcolonial in that it re-thinks the dominant Western world-view” (2). Magical realist texts, then, are often read “as reflecting in [their] language of narration real conditions of speech and cognition within the social relations of a postcolonial culture” (Slemon, in Zamora and Faris 411). Moreover, in their treatment of modes of social belonging and communal identity that exist within broadly colonial systems of power, these texts often showcase a type of magic that derives from indigenous resources, which are, as Sasser claims, “frequently utilized as a tool... through which to recuperate a buried identity and culture, that which preceded the rupture of colonization” (Sasser 7). I do not argue that *Snow’s* use of magical realist elements, particularly Grandmother’s rug, can be comprehensively explained by a postcolonial reading of the film. However, insofar as its particular Bosnian postwar chronotope thematizes tradition and modernity, local production and rampant semi-global capital, it does resemble these works in which traditional, regional forms become sources of magic around which communities and shared notions of identity can literally cohere. Insofar as the “rags” that make up Grandmother’s *ponjava* are, in fact,

scraps taken from various cloth articles belonging to the Slavno women, this rug, as a magical realist object, becomes a powerful symbol of local production and individual participation in communal identity. Moreover, because of the collected nature of its materials and the ritual passage in which it functions, the rug becomes a commemorative object that both preserves in itself a symbol of each Slavno resident and aesthetically bears witness to the way in which this community, in recovering its missing members, commemorates its traumatic recent past.

Functioning in parallel with Grandmother's rug on structural, visual, and verbal grounds is the impending snow from which the film takes its name. In the same Toronto Film Festival interview quoted above, Begić indicates that the particular qualities of snow made it an appealing visual element and symbol for the film itself. "Snow is one of nature's most beautiful, incredible things," she noted, adding that snow is "physical but also metaphysical" (Begić, in Guillen np). The way snow functions in the film is not exactly magical, but not entirely realist: it comes unexpectedly and prematurely for the season, but its coincidence with the villagers implied recovery of the mortal remains of the Slavno men renders it almost fantastic. In this way, snow becomes thematically, semantically, and hermeneutically allied with the process of revelation, of bringing that which was hidden to light and integrating it into memorial practice and social habitus. In this way, it subtly underscores the film's use of fantastic elements: the word "fantastic" comes "from the Latin *phantasticus*, which is in turn from the Greek φανταζω, meaning to make visible or manifest" (Jackson 13). Snow, in the film, gestures towards all of the realist and magical realist forces at work that allow the Slavno villagers to "realize desire, to make visible the invisible and to discover absence" (ibid 4). In this regard, snow functions not only to create meaning in the film, but also to

underscore the process of memorializing trauma, working through it, and changing chronotopes.

In her director's notes, Begić begins by quoting a regional proverb, "the snow does not fall to cover the hill, but to reveal every little animal's trace.³³" At the core of this phrase is the contrast between covering and uncovering, hiding and showing – an idea that lies at the very heart of *Snow* as a film. Moreover, the use of snow takes on additional depth in the film for viewers from the former Yugoslavia or familiar with its folklore. The semantic field that surrounds "snow" in the region's oral and folkloristic tradition underscores it as a semi-fantastic element whose "magic" rests in its ability to selectively conceal and reveal. In his late 19th century study of regional folk riddles [zagonetke], Tomislav Maretić dwells on a series of paradoxical proverbs that center on snow's ability to hide some objects and expose others. The use of paradoxes, moreover, demonstrate an important rhetorical quality of the riddles Maretić analyzes; he argues that, in putting together seemingly illogical sequences, opaque constellations of images, and combinations of real and impossible objects, these riddles are best approached through the aesthetics of the "fantastic and also the arabesque" (4-5). A full discussion of the way in which the fantastic and the arabesque modes buttress each other over each of their long literary and artistic traditions remains beyond the scope of my analysis.³⁴

³³ "Ne pada snijeg da pokrije brije, nego da svaka zvjerka trag pokaže."

³⁴ The arabesque literary mode has its basis in Islamic art and architecture, and the West's Orientalist appropriation of this style of elaborate and largely non-figural decoration (cf. Berman 2012, Gordon 1992). One particular feature of arabesque art and architecture that was transposed into the literary realms in a variety of ways is the notable lack of a clear beginning and end of a pattern, the sense of non-linearity and circularity that fills and masters space (Duraković 2015). The nature and function of the arabesque generated a lively discussion in late 18th and early 19th century German aesthetics, including – among the major philosophical and literary figures of German Idealism and German Romanticism – Kant, Schlegel, and Goethe (Menninghaus 2000). Later literary figures whose work moves beyond the Romantic tradition, while maintaining obvious ties with it, integrated the arabesque into their work. See, for

However, it is helpful to integrate Maretić's observation that folk riddles can and should be approached as one does fantastic or arabesque works of art. The arabesque mode has a tendency to "create an ambiguity between figure and ground, and to obfuscate the relation of its parts" (Gordon 34). Thus, they, like works written in the fantastic or magical realist mode, necessitate a reader or viewer's concerted effort in parsing obscure or confusing elements in the work, finding traces that remain partially hidden, and actively participating in working out meaning and assessing the degree to which representations of events can be interpreted according to formal laws.

When Maretić discusses riddles involving snow as an illustrative introduction to the rhetorical and semantic work of folk riddles in general, he points to one riddle in particular: "a *ponjava* rug covers the whole earth, but can't [bring] the brother to itself"³⁵" (Maretić 4). The answer to this riddle is, of course, snow, which is conveyed as a *ponjava* rug. Thus, the proverb mentioned above, this riddle, and the film *Snow* overlap in both their semantic field as well as in their common rhetorical or representational, rather than realistic, properties. Not only does this help to fit together two objects that become overarching symbols in the film, but the logic of the proverb and riddle discussed here helps to explicate the film's own rhetorical and visual use of chronotope as a method of revealing how postwar trauma might be worked through. The *ponjava* rug and the sudden snow participate not only in uncovering missing bones, but also in revealing to the villagers a newly shared determination to remain in Slavno. The snowfall covers

example: Edgar Allan Poe, *Tales of the Grotesque and the Arabesque* (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1840) and Nikolai Gogol, *Arabeski* (Saint Petersburg: Nauka, 2009 [1835]).

³⁵ "Jedna *ponjava* pokri po svijeta, a ne može brata do sebe."

what should be covered, while exposing new ways in which time and space might be sutured for the residents of Slavno.

The film concludes with an almost wordless, but visually rich scene. Like the film's first scene, its last is introduced by an intertitle that, as I will demonstrate, is indicative of chronotopic shift. Reading "Friday, 1998," this intertitle seems only to have to do with time, and the fact that several months have passed between the day in 1997 when the remains of its men were found, snow unexpectedly fell on Slavno, and Hamza's purchase of the women's preserves offered the villagers hope for a sustainable life.³⁶ However, in the logic of visual sequencing that has become familiar throughout *Snow*, this temporal marker is visually sutured with space through a series of sequential shots. An aerial shot of Slavno opens the scene, providing a holistic view of the village from a perspective that has never featured in the film thus far. From such a vantage point, Slavno's isolated position, and the fact that abandoned houses remain on its outskirts, is reiterated. However, looking down from above, the village is obviously occupied and, moreover, in the process of restoration: several of the houses have blue roofs, indicating that they are in the process of repair, while shot's ambient sound of pounding and scraping foregrounds this sense of rebuilding.³⁷ Next, the camera moves to a small cemetery, in which many of the graves are obviously new; eight of these, strongly suggested to be the graves of the men found in the Blue Cave, appear particularly recent and have a headstone [*nišan*] in the form of an obelisk, a common

³⁶ The green grass and trees, as well as the long sleeves worn by Ali and Azra as they play basketball, indicate to viewers that it is either early spring or early fall in this final scene – that is, between five and ten months have passed since the previous scene.

³⁷ What seems at first to be the regular pounding of a hammer or mallet is actually the dribbling and shooting of the children's basketball.

postwar Muslim style of burial marker and the one, for example, chosen for all of the graves in the Srebrenica-Potočari Cemetery. Finally, the camera moves to an overhead shot of Ali and Azra playing basketball amidst a collection of building materials (terracotta bricks and roof shingles, wood beams, and bags of cement) across a small road from Hamza's blue SUV.

Together, these three shots work together with the temporal marker to convey not only that the villagers have decided to stay in Slavno, but that this decision has fundamentally shifted Slavno's chronotope from one of melancholic waiting and the constant presence of the traumatic past to one of creatively productive labor that sustains and futurity. The film's final scene, then, is colored by a question uttered earlier, when the sale of the village seemed imminent. The young Zehra asked, even at that point, "why do we have to [leave] the village? We have everything we need here, don't we?"³⁸ In moving from communal practices centered around miming the characteristic gestures of the missing dead to those in which they are mourned and memorialized, but situated in close proximity to the living, the film enacts the transition from acting out to working through – a shift that changes the lived experience of conjoined time and space in postwar Slavno.

"A COIN": DISCREPANT TIMES AND SPACES AS SIMULTANEOUS CHRONOTOPES

Here I move to examining the nature of chronotope in Hemon's "A Coin," the sixth story in his collection, *The Question of Bruno*. "A Coin" establishes a chronotope in which points in space are situated in time, and temporal categories are inseparable from spatial ones. Part of the narrative takes the apparent form of letters received from Aida,

³⁸ "Što mi moramo iz sela? Što nam ovdje fali?"

a Sarajevan friend of the story's main narrator who, having emigrated from Bosnia, resides in Chicago.³⁹ The other part, italicized, constitutes the Chicago narrator's own discussion of these letters, their method of receipt, and of his own meager existence in Chicago – on its own terms and in comparison to Aida's life in besieged Sarajevo. The spatial dimension of the story seems to be one that simply encompasses the parts of Sarajevo and Chicago traversed by its characters, and its temporal contours a span of months during the war in Bosnia.⁴⁰ However, owing to its format, in which Aida's letters are presented as primary documents and the narrator's reflections as secondary, each section refers both to the protagonist's own locale and that of the other, leaving the narrative permanently suspended between places. Likewise, the unreliability (and eventual impossibility) of mail establishes the disparate temporal dimensions of the story as perpetually out of sync, promising but never achieving simultaneity. Thus, time and space cohere in the story, paradoxically, because they are linked by a fundamental and persistent "discrepancy" (120) that comes to characterize the overarching chronotope of the narrative: time and space fail to coincide, and it is their consistently being out of sync that gives trauma its texture and animates memory.

The particular spaces and times that come into narrative existence and prominence in "A Coin" help to elaborate the way the story's chronotope functions. The story begins and ends with a reference to the seemingly dislocated and atemporal

³⁹ One version of Hemon's familiar protagonist, appearing elsewhere in *The Question of Bruno*, in the novel *Nowhere Man*, and in the "autobiographical" *The Book of My Lives*.

⁴⁰ The reader is made to assume that the story takes place sometime after August 25, 1992 (when the Sarajevo Vijećnica was destroyed). The mention of "April," after which the narrator in Chicago received no more letters from Aida, might be the first month of the war in 1992, but is likely a later April, given that Sarajevo was not cut off from the rest of the world until May of 1992.

Points A and B.⁴¹ These points are linked chronotopically rather than existing in only place or time. “Suppose there is a Point A and a Point B,” the story proposes, and “if you want to get from point A to point B [sic], you have to pass through an open space clearly visible to a skillful sniper. You have to run from Point A to Point B and the faster you run, the more likely you are to reach Point B alive” (119). Thus, not only does the narrative employ two abstract, rather than geographical, points in space, but the relationship between Point A and Point B is not spatial in the normal sense of the word: the perceived distance and the probability of moving between the two points is dependent on the runner’s speed, that is, upon a ratio of space to time.⁴² This opening sentence is integrated into a longer passage, which the reader comes to understand as a fragment from Aida’s letter to her friend in Chicago. Thus, Point A and Point B, the objects and bodies that litter the open space between these points, and Aida herself are narratively positioned in the larger chronotope of besieged Sarajevo, in which the relationship between space and time is different from normal.

Point A and Point B are chronotopes, transferrable to spaces and times throughout the city and throughout the siege insofar as they are defined according to the way they structure experience, rather than their geographical or temporal position. Point A is a site of anticipation of the run to Point B and its accompanying fear, of “pain

⁴¹ It is meaningful here that “point” is used to designate either a discrete location or moment: a “point in space” and a “point in time.”

⁴² This focus on running in besieged Sarajevo calls to mind the marathoner, Islam Dugum, who famously continued his training for the 1996 Atlanta Olympics during the siege. In the process, he became somewhat of a cult figure, at home and abroad (particularly after competing in the Atlanta Olympics). I maintain that the actions and stance for which Dugum became famous are similar in quality to the countless acts of defiant normality and productivity in the face of privation that came to characterize Sarajevo as a whole during the war. In this regard, Dugum’s continuing to run long distances on dangerous paths and without adequate nourishment illuminates in clear relief how continuing to act according to the prewar laws of common-sense becomes a radical act once the space and time of the city has been altered by war.

in your stomach" and "wet heat inside your eyeballs" (128). From Point A, "all you can see is one or two meters ahead of you and all the little things that you can trip over" (129). Meanwhile, Point B is defined by almost unbearable relief at having survived: "when you get to Point B, the adrenaline rush is so strong that you feel *too* alive. You see everything clearly, but you can't comprehend anything" (134). The sensation of body and mind, different at each Point, are nonetheless linked. What grounds them in a single space and time, and creates a powerful narrative chronotope, is the "death rattle from the person behind you" (129). Heard first from the perspective of Aida running from Point A, this rattle reappears and is given visual confirmation from the perspective of Point B's relative safety. The rattle belongs to "a woman holding on to her purse while her whole body is shaking" (134).

This confrontation with death is both particular and generalizable, a specific moment that stands for countless other moments of horror during a long and vicious war. The story's opening and closing passages, in which Point A and Point B are narratively traced, are told from the perspective of a narrator who is well versed in the ways of running this dangerous path. Her war-weariness underpins the section's didactic and slightly detached tone. "I've run from Point A to Point B hundreds of times," Aida baldly notes. However, she continues in an unexpected way: "the feeling is always the same but I've never had it before" (*ibid*). Thus, even as it is unbearably familiar, the experience of survival is always novel because of the way Point A and Point B are imagined and inhabited chronotopically in "A Coin." In the text, these sites are marked by an impossible similarity and difference because they are constituted not by their geographical or temporal place in the actual city of Sarajevo, but on the basis of how Aida experiences these Points in the chronotope she inhabits. In this way, the story

is temporally stripped to a single dash between Point A and Point B, bound into a unified chronotope even as the narrative in between occupies other settings.⁴³ Everywhere else, and anytime else, exists in the space between Points and the time it takes to run between them.

This chronotope recalls Fran Markowitz's treatment of *šetanje* [strolling] as a practice of "place-making" and "self-making" that unfolds through the communal ritual of walking in the evening along the major Sarajevo thoroughfare, Titova Street, between the city's *čaršija* (Ottoman quarter) and its Marindvor neighborhood, with its characteristically Austro-Hungarian architecture.⁴⁴ Space and time become inextricably bound up with the lived practice of walking. Thus, a particular way of knowing and claiming one's place in the city, was destroyed during the war along with the destruction of urban space. Walking, as Markowitz points out, "once a leisurely pursuit and a highly social evening practice, became the sole means for getting from one place to another. Sarajevans quickened their pace; they darted and crouched, trotted and ran" (33). Even after the end of the war, as one of Markowitz's informants points out, the memory of "walking as quickly as I could" (ibid) colors the experience of walking itself. Thus, Point A and Point B are both narrative chronotopes and *lieux de memoire* as *šetanje* is replaced both by other forms of moving through space and, importantly, the memory of previous ways of walking through the city.

⁴³ Aida's account of running between points, as well as her undergoing an abortion in "A Coin," is complicated by another story in *The Question of Bruno*, in which the character, Jozef Pronek, returns to Sarajevo after the war and meets Aida, whose "mother was killed, she said, by a sniper, at the beginning. She saw it, because her mother ran ahead of her across a sniper-watched street, she was struck and killed instantly." In contrast to the letter Aida is purported to send in "A Coin," she "was married, she had a son, born in the middle of the siege" (202).

⁴⁴ See: Fran Markowitz, "Practices of Place: Living in and Enlivening Sarajevo," in *Sarajevo: A Bosnian Kaleidoscope* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010).

As Markowitz highlights, walking along Titova in the postwar period recalls experiences of running the street during wartime. The interwoven nature of past and present in physical space means that the street both is and is not “the same.”⁴⁵ Titova is not unique in this regard: Bosnian geography is dotted with sites that so strongly recall social memories of war that they cease to function according to the “normal” rules of time and space. Postwar chronotopes of this sort become particularly evident in memorial rituals that inhabit and transform physical sites into *lieux de memoire*. For instance, the “Sarajevo Red Line” memorial, staged on April 5, 2012 to mark the 20th anniversary of the beginning of the shelling of Sarajevo, highlights the way a postwar “Point A” and “Point B” are determined chronotopically and how these points are related mnemonically to their wartime versions.

The main installation of the “Sarajevo Red Line” multi-media memorial consisted of 11,541 red plastic chairs that were arranged in rows that ran for eight hundred meters along Titova from the Eternal Flame to a point between the Presidency Building and the Alipašina Mosque [FIGURE 2.3 and FIGURE 2.4].⁴⁶

⁴⁵ The main Sarajevo thoroughfare still bears Tito’s name. During the Yugoslav period, many streets and towns were named after Josip Broz Tito: there were Titova streets in all of the Yugoslav republics and the possessive *Titov* [Tito’s] was appended to small towns throughout Yugoslavia (for example, the Serbian town Užice changed its name to Titovo Užice during the socialist period, and then back to Užice in the 1990s). There is a famous Bosnian joke that the central Bosnian town of Jajce [lit: *little eggs*, fig: *balls, testicles*] had, as a part of this Yugoslav trend, been renamed Titovo Jajce. It was not.

⁴⁶ Obviously, the ending point of the rows of chairs was not entirely by design, but determined based on where the 11,541 chairs ran out. News stories and reviews of the “Sarajevo Red Line” that mentioned the installation’s concluding point at all usually noted that it was located either between the Presidency and the Alipašina Mosque, or picked one of these two well-known structures. However, for the purpose of my analysis of this memorial, and its contribution to understandings of place, time, and memory in the postwar period, it is worth noting that the Presidency Building houses the Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina – and, indeed, that the chairs ended almost exactly at the street that leads to the Archive entrance of the Presidency.



FIGURE 2.3: AERIAL VIEW OF “SARAJEVO RED LINE” MEMORIAL (APRIL 5, 2012)



FIGURE 2.4: CHAIRS COMMEMORATING SARAJEVO’S WARTIME VICTIMS,
“SARAJEVO RED LINE” MEMORIAL (APRIL 5, 2012)

Each chair represented a victim of the war in Sarajevo; 643 tiny chairs, commemorating the Sarajevo children who were killed, made up the front forty-odd rows. This choice to represent human beings with chairs made visible the sheer quantity of victims.⁴⁷ Their number is so large as to remain abstract, even when the name of each victim is listed as a way of rendering each victim in his/her individuality.⁴⁸ Unlike the lists of names of victims, which are used in various war memorials in Bosnia and around the world, the red chairs take up space and, more specifically, each chair takes up an amount of space that is roughly equivalent to that of the person it is meant to commemorate. Calling attention to the human beings who are not sitting in them, the chairs nonetheless suggested a huge and invisible audience for the memorial's other events, which included musical and literary performances that took place on a stage in front of the Eternal Flame. In this way, the "Sarajevo Red Line" works to embody the disembodied victims, pointing to the larger issues of how individuals occupy social space and how this space functions after the traumatic loss of so many of these individuals.

⁴⁷ The use of empty chairs to represent victims of atrocity or natural disaster is also a repeated memorial trope. It is employed, for example, in both Oklahoma City's "Field of Empty Chairs" memorial to the victims of the 1995 bombing of the Alfred Murrah Federal Building and in Christchurch's "185 Empty Chairs" memorial to the victims of the 2011 earthquake. For discussion of this and other global memorial tropes, see: Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism From Oklahoma City to Ground Zero* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

⁴⁸ This strategy is used, for example, in Mirsad Tokača (ed), *Bosanska knjiga mrtvih* [The Bosnian Book of the Dead] (Sarajevo: Istraživačko dokumentacioni centar, 2013) as well as in a volume commemorating the war in and around Foča: Rasim Halilagić, *Foča 1992-1995: Žrtve genocida* [Victims of Genocide] (Sarajevo: Institut za istraživanje zločina covječnosti i međunarodnog prava Univerziteta u Sarajevu, 2008).

By memorially occupying the symbolically dense chronotope that is Titova street, the “Sarajevo Red Line” serves as an illustrative counterpoint to the way time and space are linked in “A Coin.” In many ways, the memorial aims to counter the fleeting time-space connection that exists in a wartime dash between Point A and Point B, in which, as Aida concludes, “once you get to Point B everything is quickly gone, as if it never happened” (134). Point B becomes a site both of relative safety and of retrospection, a time and a place from which to glance back at the debris and cleaned up blood that metonymically convey both the permanence and impermanence of war’s traces. The “Sarajevo Red Line” chose one prominent stretch, parts of which were run along many times and by hundreds of people during the war’s forty four months, and inhabits it in a way that commemorates all of these frantic dashes – the ones that were successful and the ones that ended in death. By putting a halt to the progression of ordinary time and use of space for one day, the red river of chairs on April 5, 2012 certainly preserves what would otherwise be “quickly gone, as if it never happened.”⁴⁹ However, the installation’s contribution to the remembrance of the Siege of Sarajevo and its victims does not primarily inhere in its guarding of memory against forgetfulness. Instead, it remediates memory by drawing a link between time and space that both relies on and builds upon the connection created by hasty and dangerous wartime movement.

In order to further understand the function of the chronotope of Hemon’s story, it is necessary to investigate the complicated layering of temporality in “A Coin” – a layering that serves, as I will demonstrate, to trace out the way trauma impacts time as

⁴⁹ Haris Pašović, author and director of the “Sarajevo Red Line” event, described the memorial as a “red river” in several different interviews. Others saw it as representing a “river of blood.”

much as it does space. As mentioned above, the story is seemingly set during the war in Bosnia, as experienced by Aida in Sarajevo and the second protagonist in Chicago. However, the temporality that becomes integrated into the story's chronotope is one that operates according to different laws of time than those usually at play. The narrative device of exchanged letters inserts a temporal gap at the heart of the story. The discontinuity between the protagonists' occupation of space is mirrored by a discontinuity of time. As the Chicago narrator notes, his and Aida's letters take months to reach each other and, "when they do, they're already obsolete, they're rendering someone other than myself" (125). His reaction to this is two-fold. First, he is bothered by the lack of simultaneity, which he attempts to remedy through his own sent narratives: "That is why I tend to write her things that she already knows, tell her stories told wars ago. It is cowardly, I confess, but I'm just trying to create an illusion that our lives, however distant, may still be simultaneous" (127). The narrator's second reaction, however, is even more unsettling and difficult to address. Given Aida's spatial location in a site of danger and uncertainty, the narrator in Chicago is terrified, as he rips open each letter from Aida, saying,

she may be dead. She may have vanished, may have already become a ghost, a nothing – a fictitious character, so to speak – and I'm reading her letter as if she were alive.... I fear to communicate with a creature of my memory, with a dead person. I dread the fact that life is always slower than death and I have been chosen, despite my weakness, against my will, to witness the discrepancy. (120)

The format of exchanged letters, while miming simultaneity, actually comes to highlight the irreconcilable discrepancy between temporalities. Moreover, the gap between when a letter is written and when it is sent, or when it is sent and when it is received, encompasses the possibility of death. This gap, then, is chronotopic: it is not measured

in hours or days, not located in Chicago or in Sarajevo, but occupies the time and space of anticipatory memory and the dread it evokes.

The content of these letters further solidifies the particular chronotope that the story traces. Writing into the gap becomes, for both Aida and the Chicago narrator, a matter of depicting the very “process of disappearing” (128). For this reason, the photographs and film images that are both ekphrastically inserted into letters and accompany them in the envelope are of central importance to tracing out the relationship between time and space as they operate in “A Coin.” Part of Aida’s job as a liaison to foreign journalists in Sarajevo, as she describes it in her letters, is to edit their footage for broadcast. First, her strategy is to choose “the most telling images, with as much blood and bowels, stumps and child corpses as possible” (122). Later, recognizing that these images of horror are not being broadcast in the international media, or that they are not “induc[ing] some compassion or understanding or pain” (*ibid*), Aida starts collecting these images and suturing them together on a single tape, her so-called *Cinema Inferno* “montage of death attractions” (123).⁵⁰ In this sense, “montage” refers as much to the filmic whole created by these fragments as to the meaning generated by placing them sequentially and moving through them. Thus, the montage technique is both temporal and spatial. Aida’s particular montage, which emerges from collecting, is also connected with memory. At one point, witnessing the image of her dead aunt’s body devoured by dogs, Aida wishes for “a camera so [she] wouldn’t have to remember” (133). Photographic or film images, in this schema, substitute for rather than

⁵⁰ This is a reference to Giuseppe Tornatore’s 1988 film, *Cinema Paradiso*, one of the major points of which involves a film projectionist’s collection of on-screen kisses, excised from the film tape by a priest, and his creation of a film composed of these bits of censored reel.

supplement memory. Thus, we can read her creation of the *Cinema Inferno* as a means of preserving the memory of atrocity without having to engage with it personally.⁵¹

It is primarily still photographs that underscore the story's reigning chronotope. As mentioned above, at various points, photographs reveal the way time and space are impossibly out of sync. In a photograph of damaged buildings that Aida sends to the Chicago narrator for identification, he can only see that "what was in the pictures was what was not in the pictures – the pictures recorded the very end of the process of disappearing, the nothingness itself" (128). This "spectral evidence" (to borrow Ulrich Baer's evocative term) is echoed in Aida's own posing in the photographs of her American lover, taken at both monumental locations and places of private significance around destroyed Sarajevo: "the places on our tour were between being a memory and being reduced to nothing but a pile of rubble. The camera was recording the process of disappearing" (131). Photographically capturing this process serves to link time and space: it imprints time (the process) into the space of the photograph, and space (the destroyed buildings) into memory.

Aida eventually sends a photographic self-portrait to the Chicago narrator. This photograph, taken in the ruined interior of the Sarajevo Vijećnica, demonstrates in miniature the overarching impossible chronotope of "A Coin." The photograph is, apparently, received early on in the story (122). However, the letter to which the photograph is appended comes later in the story, in what is presented as Aida's last letter, after which the narrator has "received no letters from Aida. From that time on [he has] to make up her letters...to imagine her" (129). Even as he holds on to the hope that

⁵¹ Aida's decision to not watch this tape bears similarities with the ethical stance espoused in Jasmila Žbanić's *Pictures From the Corner* (discussed in Chapter Five).

“one of these days [he’ll] have a bundle of her consecutive letters” and that “she’s writing them this very moment” (*ibid*), the narrative chronotope becomes one of uncertainty and doubt as to the exact relationship between time and space. The indeterminacy surrounding Aida’s *Vijećnica* photograph is only one example of temporal instability in “A Coin.” In addition, at moments that narratively follow the apparent stop of Aida’s letters, “A Coin” still includes text that seems to be written from Aida’s perspective. Perhaps these sections are from a bundle that did, in fact, arrive later. Perhaps they are letters whose narrative and Aida-like voice are imagined by the Chicago narrator. The story does not resolve the ambiguity in favor of either of these options.

The story, however, does integrate an implied reader into this chronotope of indeterminacy. This reader is conceived of as both a secondary witness and a participant in tracing out spatial and temporal clues that do, after all, add up to a consistent chronotope. In his analysis of “A Coin,” Riccardo Nicolosi argues that the otherwise fragmented narrative establishes the possibility of a “reading process, through which the unity between sender, receiver, and messages can be reconstructed” (Nicolosi, in Zimmerman 71).⁵² That is, the seeming lack of coincidence between the space and time of Aida and the Chicago narrator is reconciled by the implied reader, who successfully receives the messages that fail to reach Sarajevo or Chicago. I am not convinced that the inclusion of such an implied reader successfully resolves the disharmony within time and space in “A Coin.” In the context of my analysis here,

⁵² Nicolosi’s reading of “A Coin” bears certain similarities to my own. While he emphasizes the “narrative modeling of space” (69) and uses of topography in texts related to the Sarajevo siege, he does so with the overarching goal of establishing the degree and way in which these texts are primarily characterized by forms of fragmentation.

which investigates the chronotopic treatment of trauma in narrative, such a reader would come problematically close to Dori Laub's description of a secondary witness to testimony of trauma, without whom, in Laub's theory, such testimony cannot take place. Laub's secondary witness participates vitally in the process of narrative testimony, indeed becoming "the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time" and a "co-owner of the traumatic event" (Laub 57). In "A Coin," while the implied reader exists and participates in a chronotope in which subtle clues must be actively and repeatedly pieced together in order to create coherence, the reader does not ultimately cause the paradoxical relationship between time and space that exists in the story to cooperate with temporal and spatial laws that govern reality. The vigilant reader might find a coin in Aida's pocket at the end of "A Coin," and deduce that it was the same used by Pronek (who might be a stand-in for the Chicago narrator) to pay for his mineral water in the Vienna airport, where he spends a layover after returning to Sarajevo for the first time since the war. However, the reader may not find such a coin after Aida successfully runs from Point A to Point B, and desist from sleuthing. Convincing the reader that, as Aida's text maintains, "nothing will ever be all right" (132) is the final step in tracing out the specific chronotope of trauma, wherein narrative devices elaborate the mismatch between time and space, between characters, and between text and reader, but neither overarching trauma nor discrepant chronotope is resolved through narrative means.

At one point in the story, Aida sends the Chicago narrator a photograph of herself. "She sent me a black-and-white picture," the Chicago narrator writes, in which "[Aida] is standing on a pile of debris in the midst of the Library ruins. I could see holes that used to be windows, and pillars like scorched matches. The camera looks at her

from underneath" (122). This ekphrastic self-portrait of Aida inscribed into the story cannot help but recall the series of iconic photographs taken in 1993 by Mikhail Evstafiev of the "cellist of Sarajevo," Vedran Smajlović, in the Sarajevo Vijećnica. This series shows the cellist seated in a variety of positions in the library. In a wide, low angle shot, Smajlović plays his cello in the ruined cavern of the building [FIGURE 2.5].



**FIGURE 2.5: VEDRAN SMAJLOVIĆ, THE "CELLIST OF SARAJEVO," IN SARAJEVO'S VIJEĆNICA
(© MIKHAIL EVSTAFIEV, 1993)**

A cropped mid shot, with a less dramatic low angle, has the cellist holding his bow in his left hand, his right hand covering his eyes. This latter image was featured on the poster for the 1993-1994 Sarajevo Winter [Sarajevska Zima] Festival [FIGURE 2.6].⁵³ Smajlović's gesture in this particular photo echoes another photo, this one taken by Getty photographer Tom Stoddart, in which Smajlović covers his eyes while seated with his cello in a cemetery full of freshly dug graves.

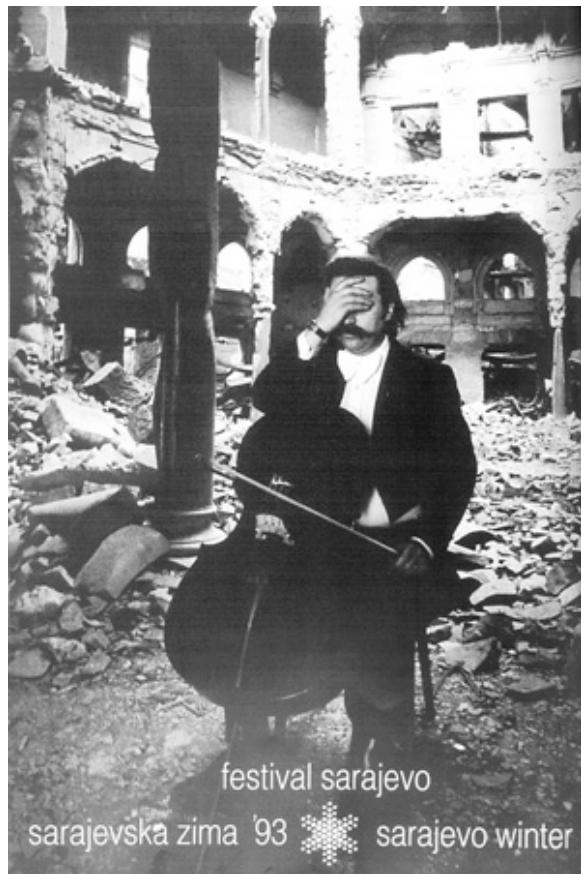


FIGURE 2.6: VEDRAN SMAJLOVIĆ PLAYS IN SARAJEVO'S VIJEĆNICA SARAJEVO WINTER 1993 FESTIVAL POSTER (© MIKHAIL EVSTAFIEV, 1993)

⁵³ This was a cultural festival, inaugurated in 1984-85 and continued during and after the war in Sarajevo. The event runs from late December until late March or early April and includes a variety of performances and exhibits, featuring local and international artists. The festival has been viewed as a significant happening that both engages Sarajevo's citizens and reflects on the cultured self-identity of the city; it has thus been important throughout its history, and was especially meaningful and hailed during the war years.

This cluster of well-known and highly circulated images is buttressed by the veritable legend of Smajlović's memorial rituals to honor those killed in Sarajevo. These rituals were at first private, but then became increasingly public in nature. Usually dressed in a tuxedo, Smajlović moved around the city, playing Tomaso Albinoni's famous "Adagio in G minor" at the sites of massacres and other places where Sarajevans had been killed, as well as for funerals and in established and makeshift graveyards.⁵⁴

The dense mythology of memorializing traumatic violence that links Smajlović, Vijećnica, and photographic record seeps into Hemon's story, fitting Aida's photograph into the same chronotope as photographs portraying Smajlović. More precisely, the Chicago narrator's interpretation that the photo is full of pathos is privileged over Aida's own nonchalant and ironic stance in having it taken. This, I argue, at least in part is because of the strongly pathetic nature of the Smajlović series. The visual similarities between the images – their location and timing, as well as the positioning of the camera and subject in the interior space of the Vijećnica – overshadow important differences between them. The narrator's visual reading of the ruined library perfectly accords with the Evstafiev photographs, while his choice of words brings together the visual transformation of the library from gleaming shrine of culture to burnt-out cavern with the strong affect of irrevocable loss. However, Aida is shown standing "tall and erect" (*ibid*) and with a decidedly uncovered face on what she herself describes as "one of the happiest days of [her] life, this life" (129). Nonetheless, even these visual and

⁵⁴ It is popularly claimed that he began this memorial practice the day after the infamous breadline massacre on Vase Miskina Street (which was renamed "Ferhadija" after the war) on May 27, 1992. Reportedly, he returned with his cello to the place where twenty-two people had been killed, and continued to return to the same spot, playing the Adagio on twenty-two subsequent days for each of the victims.

affective differences – the fact that her photo is surrounded with irony, while Smajlović's conveys pathos – fail to separate the two. Their portrayals of defiance, through art or through physical and rhetorical stance, establishes an overwhelming theme that draws the two into a common chronotope that stems from the culturally mediated memories of traumatic violence in Sarajevo and continues to integrate seemingly disparate acts into a disjointed union of time and space.

“THE FEAST OF THE ROSARY”: A CHRONOTOPE IN COLOR

Alma Lazarevska's “The Feast of the Rosary” was published in her 2003 collection of short fiction, *Plants Are Something Else* [*Biljke su nešto drugo*]. On the level of its plot, the story treats the aftermath of ethnic cleansing in rural Central Bosnia, focusing on the experience of one elderly woman, Bakija, who survives a campaign of rape and violence along with her grand-niece, flees to Sarajevo, and, months later, relates her story to a foreign painter and his wife. The dense story employs several key strategies, all of which indicate particular aspects of the narrative chronotope in which its actions are set. The particularities of this chronotope, as I will demonstrate, allows “The Feast of the Rosary” to convey both a sense of what has been lost in the violent events that constituted the breakup of Yugoslavia, as well as to stage rhetorically a mediated memory that recalibrates time and space after they have been disrupted after trauma. Like *Snow*, “The Feast of the Rosary” deals with the immediate aftermath of war in rural Bosnia among the women who survived it. In addition, “The Feast of the Rosary,” like *Snow*, conveys a sense of chronotopic shift in its conclusion. The story is profoundly metatextual and involves the reader as interpreter. In this respect, it bears textual similarities with “A Coin.” What truly sets “The Feast of the Rosary” apart from

the other works discussed in this chapter that show the crucial role of chronotope as it interacts with and shapes the narration of trauma, is the central role in Lazarevska's story of objects that bear on understandings of time and space, and colors that shape and characterize the traumatic chronotope.

My analysis begins at story's end. Structurally and temporally, the narrative exists as a multiply framed story, with several major overlapping narrative perspectives, and the final frame establishes a context in which these other devices operate. First of all, unlike the other stories in *Plants Are Something Else*, a place and a date are appended to the final paragraph of "The Feast of the Rosary": Sarajevo, 1997. This textual feature functions very differently from the identical ascriptions of place and date in the intertitles that bookend *Snow*: the bulk of the narrative in "The Feast of the Rosary" does not take place in 1997, and only some of it takes place in Sarajevo. Given this discrepancy, the reader might simply assert that the spatial and temporal markers given in this sparest of paratexts merely indicates that this story predates the others in the 2003 collection, and can thus be periodized as an immediate postwar story, rather than one belonging to the next generation of cultural production.⁵⁵ However Lazarevska's overt paratextual specification of the story's time and place both derives meaning from and contributes meaning to the overarching chronotope of "The Feast of the Rosary" because of the first person voice used in the story's final narrative frame, as well as the intertextual context in which this final frame exists.

In contrast to the majority of "The Feast of the Rosary," which is narrated in the third person, the story's conclusion mixes first- and second-person narration, and its

⁵⁵ For further discussion of the periodization of postwar texts, and the reigning aesthetic, political, and commemorative concerns, see the dissertation's conclusion.

implied narrator is Lazarevska herself. This narrator reveals that the proximate motivation for the final form in which “The Feast of the Rosary” comes to the reader is her own struggle to make sense of a particular confession from Seada Vranić’s pioneering work of testimony, *Before the Wall of Silence [Pred zidom šutnje]*.⁵⁶ Vranić, a Bosnia-born political journalist living and working in Zagreb, undertook the task of interviewing Bosniak refugees in Croatia from almost the first moment they began to arrive *en masse* in Croatia in the summer of 1992.⁵⁷ Recording and transcribing hundreds of these terrible stories, she came to focus on the prevalence of sexual violence in Bosnia and, in 1996, published twelve of these interviews, along with contextual and methodological supplementary chapters, as *Breaking the Wall of Silence*. Vranić’s book, published before the echoes of war had even faded from Bosnia and as the Dayton Accords were being implemented, was an influential work among several others that documented the prevalence of rape by Bosnian Serb forces,⁵⁸ the large numbers of

⁵⁶ Vranić’s book has been translated into English, with a different title and somewhat problematic subtitle: *Breaking the Wall of Silence: The Voices of Raped Bosnia*. Because there are significant portions of text that are included only in the Croatian or only in the English translation, it is actually more accurate to see these as Croatian and English versions of a single text. According to their order in the bibliography, I cite the English text as “Vranić A” and the Croatian one as “Vranić B.”

⁵⁷ Vranić recounts scenes of refugees at Zagreb’s main train stations, as well as those in other Croatian towns, in language that is strikingly similar to that used to describe the current movement of refugees into Europe from the Middle East and Africa. In 1992, European leaders engaged in precisely the same discussions about the moral duty to accept refugees (with overt reference to the atrocities of the Holocaust as historical precedent), while voicing fears about being “overrun” by them. Each country debated quotas and found reasons why it could not accept as many refugees as its neighbors. Germany accepted the largest share of refugees, while Britain and France argued that it had not taken in enough. Hungary took in a large number of refugees, more than Britain and France combined. European countries quickly closed their borders, as did the recently independent Slovenia. Croatia, itself embroiled in war, worried that it would be forced to take in all future refugees from Bosnia. Meanwhile, refugees were taking up residence, sometimes for months, in train cars parked at stations across Croatia (Vranić B 46-47).

⁵⁸ See, for example: Roy Gutman, “Mass Rape: Muslims Recall Serb Attacks,” *Newsday* (August 23, 1992); Pamela Goldberg and Nancy Kelly, “International Human Rights and Violence

victims, and what Vranić calls the “patterns” according to which acts of sexual violence were carried out.⁵⁹ More importantly, Vranić’s book conclusively demonstrated that rape was being used systematically as an organized technique of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, rather than as a series of isolated incidents by individual Bosnian Serb soldiers.

Furthermore, not only are the testimonies Vranić recorded for *Breaking the Wall of Silence* groundbreaking renderings of the truth that suffering is both “private as well as public” (Vranić A 39), her method of ethnographic research is remarkable.⁶⁰ She not only transcribes the words of those whose lives have been forever impacted by the trauma of rape, but she includes her own questions, concrete data about victims, and theoretical texts that contextualize the war in Bosnia and the manner in which sexual violence came to play such a prominent role in it. In this, Vranić’s own subject position, which she herself repeatedly comments upon, as a Travnik-born Muslim who left Bosnia (albeit not under such dire circumstances as her interlocutors) helps her gain the

Against Women,” *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 6 (1993); “Rape and Abuse of Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina,” EC Investigative Commission’s report (Feb 2, 1993); “Rape and Abuse of Women on the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia,” UN Commission on Human Rights report (Feb 12, 1993); “War Crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina,” *Helsinki Watch* 2 (1993); Slavenka Drakulić, “Women Hide Behind a Wall of Silence,” in Rabia Ali and Lawrence Lifschultz (eds), *Why Bosnia?* (Stony Creek, CT: Pamphleteers Press, 1994); Alexandra Stiglmayer, *Mass Rape: War Against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994); and Marko Vešović, *Smrt je majstor iz Srbije* (Sarajevo: Bosanska knjiga, 1994).

⁵⁹ Vranić identifies the following “patterns [obrazci],” some of which contain internal variation: a rural pattern, an urban pattern, a concentration camp pattern, and, finally, a “women’s prison” pattern, in which the prison functioned like a brothel in which women were raped and eventually killed (Vranić B 185-210).

⁶⁰ Vranić’s conception of testimony as the painful movement from private truth to public truth is fleshed out in the introduction to the volume’s first testimony, but only in the English version. This is only one of many important distinctions between the two versions. A comparative analysis of these two texts would fruitfully contribute to larger understandings of the rhetorics and ethics of documenting and framing primary witnesses’ accounts of trauma.

trust of Bosnian refugees and engages them in culturally sensitive ways about their narratives of trauma. Additionally, Vranić goes to great lengths to keep in mind her own position as an ethnographer and interviewer – that is, as a secondary, rather than primary, witness to trauma. While noting that she “no longer felt like the same person”⁶¹ (Vranić B 181) that she had been at the beginning of her investigation, she vigilantly guards against either appropriating the trauma of others or becoming vicariously traumatized by the haunting stories she collects.

Vranić’s own background is what first allows her to approach, and later to interview, Bosnian victims of rape in Croatia. Vranić pointedly introduced herself to a refugee at the Zagreb train station with the words, “‘I write about Serb war crimes and I wanted to hear from refugees about what is happening in Bosnia. I myself am a Bosnian, a Muslim,’ I said, hoping that my [ethnic] origins would give me a more persuasive legitimacy in her eyes than would my profession alone”⁶² (Vranić B 39). In addition, Vranić’s familiarity with widespread social stigma about discussing rape in the Bosnian, and indeed the larger Balkan, context, allows her to engage with victims respectfully and circumspectly. This stigma relates not only to what can be said, but to whom accounts of sexual violence can be told. For instance, Vranić transcribes the words of a little boy whom she meets when he temporarily “steals” her keys, the iron content of which is believed to be useful to stop an epileptic seizure. This boy states that his mother, a rape victim, has explained rape to him and does not mind if he talks about it, even with a stranger. This stands in stark contrast to the boy’s grandfather, who, he

⁶¹ “Osjećala se da ni ja više nisam bila ista osoba.”

⁶² “‘Pišem o srpskim zločinima pa sam željela čuti od izbjeglica što se događa u Bosni. I ja sam Bosanka, Muslimanka,’ rekla sam nadajući se da će joj moje podrijetlo biti uvjerljivija legitimacija od moje profesije.”

claims, “would be angry if he knew that I was saying this. He has forbidden me from saying even a word to anyone. He promised me that he himself will tell ‘when the time comes.’ But I know he won’t”⁶³ (ibid 45). Thus, the prohibitions on speaking about sexual violence are shaped by norms about gender, as well as those related to age or maturity and governing private versus public discourse.

Vranić’s emphasis on the importance of first person accounts guides her collection of testimony and her framing of the interviews she collects. As she describes in the commentary on an interview with a woman named Azra (which is only included in the English version), the “problem was not finding ‘material’ because I met rape victims daily. I had difficulty... finding victims who would speak in the first person” (Vranić A 136). If finding willing interlocutors was difficult because of the aforementioned social stigma of publically discussing rape, Vranić’s own convictions made her reluctant to push the ones she did find to talk. Reflecting on the same interview with Azra, Vranić notes that, “[Azra] was a person I needed. [But] I was afraid it would feel like a dishonest trade on her emotions in exchange for my help...” (ibid). By remaining constantly aware of and, moreover, meticulously commenting on her method and ethical compunctions in *Breaking the Wall of Silence*, Vranić models a sensitive and non-appropriating stance towards victims and their testimony that Dominick LaCapra terms “empathic unsettlement” – a way of being “responsive to the traumatic experience of others” (41) while “resist[ing] full identification with, and appropriation of, the experience of the other” and recognizing “that another’s loss is not identical to one’s own loss” (79). As Vranić herself both demonstrates and explicitly

⁶³ “Samo bi se dedo na mene ljutio da zna da ovo govorim. On mi je zabranio da kažem ikome i riječ. Obećao je da će on reći ‘gdje treba’ a neće sigurno.”

states, “after long months of listening to shocking testimonies that deeply etched themselves into my consciousness, I was on the verge of a breakdown. It was only after a long time that I was able to recover enough to start writing” (Vranić B 19). Thus, Vranić’s very ability to undertake her work in an ethical way stems from her awareness that secondary witnessing is an act fraught with the potential for intellectual and emotional missteps.

The fictional “The Feast of the Rosary” clearly derives its major features – its cast of characters, salient plot points, and themes – from Kadira’s testimony, recounted in *Breaking the Wall of Silence*. However, it is clear that the story is not only paratextually framed by Vranić’s text, but also by pertinent ethical issues involved in representing trauma, particularly the trauma of others. Thus, the narrator of the final frame struggles to narrate the story contained in earlier frames of “The Feast of the Rosary” in a way that is adequate to the original testimony, related by the pseudonymous Kadira. “Lately,” Lazarevska’s narrator asserts, “I have made a somewhat torturous attempt to free myself from a testimony I read in *Breaking the Wall of Silence*. Repeatedly recasting this narrative, I searched for [the boy’s] key”⁶⁴ (124). It is in its concern for a “key,” both here and elsewhere, however, that Lazarevska’s own fictional reworking engages with Vranić’s work as a whole, with the ethical dilemma of secondary witnessing articulated in *Breaking the Wall of Silence*, and, moreover, with the relationship between testimony and the figuring of trauma in fiction. Not only does the key become an important object in “The Feast of the Rosary,” but it functions as an overarching symbol for the use of

⁶⁴ “Ovih dana, u pomalo mučnom naporu da se, ponovnim uobičavanjem, oslobođim isповijesti koju sam čitala u knjizi *Pred zidom šutnje*, tragala sam za njegovim ključem.”

fictional strategies to convey the texture, rather than the literal happening, of experiential trauma.

By interrogating the relationship between the narration of traumatic memories and their emplotment in time and space, “The Feast of the Rosary” demonstrates that a text’s chronotope does not exist by default but is created. By rhetorically casting time and space as perceptual categories, the story traces out both the effects of traumatic experience on modes of perception, but also narrative frameworks’ capacity to recalibrate relationships between time and space. “The Feast of the Rosary” does this, first of all, by using deceptively specific spatial and temporal markers. The story’s traumatic events are primarily located within five kilometers of the fictional village of Selo on a day in July of 1992, while its narration takes place in Sarajevo in December of 1992. Selo is triangulated with villages that exist outside of fiction: it is in the vicinity of Sokolina, Vinac, and Prusac in central Bosnia.⁶⁵ Meanwhile, insofar as the toponym “Selo” simply means “village” in BCS, it simultaneously designates a specific place and functions as an archetype. This echoes Lazarevska’s characteristic and consistent use of the term “The City” to refer to Sarajevo in her fiction that deals with the war in Bosnia.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ In this regard, the fictional Selo could be the actual village of either Staro Selo, Babino Selo, or Novo Selo, all of which are located in the Donji Vakuf region on the border between the Federation and Republika Srpska in central Bosnia.

⁶⁶ She uses the capitalized form, “Grad,” or the fixed phrase, “opkoljeni grad” [‘besieged/surrounded city’] to refer to Sarajevo in many of the stories that make up *Bilje su nešto drugo* and *Smrt u muzeju moderne umjetnosti*, as well as the story, “Blažen neka je dan [Blessed Be the Day.]” In an interview, Lazarevska commented on this consistent terminological choice, saying, “I [used these terms] without any clear intention, it was not a part of some plan. I was almost unaware of it, but today in the hindsight, after much had been published on the siege of Sarajevo, I am glad I did so. Sarajevo was a word that at one point guaranteed success of a book or a text. By success I mean sales, publicity. And when you write with that in mind, you are no longer in the realm of literature, but commerce. You succumb to dictates of fashion and market” (Mantle interview, 8/18/14). Compare Lazarevska’s oblique formulations with Mehmedinović’s use of “opsjednuti grad [the besieged city],” as discussed in Chapter One.

Thus, both Selo and Sarajevo are treated both as fictional archetypes that are tied to inextricably traumatic historical events in the region, at once both specific sites and stand-ins for hundreds of other places that share the violent legacy of the years between 1992 and 1995.

This notion that sites of trauma can be linked across actual geographical and temporal distance recalls a crucial point in *Breaking The Wall of Silence*, when Vranić describes the moment at which she realized that she was in the process of documenting not a massive number of isolated acts of rape, but a discernible pattern that revealed an underlying system. In a chapter evocatively entitled, “How the “Mosaic” Came Together,”⁶⁷ Vranić notes that,

By chance, an old auto map of Bosnia-Herzegovina tipped the scales in my eventual decision [to write the book].... I thought that I would be able to avoid unwanted surprises [by finding and marking the sites mentioned by refugees on the map], and also to make sure that these places, the scenes of these crimes, were not made up. I marked some fifty-odd red dots on the map, and when I later joined these points with a line, the resulting ‘drawing’ resembled the head of a mushroom that was bounded by the Drina to the east, the Sava to the north, and the Una to the west. I wasn’t looking for any symbolism in this ‘drawing,’ nor some kind of message, but the ‘mushroom cap’ so obviously corresponded with the exact route taken by the Serbian occupation.⁶⁸ (Vranić B 182)

The representation of these sites of violence and their relation to each other on a map refigures the testimonies whose traumatic events occurred in the places to which the red dots refer. All at once, Vranić concludes, “the incredible similarities in descriptions of

⁶⁷ “Kako se slagao ‘mozaik’.”

⁶⁸ “Jedna stara auto-karta Bosne i Hercegovine slučajno je bila presudna da donese konačnu odluku.... Pomislila sam kako bih i na taj način mogla biti izbjegići neugodna iznenađenja i, barem, biti sigurna da takva mjesta, poprišta zločina, nisu izmišljena. Kad sam na auto-karti označila pedesetak crvenih točaka i potom ih linijom zaokružila po vanjskom rubu, ukazao se ‘crtež’ sličan glavi gljive što natkriljuje široko područje ogradieno Drinom na istoku, Savom na sjeveru i Unom na zapadu. U ‘crtežu’ nisam tražila nikakvu simboliku niti sam prepoznala kakvu poruku, osim što je bilo očigledno da se rub ‘klobuka’ poklapa s pravcem srpskog osvajanja.”

geographically distant events became meaningful and particularly important”⁶⁹ (Vranić B 183). Lazarevska’s story also showcases this act of panning in and out of spatial representations.

“The Feast of the Rosary” explicitly engages with Vranić’s conception of the map as one way of representing trauma. The story ekphrastically includes cartographic images. The use of maps is a realist technique. More importantly, however, maps are always treated as objects with a specific scale that can, by turns, make place visible or obscure it. The shifting scales and versions of the maps that appear throughout the story emphasize the underlying role of time and perception in cartographic representations of space. Through maps, “The Feast of the Rosary” narrates how villagers from Selo experienced the violent destruction of Yugoslavia and the creation of an independent Bosnia. One of the story’s main characters, Bakija’s nephew, notes while gazing at a prewar map of Yugoslavia,

Bosnia was a part of Yugoslavia at that time. [On the wall, in addition to a map of Yugoslavia] there was also a map that showed Bosnia by itself. The nephew learned that Selo was figured on both of these. He preferred the second, because on that one it was easier to make Selo out. His gaze didn’t wander over and along the map for long. His finger would quickly land on Vinac. It was easy to go from there. His finger would stop, and that’s where Selo would be.⁷⁰ (102-103)

This narrative act of mapping and of moving between a place and its representation allows the story to represent existence and non-existence and the way in which, in “The Feast of the Rosary,” these two states abut each other. While Selo might be invisible on a

⁶⁹ “Najednom su mi postale znakovite i iznimno važne zapanjujuće sličnosti u opisima geografski razdvojenih događaja, na koje prije nisam obraćala pažnju.”

⁷⁰ “Bosna je tada bila dio Jugoslavije. Ali, postojala je i mapa na kojoj se Bosna predstavljala zasebno. Sestrić je u školi naučio da Selo zamišlja i na jednoj i na drugoj. Draža mu je bila druga, jer je na njoj Selo lakše zamišljao. Pred i nad njom, pogled mu nije dugo lutao. Prst bi mu se hitro spustio na Vinac. Odatle bi se lako pomjerio. Tamo gdje bi se zaustavio, trebalo je zamisliti Selo.”

given map whose scale is insufficiently small because “the human eye can’t see anything smaller than a dot”⁷¹ (104), the narrative, focalized through the nephew’s understanding of maps and the places to which they refer, first represents a lack of concern for such invisibility: if Selo “did exist, there in the place the map corresponds to, it would need to be 1,250,000 times bigger than here”⁷² (*ibid*). The temporal framework that is frequently linked with geography in the story is mediated by a series of cartographic representations that model the way places do and do not exist, some of them traumatic and others not.

Over the course of “The Feast of the Rosary,” Selo is practically wiped off the map. The violent destruction of Selo and its surrounding region is inseparably linked with terminological changes that provide insight into the nature of the villagers’ traumatic reality. “What had been Yugoslav for decades now became Serb,” the narrator notes, “Serb tanks. Serb grenades. Serb howitzers. Serb rifles. Serb machine guns. Serb rocket launchers. Serb sowers of death”⁷³ (103). These attributive adjectives, attached to objects of war, convey in a pithy way the shifting categories through which the story’s characters previously and currently understand the world around them. At this point in the story, seemingly nothing violent has yet happened in Selo: the Bosnian Serb soldiers have not yet reached the village. However, the narrative strongly conveys a sense of impending disaster through its meta-textual commentary on past and present features of Selo. In this way, the story uses what Adisa Avdagić calls “a literary version

⁷¹ “Nema ništa manje od tačke, a da ga golo ljudsko oko može vidjeti.”

⁷² “A i da ima, u onome na što se odnosi ova mapa, i u čemu bi sve trebalo biti 1 250 000 puta veće nego na njoj.”

⁷³ “Ono što je decenijama bilo jugoslovensko, postalo je srpsko. Srpski tenkovi. Srpske granate. Srpske haubice. Srpske puške. Srpski automati. Srpski ručni bacači. Srpski sijači smrti...”

of ‘ethnographic realism,’ [through which] the story represents and comments on the history/structure of an unmapped life”⁷⁴ (329). Thus, if the geographical and temporal features that figure prominently in the story locate Selo as a place that once existed, they thereby populate Selo’s chronotope. Selo’s inhabitants once experienced their village as a *habitus*, but now, after its destruction, they must name explicitly the components that once made up this *habitus*. The act of narrating what had long remained implicit and without need for comment becomes, in “The Feast of the Rosary,” an act of memorialization that represents rather than embodies what has been lost.

By establishing a chronotope and then giving shape and texture to that which exists within this chronotope, “The Feast of the Rosary” effectively traces out a sense of trauma without reducing trauma to its series of events. The frame story in which Bakija narrates these events exists at both a spatial and temporal remove from Selo in July 1992, taking place in Sarajevo in December 1992. Staging the act of narrating traumatic memories in a way that links time and space, “The Feast of the Rosary” demonstrates how chronotopic devices used in fiction can effectively convey the way traumatic loss has been endured in lived experience. Kadira’s testimony in *Breaking the Wall of Silence* begins with the assertion that her home village, Doganovci, “is no more... there isn’t any village anymore”⁷⁵ (Vranić B 98). In “The Feast of the Rosary,” Selo’s disappearance in space is joined up with time, as well as a narrative awareness of how space and time are represented. The narrator of “The Feast of the Rosary” (which, in this particular frame of the story is closely tied with Bakija’s perspective and voice) inserts a temporal

⁷⁴ “Kao literarizirana verzija ‘etnografskog realizma’ priča reprezentira i komentira povijest/strukturu jednog nemapiranog života....”

⁷⁵ “...nema više Doganovaca.... Nema sela.”

component to Kadira's words: "today there is no Selo" (104) and, further, "today is 15 December 1992. And today is the dot. The dot on the timeline that either has or lacks a beginning and an end"⁷⁶ (ibid). Kadira's testimony was recorded on 14 December, 1992, as Vranić notes. Lazarevska's reworking self-consciously temporally follows Kadira's actual testimony, and, in a symbolic sense, is its tomorrow.

The creation of chronotope allows "The Feast of the Rosary" to engage with Vranić's non-fictional *Breaking the Wall of Silence*, recasting and commenting upon features found in those collected testimonies. In doing so, "The Feast of the Rosary" highlights how fictional chronotopes can create new possibilities for understanding non-testimonial narratives of trauma. The story stages the act of bearing witness to atrocity, but, as mentioned above, the narrative that emerges is not a literal representation of events. Bakija sets out to tell the story of "what happened"⁷⁷ (111). But the resulting story is not merely a sequence of events that take place over time in a given location. "In 1992, according to the official census," it begins, "there were 284 residents of Selo. Of these, 282 were Muslims"⁷⁸ (Lazarevska 103). In what becomes a characteristic rhetorical technique that instills the chronotope of "The Feast of the Rosary" with meta-textually defined and memorialized features, Bakija's story goes on to note that, "there where there had been 282 Muslim souls and not one Serb, now there were three Muslim women and thirteen Serbs"⁷⁹ (111). In this formulation, "there"

⁷⁶ "Sela danas nema. 15. decembar 1992. godine je danas u ovoj priči. I danas je tačka. Tačka na liniji vremena koja ima ili nema početak i kraj."

⁷⁷ "Kako je bilo" (literally: "how it was").

⁷⁸ "Hiljadu devetsto devedeset druge godine, po zvaničnom popisu, u Selu je bilo 284 stanovnika. Od toga su 282 bili Muslimani."

⁷⁹ "Tamo gdje su do neki dan bile 282 muslimanske duše i niti jedna srpska, sada su bile tri Muslimanke i trinaest Srba."

refers to Selo, but Bakija's narrative focuses on the dramatic difference between how the prewar village "had been" inhabited and how it "now" is inhabited. This contrast makes it clear that Selo is not the same "there" that it was in the prewar period. Referring to Selo's past and present inhabitants becomes a way of substantiating and representing the fact that Selo no longer exists.

Bakija uses specific words that position her in space and time to trace out particularly traumatic elements of the past she has recently survived. The story is heavily attuned to the use of dialectal features, primarily nouns of Turkish or Arabic origin that are used by Bosniaks/Muslims.⁸⁰ In both incorporating these characteristically Bosnian Muslim terms as well as pausing to comment upon them, the story engages in ethno-linguistic identity politics after trauma.

The repeated and highly prominent use and explication of characteristic dialectal features narrate trauma in a way that renders it unique and regional. Bakija relates her testimony of trauma in Sarajevo to the painter Hans Weiner and his wife, Eva, whose house Bakija cleans. Hans and Eva are foreigners, and Eva, although she speaks BCS, is unfamiliar with regional terms.⁸¹ The story proceeds through a series of definitions of words in a regional dialect, definitions that seem to be for the linguistic benefit of the

⁸⁰ The terms employed in "Feast of the Rosary" are ethno-regionalisms. They are variously marked as Muslim, Bosniak, and/or colloquial style. In the modern Bosnian standard language, however, many of these terms are normatively prescribed as standard. Thus, in this dissertation, the term *dialectism* is used as a portmanteau term to refer to words that are or were regionally and/or ethnically marked in the former Serbo-Croatian language as well as in at least some of its successor standard languages.

⁸¹ Eva is a professor who lived in Belgrade for a time, and now lives in Sarajevo. She is proficient in BCS, but not fluent, and is described as "wanting to expand her knowledge [of the language] with the words" used in Bakija's Selo, or in Bosnia more generally [*Sada je zainteresana za riječi kojima će svoje znanje obogatiti. Za ono kada Bakija kaže: Tako se kaže u Selu. Ili: Tako se kaže u Bosni*] (113).

Weiners, conceived of simultaneously as novices and as secondary witnesses to Bakija's testimony. In fact, however, "The Feast of the Rosary" complicates such an interpretation of the intended reader, either internal or external to the text. Here the technique of definition, within the chronotope of loss, becomes a technique of narrative memorialization: the story brings together what is being lost, what has been lost, and what might be lost in the unified time and place of narrative, because these things have ceased to exist in the real world.

Recounting her own version of the events of July 1992, Bakija "says that the world, and she calls it 'dunjaluk,' began in an instant and will end in one"⁸² (105). Such intertwining of story and glossary works in tandem to sketch the trauma that has beset Bakija and her family, and this trauma's impact on the very contours of her world:

Muslims say 'dunjaluk.' For 'person,' they say 'insan,' and for 'child,' 'maksum.' They say 'Allah,' meaning the one true God. Bosnian Serbs understand the words of Bosnian Muslims. Words, most of them anyway, are shared by both. They understand even the ones that only Muslims use. But they are deaf to those words when they slaughter and drive out Muslims. When they do that, they are deaf to all words, those shared and those in which they differ. To the word 'Allah,' or to 'God.' To 'maksum' or... 'child.' To the word... 'pregnant.' To the words... 'I am pregnant'... they turn deaf ears. In Bosnia it is said that one can become blinded by hatred, but also deafened.⁸³ (105)

In part, this strikingly rhetorical technique works in a similar way as the practical prose genres (in particular, the glossary) discussed in the previous chapter. That is, it fixes in narrative form what has disappeared in reality, functioning as an act of commemoration. Moreover, it addresses an implied reader or listener who does not

⁸² "Bakija kaže da je svijet, a ona ga zove dunjalukom, jednom počeo i jednom će završiti."

⁸³ "Muslimani kažu dunjaluk. Za čovjeka kažu insan, za dijete maksum. Kažu Allah misleći na Boga jedinog. Bosanski Srbi razumiju riječi Muslimana. Riječi su im, većina njih, zajedničke. Razumiju čak i one koje koriste samo Muslimani. Ali se o njih oglušuju kad Muslimane ubijaju i progone. Tad se oglušuju o sve riječi, i zajedničke i one po kojima se razlikuju. O riječ Allah, ali i Bog, o riječ maksum ali i...dijete, o riječ...trudna. O riječi... trudna sam... se oglušuju. U Bosni se kaže da se od mržnje može biti slijep, pa i gluhi."

know these dialectal terms. Meanwhile, however, it creates an evocative contrast between the seeming orderly form of a glossary and the chaos of destruction.

After instituting the glossary structure as a primary technique in recounting her testimony, Bakija goes on to note that only three women (Bakija, her sister, and her niece) remain in Selo. She fixes on the term *avlija* as a way of narratively situating herself in the selfsame courtyard where the remembered events unfolded. “An ‘avlija’ is an enclosed space in front of the house,” she says, “a courtyard.... The thirteen Serbs burst into the ‘avlija’ where, until then, no Serb foot had ever trod”⁸⁴ (ibid). In a similar fashion, this time situating herself temporally, Bakija recounts the moment she regained consciousness, and what happened while she was unconscious. She structures her narrative around a central object and term, a *tespih*, which she identifies as “a Muslim rosary”⁸⁵ (116). Without overtly stating that she has been raped, and her sister and niece raped and killed, Bakija nonetheless conveys this trauma with recourse to the *tespih* and its ordering of time.⁸⁶ The *tespih* ritually demarcates time, containing “33 or 99 beads” that are “used to number prayers”⁸⁷ (ibid). As it is figured in the narrative, though, the *tespih* also temporally orients Bakija after trauma: fingering the *tespih*, whose beads made of bean are not yet dried and leave her fingers green, she realizes that it must be the beginning of summer. Yet, as is characteristic of the story’s overarching dependence

⁸⁴ “Avlija je zagrađen prostor ispred kuće. Dvorište.... Trinaest je Srba ušlo u avliju u koju do tada srpska noga nije kročila.”

⁸⁵ “Muslimanska krunica.”

⁸⁶ The presence of the *tespih* in Lazarevska’s text recalls Akšamija’s use of these beads in her textile memorial. Though the two works employ this object differently, it is notable that this particular ritual object is central to the chronotopes traced out by each of them.

⁸⁷ “Njime se odbrojavaju molitve, kontrolira broj izgovorenih riječi kojima se veliča Bog. Zatvoren niz od 33 ili 99 zrna.”

on chronotope, neither is the *avlja* only spatial nor the *tespih* only temporal. The *avlja* encloses a sequence of kicks from a soldier's boot, as well as the consequence that "forever [*dovijeka*]" will Bakija's niece be unable to conceive a child (112). The *tespih* is made of beans [*mohune*] and Bakija hides among the bean-plants in the garden. Moreover, the *avlja* and the *tespih* are narratively bound together into a shared shape and time: Bakija hears three sequential gunshots at close range and, after a while, leaves her hiding place and enters the now-quiet *avlja*, to discover her dead sister and niece.

Bakija's manner of narration establishes a chronotope that encompasses disparate traumatic deaths. Before the family flees from Selo, Bakija's brother-in-law is killed by a piece of shrapnel just after he says, "nobody can drive me from my doorstep"⁸⁸ (106). Structuring the narrative in what is by now a familiar way, Bakija conveys a nuanced sense of his death without detailing it:

Bakija calls that being a smart alec, referring to the soul of her departed brother-in-law. 'Being a smart alec' is when someone wants to be smarter than they really are, smarter than a person can hope to be. And 'rahmet' alludes to the dead, invoking eternal rest. Not ten meters from his own doorstep, Bakija's brother-in-law was met by a 'geler.' A 'geler' is a white-hot piece of iron... released when a grenade explodes.⁸⁹ (106)

The spare narration is chronotopically rich, especially because this death takes place almost precisely where Bakija's sister and niece are killed. The garden in which Bakija later hides among the beans is the same garden in which the women bury the brother-in-law. And it is in Bakija's narration of the burial that we fully see terminology,

⁸⁸ "Neće mene niko tjerati sa kućnog praga."

⁸⁹ "Bakija ovo zove pametovanjem i pomene rahmet zetovoj duši. Pametovanje je kad neko hoće biti pametniji nego mu je dato, neko je čovjeku uopće dato da bude pametan. Rahmet se pomene mrtvom, priziva pokoj... mir. Na desetak metara od kućnog praga, Bakijinog zeta je stigao geler. Geler je usijani komadić željeza, nekad manji od nokta na malom prstu. Oslobađa se kad eksplodira granata."

definition, and chronotope come together to convey the nature of trauma in “The Feast of the Rosary.” “In front of her is a person,” Bakija recounts,

hit by something from a distance and turned, in the blink of an eye, into a ‘mejt’. A ‘mejt’ is a corpse. [Bakija] hadn’t seen one like this before.... One should close the eyes of the dead with a hand and recite a prayer to commend their soul to Allah. Here the hand had nothing to close. There was nothing to look at on this ‘mejt.’ It had to be buried as soon as possible. Among Muslims, only the men perform that task. That day, though, ushered in a time when many things wouldn’t be the way they were supposed to be. This ‘mejt’ was buried in the garden, under the pear tree, closer to the doorstep than the cemetery.⁹⁰ (106-107)

Here, the body of Bakija’s brother in law is both defamiliarized through constant use of the term *mejt* and also incorporated into the community in which he, in life, was a part. In this way, calling the body *mejt* invokes a larger structure of belief about the human being, the soul, and the significance of rituals, including those related to burial. The specific steps that accompany the proper burial of a body, enumerated here, serve as a literary substitute for the actual ritual. The sudden brutality of his death, and the context of impending danger, means that he is buried by his female relatives in their home garden. As the passage indicates, these deviations from burial customs foreshadow a future that will no longer resemble the past. The chronotope inhabited by this passage is one in which an ordinary garden becomes a cemetery, and time itself is hurried and abnormally condensed. It is the pointed repetition of the term *mejt* that illuminates the contours of this traumatic chronotope and gives insight into the way “The Feast of the Rosary” functions as a fictional commemoration.

⁹⁰ “Pred njom je insan, pogoden nečim iz daljine, u trenu postao mejt. Mejt je mrtvac. Ovakvog ranije nije vidjela.... Trebalо je ruku spustiti na mrtve oči i izgovoriti molitvu kojom se duša preporučuje Allahu. Ovdje se ruka nije imala ni na šta spustiti. Ovo je bio mejt koji se ne da gledati. A valjalo ga je što prije ukopati. To kod Muslimana čine samo muškarci. Ali, tog dana je nastupilo vrijeme kad mnogo šta neće biti kao što jeste. Ovaj je mejt ukopan u bašti, ispod kruške, bliže kućnom pragu nego groblju.”

In addition to the use of specific terminology that is narrated through use of direct definition, “The Feast of the Rosary” uses color to instill its traumatic chronotope with texture and structure. This use and treatment of color, moreover, mirrors the meta-textual way in which the story both employs maps and dialect glossaries: it narratively steps away to comment on all of these textual strategies. That is, not only are objects in the story cast in vivid hues whose repetitions and similarities structure the story’s themes, but “The Feast of the Rosary” advances a theory of color as a mnemonic tool that allows for the narration of trauma. Notions of color are taken from the world of painting and, in particular, from Leonardo da Vinci’s *A Treatise on Painting* and Albrecht Dürer’s *The Feast of the Rosary* [*Das Rosenkranzfest*] (which gives the story its title).⁹¹ As I will demonstrate, these specific intertexts in “The Feast of the Rosary” exist within the story’s overarching chronotope and, moreover, give it hue and subtlety. The technique of color also allows “The Feast of the Rosary” to ponder the relationship between historical and experiential atrocity and their artistic representation, providing insight into how the “real” of lived experience becomes the “especially real” of mediated memory.

As “The Feast of the Rosary” integrates representations of geography and dialectal language into its chronotope, the story seems to be primarily concerned with definition and place. Even its treatment of colors seems, at first, to operate in a definitional way. As Bakija narrates her own rape, the narrative treatment of the color

⁹¹ The title of Dürer’s 1506 painting is translated into English either as *The Feast of the Rosary* or *The Feast of the Rose Garlands*. Both hinge on the etymological relationship between ‘rose’ and ‘rosary.’ The BCS *krunica* maintains ambiguity, but in a different morphological field. Instead of “rose,” it is “crown” that forms the root. Thus *krunica* can either be a crown (of flowers, as in the case of Dürer’s painting) or a rosary. The text confirms the “rosary” interpretation in the passage discussed above, in which Bakija fingers a *tespih*, defining it as “a Muslim rosary [*krunica*]” (116).

red takes the structure of a definition. Describing something red on her *dimije* (the traditional loose pants, often worn by Muslim women in the Balkans)," Bakija narrates a series of visual associations:

Red is a primary color. It conveys everything from hell to heaven. The only sphere it is unable to represent is the highest heaven, where blue reigns. Red is the color of Mary Magdalene.... strawberries in the grass.... the very tip of a flame.... the five-pointed star on Yugoslav National Army uniform caps.... blood. On the 'sedžada,' it's red. A 'sedžada' is the mat that Muslims use to pray.⁹² (115-116)

This verbalization of color mirrors how Bakija, as detailed above, focuses on terms and their meanings and referents as a technique to narrate traumatic events. Color here forms an important buttress for the story's chronotope, serving to bring together and unite disparate times and places based on their mutual redness.

Indeed, color is intimately tied to the chronotopic representation as it functions in "The Feast of the Rosary" as a whole. The point at which this becomes most clear is when the narrative weaves the town of Prusac into a layered memory of the story's crucial object, the niece's white dress (which will be discussed in the next section). Prusac, located near Selo, is not so much treated geographically in this passage as it is through a complex series of associations that effectively convey the position of Prusac in the story's chronotope. "When trees aren't bearing fruit," the story notes, "people from Prusac say, 'well, you know, I'm from Prusac.' When the fruit is ripe, they simply say, 'I'm from Akhisar.'... Akhisar is the old name for Prusac. It means: White City"⁹³ (120).

⁹² "Crveno je osnovna boja. Izražava sve prelaze između paklenog i uzvišenog. Nemoćno je jedino pred eteričnim, gdje vlada plavo. Crveno je boja Marije Magdalene. Madona sa Isenheimskog oltara je u crvenoj haljini. Crvene su jagode u travi. Crvena je kruška lubenjača kad se zagrizi. Crvena je kriješta kod pijetla. Trešnja. Vrh plamena je crven. Zastava može biti crvena. Petokraka na kapi Jugoslovenske Narodne Armije. Krv je crvena. Na sedžadi je... crveno. Sedžada je prostirka koju Muslimani koriste pri molitvi."

⁹³ "Kako oni iz Prusca kad voće ne rodi, kažu:
- Ma iz Prusca sam, bolan.

The use of “Akhisar” and “Prusac” for the same point in space correlates with a symbolic foreshortening of time, in which earlier and later toponyms exist in the same temporality.⁹⁴ It also, and more importantly, linguistically establishes a sense of communal belonging: what would otherwise seem a nonsensical variation of names becomes a meaningful shorthand for conveying affective links between locality, seasonality, and identity. In this way, color is vitally linked with chronotope in “The Feast of the Rosary.”

Color operates alongside maps and definition to shape the story’s chronotope. All of these techniques narrate trauma through artistic gesture, rather than literal testimony. These techniques are forms of what Bakija calls *išareti*, literally “signs, signals,’ denoting oblique forms of communication that rely on “winks, nods, movements, glances.... to do what words and speech can’t”⁹⁵ (107). In this, the trope of color in “The Feast of the Rosary” is linked explicitly with the issue of perspective and the way vision can be distorted. Colors are subject to change, based on tricks of light and the eye. As Leonardo’s *Treatise* consistently asserts, “no body is ever shown wholly in its natural colour” (74). The story obliquely addresses Leonardo’s notions of perspective – the effects of the anatomy of the eye on visual perception, perceived size,

A kada rodi, kažu:

- Od Akhisara sam.

I ne dodaju:

- ... bolan.

Akhisar je starinski naziv za Prusac. Znači: Bijeli grad.”

Bolan (contracted form: *ba*, feminine: *bona*) is a primarily Bosnian slang term, used almost exclusively in direct address, and with the meaning, “man” or “bro.”

⁹⁴ *Hisar* means ‘fortress’ in Turkish (from the Arabic *ḥiṣār*). Akhisar more accurately means ‘white fortress’ rather than ‘white city,’ as “Feast of the Rosary” has it.

⁹⁵ “Išareti znači sporazumijevati se migom, kimanjem, pokretom, pogledom.... Ponekad išaret može što ne može riječ i govor.”

and perceived color. Fundamentally, “The Feast of the Rosary” privileges color as a mechanism for narratively conveying the perceptual quality of memory. The integration of color in “The Feast of the Rosary” prominently traces the felt sense of trauma, the vagaries of traumatic memory, and the way the perceived color of objects – rather than the objects themselves – allow for the narration of trauma.

Indeed, “The Feast of the Rosary” opens by provocatively linking historical trauma and narrative representation, using tenets of fine art to ground the connection. “This story,” its first line reads, “emerges from the belief that the year 1992 is a page wrested from *A History of European Sacred Painting*” (101). That is,

Real events motivate its telling – events that preceded what is, according to the story, just as real. It starts with a gob of phlegm, and aims to express the sense that, in addition to on the grass, that gob also landed on a page of *A Treatise on Painting*. On the very page where it reads, *if you see a woman dressed in white in the countryside, that part of her which is exposed to the sun will be bright in such a way that it will in part irritate our vision like the sun.*⁹⁶ (*ibid*)

A Bosnian Serb soldier stares at Bakija, her sister, and her niece, utters a derogatory epithet for a Muslim woman (*balijka*⁹⁷), and spits. The phlegm lands on the grass near Bakija’s house and, bridging time and space, also lands on a page of Leonardo’s *Treatise*. Interpolating the words from Leonardo’s *Treatise*, this opening points to the way visual art both exists at the core of this traumatic chronotope and offers strategies for representing it in narrative. The story meaningfully explores the seeming contrast

⁹⁶ “Ova priča nastaje iz vjerovanja da je 1992. godine, zbog djevojčice iz Prusca, istrgnuta stranica iz *Povijesti evropskog sakralnog slikarstva*. Ponukana je stvarnim događajima koji su ovome, po ovu priču jednako stvarnom. prethodili. Kreće od jednog ispljuvka. Želi izraziti osjećaj da je osim na travu, ovaj ispljuvak pao i na stranicu *Traktata o slikarstvu*. Na onu stranicu gdje stoji *da će žena odjevena u bijelo, u polju, dijelom koji je izložen suncu, biti toliko svijetla da će kao sunce, smetati oku.*”

⁹⁷ The slurs take both masculine and feminine forms: *balija* and *balijka*. During the war in Bosnia, the term was used in a pejorative way, as were *četnik* and *ustaša* (discussed earlier in this chapter). However, unlike *četnik* and *ustaša*, which have their origin in 20th century political events and wartime divisions, the terms *balija/balijka* are ethnic slurs.

between such violent events and a beautiful depiction of that same violence, suggesting at once that trauma escapes literal representation and that the memory of trauma takes unlikely forms. Indeed, the scene of the three women with which “The Feast of the Rosary” begins suggests that visual art can both obscure and reveal aspects of experienced trauma. The women in the meadow, the story pointedly notes, “could be a lovely scene... the kind that the Impressionists sought out. They were especially eager to paint women in white”⁹⁸ (108). Thus, ekphrastically inserting a painting entitled *Women Searching for a Key*⁹⁹ (109) into its developing narrative, “The Feast of the Rosary” imitates an Impressionist style to highlight how tropes of representation can simultaneously belie and provide insight into the traumatic reality they portray.

This issue of how trauma might be visually or narratively represented is fundamentally related to the context in which Bakija tells her story. As mentioned above, she relates it to the painter, Hans Weiner, and his wife, Eva. More specifically, she does so at their behest and, further, the story implies, there exists a relationship between Bakija relating “real life events” and Hans Weiner’s painterly inspiration. His white canvas constantly occupies the story’s periphery as Bakija remembers and tells her story. At points, Bakija worries that “ ‘[Hans Weiner] will never draw anything.’ She doesn’t know whether it’s for the good. If it’s for the bad, who’s to blame? Maybe [Bakija], because she is telling her story badly. But she keeps talking just the same”¹⁰⁰ (115). In this, the communication of traumatic narratives to a listener is linked to the

⁹⁸ “Ali, žene koje nešto traže po livadi... može biti lijep prizor. Za takvim su impresionisti tragali. Naročito su rado slikali žene u bijelom.”

⁹⁹ “E da bi se prizor naslovio sa Žene traže ključ.”

¹⁰⁰ “A [Bakija] misli:

- Nikad on tamo ništa neće nacrtati.

Ne zna da li je to dobro. Ako je loše, ko je kriv? Možda ona, jer loše priča. Ipak, priča.”

visual representation of verbal narrative. By staging such a communicative context, the story develops an overarching concern for the possibility of communicating, as well as representing, traumatic lived experience. The difficulty Bakija experiences in conveying her story to the Weiners, in which she focuses on the empty canvas, becomes the mnemonic kernel around which her narrative comes to fruition. Noting first that, after Bakija finishes her story, “it doesn’t look like [Hans] wants to go up to [the canvas]” (117), she immediately exchanges this sentiment for another:

‘It’s a pity to go to it, something so white,’ says Bakija, as though to herself, and suddenly sees a living hand, as though to cover its own nakedness, taking the [niece’s] dress from the hand of the dead. Bakija helps her. The dead fingers resist. ‘Jazuk’ is a pity. Sometimes it’s put to rights. More often, it’s not.¹⁰¹ (118)

The dress, then, chronotopically and chromatically linked with the white canvas, becomes the object through which Bakija’s trauma can be fully and non-literally remembered and, moreover, narrated.

After appearing through the Leonardo intertext in the opening of “The Feast of the Rosary,” and motivating the continual development of a theory of color and perspective, the niece’s dress has figured prominently in the story Bakija tells to the Weiners. She recounts how, while being marched by the Bosnian Serb forces back to Selo, she “suddenly couldn’t hear, she could only see. But in a particular way that she was unfamiliar with. She saw colors separate from shapes. More accurately, she watched as a solitary dress appeared intermittently between the uniforms”¹⁰² (110). The

¹⁰¹ “Niti je izgledao kao da mu želi prići.

- Jazuk mu je i prići, onako bijelom, govori Bakija kao za sebe i odjednom vidi kako živa ruka, da bi pokrila svoju golotinju, iz mrtve ruke uzima haljinu. Bakija joj pomaže. Mrtvi se prsti opiru.

Jazuk je šteta. Ponekad se da namiriti. Češće ne da.”

¹⁰² “Bakija odjednom nije čula. Samo je vidjela. Ali na neki poseban, nepoznat način. Vidjela je kako se boje odvajaju od oblika. Zapravo, gledala je samo haljinu koja se povremeno ukazivala između uniformi.”

distortion of her vision, which conveys the particular perspective Bakija has at the moment of trauma, becomes more than a visual aberration: the floating dress links the present of the story and the present of its telling into a single chronotope. This chronotope, in which events exist alongside their associative memories, is structured by colors. And in their perspectival fluctuation, colors reveal the contours of the story's chronotope. Thus, both witnessing and recounting the way her niece's dress became disembodied, Bakija "was not perplexed by the fact that the dress was floating, but that it was blue. The dress then stopped being a shape and became just a color"¹⁰³ (ibid). As Bakija speaks, her grand-niece grows restless.¹⁰⁴ Eva gives the girl *A History of European Sacred Painting* to leaf through, and the latter zeroes in on Dürer's *The Feast of the Rosary*, with its central figure of the virgin in a vibrant blue dress [FIGURE 2.7]. Chromatically and chronotopically linking these two dresses, Bakija both finds a tool for mediating her own traumatic memories.

¹⁰³ "Bakiju nije zbumjivalo to što haljina lebdi. Nego što je plava. Potom je haljina prestala biti oblik i bila samo boja."

¹⁰⁴ This unnamed girl is the daughter of Bakija's late niece. When she escaped from Selo to Sarajevo, Bakija takes the grand-niece, her only surviving relative, with her.



FIGURE 2.7: ALBRECHT DÜRER, *THE FEAST OF THE ROSARY* (1506)

Before articulating these mnemonic and narrative processes, it is necessary to detail briefly the cultural context and central aesthetic features of Dürer's painting. This work is often viewed as transitional in terms of both Dürer's biography and his artistic development. Both of these readings underscore the importance of place. Dürer painted his *The Feast of the Rosary* in Venice, the city to which he had fled in 1494, escaping the

plague that was decimating southern Germany. He returned the following year to his native Nuremberg, but made a second journey to Italy a decade later, in 1505. It was during this second Venetian period that *The Feast of the Rosary* was commissioned by its patron, Jacob Fugger, and supported by a group of German merchants living in Venice. Dürer's letters of the time evince a strong sense of being between worlds. Even the geographical position and differing climates between Italy and Germany seemed bound up with the contrast between Dürer's success and social standing in Venice and his rather lowly position as an engraver in Nuremberg. Shortly after having completed *The Feast of the Rosary* and preparing to leave Venice for good, he wrote to a friend, "oh, how I shall freeze for the [lack of] sun! Here I am a gentleman, at home a parasite" (Homolka 7).

Beyond the biographical details of Dürer's involvement in both the German and Italian worlds of art, the painting's theme allows it to be read as bridging a geographical and cultural gap. The festival portrayed in the painting, in which the Virgin is worshiped by various members of a Dominican Brotherhood of the Rosary and, in turn, bestows rose garlands on them, is one that finds frequent expression in German art of the 15th century (ibid 8). The Fondaco dei Tedeschi merchants commissioning Dürer's painting were members of this Dominican Brotherhood, and the painting would be housed in the local parish of the German community in Venice, St Bartolomeo (Bubenik 60). In addition to the members of the Brotherhood, the painting represents Pope Julius II and the German Emperor Maximilian I in prominent positions on either side of the Virgin. Meanwhile, the natural setting behind the gathering is Alpine (Homolka 12), gesturing to the landscape lying between Italy and Germany. Just below the white Alpine peaks, in the upper right of the painting, Dürer included an image of himself,

holding a scroll bearing his name and the epithet “Germanus.” This was the first time Dürer had inserted a self-portrait into an altarpiece (Bubenik 60), and he dressed his self-representation in a fine cloak. In this way, *The Feast of the Rosary* shows in various aspects of its composition “how German painting became enriched by Italian features” (12). It thus embodies Dürer’s progression from young German craftsman to respected artist in Venice.

Much of the recognition that Dürer received for *The Feast of the Rosary* stemmed from the painting’s masterful use of color, particularly blue, green, and red. As Dürer himself claimed, with the evident skill and understanding of color harmony demonstrated in work, he had “stopped the mouths of all the painters who used to say that [he] was good at engraving, but as to painting [he] did not know how to handle [his] colors. Now everyone says that better coloring they have never seen” (Luber 112). Two intellectual and artistic developments are significant in regards to Dürer’s growth as a master of tone. Almost contemporaneously with this success in the sphere of color, Dürer began writing theoretically on the subject, essays that would later be collected in his *On Colors* [*Von Farbern*] and would primarily deal with “present[ing] a convincing rendition of illusionistic space... through the play of light and shadow on the forms and colors of all the objects depicted” (ibid 88). And *The Feast of the Rosary* marks the first known time that Dürer used preparatory studies drawn on blue-toned paper instead of underdrawing on the canvas itself. Dürer brought to the *carta azzurra* technique, a characteristically Venetian method of drawing in white or gray paint on blue paper, “a level of rigor and sophistication not achieved by Venetian draftsmen” (Silver 110).

Serving as the central intertext of “The Feast of the Rosary,” Dürer’s painting both highlights and recasts the story’s central concern for the mediation of memory and

the narration of trauma. Hans rips from the art book the page containing Dürer's *The Feast of the Rosary* and gives it as a gift to Bakija's grand-niece. After returning to the nondescript room, "one of twelve identical rooms in a row"¹⁰⁵ (119) that she shares with her grand-niece, and after hanging the reproduction on the wall, where it joins the aforementioned map of Bosnia, Bakija "remembered what she was trying to remember on the road to Selo. What she couldn't remember today in the studio"¹⁰⁶ (ibid). This memory takes on shape only when the visual quality of the painting spurs the grand-niece to assert that she knows "something whiter [than snow]"¹⁰⁷ (117). This "something" is her mother's dress, which is physically white and narratively blue because of the intricate chronotope and chromatology of its origin story.

The husband of Bakija's niece, a man from Prusac, buys his wife a dress, encouraging her to guess its color before opening the package. The niece lists various colors, eventually settling on blue, "not as a guess, but as a wish"¹⁰⁸ (119). Her husband, delighted, confirms that "it is blue... the bluest blue there ever will be.... Blue like for going to Prusac"¹⁰⁹ (120). Recalling the role played by the toponym Prusac in its relation with Akhisar, in the story's chronotope, being "blue like for going to Prusac" becomes a circumlocutory way to assert that the dress is, in fact, white. Further, the niece claims that the dress is blue for another reason, because she is pregnant with a boy (121). However, it is primarily because of the narrative context in which all of these color-

¹⁰⁵ "Sada je u sobi, u jednoj od dvanaest jednakih u nizu."

¹⁰⁶ "Sjetila se onoga čega se pokušavala sjetiti na stazi za Selo. Onoga čega se nije mogla sjetiti ni danas u ateljeu...."

¹⁰⁷ "A ja znam nešto bjelje, kaže djevojčica...."

¹⁰⁸ "Ovo nije bilo nabranje i pogodađanje. Bila je... želja."

¹⁰⁹ "Jeste plava... plava da plavlja ne može biti.... Ali plava kao da je za Prusca."

based associations come together that they take on significance in "The Feast of the Rosary." To amuse his daughter, the man from Prusac relates again how he once called her mother's white dress "blue":

The girl laughed and tried to get him to do it again for her. Later, at the table where they were eating, each in their own place, they recited the refrain about the blue and white dress. Once, twice, then three times, all three with a single voice: 'Blue it is, the bluest blue there ever will be.'¹¹⁰ (ibid)

Likewise, Bakija notes that the Virgin Mary in Dürer's painting is also in blue, "the bluest blue there ever will be" (122). A relationship of identity, rather than opposition, is thus developed between the colors blue and white. This relationship is mediated in "The Feast of the Rosary" through Leonardo's theories of visual perception and rules of perspective in conveying color in painting. The fundamental notion underpinning each of the quotes from Leonardo's *Treatise* that are integrated into Lazarevska's story is the fact that "no body is ever shown wholly in its natural colour" (Leonardo 74). Like Dürer, Leonardo articulates an artistic paradox: that a figure must be rendered through contrived uses of color, shadow, and light in order for it to be interpreted as realistic. This central concept is tightly bound to the work of memory and of trauma's narration in "The Feast of the Rosary." Through its layered memories and moments of forgetting, apprehensions and misapprehensions, the story articulates both the substance and the process of memory as intrinsically collected, communicative, and mediated through intertexts. And it is through the phrase, "the bluest blue there ever will be," that disparate points in time, space, and hue are drawn together, establishing

¹¹⁰ "Da bi je zabavio, pričao je kako je materi za bijelu haljinu rekao da je plava. Djevojčica se smijala i tražila da joj to ponovi. Poslije su, dugo, i za stolom, dok su jeli, i svako sjedio na svom mjestu, ponavljali ono o plavom i bijeloj haljini. Jedno, pa drugo, pa treće, pa sve troje, u glas:
- Jest', plava da plavlja ne može biti."

and revealing a colored chronotope that both houses and shapes Bakija's narrative of trauma.

With her grand-niece as interlocutor, Bakija "starts to speak, each word soft and distinct: 'the bluest blue there ever will be...well, that's how it was'.... The story must start with those words"¹¹¹ (118-119). Thus, Bakija tells two versions of her story. The one told to the Weiners is framed as a testimony, while the one she relates to her grand-niece and, importantly, to herself is not. Yet both of these stories address "what happened" and "how it was," illuminating the different ways in which a story of trauma can be represented. This story, framed first as a conversation between a survivor and a secondary witness and then as an act of mediated memory that is given verbal expression, essentially stems from an attempt to understand and communicate the texture of traumatic loss. In this regard, the grand-niece's wailed series of questions posed to Bakija highlights the traumatic chronotope in which the story unfolds, and to which it contributes. "Blue...blue...blue...blue," the little girl cries, "how was it, auntie? How, auntie? Tell me. Tell. And when will mama have my brother... that little boy? And why isn't she here any more? Why are we here and they're over there? They're gone. Daddy. Uncle. Granny"¹¹² (118). In this way, "The Feast of the Rosary" as a work of fiction seeks to represent the inseparable nature of space, time, and color – not as an abstract aesthetic exercise, but because these are the attributes that mark traumatic loss

¹¹¹ "Ali, progovara tiho i razgovjetno:

- Plavo da plavlje ne može biti... eto, tako je bilo.

Govori kao da priča u koju će ove riječi stati, tek treba da se ispriča. Ovim riječima priča treba da počne."

¹¹² "Onu što je bila plava... kako ono... plava... plava... plava da... da plava. Ma, kako je ono, tetka bilo? Kako, tetka, reci mi? Reci. I kad će mama više rodit' tog bracu... tog dječaka? I što je više nema... ovamo? I što mi ovamo a oni tamo? Pa ih nema. Ni babe nema. Ni dajdže. Ni nane."

for the grand-niece. Only in finding techniques in which to convey their intersection is the story able to attend to these losses narratively.

In this chapter, then, I have discussed three particularly notable works in which the intersection of time and space, as they are traced out in fictional chronotopes, crucially illuminates not only a variety of possibilities for narrating trauma, but also the way these narratives exist alongside other memorial works in contemporary Bosnia. *Snow's* magical realist treatment of traumatic waiting, local resilience, and gendered productivity occupies a common memorial chronotope with Akšamija's *Monument in Waiting*. "A Coin," with its chronotopic treatment of speed and the disjoint between time and space, is in dialogue with the "Sarajevo Red Line" memorial. And the chronotope that "The Feast of the Rosary" narratively establishes is intertextually inhabited by both the testimonial *Breaking the Wall of Silence* and Dürer's famous painting. Thus, I have woven together these spheres in order to demonstrate that, just as time and space meaningfully structure memorial activities that shape trauma in specific and socially relevant ways, fictional chronotopes structure types of engagement with traumatic pasts that are no less important for revealing subtle aspects of trauma. These works, then, help to articulate the many ways in which the space and time of trauma are experienced and, more importantly for my study as a whole, how these can be represented in fictional narratives, the tools of which are uniquely suited to tracing textures of trauma rather than recording their literal events.

CHAPTER THREE

HAUNTING NARRATIVES: PRESENT ABSENCE AND ABSENT PRESENCE IN POSTWAR FICTION AND FILM

Turning from investigations of time and space as they are traced out in postwar Bosnian narratives, I now turn to ways in which narrative chronotopes can be “haunted” by traumatic legacies. I seek to attend in this chapter to what Tiina Kirss, in her “Seeing Ghosts,” calls a “poetics of haunting.” In order to do so, I trace out the role of both spectral presences as well as tangible absences in four postwar works. These works distinctly exemplify the rhetorical and visual ways in which narratives engage with people, objects, and places that, after traumatic loss, evoke presence in their absence, and absences in their presence. By detailing the fluctuating nature of these categories in a variety of works, I demonstrate how notions of absence and presence work both intratextually, intertextually, and extratextually to illuminate further the texture of trauma as it exists in the world created in these fictional works, but also within postwar Bosnian society. My analysis in this chapter focuses on fine-grain textual details in their rhetorical as well as social and historical context, working to elaborate and substantiate my dissertation’s general claim that texts work in conjunction with wider social practices to mediate memories of trauma and, as in these cases, work out new understandings of traumatic loss.

My analysis in this chapter begins with Ademir Kenović’s 1997 *Perfect Circle* [*Savršeni krug*], the first Bosnian feature film produced after the war and one that explicitly deals with a number of prominent wartime losses. I introduce this fictional film in conjunction with another of Kenović’s films, the wartime *Sarajevo: A Street Under Siege*, which I see as *Perfect Circle*’s documentary predecessor. The medium specificity of

each of these two films highlights both distinct and shared narrative and visual techniques of haunting. Each film specifically and meaningfully reconfigures absence and presence within the context of loss with recourse to a variety of “ghosts,” both figural and ideational. Moreover, both *Perfect Circle* and *Sarajevo: A Street Under Siege* critically employ and work to solidify sites of memory in Sarajevo’s geographical landscape – sites which remain important in narrating traumatic events and commemorating wartime traumas to the present day.

Next, I turn to Faruk Šehić’s prose poem, “There is This Story [Postoji ova priča],” which enlists an anaphoric structure borrowed from Apollinaire in order to reflect the relationship between the dead and those who remember them. The repetition of the verb *postojati* (‘to exist’ or ‘there is’) is borrowed directly from Apollinaire’s WWI poem, “Il y a.” Through both its rigid form and overt intertextuality, Šehić’s poem creates an inventory of that which exists during and after the war – and of that which does not exist. These absences, however, in being either implied or explicitly named, are narrated as presences. Thus, the poem reveals symbolic relationships between presence and absence within the larger context in which war makes objects and people “invisible,” or places them in a state between presence and absence. Finally, the poem works in tandem with larger social commemorative activities in Bosnia, including forensic attempts to locate “missing persons,”¹ the ritual and communal burial of these victims, and the official discourse surrounding “missing persons” in the Bosnian press. “There is This Story” critically intervenes in the postwar Bosnian commemorative landscape, laying bare both widespread social practices of remembering those who

¹ “Nestale osobe” is a phrase used frequently to refer to those killed during war and genocide whose remains have not been found.

have become physically and symbolically “invisible,” as well as the high ethical stakes that accompany acts of commemoration.

I conclude the chapter with an investigation of Danis Tanović’s 2011 short film, *Baggage* [*Prljag*]. This film engages with the prominent presence of absent “missing persons” in postwar Bosnia in an even more explicit way than does Šehić’s poem. Through its visual complexity, the film stages evocative ways in which physical and symbolic presence and absence are negotiated after traumatic loss at the hands of former neighbors. By dealing with presence and absence in the context of both death and emigration, *Baggage* serves to unite the four narratives discussed in this chapter, putting them in clear dialogue with each other.

This chapter’s focus on loss, presence, and absence means that it is theoretically “haunted” by Dominick LaCapra’s insightful elaborations of these concepts. In his *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, LaCapra differentiates between conceiving of a traumatic event as involving a historical loss or, by contrast, a structural or transhistorical absence. Noting that the very elusiveness of traumatic experience makes it easy to conflate structural and historical traumas, LaCapra outlines the ways in which interpreting loss as absence, or absence as loss, can lead to impossible melancholy or utopian politics, respectively (46). Moreover, LaCapra calls for a rigorous and historically-minded understanding of loss and absence as a prerequisite for responsibly using these terms to discuss trauma. Indeed, his work of definition serves to highlight the rhetorical, ethical, and political stakes of writing trauma and writing about trauma. At the same time, however, I am conscious of the way in which LaCapra’s cautions are particularly directed at the work of historiography, with its specific epistemological hazards. The necessity of seeing loss and absence as different kinds of trauma is

certainly necessary in approaching both historical and individual lived traumas, as well as their representation in all kinds of media. However, in this chapter, which traces out fictional ways of framing loss, presence, and absence, I find that these terms cease to remain entirely distinct. Indeed, authors and characters themselves meaningfully blur the boundaries between them. Thus, when I depart from LaCapra's schema, it is for the purpose of underscoring how the project of writing fiction diverges in crucial ways from that of writing history.

THE POETICS OF SEEING GHOSTS: SARAJEVO: A STREET UNDER SIEGE AND PERFECT CIRCLE

Director Ademir Kenović was active in the Bosnian film scene before the war, working as a filmmaker since 1979 and as a professor at the University of Sarajevo's Academy of Performing Arts since 1989. Having studied film and English literature at both the University of Sarajevo and Denison University in Ohio, Kenović came into his own as a director in the mid-1980s as a feature and documentary filmmaker. His first feature-length film, *A Little Bit of Soul* [*Ovo malo duše*], a historical drama about a traditional Muslim village in Bosnia after the Second World War, encountered some critical resistance before it was eventually produced for Sarajevo Television in 1987. Kenović's 1989 film *Kuduz* garnered almost immediate acclaim, and went on to become a classic of Bosnian cinematography in the late Yugoslav period. In both of these films, Kenović consistently worked with a core group of actors who would appear in nearly all of his subsequent films (including in *Perfect Circle*). These included the established Zaim Muzaferija and Božidar Bunjevac (nicknamed "Bogart" because of his legendary acting skills). Additionally, Mustafa Nadarević (who plays *Perfect Circle*'s protagonist) and Saša Petrović appeared in many of Kenović's films. While this reliance on a few key

actors, who appear in many of a director's films, is a notable feature of Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav cinema, this is particularly true for the production of certain Bosnian directors. In Kenović's case, this trend is also correlated with his reputation for helping young actors develop professionally, find roles, and achieve success in the Yugoslav and then Bosnian film industry.²

During the war, Kenović worked primarily in documentary modes, shooting and producing films through the studio he founded in 1990, SaGA (Sarajevo Group of Authors). This studio was a crucial resource for film production, intellectual and creative collaboration, and discussion among filmmakers in besieged Sarajevo. The short films making up the wartime documentary, *Diary of a Director*, are notable and representative SaGA wartime productions (discussed in Chapter One). Kenović was involved, as director or producer, in countless SaGA documentaries. One of Kenović's most notable films during this period was his 1992 *Confessions of a Monster* [*Ispovijest monstruma*], an extraordinary and troubling inquiry into the mind of Borislav Herak, the first JNA soldier to be convicted of genocide and war crimes against civilians during the war in Bosnia.³ The second of Kenović's seminal documentaries during the war period

² Perhaps most often recounted as an example of Kenović's mentorship is the case of Branko "Duro" Đurić, who was at first rejected from Sarajevo's Academy of Performing Arts (ASU) but then, under the Kenović's guidance, was eventually admitted and went on to become one of Bosnia's (and the wider Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav region's) most successful and recognizable actors. However, the legacy of Kenović continues to the present, as attested by current ASU students who, during my research in 2013 and 2014, served as some of my informants.

³ This film, directed by Kenović and Ismet Arnautalić, formed the third and final section of the omnibus work, *MGM* [*Man, God, Monster*] Sarajevo, which also included Mirza Idrizović's *Diary of a Filmmaker* and Pjer Žalica's *Godot-Sarajevo*. *MGM Sarajevo* in general, and *Confessions of a Monster* in particular, occupied a seminal position in wartime Sarajevo's cultural production in that the film displayed exceptional scope, creativity, and quality – a fact that both belied, and served as a trenchant form of resistance to, the actual existing privations suffered by Sarajevans, including filmmakers. *Confessions of a Monster* was created from footage of Herak's confession at the Sarajevo military prison, where he was being held after having been captured by soldiers from the Army of BiH. During this time, the British journalist John Burns interviewed Herak,

was the 40-minute documentary, *Sarajevo: A Street Under Siege*, which was created from footage shot between November 1993 and March 1994, and still other footage from January 1995.

While primarily made up of short interviews with Sarajevans, *Sarajevo: A Street Under Siege* also contained documentary footage of events and places around the city: cemeteries, panoramas of the city, the Markale market, the Military Hospital, as well as the interiors and exteriors of homes on the film's titular Muse Ćazima Ćatića Street in the Mejtaš neighborhood directly uphill from the Sarajevo Cathedral. As Kenović notes in an interview with author Dubravko Brigić,⁴ *Sarajevo: A Street Under Siege* was distributed and screened widely on local as well as international television channels, including "BBC 2, Canal Plus, WIPX USA, NHK Japan, ZDF and WDR Germany, and about ten other TV stations" (Brigić np). Before the serial was broadcast on BBC2, the time slot in which it was shown had around six hundred thousand viewers. In a testimony to the film's large audience and mass appeal, during the serial's run, this number increased to three and a half million. Kenović asserts that the situation was similar for other international channels, without providing such concrete details (*ibid*). In many ways, *Sarajevo: A Street Under Siege* exists in a dialogue with *Do You Remember Sarajevo? [Sjećaš li se Sarajeva?]* (discussed in Chapter Four). Both films crucially engage

footage of which constitutes the first part of *Confessions of a Monster*. The interview also formed the basis for Burns' Pulitzer Prize-winning article, "A Serbian Fighter's Path of Brutality: A Killer's Tale [Special Report]." This and follow-up articles were published in the *New York Times*. Herak notably confessed to the killing of Muslim civilians, including children, by JNA soldiers, the burial of the victims in mass graves, as well as the rape and murder of Muslim women by JNA soldiers in the "Kod Sonje" rape camp in the outskirts of Sarajevo. See also: Alexandra Stiglmayer, "The War in the Former Yugoslavia," in *Mass Rape: The War against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, ed. Alexandra Stiglmayer (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), particularly pp. 147-154.

⁴ Brigić is the author of, among other works, the wartime *An Alphabet of the Dead [Alfabet mrtvih ljudi]* (Sarajevo, Bosanska knjiga, 1996).

the particularities of wartime lived experience, mediating what seem at first to be individual memories into a larger social narrative that holds sway in both the immediate context and the postwar period. One major difference between these two works, however, is that while they both employ incredible wartime footage, the former was, moreover, completed and distributed during the war, while the latter was created, edited, and released only in 2002.

Much could be said about the specific narratives collected in *Sarajevo: A Street Under Siege*, the thematic and affective resonances created among them, the relationship between the camera and the film's subjects, as well as the fact that more than one version of the documentary exists.⁵ Kenović's film could fruitfully be analyzed as a work of schematic – and often ironic – memorialization alongside other texts from Chapter One, or as a collected memory project, much like *May 2, 1992: It Was a Fair and Sunny Day* (Chapter Four). However, for the purpose of this chapter, I dwell briefly on *Sarajevo: A Street Under Siege* because I maintain that it serves as a crucial preparatory text for Kenović's eventual feature film, *Perfect Circle*. Although the two are highly distinct, they nonetheless share a number of thematic and conceptual preoccupations. Each approaches the large and thorny issue of traumatic loss using the specific tools of documentary and fictional film, respectively. And, indeed, in order to understand the way *Perfect Circle* comes to narrate and visualize the interaction between and overlap of

⁵ I am aware of two distinct versions. One major difference between these versions is that one opens with Kenović himself speaking, while the other (used in my analysis here) uses this section later, and partly with a voice-over rather than depicting Kenović addressing the camera throughout the passage. The second primary difference is that one version includes periodic intertitles with dates and the ordinal number of the siege day (e.g. "8 November, 1993: Day 580"), while the other only uses a single one (reading "November 1993–March 1994") at the very outset of the film. The same interviews in each version are, at times, presented in a slightly different order. I surmise that, because of the episodic nature of the film's material, it is highly likely that additional versions exist. Research in television studio archives outside of Bosnia could confirm this.

presence and absence in the context of trauma, it is fundamental to see this film in contrast to its documentary forerunner, *Sarajevo: A Street Under Siege*.

Dealing with many more and disparate issues related to the lived experience of war, Kenović's documentary nonetheless is strongly framed and organized by the theme of people who have either left Sarajevo or been killed, and the impact their loss has on those who have survived and who remain in the city during its ongoing siege. The film's opening section is devoted to several heart-rending interviews, sequenced one after another, in which Sarajevans recount their experience of having loved ones leave the city. One Emin notes that his "entire family has gone abroad,"⁶ while he alone remains in the city.⁷ He breaks down in tears as he falteringly confesses that "now [he] thinks about going with them."⁸ The camera pans to a packed valise, and then to Emin comforting a neighbor who is distraught by his impending departure. In a third scene, while the camera pans over a group of Emin's elderly neighbors, the voice of another neighbor, Jasmina, describes how "today is a difficult day because a friend [Emin] is leaving... someone who came to our place during the war, whom we didn't know beforehand."⁹ Then Kenović's own voice (speaking in English) describes the dangers suffered by the "encircled" city and the neighborhood around Muse Ćazima Ćatića Street. In the final scene of the film's opening series of interviews, a group of individuals with baggage are seen waiting for a convoy leaving the city. This scene immediately transitions to a shot of a moving red and white bus, from which a hand

⁶ "[Porodica je] otišla u svijet."

⁷ Only the given names of the film's interviewees are presented.

⁸ "I sad mislim ići sa njima."

⁹ "Danas mi je jedan teški dan jer odlazi jedan prijatelj koji je došao u kuću sa ratom. Njega nismo znali."

silently waves out of a single open window. Out of this initial constellation of words and images, the documentary narrates and renders communicable the trauma of loss. And it is only within this overarching constellation of words and images that the film animates its character-interviewees as individuals and within which they specifically inhabit an environment of loss.

In the earlier documentary format, it is possible to see stylistic and thematic elements which clearly shaped Kenović's thinking as he created the scenario for *Perfect Circle*. First of all, as mentioned above, many of the locations and cinematographic treatments of space in the films are shared. Both prominently use Sarajevo's graveyards, in particular the complex in the Koševo neighborhood, formed from the Lav, St Marko, and St Josip cemeteries.¹⁰ Figuring cemeteries is a frequent practice in wartime and postwar Bosnian literature, film, and other forms of cultural production, so these two films are by no means unique – rather, they participate in a wider trend of cultural memory. The choice of the particular cemetery complex in Koševo is notable, as these graveyards are singled out in cultural memory, largely because they abut the Olympic stadium complex, whose grounds became cemeteries in their own right (now the Muslim "Martyr's Cemetery") as burial space became severely limited and Sarajevans used what space was available to bury their wartime dead.¹¹

¹⁰ While the St Marko and St Josip cemeteries were and continue to be used by Orthodox and Catholic Sarajevans, respectively, the Lav cemetery has graves belonging to members of all three of Bosnia's major religions (as well as atheists).

¹¹ An additional layer of cultural memory adheres to the Lav cemetery, which was first established during the Austro-Hungarian occupation for the burial of imperial soldiers. During this time, it was called the Militär Friedhof. After 1917, when architect Jozef Urban installed large stone lion statues to guard its entrance, the cemetery was colloquially referred to as the Lav [Lion] Cemetery. In the imperial period through the early Yugoslav period, the site also served as the Ashkenazi burial grounds. Only in 1958 were 1200 of these Jewish graves exhumed and moved to the Borak cemetery (the Jewish cemetery on the face of Trebević mountain in the Soukbunar neighborhood). Following the Second World War, the cemetery

In a similar way, the Sarajevo Military Hospital provides not only the setting for several key scenes in both films, but the hospital is established as a site of memory through these and other representations in various cultural formats during and following the war.¹² For example, the March 15, 1994 edition of *BH Dani* devoted a series of articles to the hospital.¹³ One article was devoted to an overview of “The Hospital in the Heart of the City.” Another described in detail the ingenious external fracture fixation device, “Sarafix,” that was developed out of necessity during the siege, and went on to be used in conflict zones elsewhere. A third and highly polemical article, “Departures of Doctors [Odlasci ljekara],” printed the full names of Sarajevo doctors who had fled the city without the permission of the clinical director, strongly denouncing these doctors and praising those who had stayed at their posts. Since the war’s end, the hospital has been further fixed in individual and social memory of the siege. Images of its devastation are widely circulated in media. In 2013, journalist Merima Spahić produced a documentary, *Wounded Hospital [Ranjena bolnica]*, featuring

name was changed to the Partizan Cemetery, reflecting the memory politics of Tito’s Yugoslavia. In April 1992, at the outset of the war in Bosnia, the cemetery’s name was officially changed to Lav. During the siege of Sarajevo, these lions were badly damaged and were restored only in 2005. This capsule history is summarized from the website of the main Sarajevo burial and cemetery public company, Pokop: <http://www.pokop.ba/Groblja/Get/11> (Accessed 11/13/2016)

In cultural and social memory and in fact, the Lav Cemetery is known for housing the graves of members of all of Sarajevo’s religious communities: Orthodox, Catholics, Muslims, Jews, and atheists.

¹² Following the war, the Military Hospital was turned into the Abdulah Nakaš General Hospital, named after the legendary surgeon who famously worked 1500 consecutive days during the Siege of Sarajevo.

¹³ This March 15 edition was the first *BH Dani* to be printed without a price. The short-lived local wartime currency, the BiH dinar, was in precipitous freefall. For reference, the previous (December 29, 1993) edition cost 500,000 BiH dinar, while a month earlier the October 27 one had cost 200,000 BHD, and the price had roughly doubled each month prior. By comparison, the first edition of the so-called “Nova serija [New Series]” run of *[Naši ratni] BH Dani*, August 25 1992, cost 100 BHD. In May 1993, the price was given in three currencies: 3000 BHD, 3DM, 2 USD.

interviews with doctors interspersed with historical and contemporary footage, as well as dramatic reconstructions of wartime events.

In addition to foregrounding Sarajevo places and, in doing so, establishing shared memorial activities at these sites, *Sarajevo: A Street Under Siege* develops themes and characters, both of which lay the groundwork for those taken up in *Perfect Circle*. Several key interviewees express thoughts and sentiments that form the embryonic elements from which the later film's fictional characters and larger narrative arcs emerge. Nada, a deaf woman shown engaged in sign-language conversation with a friend in several episodes of *Sarajevo: A Street Under Siege* might be seen as having inspired *Perfect Circle*'s deaf protagonist, Kerim. Moša, the documentary's avid pigeon breeder who dreams of renewing contact with dove enthusiasts in Utah (and other cities outside of besieged Sarajevo), is completely temperamentally distinct from *Perfect Circle*'s curmudgeonly pigeon keeper, Asaf. Yet Moša's specific hobby certainly stands out as a vivid way of tracing out a compelling character and related plot, parts of which are used in *Perfect Circle*. More importantly, however, Moša serves to underscore, both memorably and dramatically, how Sarajevans maintained activities from prewar life during wartime's hardship as a form of cultural resistance. This can also be seen when various interviewees reflect on the issue of pets (and, in particular, dogs) in besieged Sarajevo. One interlocutor, Branko, expresses the fact that humans' relationships with pets in wartime Sarajevo is complicated: on one hand, the animals "are welcome, and help [their owners] psychologically"¹⁴ but, on the other, they are a source of constant worry. Several other individuals express concern for animals abandoned by their owners, underscoring Branko's point about the dire situation faced by animals living

¹⁴ "Oni su nama dobro došli i oni su na neki način nama neka psihička pomoć."

amidst widespread violence as well as the effect this constant danger to animals has on humans. In both of these cases, Moša's and Branko's, we see represented a larger tenet, wherein Sarajevans pointedly carry out habitual activities from peacetime and act according to the same values that governed life before the outbreak of war – even at great physical or emotional cost. As Kenović maintains in another interview, describing how he established the SaGA production company, “Sarajevo seemed like a concentration camp surrounded with people shooting at the prisoners. All you could do was to try to survive by working at whatever you knew how to do – which was filming, filming neighbors, kids, hospitals, graveyards” (Cowie and Edelmann 66). This theme of the necessity of cultural and ethical survival beyond basic physical survival, echoed by countless others during and after the war, forms a significant common thread that unites *Sarajevo: A Street Under Siege* and *Perfect Circle* – in their choices of film subjects, in the specificities of their narrative and visual modes, and in their philosophies of production.

I maintain that one of *Sarajevo: A Street Under Siege*'s major contributions is its representation of the theme of presence and absence in the larger context of the cultural memory of the war in Bosnia. It achieves this by positioning its interviewees within Sarajevo sites of memory and introducing salient issues of individual and social memory after trauma. Yet the documentary mode has certain limitations, those formal and those that derive from the particular cultural history of documentary filmmaking during the war in Bosnia. As Kenović notes, film during the wartime period was characterized by the “saturation” of documentary's particular form of “presentation

and communication”¹⁵ (Brigić np). The hyper-production of documentary films during the war produced a reaction in favor of the visual and storytelling capacity of feature film after the war. In the same Brigić interview mentioned earlier – which took place in March 1995, even before the war’s end and at the very beginning of *Perfect Circle*’s creation – Kenović maintains that Sarajevo filmmakers had “shot enough documentaries over the course of these three years... [With *Perfect Circle*] we are making a feature film...[and] believe that people can re-identify with this place through the fictional format”¹⁶ (ibid). Thus, *Perfect Circle* was conceived of as engaging viewers with Sarajevo’s wartime history and its pervasive memory precisely through its choice of fictional stylistics and rhetorics, which pointedly diverged from those of documentary filmmaking.

Perfect Circle occupies, literally and figuratively, a key transitional place in postwar Bosnian cinematography insofar as it was shot immediately after the end of the war in Sarajevo locations that bore the telltale signs of war damage. *Perfect Circle* appeared to use the ruined city as a film set exactly as it had been left after the war, and before any rebuilding had begun. Moreover, to the local or international viewer, the appearance, in a fictional film, of settings that had been made infamous during the war by widely circulated photographic and film images might have prompted them to interpret *Perfect Circle* as a partially documentary film. The use of recognizable sites of memory like the Military Hospital and the Lav cemetery mentioned above are accompanied by pointed use of others that are redolent with associations from the war

¹⁵ “Usljed zasićenosti dokumentom, zasićenosti takvom vrstom prezentacije i komuniciranja....”

¹⁶ “Mi smo snimili dosta dokumenata za ove tri godine. ... Mi pravimo igrani film... mi mislimo da ponovnu identifikaciju sa ovim prostorom ljudi mogu dobiti kroz igranu formu.”

period. These include the destroyed tram in the Skenderija neighborhood, an important site of memory that is discussed in detail in Chapter Four. The film also prominently uses the Sarajevo Vijećnica,¹⁷ Sarajevo streets (especially those in the Bistrik and Marindvor neighborhoods), the Miljacka river upstream from Sarajevo, the ruined shells of apartments in the occupied Dobrinja/Aerodromsko Naselje neighborhoods, as well as the Sarajevo airport. All of this seemed to give the film a visual sense of authenticity that is often the remit of documentary, rather than feature, filmmaking.

However, as Kenović adamantly maintained, both before beginning to shoot the film and after it was made, this illusion of authenticity was, in fact, constructed.¹⁸ In response to Dubravko Brigić's question (which is, in fact, a statement), that *Perfect Circle* would have "the least expensive and most authentic scenery,"¹⁹ Kenović inserts a cautionary word. "One might say that it will be authentic," but, he maintains,

Film is complicated matter: in a fictional film, it's hard to make the same use of elements of scenery that seem most apt for a documentary. So we'll be building a lot of things [for the film's sets], believe it or not, and customizing them. We'll attempt to make everything convincing, to give the impression of authenticity, but this doesn't mean that the film will be shot in authentic settings. Just as it won't be about real events. What is most important, after all is said and done, is the feeling [the film] creates.²⁰ (ibid)

¹⁷ Which is portrayed in flames. In the film, the season is winter turning to early spring. Thus, although the timing does not accord with the Vijećnica's actual burning in August 1992, this filmic depiction further underscores the particular way in which the building functions as a site of memory and a mechanism through which to represent and mediate traumatic experience.

¹⁸ As, it should be insisted, it always is, in documentary as well as narrative filmmaking.

¹⁹ "Biće to najjeftinija i najautentičnija scenografija."

²⁰ "Da, moglo bi se reći da će biti autentična. Film je, međutim, komplikovana stvar: naizgled upotrebljivi scenografski elementi teško da se mogu u igranom filmu koristiti na način na koji se koriste u dokumentarnom. Tako ćemo i mi, vjerovali ili ne, dosta stvari graditi, prilagodjavati. Nastojaćemo da sve bude uvjerljivo, da se doima autentično, ali to ne mora značiti da će se snimati u autentičnim ambijentima. Isto kao što se neće govoriti o stvarnim dogadjajima. Najvažniji je osjećaj koji se nakon svega toga stvorí."

By complicating a straightforward notion of filmic authenticity, Kenović's assertion echoes critical thinking about how both documentary and feature films work with visual and narrative conventions to create the effect of realism or authenticity (e.g., De Bromhead 1996, Bruzzi 2000, Black 2002, Nichols 2010). By highlighting the fact that its sets are fabricated, and its story fictional, Kenović argues that the representational work done in *Perfect Circle* is of a different sort than that of *Sarajevo: A Street Under Siege*. The latter establishes iconic and indexical relationships between wartime Sarajevo and its representation in film, while the former relies on indexical and symbolic relationships. Thus, the "same" scenes of Sarajevo's ruined cityscape function differently in each film. As I will demonstrate in the remainder of this section, a useful lens through which to analyze how *Perfect Circle* diverges from *Sarajevo: A Street Under Siege* is the further investigation of their shared concern for traumatic loss and absence, both of which themes are handled differently within the aesthetic modes of fictional film and documentary.

I argue that *Perfect Circle* uses three major techniques to represent the trauma of loss and the way that absence and presence are linked within this traumatic landscape. The first is the basic fact that the film's story revolves around major losses: of security, of prewar habits, of food and water, and, most significantly in the film, of friends, neighbors, and family members who have fled abroad to escape war's dangers and privations. However, these are matched by distinctive presences, including "new families" and social networks. Second, as he continues to survive his own losses, *Perfect Circle's* protagonist, Hamza, persistently imagines both the ghostly presence of his absent family members as well as his own death by hanging. These persistent flights of fancy represent not only how the experience of trauma might radically change

commonplace notions of presence and absence, but also how visually and narratively depicting present absence and absent presence can effectively represent trauma's impact on perception, memory, and understanding. Finally, the film is intertextually built upon three Abdulah Sidran poems, which are attributed to Hamza, "the poet." As I will demonstrate, these poems work in tandem with visual and dialogic elements in the film to represent how traumatic loss can be inhabited.

On the surface of its plot, *Perfect Circle* is built around a series of losses. Sarajevo's prewar peacetime life and many of its rituals have been destroyed for the film's characters, who live in danger, privation, and fear. The film's protagonist, Hamza, is left alone in the city after his wife and daughter leave on a convoy to Croatia.²¹ Moreover, there is a loss of communication: Hamza does not hear anything from his wife and daughter in the film. He neither sends them any letters nor manages to communicate with them.

Meanwhile, also on the level of the plot, the film's structuring losses coexist with equally foundational elements of what I am calling "presence." A central aspect of *Perfect Circle*'s narrative – and the major source of the film's affective tenor – is the sudden appearance of two young boys, Adis and Kerim, in Hamza's flat. The filmic montage articulates a sense of simultaneity and logical sequence of losses and presences. The boys are shown fleeing their war-torn village on the western outskirts of

²¹ Hamza's wife, who remains unnamed in the film and is credited only as "Gospođa [Mrs.]" is presumed to be Bosnian Croat by ethnicity. Their daughter's name, Miranda, is most likely a Croatian one. In contrast, Hamza, Adis, and Kerim are all clearly Muslim names. Determining ethno-national identity on the basis of names is not always straightforward in the post-Yugoslav context. There are many given names and surnames used among all of the major ethnic groups in the former Yugoslavia, and strong naming trends during the Yugoslav period prompted parents to select non-Slavic given names, or at least non-South Slavic ones, for their children. This topic is fascinating and deserves further research.

Sarajevo and entering the ruined city on foot,²² followed by the scene of Hamza's wife and daughter deciding to leave Sarajevo and then actually departing by bus. The next scene synthesizes these two previous ones, linking them temporally, semantically, and affectively. Hamza returns to his flat after seeing his wife and daughter off, whereupon he encounters the sleeping boys. Thus, loss is intimately linked with presence, and its meaning mediated through it. Further underscoring the film's commitment to this relationship between loss and presence, when questioned by Hamza about their sudden presence in his home, Adis claims that he "thought nobody lived here, it was dark."²³ Thus, the film repeatedly brings together presence and absence, loss and that which occupies the space remaining after loss. It does not depict presence to offset loss, or even portray these as opposing states. Rather, through plot and, more importantly, rhetorical and visual choices, *Perfect Circle* represents the way traumatic loss coexists with and is narrated through particular kinds of presence.

Perfect Circle also mediates loss and presence through its script, which is heavily indebted to the poetry of Abdulah Sidran. A well-known poet and film scenarist, Sidran co-wrote *Perfect Circle*'s script with Kenović. Sidran was already firmly established and highly influential in the Yugoslav arts and culture scene before the war. Sidran made a name for himself as a poet in the 1970s and 1980s, publishing five major volumes of poetry: *Šahbaza* in 1970, *Rambler* [*Potukač*] in 1971, *Flesh and Bone* [*Kost i meso*] in 1976, *Sarajevo Collection* [*Sarajevska zbirk*] in 1979, and *Poems* [*Pjesme*] in 1987. In the 1980s,

²² Near the beginning of the film, after JNA soldiers (or irregulars, as their dress seems to indicate) have killed and rounded up the other inhabitants of their village, the boys are seen walking into Sarajevo near the Stup junction on the city's far western edge. Because of these clues to its location, as well as the terrain depicted in the village scene, it is probably one of the many small villages in the vicinity of Igman mountain.

²³ "Misli' nema nikog, mrak."

Sidran became immensely famous on account of the scripts he wrote for two of Emir Kusturica's most beloved films, the 1982 *Do You Remember Dolly Bell?* [*Sjećaš li se Dolly Bell?*] and the 1985 *When Father Was Away on Business* [*Otac na službenom putu*] mentioned in Chapter One. During the war, Sidran published *Sarajevo Coffin* [*Sarajevski tabut*] in 1994 and *Why is Venice Sinking?* [*Zašto tone Venecija*] in 1996.

Abdulah Sidran's contribution to *Perfect Circle*, and the way the resulting film bears undeniable traces of his poetic stance, are important for the film's particular representation of loss and presence. Moreover, I argue that the involvement of the poet in this project also laid the groundwork for postwar Bosnian memorial tropes, both in and beyond film. For instance, Ahmed Imamović's 2010 film, *Belvedere*, also relies on voice-overs of Sidran's poetry in its representation of postwar loss, grief, and waiting by Srebrenica's women searching for the mortal remains of loved ones.²⁴ In the wider memorial landscape, a recitation of Abdulah Sidran's long narrative poem, "The Tears of Srebrenica's Mothers" [*Suze majki Srebrenice*], has been included in the official July 11th commemorative ceremony at the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Complex.²⁵ This ceremony, which centers on the ritual burial of those killed during the 1995 genocide and whose mortal remains have been found during the previous year, takes place with high pomp and is conspicuously attended by high-ranking international delegates as

²⁴ It is worth noting that Imamović's *Belvedere* also uses these same three Sidran poems. In addition, *Belvedere* includes "Nespina" and "Guest From Another World" [*Gost sa drugog svijeta*], both of which are also from Sidran's collections from the 1970s.

²⁵ Both the title and the rhetorical stance taken by Sidran's "The Tears of Srebrenica's Mothers" situates the poem firmly within the genre of *tužbalica*, the South Slavic ritual (and literary) lament. Written in 2007, this poem was published in 2009 in a volume alongside several of Tarik Samarah's famous Srebrenica photographs. Since its publication, it has been recited at several annual commemorative ceremonies at the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Center on July 11th to mark the Srebrenica genocide. During my recent fieldwork, for example, the poem was recited at the 2013 ceremony, but included neither in the 2014 one nor at the 2015 twentieth anniversary commemoration.

well as the families of the victims. Sidran's poem has been read in the context of speeches by Bosnian and international political and religious officials, Islamic prayers, and musical performances by Islamic religious and cultural groups. Moreover, in recent years, Sidran has increasingly become outspoken about the need for a Bosniak-focused sphere of arts and culture in Bosnia; he thus has become an establishment figure both as a poet in today's Bosnian society and in his poetic output.

By focusing critically on Sidran's poetry in *Perfect Circle*, it is possible to decipher how aesthetic choices are inextricable from, and indeed contribute to the memory politics in which they exist. It is important to note, first of all, that two of the poems figured in *Perfect Circle* belong to Sidran's prewar *oeuvre*: "Nightmare [Mora]" from *Poems* and "Having Taken Flesh and Bone [Uzevši kost i meso]" from *Flesh and Bone*. The third, "I Fear [Plašim se]," seems to have been written specifically for the film, as it is not contained in any published collection of Sidran's poetry.²⁶ In what has become a generalized effect in the reception of prewar Bosnian writing (in particular, poetry), Sidran's work from the 1970s and 1980s is often mistakenly ascribed to the war period, and both its themes and rhetorical techniques interpreted as commenting directly on the war in Bosnia.²⁷ Nowhere is this clearer than in his hugely popular "Nightmare," whose lines open *Perfect Circle*:

²⁶ Another possibility exists, however: "I Fear" might have been written in the Yugoslav period but either not published, or removed through censorship or self-censorship because of its dark and depressive outlook. As Ivan Čvoro notes, referencing an interview that director Pjer Žalica did with Abdulah Sidran, "Sidran recalls a situation in which a cultural committee criticised his manuscript of poems because certain lyrics painted a very bleak picture of socialism. The committee recommended that 'the book will be published on the condition that Sidran removes any two poems from it'" (37). See: Ivan Čvoro, *Turbo-Folk Music and Cultural Representations of National Identity in Former Yugoslavia* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2014).

²⁷ The same is true of other Bosnian authors, particularly those established in their craft before the war. The poetry of Semezdin Mehmedinović comes immediately to mind, especially because it shares with Sidran's the fact that prewar poems were republished in volumes along

What are you doing, child?
I'm dreaming, mother. Dreaming that I'm singing,
and you're asking me, in my dream: 'what are you doing, little one?'
What are you singing about, in your dream, child?
I'm singing about the fact that I had a house, mother.
And now I don't have a house. That's what I'm singing about, mother.
That I had a voice, mother, and my own tongue.
And now I have neither a voice nor a tongue.
In the voice I don't have, in the tongue I don't have,
about the house I don't have, mother, I'm singing a song.²⁸

Indeed, while the poem was first published in 1987, it was reprinted as a prominent introductory poem to Sidran's 1994 *Sarajevo Coffin*.²⁹ For this reason, it is often read as referring to events during the war. However, as Sidran explained in 2012, at one of his near-annual public discussions, "Evenings with Sidran" in the Sarajevo Chamber Theater, the poem's inspiration was quite different, and more existential than historical. In 1986, after having dreamed about hearing poetry in the Macedonian language (which he does not speak), Sidran was epistemologically puzzled. He set about, with advice from literary colleagues, to compose a poem dealing both with the dream and the lasting paradox it proved for his own poetic consciousness. Nonetheless, "Nightmare" is frequently periodized as belonging to his wartime *oeuvre* because its meaning is interpretively linked to Bosnia's physical destruction during the war, as well as to challenges that arose during and after the war concerning the legitimacy of claims to a distinct Bosnian language. In addition to "Nightmare" being republished in *Sarajevo*

with wartime poetry. Some versions of *Sarajevo Blues*, for example, contain poetry written and published before the war (including the long lyric, "Zenica Blues").

²⁸ "Šta to radiš, sine?/ Sanjam, majko./ Sanjam, majko, kako pjevam,/ a ti me pitaš, u mome snu: šta to činiš, sinko?/ O čemu, u snu, pjevaš, sine?/ Pjevam, majko, kako sam imao kuću./ A sad nemam kuće. O tome pjevam, majko./ Kako sam, majko, imao glas, i jezik svoj imao./ A sad ni glasa, ni jezika nemam./ Glasom, koga nemam, u jeziku, koga nemam,/ o kući, koju nemam, ja pjevam pjesmu, majko."

²⁹ In which were also published a great many of his prewar poems, some with appended dates and others with none. "Having Taken Flesh and Bone," for example, was also republished in *Sarajevo Coffin*.

Coffin, I argue that the poem's central role in *Perfect Circle* led to its being taken out of the actual context of its creation and being given, through a particular kind of filmic mediation, a highly significant place in shaping the social memory of the war period.

In the case of "Nightmare," it is the striking combination of the film's visual techniques with poetry of loss and of the relationship between absence and presence that facilitates the mediation of the war through Abdulah Sidran's poetry. As mentioned above, it is with the lines of "Nightmare" that *Perfect Circle* opens.³⁰ They are spoken in the characteristic tone and cadence of the actor who plays Hamza (Mustafa Nadarević). However, as in all uses of Sidran's poetry in the film, while Hamza appears on screen as the lines are spoken, they are recited in a voice-over, rather than diegetically. In the opening scene, the camera pans from behind a section of barricades to a snow-covered cemetery, through whose crosses and *nišani* [Muslim gravestones] an elderly woman quickly walks. With the poem's first line, the camera reveals Hamza, dangling by a noose from a tree along one cemetery path. The woman circles the tree, looking up at Hamza with only mild confusion before exiting the cemetery.³¹ A resonance is created between visual and narrative elements of this scene that establishes a strong sense of loss. The poem prominently features that which the poetic subject lacks, repeating the negation of the possessive verb *imati* in relation to voice, tongue, and house. The wartime winter scene, meanwhile, reveals damaged buildings on the outskirts of the cemetery, and the presence of old and new graves within it. The poem, with its first person narrator, and the camera's focus on Hamza work together to advance an interpretation that it is Hamza who suffers these losses and, indeed, that he

³⁰ "Nightmare" is the only poem of the three recited in its entirety in *Perfect Circle*.

³¹ This woman is credited as "Hamza's mother," although she does not appear in the rest of the film to confirm this role. It is only the poem that provides evidence for this reading.

is in the process of losing his very life. Thus, the scene's historically and geographically specific visual clues present a quality of loss that is linked both to wartime Sarajevo and to loss more universally understood.

Loss is articulated and thematized as both general and particular in each of the next two scenes that integrate Sidran's poetry. As a bookend to the film's opening, *Perfect Circle* closes in the same Lav cemetery, this time in spring. Hamza and Kerim have just buried Adis, who has been killed while attempting to make an escape across the Sarajevo airport runway. They stand at the fresh grave, while words from Sidran's "Having Taken Flesh and Bone [Uzevši kost i meso]" are spoken extra-diegetically:

Nothing, neither good nor ill,
can happen to me any longer. It remains only
for me to number the days....
This must be understood
and, finally, calmly spoken aloud: she will come
and take everything away, once flesh and bone have been removed....
She will come. Having taken flesh and bone, she'll gather up everything else:
The pencil on the table with its graphite heart, mind and
spirit, the picture on the wall – music lighting up the room,
tears and terror, and the air choked with pollen. Then:
darkness, darkness, darkness.³²

At the words "tears and terror," Adis' grave slowly fades from view, leaving behind a black screen that visually reinforces the poem's final repeated phrase. The objects mentioned in the poem have particular meaning for the film in general. The pencil seems to refer to Hamza's seemingly miraculously practice of drawing eponymous "perfect circles" with the single movement of a pencil, achieving total symmetry each

³² "Meni više ništa, ni ružno ni dobro,/ ne može da se desi. Ostalo je naprsto/ da brojim dane.... /Treba to pojmiti/ i izgovoriti, napokon, mirno: doći će/ i uzeće sve, uzevši kost i meso..../ Ona će doći. Uzevši kost i meso, uzeće sve:/ olovku s grafitnim srcem na stolu, pamet i/ dušu, na zidu sliku – muziku od koje soba sja,/ suzu i strah, i prepun polena zrak. Potom:/ mrak, mrak, mrak, mrak."

time.³³ Meanwhile, the “picture on the wall” connotes both the perfect circle drawing that is hung on the door of Hamza’s daughter’s bedroom, as well as the various photographs, posters, and reproductions that adorn the flat and underscore the loss of Hamza’s family members – and which are eventually shown fluttering in fiery heat when the flat goes up in flames. Moreover, the use of the feminine “she” strongly indicates to speakers of Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian that the protagonist of “Having Taken Flesh and Bone” is, indeed, death [*smrt*], which is a feminine noun. Thus, what might otherwise be seen as temporary or contingent losses in *Perfect Circle* are rhetorically joined with a kind of loss that is irrevocable.

Midway through the film, between these opening and closing poems, *Perfect Circle* inserts Sidran’s lyric “I Fear [Plašim se].” In this scene, Hamza is portrayed hanging from a rope on a bombed out tram near the bridge by Skenderija. Lines from the poem are spoken over the scene as the camera pans over desolate ruins of vehicles and metal debris around the tram:

I fear I’ll end up at the end of a rope,
as so many others have;
out there and right here...
right beside us...
Days are long, nights are long,
years are long.
Without love’s bread,

³³ The significance of this gesture remains opaque throughout the film. It seems to recall the tradition of casting “magic circles” as the ritual creation of a barrier from evil. Relatedly, one also thinks of figures like Honi ha-M’agel (“Honi the Circle Drawer”), the 1st century BCE Jewish miracle worker. In the Talmud it is related that Honi ha-M’agel, during a drought, drew a circle in the sand, stood inside it, and ordered God to send rain, not leaving the circle until a normal rain was sent down. Asked about the film’s title, Kenović noted its highly metaphorical nature, claiming that it actually functions as a “pleonasm, because a circle is always perfect” (Brigić np). Later, though, he articulated a more specific sense in which the filmic circle can be understood: “We Sarajevans have been in an enclosed space for three years now. The way out from our current situation is tangled up, as though inside a circle. As though we can’t get anywhere, no matter what” (ibid).

without love's water, without love's, without love....
Without love's light, without bread,
without water, without air.
Just one step and I go into darkness from darkness.³⁴

As in both "Nightmare" and "Having Taken Flesh and Bone," this poem speaks of global losses – of love and, by implication, the desire to live – while the scene's visual elements are undeniably situated in the time and space of wartime Sarajevo. The general and the particular, the absence of love and the absence of sustenance, are bound together in the language and images of the scene in which this poem is animated. Each of these three scenes is imbued with what seems to be a universalized sense of tragedy, primarily because of Sidran's expansive poetic style, his opposing the lyric subject to death itself, and the Manichean themes with which his poetry is often concerned. Meanwhile, these lines are carefully positioned in the particular context of *Perfect Circle* and marshaled for a fictional representation of wartime Sarajevo. Thus, their far-reaching poetic sensibility is sutured to a circumscribed local context and used to narrate trauma within it. As these poems are re-contextualized in a filmic context, they bear witness to what poetry, as well as Bosnia, has lost. In this, they participate in mediating the memory of war in a way that becomes accessible and productive for a wider social context.

In concluding this discussion of *Perfect Circle*'s representation of the trauma of loss and its instrumental role in bringing together in narration and image several themes and techniques that emerge as later tropes in memorializing trauma in Bosnia, it

³⁴ "Plašim se skončat ču na užetu./ Nije ih malo skončalo tako;/ u svijetu i tu.../Tik pokraj nas./ Dugi dani, duge noći,/ duge godine./ Bez hljeba ljubavi,/ bez vode ljubavi, bez zraka ljubavi, bez ljubavi..../ Bez svjetla ljubavi, bez hljeba,/ bez vode, bez zraka/ Tek jedan korak ubavi u mrak iz mraka."

is necessary to examine one of the film's most striking devices. As I have indicated in my earlier overview of the film's thematic and poetic treatment of presence and absence, *Perfect Circle* symbolically blurs the line between physical presence and absence. Not only does Hamza frequently converse with his absent wife and daughter, whom he imagines as physically present in Sarajevo, but he sees himself as absent – hanging near death from a noose in the Lav cemetery, in the tram, and, near the end of the film, in his own burning flat. Each of these scenes both thematizes the proximity of presence and absence in the context of traumatic violence. Each also meaningfully represents, in different symbolic ways, how presence and absence might be experienced as a result of trauma.

Hamza's repeated visions of his own death seem to constitute both a Freudian repetition compulsion, while his imaginary interactions with his wife and daughter seem a kind of wish fulfillment. Yet, following Petar Ramadanović's insightful engagement with similar issues in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, as well as Tiina Kirss' theory of a "poetics of haunting," I prefer to read the presence of ghostly figures in *Perfect Circle* as a particular type of haunting that works to symbolize the particular way in which trauma exists in the film. As Ramadanović maintains, turning attention to how texts might be haunted opens up possibilities to understand "how the repetition of trauma... repeats also something that is otherwise (in a political, historical, and ethical sense) than trauma, something that is otherwise than the compulsion to repeat" (181). Moreover, too often the impulse to "name the ghost" (183) substitutes for nuanced treatment of the various ways in which revenants of different kinds haunt texts that

engage trauma, either individual or historical.³⁵ It is tempting to interpret the appearance of specters of self and other in *Perfect Circle* as manifestations of Hamza's working through the trauma he has experienced as a result of both the war and, in particular, his family's departure. However, his engagement with these ghosts indicates that they have broader and more nuanced thematic functions. Indeed, both the presence of haunting individuals at key points and Hamza's reaction to them articulate what I see as the film's twin notions of memory and trauma.

Interacting with the spectral presences of his wife and daughter, Hamza inhabits the full complexity of traumatic present absence and absent presence that I argue forms the thematic and structural contours of the film. Moreover, because these interactions with ghosts shape his actions and interactions with flesh-and-blood characters, the film implies that the memory of those who are (and that which is) absent is constantly mediated in the present, rather than being fixed in a nostalgic past. Indeed, Hamza's interaction with his wife continues to unfold and, for the most part, involves her berating him for his drinking, forgetfulness, and repeated (imaginary) suicide attempts. Meanwhile, it is amid these bouts of criticism that Hamza crucially recalls useful facts that pertain to his survival, such as the location of food items hidden in the apartment. Hamza's imagined relationship with his daughter is more variable than that with his wife. His daughter Miranda encourages Hamza to take care of the two boys – even prompting him to clothe them in the warm sweaters she has left behind in her bedroom closet. Later, though, she expresses disappointment that Hamza has not tried to contact her in Croatia, pointedly criticizing the fact that he is going to such great lengths to help

³⁵ Here, and throughout, Ramadanović is speaking about Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. However, his critique also applies to "trauma literature" more generally.

Adis and Kerim, what he calls “some sort of a new family,”³⁶ while seeming to neglect his “real” family. The visitations by Hamza’s wife and daughter indicate strongly that these are not ghosts who simply come from the past; rather, like Beloved in Morrison’s novel, they continue to develop as characters, as does Hamza in relation to them.

Throughout the film, the undeniably imaginary quality of Hamza’s wife and daughter is, as mentioned earlier, underscored by reaction shots of Adis and Kerim, who consistently wonder to whom Hamza is speaking. At the same time, the boys contribute meaningfully to the film’s articulation of present absence and absent presence insofar as they are not outside the realm occupied by the specters of Hamza’s wife and daughter. Not only does Hamza speak to his family, but he also speaks about them – furthering the film’s notion of ongoing memory-making, rather than a single fixed memory. Moreover, when pressed on the issue of Hamza’s seeming preference for his daughter by Adis, who notes, “it’s always your daughter. Don’t you have a wife?,”³⁷ Hamza makes a confession that vitally informs the film’s conception of presence and absence:

I miss [my wife] when she’s gone. But when she’s here... I don’t know.... It’s like they’re somehow still here. I know they’re doing well over there. They’re not hungry or cold. I’m glad they left.... But I worry about them: it’s not easy being away from your own home.... And I miss them.³⁸

It is, thus, not only for Hamza, but also for the boys, that these two characters are simultaneously present and absent, both here and not here. With Hamza’s halting words, in the context of its general themes and poetics, the film traces out narratively

³⁶ “Neka nova familija.”

³⁷ “Samo ‘kćerka, kćerka.’ Kad i nema žene?”

³⁸ “Kad je nema, fali. A kad je tu, onda ne znam. Kako kad. Opet meni je kako k’o tu. Znam da je tamo dobro. Nisu gladne, nije hladno. I drago mi je da nisu ovdje.... Ali opet brinem za njih. Nije to lako biti iz svoje kuće... i meni fale.”

and visually how presence and absence, reality and imagination, can coexist within a traumatic context. This stands in contrast to *Sarajevo: A Street Under Siege*, whose specific type of documentary mode dictates that while interview subjects express a longing for the presence of individuals and things which are, in besieged Sarajevo, absent, these absences are not made present in the film. *Perfect Circle*, however, uses the particular tools of fictional representation to make both manifest what is not present in reality and strip away what, in fact, exists. In this way, the film effectively articulates one way traumatic loss might be experienced.

This fictional treatment of the texture of trauma is brought to bear, perhaps most clearly, in the second type of haunting that Hamza experiences: his repeated visions of his own hanging. This ghostly presence of the absent self, and the imagined separation of one version of bodily self (the hanged) from another (the witness to the hanging), shares something in common with Hamza's visions of his wife and daughter. These are presented as imaginary visions that only Hamza himself and the ghosts of his wife and daughter can see. They also establish experiential, rather than semantic, blurring of the categories of absence and presence. This it does in an even more hard-hitting way than do the other two specters. The major point of view in the film is Hamza's, meaning that the camera sees the hanged self from the implied perspective of the non-hanged self. I conclude with an examination of this particular aspect because it draws on many of the film's elements that have previously been discussed. Hamza imagines his own suicide at important sites of memory in Sarajevo's wartime history. He experiences both conflicting and corresponding senses of presence and absence of self. Well-known Abdulah Sidran verses accompany the first two of these hangings. And what comes to the fore in these moments is a fact that bears repeating here: Hamza is, fundamentally, a

poet. It is precisely in the ghostly vision of his own hanging that he finds words to articulate both his own trauma and wider social traumas – both those experienced within the film and in the realities of postwar Sarajevo.

Returning to the second of Hamza's imagined hangings, which takes place on the famous Skenderija tram, it is now necessary to elaborate on the conclusion of this scene. After pausing on what has now become a familiar shot of an immobile, wide-eyed, and silent Hamza dangling from a rope, the camera shows the exterior of the tram, which begins, as if in a dream, to move east down the track. Between these two shots, a man collecting scrap comes onto the tram, makes as if to hang himself as a crude gesture to mock Hamza, saying derisively, "why, it's that poet. You fucking idiot!"³⁹ It is at this point that the ghostly hanging begins to reckon with represented trauma in a more involved way. After the tram moves off into the distance, the camera pans to the living Hamza, now being passed by the tram further down its path. He himself repeats the poem's final stanza, "just one step and I go into darkness from darkness."⁴⁰ He pauses for a moment, and then comments that,

[‘into darkness from darkness’] really reminds me of something. But when I go to write it down, it evaporates. I haven’t even written a letter lately. What kind of poet have I become? I have no idea what I should write, though. And besides, no one gives a fuck about poetry.⁴¹

³⁹ "Ma, ovo je onaj pjesnik. Jeb'o, budalo!"

⁴⁰ That is, it is strongly implied that he is voicing these words himself and in reality. His mouth is covered by the kitten he found abandoned on the seat of the tram and who now perches on Hamza's shoulder. However, his right cheek is visible during this line and it does slightly move, indicating that he – rather than the Hamza of the film's voice-over – is speaking this line.

⁴¹ "Boga mi, ovako liči na nešto. Ali kad hoće da zapišem, ispari. I pismo više nisam u stvari napisao. Eto...ja pjesnik sad i smo. Pa ne znam valja što bi zapisivao. Jebeš piši poezije, šta ćeš toliko....

The core of the scene, which seems at first merely to recapitulate themes of traumatic absence and presence within the narrative context of Sidran's poetry, expands to include the vital issue of poetic representation itself. More specifically, it addresses the way in which traumatic experience can be represented in non-literal ways, and the adequacy or limitations of this artistic endeavor. Hamza is therefore not only a poet, but also one who struggles to find words that represent trauma in a way that is recognizable – that “resembles” the experience, without merely tracing it out literally. Through the complex character of its protagonist as well as through the film's substantial use of intertexts – both Sidran's poetry and the visual intertext formed from the memorial landscape of Sarajevo – *Perfect Circle* meaningfully reflects on involute presences and absences after trauma.

“THERE IS THIS STORY”: NAMING INVISIBLE PRESENCE AND ABSENCE

Now I turn to Faruk Šehić's prose poem, “There is This Story.” This poem is markedly structured as a list of phrases, each beginning with the word *postojati* (“to exist, to be”). As Šehić remarks in an explanatory footnote at the end of the poem, he borrows the anaphora from the early 20th century Polish/Italian/French poet, Guillaume Apollinaire.⁴² The poem to which Šehić refers is Apollinaire's “[Il y a,” whose lines, likewise, begin with an existential expression and whose theme and setting is, likewise, war. Both poets voluntarily enlisted; Šehić served as a lieutenant in the

⁴² Guillaume Apollinaire is the pseudonym taken by Wilhelm Albert Włodzimierz Apolinary Kostrowicki (1880-1918), born in Rome to a Polish mother. He spent his adult life in Paris and was a leading member of the cultural and artistic community that included Pablo Picasso and Gertrude Stein. He is credited with coining the terms “Cubism” and “Surrealism.” He fought and was wounded by shrapnel in the First World War. The volume *Calligrammes*, published posthumously in 1918, contains Apollinaire's “war poetry” and is likely the collection to which Šehić refers in his cycle.

Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while Apollinaire joined the French artillery in the First World War. Both were, moreover, seriously wounded in battle. In this section, I seek to link Šehić's formal stylistics, his explicit reference to Apollinaire's poem, and the subjects he brings into narrative existence. More precisely, my argument is that Šehić's "There is This Story" addresses and narrates the trauma resulting from loss in a way that re-establishes presence through memorialization.

"There is This Story" is reminiscent of the wartime witness literature discussed in Chapter One: it constructs a fragmentary and ironic narrative using the rigid form of the anaphora "there is/there are." This repetition can be seen as a symptom of the trauma of war, the automatic and identical repetition compulsion that Freud saw at the core of his theory of trauma and which theorists after him and influenced by his work took up and refracted in their own work (Caruth). However, as I will elaborate, this borrowed anaphora can also be read as a technique that operates on two levels. First of all, Šehić uses obdurate repetition and the short phrases that follow the existential verb to convey, in words, the experience of trauma. Additionally, however, he operates within this structure of repetition to fashion a narrative that allows this trauma to be worked through. This working-through might best be seen along LaCapra's lines, as

an open, self-questioning process that never attains closure and counteracts acting-out (or the repetition compulsion) without entirely transcending it.... But it is deceptive to see [working-through] in terms of a notion of cure, consolation, uplift, or closure and normalization. (xxiii)

I argue that Šehić's use of repetition allows the poem to work through trauma in narrative because of three components of this structure of repetition: its specific literary reference, the poem's limited and pointed use of variable tenses of *postojati*, and its conceptual work with the idea of "the art of becoming invisible" which both concludes and pervades the poem as a whole.

It is no accident that Šehić borrows stylistically and thematically from Apollinaire and, in particular, from a poem in a collection written while Apollinaire served and was wounded in WWI. Davor Beganović claims that Šehić belongs to a literary strain in Bosnian war writing that represents trauma by employing a grotesque and violently imagistic “warrior’s prose” that focuses on the external space of the front, in contrast to the interior “melancholic” representation of siege (221-222). Whether this dichotomy is completely accurate, it is true that Šehić employs very different settings of violence and rhetorical subjectivity than, for instance, the wartime work of Mehmedinović and Kebo. This distinction doubtless has at least something to do with the fact that Šehić’s immediate topography is the front, particularly the sites of conflict in northwest and central Bosnia where he spent the majority of the war. And while the figure of the soldier-poet is a trope in world literature, and one which threatens to over-determine biographically both Šehić and Apollinaire, the affinity of the former with the latter’s specific take on war and aesthetics is meaningful.

A thoroughgoing discussion of Apollinaire’s aesthetics is far beyond the scope of this chapter. However, it is important to note elements of modernism and, in particular, modernist simultanism, which characterize much of Apollinaire’s poetics, present in “Il y a.” In his introduction to the study of Apollinaire’s *Calligrammes*, S. I. Lockerbie identifies in Apollinaire’s poetry a commitment to what he called “simultaneity” – a praxis employed in both Cubism and Futurism – which works to “create an impression of multiple and simultaneous consciousness, perceptions and ideas are abruptly juxtaposed...in an arrangement that, at first reading, seems to be one of considerable disorder” (Lockerbie 3). In “Il y a,” Apollinaire uses this “discontinuous mode of writing which largely ignores the demands of logical compatibility and conceptual

coherence, relying instead on a markedly non-discursive type of discourse which makes use of multiple and unstable viewpoints" (Hermans 68).

The repeated phrase, "il y a," that opens each line of Apollinaire's poem, gives profound insight into the simultanist method. While each was a distinct method with their own histories, Simultanism and Cubism share core elements of artistic perspective and vision. Moreover, word and image are integral to both Simultanism and Cubism. Thus, for the purposes of articulating the simultanist thrust of "Il y a," it is helpful to see both the repetition of the phrase and the constellation of disparate objects in the poem as enacting in words what a Cubist work of art achieves in imagery. By simultaneously representing different perspectives or moments in a sequence, both Cubist art and Simultanist literature embodied an important aspect of Modernism, with its attention to stylistic and thematic innovation, reflexivity, conflation of subject and object, use of allusion, and obscurity of syntax and reference.

"Il y a," as mentioned above, is structured as a list of discrete elements that range from the concrete to the abstract, all of which relate in some way to the poetic setting of the trench, as a synecdoche for the war and, more specifically, the soldier's position on the front. This list can be seen as an inventory, of the kind used as artistic devices by later Surrealists (Jacques Prévert, most notably). The inventory composition, as seen in "Il y a," at once showcases the collection of objects depicted and the method for including and linking them. The repetition can also be read, as Timothy Mathews suggests, as a poetic means of "[keeping simultaneity] alive through repeated beginnings" (Mathews 109). Thus, the repeated beginning, "il y a," establishes a simultaneity between the accoutrements of war (an "enemy submarine," a "ship," "guns," and "coffins"), its cast of characters (a "captain, some "prisoners," a "post

orderly,” a “spy”), locations (“Cologne,” “Mexico City,” the “Gulf Stream,” “Algeria”), and elements populating its setting (the “thousand little pines,” a “cemetery full of crosses 5 kilometers away,” the “rivers that won’t flow uphill again”). Juxtaposed with these objects are “snapshots” and a “portrait” of the lyrical subject’s beloved, as well as emotions themselves: the “longing for a letter” and “a love that gently allures” (Apollinaire 275-277). Indeed, the major axis of juxtaposition is between the war and the beloved: the ship has “sailed away with [the] love” and the enemy submarine “has designs” on her. The beloved’s photographs integrate her into the war landscape, as does an intended but unsent gift from the poet to his beloved: “there is an inkwell I made in a 15-centimeter rocket they didn’t send off” (*ibid* 277).⁴³ The object of war is transformed, in physical make-up and poetic inscription, into one of both art and communication. Fundamentally, it is the poetic eye that serves as the arbiter and compiler of simultaneous vision.

This poetic eye, and the lyrical subject and narrator, can be seen in another of Apollinaire’s poems, “The Wonder of War [Merveille de la Guerre],” from the same period as “Il y a”:

I bequeath to the future the story of Guillaume Apollinaire
Who was in the war and knew how to be everywhere
In the lucky towns behind the front lines
In all the rest of the universe
In those who died tangled in the barbed wire
In women in cannons in horses
At the zenith at the nadir at the four cardinal points
And in the unique ardor of this eve of battle. (*ibid* 259)

⁴³ As Anne Greet notes in her commentary, this line originally read: “Il y a un encrier que j’avais fait pour Madeleine.” Much of Apollinaire’s wartime poetry explicitly referred to “Madeleine,” and the poet prolifically corresponded with Madeleine Pagès, his fiancée (Greet 471).

In this poem, disparate time periods, war and peace, proximal and distant locales are all mastered and united by the poet, whose vision unites them into a single plane and temporality.

In Šehić's poem, and the cycle from which it is taken, the Apollinairean allusion is exploited and altered in order to convey the texture of traumatic loss. "There is This Story" was published in the 2004 collection *Under Pressure* [Pod pritiskom] and serves as the concluding poem in the cycle *In Search of Warmth* [Potraga za toplinom], all of whose components deal with the direct experience of war or its integration into the narrator's memory. Šehić uses Apollinaire's poetry as a thematic and stylistic reference throughout the cycle: in addition to "Il y a," one of the other pieces in the collection bears a title taken directly from Apollinaire's *oeuvre*, "Moon-Colored Shells [Obus de Couleur de Lune]." Moreover, *In Search of Warmth*'s first story, built around a dialogue between soldiers and titled "Deep Behind the Lines [Duboko iza linija]" can be read as a subtle reference to the line from Apollinaire's "Wonder of War" quoted above.

The multivalent experience of war shapes the rhetorical context for the vast majority of Šehić's work, as is strikingly evident in *In Search of Warmth*. The cycle itself begins with the narrator being asked, "don't you know how to talk about anything besides war?" – to which he answers, "it looks like I can't"⁴⁴ (Šehić 106). Talking or writing about war takes on a number of key features, for Šehić. All of these are on display in "There is This Story."

In addition to the anaphoric repetition of "there is," Šehić borrows from Apollinaire a sense of the grotesque setting of war, as summed up in the latter's frequent use of the term *boyau/boyaux*. The term *boyau* carries strong aesthetic and

⁴⁴ " – Znaš li ti pričati išta drugo osim o ratu? – pita me Zu. – Izgleda da ne znam."

affective overtones largely on account of its indeterminacy and playful deployment in Apollinaire's poetry: it is at once a "bowel" or "gut" and a "trench." Poised between these two meanings, the trench takes on a repulsive stench, and the gut is implicated in war. Šehić plunges straight into this context in "There is This Story," whose opening line immediately places the reader in the visceral horror of the front line. "There is this line," he says, "stretched out across the woods like a pig's intestine (when you pump a boar full of bullets), reeking of half-digested food"⁴⁵ (138). Underscoring the impression created in this opening line, Šehić re-figures "pig" and "guts" in the third line, "There is a two-day-old corpse that the pigs went wild over, devouring the entrails. The owner of the corpse was their master"⁴⁶ (*ibid*). By placing these lines, with their common nouns, close to each other, Šehić creates an uncomfortably grotesque portrait of multi-layered trenches in which the poem is set – for, indeed, the "dug-outs with trenches instead of a chimney"⁴⁷ (*ibid*) are placed squarely between the first and the third lines' gore.

This tracing out of a repulsive and confined setting establishes one aspect of the texture of trauma that I argue Šehić's poem conveys. However, unlike Beganović – who sees this grotesque narrative style, which partakes of literary modernist tropes to convey the "trauma of the warrior," as the primary mode in which Šehić depicts trauma – I maintain that such front-line gore is only the first step in a much more expansive and subtle linking of trauma and memory through narrative. By sketching out uncomfortably horrific violence and death, and circumscribing the reader within this horror of the trench, Šehić effectively conveys the way trauma can be experienced as the

⁴⁵ "Postoji ova linija razvučena kroz šumu kao svinjsko crijevo (kad izrafalaš nerasta) u kojem se puši poluprovarena hrana."

⁴⁶ "Postoji dvodnevni leš kojem su podivljale svinje pojele utrobu. On im je bio gazda."

⁴⁷ "Postoje zemunice sa rorovima namjesto dimnjaka...."

suffocating and often repeated presence of experiences that were disturbing to or overwhelmed the subject. In this way, the anaphoric repetition of “there is” and grotesque details work together to express the trauma of presence, of things that persist in consciousness after an event and threaten to disrupt the subject.

In this regard, it is significant that – like Apollinaire in “Il y a” – Šehić primarily uses the present tense to create his poetic inventory. In addition to grotesque details, Šehić’s poetic landscape is populated by objects, varyingly concrete and abstract, that are brought into physical proximity with each other and, moreover, into simultaneous existence in the present tense. The identical way in which these things are rendered in the text narratively domesticates them. The present tense makes traumatic experience intimate: “There is this dugout to which I am bound, just as much as to my own hearth” (139). Likewise, “There is a 60-millimeter mine thrower (nicknamed “little Hasib”) and about ten grenades that we hoard like diamonds from a royal crown”⁴⁸ (140). And, as in Apollinaire’s poem, there is a beloved, “a girl I love, some thirty kilometers from here, and whenever I think about her, I am seized by a deathly fear that I will never see her again”⁴⁹ (ibid). All of these disparate details work to delineate the way in which trauma distorts ordinary things and creates new affective connections between subjects and objects.

The present tense list also contains elements that are of a less concrete nature. These exist on several levels at once. Undoubtedly, they “are” in the same space and time as the objects of war and the physical setting, but they are also meta-textual. This

⁴⁸ “Postoji minobacač kalibra 60 mm (zvani hasibić) u našoj jedinici, i desetak granata koje čuvamo kao dijamante iz kraljevske krune.”

⁴⁹ “Postoji djevojka koju volim, nekih trideset kilometara odavde, i kad god pomislim na nju, uhvati me predsmrtni strah da je nikad više neću vidjeti.”

can be clearly seen in the following line: “There is a surface-to-surface Luna missile.... If *I am to aestheticize the horror*, the missile looks like a ball of fire; but nobody has any use for that”⁵⁰ (140, italics in original). The first sentence seems like it is another object that will be poetically integrated into the home space of the trench, like “little Hasib,” the mine thrower. However, the second sentence disrupts this formulation, instead inserting the narrator’s own commentary on describing a weapon and its destruction. Not only does this meta-textual commentary prevent the Luna missile from being domesticated, it also critiques an attempt to aestheticize horror – even as the poem continues to do so, by virtue of it being a poem.

Alongside the present tense that contains different, and even contradictory, voices, there is the referential present that levels disparate moments in history as well as fictional and factual worlds. Thus, we vividly witness the fact that “There is me in a camouflage uniform, hunched over as I sit on the forest floor, reading American poetry like Vladimir Nazor⁵¹ ‘in a pause from battle’”⁵² (139). The conflation of wartime and peacetime activities indicates the degree to which the reality of war is unfamiliar and unstable. This “pause from battle” also resonates with the way that Apollinaire traces out, in his war poetry, a present that consists of peace-within-war: this specific time-space is physically situated in *le bois* or *la forêt* and, temporally, exists as a “time out of war” (Lockerbie 15).

⁵⁰ “Ako estetizujem užas, rakete liče na vatrene kugle; međutim, od toga niko nema koristi.”

⁵¹ Vladimir Nazor (1876-1949): prolific Croatian/Yugoslav poet and influential politician in the creation of Tito’s Yugoslavia. Both his close relationship with Tito and status as a soldier-politician-poet was immortalized in Veljko Bulajić’s epic 1969 Partisan film, *The Battle on the Neretva* [*Bitka na Neretvi*].

⁵² “Postojim ja u maskirnoj uniformi kako zagrbljen sjedim na šumskoj stelji i čitam američku poeziju kao Vladimir Nazor ‘u predahu borbe.’”

For Šehić, this additional layer of the present hinges vitally on references to works of literature, film, and cultural icons. Referring to the 1980 Kurosawa film, a line introduces “the giant *Kagemusha, Shadow Warrior*, whom I imagine shuffling down the Macadam road towards us while we dine on tasty meat”⁵³ (ibid, italics in the original). There are also “plenty of poets who wrote about death; I have nothing to say about the subject because I am not personally acquainted with it”⁵⁴ (139). Such intertextuality seems to be a formal narrative mechanism of making sense of traumatic chaos through analogy, which brings disparate things into a common present. In that these referential objects and personages are introduced in the poem in relation to the poetic narrator’s thoughts, these lines convey the working of such a mechanism “in real time.” Trauma is being worked-through in the poetic present.

Meanwhile, the poem is punctuated by occasional jumps to the past and future tenses. Early on, the narrator notes that, “There was in me patriotism at one time, and then everything went to shit”⁵⁵ (138). This recollection of a past establishes a point of contrast with the present, in which not only is everything still “shit” but, implicitly, patriotism does not exist. The line’s use of past tense verbs also contains a micro-narrative sequence, one which is augmented because the line is sandwiched between entries that establish the war setting: a tree burned in the forest where the soldiers are camped out, and the poet’s “animal desire to defend this line and these woods, because

⁵³ “Postoji džinovski *Kagemusha* sjenka ratnika kojeg zamišljam kako se gega makadamskom cestom prema nama dok jedemo ukusno meso.”

⁵⁴ “Postoji dosta pjesnika koji su pisali o smrti; o njoj nemam ništa reći jer lično ne poznajem.”

⁵⁵ “Postojao je neko vrijeme patriotizam u meni, a onda je sve je ošlo u kurac.”

those two exist for the sole purpose of us being here”⁵⁶ (138). By briefly returning to a pre-war past, the poem’s largely present-tense thrust is more acute.⁵⁷

In a similar way, “There is This Story” contains a single line that uses future verb forms: “There will be the imprisoned, the wounded, and the dead. I hope I’ll survive”⁵⁸ (140). The future, imagined and narrated in this line, is both determinate and indeterminate. The casualties of war are vivid and yet, in composite, they conjure up images on account of being stereotypes, reproduced in a thousand narratives of postwar realities. The narrator hopes, but does not know with certainty whether he will survive. He does foresee the near future with a paradoxical clarity, however, saying, “before an action, something will flutter in my chest and weakness will drop down into my stomach like a swig of strong *rakija*. I don’t believe I’ll be brave like Borges’ Juan Facundo Quiroga; anyway, he’s a historical character from a poem”⁵⁹ (*ibid*).⁶⁰ By referring to Quiroga, the line establishes, in a rich and succinct way, a foil to the narrator’s own dubious heroism. This relationship between soldier and literary figure, unlike the intertextual moves mentioned above, is quickly undermined with the

⁵⁶ “Postoji životinjska namjera da se odbrani ova linija i ova šuma, jer one i postoje isključivo zbog toga da bismo mi bili ovdje.”

⁵⁷ In “Il y a,” Apollinaire diverges only once from the use of the present tense. Near the end of the poem, his narrator notes that, “There was a *Boche* prisoner carrying his machine gun on his back.”

⁵⁸ “Postojaće zarobljeni, ranjeni i mrtvi. Nadam se da ću preživljjeti.”

⁵⁹ “Pred akciju nešto će mi zatreperiti u prsima i slabost će se spustiti u želudac kao gutljaj žestoke rakije. Ne vjerujem da ću biti hrabar kao Borgesov Juan Facundo Quiroga; ipak, on je historijska ličnost iz pjesme.”

⁶⁰ Jorge Luis Borges, “El general Quiroga va en coche al muerte,” *Luna de enfrente* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1969 [1925]).

metatextual final clause. If, as seen earlier, the narrator is like Vladimir Nazor in a meaningful way and if this likeness, expressed in narrative, is that which concisely conveys the texture of being momentarily secure amidst the general danger of war – the narrator is not Quiroga in way that also narrates something about traumatic legacies of war. More specifically, by shutting down the comparison between himself and Quiroga on two counts (because they are dissimilar in their bravery and because Quiroga is a historical personage transposed into a Borges poem), the line poignantly illustrates the manner in which ideals and hopes are lost when one experiences the horror of all-too-present war. The use of a future tense that bleeds into the historical present in the final clause, much like the past tense with present implication of the absence of “patriotism” in the previous paragraph, conveys the way temporality becomes a meaningful rhetorical strategy in narrating the experience of traumatic war.

I dwell at length on the use of tense in “There is This Story” as a whole in order to lay the groundwork for my analysis of the poem’s pivotal conclusion, which brings together issues of repetition, intertextuality, and temporality with those of loss, presence, and absence in a stark way. This poem’s second half is bracketed off rhetorically from its first by the statement that “There is this story in which nothing happens”⁶¹ (140). This is, in part, a commentary on the formal structure of the work: as an inventory, it primarily documents things. Nothing “happens” – everything simply “exists.” At the same time, however, this transitional line prompts – even challenges – the reader to doubt its accuracy.⁶² Much has taken place in the poem, the noun-heavy

⁶¹ “Postoji ova priča u kojoj se ništa ne dešava.”

⁶² Šehić’s line echoes and functions similarly to Mehmedinović’s famous formulation: “Rat je / i ništa se ne događa....” (see Chapter One for a discussion of this line).

lines tracing out a narrative, albeit an incomplete one that compels the reader to fill in gaps and situate the poem's objects in relation to each other in time and space. Suddenly, in the forty lines that follow the "story in which nothing happens," the poem is overwhelmed by an inventory of names: "Fikret Avdagić 'Fikro' existed. Mirsad Mustedanagić 'Ćipo' existed. Samir Redžić 'Bale' existed... Emili existed" (140-141). Some have nicknames; some are *only* given nicknames; one is designated as the brother of someone listed earlier. These forty men merely existed, in the past tense. And they are all men, a fact confirmed by both their names and the Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian past tense verb form, which (in contrast to present or future tense) conveys gender and number. These men, thus, existed and they did so individually, but they also continue to exist as a narrative group that spans the final pages of the poem.

Beyond this linking of names on the page, the poem's penultimate line further solidifies the way in which naming the dead intersects with other rhetorical strategies at work in "There is This Story." The line following the forty names returns to the present tense: "There are the military cemeteries: Ometaljka, Soline, and many others in the wider Bihać region"⁶³ (141). Here we see clearly the way a temporal shift creates a narrative sequence, even if a conclusive logical connection is omitted between subsequent lines. The reader understands that those men who existed now lie in Ometaljka and Soline, although nothing in the poem indicates this to be so. This revelation – that there may, indeed, be no connection between those who are named and the cemeteries – opens up a new meaning for the poem's repeated claim that "nothing happens" in it: while a space between lines is ritually and meaningfully

⁶³ "Postoje vojnička groblja Ometaljka, Soline, i još mnoga groblja širom Okruga Bihać."

preserved for the action of bodies being buried, the anaphoric structure which privileges nouns highlights the possibility that those who existed might not be buried.

The final repetition of “there is this story in which nothing happens” in the poem’s last line could be a simple refrain, bracketing the inventory of names and the places in which these men are buried into a narrative unit. A conclusion with this now familiar phrase would thematically link with one that forms part of the conclusion of the poem’s first section, that “there are a billion details I can’t remember now”⁶⁴ (140). According to the logic bridging these two statements, that which escapes memory are things left out of the narrative, which is then characterized by absence of “happening” rather than what does, in fact, happen in it.

However, Šehić makes a striking narrative choice in the poem’s final clause that, in a subtle but important way, shifts formulations of presence and absence in the piece and their claims on memory, traumatic experience, and the literary framing thereof. The poem’s final line imbeds Apollinaire’s own conclusion to “Il y a”: “There is this story in which nothing happens, *for we have pushed very far in this war the art of becoming forever invisible*”⁶⁵ (141, italics in original).⁶⁶ The “art of becoming invisible,” borrowed from

⁶⁴ “Postoji milijardu detalja kojih se sada ne mogu sjetiti....”

⁶⁵ “Postoji ova priča u kojoj se ništa ne dešava, *jer se u ovom ratu otišlo isuviše daleko sa umijećem da zauvijek postaneš nevidljiv.*”

⁶⁶ Apollinaire’s line, “Car on a poussé très loin durant cette guerre l’art de l’invisibilité” has been translated into English in numerous ways. Kay, Cave, and Bowie render it as, “For people took the art of invisibility very far during this war (260), while Michael Benedikt takes some liberties with his version, “Knowing as they do what great progress we’ve made during this particular war in the art of invisibility.” Šehić’s own translation (or the one from which he borrowed, if indeed he was using a BCS translation of Apollinaire’s *Calligrammes*) is, on one hand, sufficiently different from the French original to be interesting: “jer se u ovom ratu otišlo isuviše daleko sa umijećem da zauvijek postaneš nevidljiv” (141). His use of *otići* [to go out, to leave] for *pousser* shifts the verbal range, while the final clause’s use of the second person singular also implicates an interlocutor not present in the French.

Apollinaire, resonates in Šehić’s poem in a way that slightly alters its meaning and import. For both poets, the “art of invisibility” is related to those who are dead or absent. Mathews claims that the way in which people and things grow invisible in Apollinaire’s poem is related to its formal structure, a “camouflage of naming and indicating” (Mathews 190). The same can be said, to some extent, about “There is This Story.” In this reading, the poems’ proliferation of objects, rendered simultanistically, ultimately begin to obscure specific items in the inventory; this technique narrativizes the way war destroys and makes absent elements and characteristics of prewar life.

However, I maintain that the interpolation of Apollinaire’s line into Šehić’s poem allows the poem to render in new ways two major traumas of the war in Bosnia and its postwar aftermath: the fact that the bodies of thousands killed during the war have still not been recovered, and the politics of memory that structure official recognition and burial of the dead whose bodies have been found. The social context for Šehić’s poem is informed especially by the fact that, at the end of the war, 31,500 Bosnians remained missing. This was and continues to be experienced as a major social and individual trauma.⁶⁷ At the core of the trauma of the euphemistically termed “missing persons [*nestale osobe*]” is the fact that victims whose remains have not been found and identified often cannot be buried in cemeteries. For some, this inability to bury extends to a prohibition on burying a body until all of its composite bones have been collected.⁶⁸ The

⁶⁷ According to the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), as of July 2015, the remains of roughly 23,000 missing persons had been located and identified (a little over 70% of the original number of individuals missing at war’s end).

⁶⁸ This traditional Islamic conception of burial, in which the body must be buried whole, is often upheld by the devout. However, the prohibition against burial of partial mortal remains is often skirted, both in wartime and postwar Bosnia and other contexts, particularly situations involving war and violence. See, for example, Juan Eduardo Campo, “Muslim Ways of Death:

ongoing trauma of “missing persons” in postwar Bosnia and the work of locating, identifying, naming, and burying the dead brings together the traditional and the modern, religion and DNA technology, institutions of justice and institutions of politics. Sarah Wagner eloquently details these facets in her monograph, *To Know Where He Lies*, which explores what she terms a “biotechnological response” (8) to the missing.

Prominent memorial activities were organized, and continue to be organized, around this trauma of those who remain absent. First of all, wide-ranging strategies were put in place to locate these missing persons, including scientific and informational-technological, legal, and social. DNA technology was used on an unprecedented scale to identify mortal remains, while Bosnia’s Missing Persons Institute (established as a state-level, rather than entity-specific, institution in 2005⁶⁹) launched a Central Records database to handle and unify the large amount of personal data collected about the missing. Relatives contributed data, descriptions and the DNA samples that would be matched with DNA from bones located in graves around Bosnia. Communities also established family associations to collect and disseminate information about the missing. Additionally, the Law on Missing Persons, ratified in 2004, was the first such law to be passed anywhere in the world.⁷⁰ It formally established a mandate to search for all missing (without regard to ethnicity) and to create a compensatory fund for the families of victims.

Between the Prescribed and the Performed,” in Kathleen Garces-Foley (ed), *Death and Religion in a Changing World* (London: Routledge, 2014).

⁶⁹ It was inaugurated as a united institution on August 30, planned to coincide with the International Day of the Disappeared.

⁷⁰ See: “Zakon o nestalim osobama,” *Službeni glasnik* 50 (9 November 2004), 5225-5229 and “Proces traženja i identificiranja nestalih osoba: Vodič za porodice u Bosni i Hercegovini [The Process of Locating and Identifying Missing Persons: A Guide for Families in Bosnia and Herzegovina],” ICMP (January 2011), 1-19.

The search for loved ones that continues to this day: successful searches end when those found and identified are lain in marked graves like Ometaljka and Soline. Such searches occupy a major place in wider Bosnian memorial practice and politics of memory. This reburial (which, in many cases, is a burial for a second, third, or fourth time, since the mortal remains of victims were often moved and deposited in secondary graves) is often accompanied by a religious and political ritual. Through this ritual, the individual body is ritually integrated into the national body by means of commemorative ceremony and physical interment. Nowhere is this symbolism more overt than in the case of the annual reburial in the Srebrenica-Potočari Cemetery each July 11th, in which the bodies of the victims located and identified in the previous year are reburied with high political pomp in a traditional Muslim ceremony. The politics of memory at work in this and other official burial ceremonies contains, at its root, a logic wherein the one who was missing is ritually returned to the community, given a physical presence and a kind of symbolic visibility. This is reiterated terminologically in a particular verse of the Qur'an which features in speech about Bosniak victims and is inscribed on many of their grave markers: "And do not say about those who are killed in the way of Allah, 'They are dead[!]' Rather, they are alive, but you perceive [it] not [!]" (Surat Al Baqarah 2:154).

The exclamation points bracketed here are, more often than not, used to punctuate the verse in its contemporary Bosnian use. For example, the top panel on the front page of the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Center and Cemetery website uses this punctuation [FIGURE 3.1].



FIGURE 3.1: FRONT PAGE OF SREBRENICA-POTOČARI MEMORIAL CENTER WEBSITE

This composite image contains all of the insignia of Bosnian “official” commemorative ritual: the Bosnian flag, the stone inscribed with victims’ names and strewn with roses, the crocheted “Srebrenica rose” (conveying a group of women in headscarves holding onto a coffin draped in green) that has become a major commemorative icon, and the Qur’anic verse under discussion.⁷¹ And the verse’s poetic articulation of an Islamic understanding of life after death hinges vitally on the idea of “(in)visibility.”

Šehić’s poem, with its use of the language of visibility and invisibility, shifts between past and present tense, and his pointed inventory of names gestures towards larger social processes of memory and narrating traumatic loss in postwar Bosnia. At the same time, however, his poem subtly critiques the circumscribed politics of memory wherein, to a large extent, the bodies of those who, in life, did not belong to religious or political groups are, in death, incorporated into these groups both through burial ritual and reigning discourses about bodies. Returning to Šehić’s list of names, his diversion

⁷¹ See: <http://www.potocarimc.org/> (Accessed 9/13/2016)

from official organizational structures for the names of the dead becomes an implicit critique of these dominant strategies. The poem's forty names are not organized according to an apparent structure, contrasting significantly with other notable lists of names of victims. These official lists are usually alphabetized according to last name, with supplementary identification provided, often including the name of the victim's father, the victim's national identity (often restricted to Bosniak, Croat, or Serb), the victim's place of birth and death, and their status (civil or military).⁷² In this way, Šehić's poem intervenes in the postwar discourse that offers only particular kinds of symbolic presences to those who are physically absent. In this way, "There is This Story" performs a type of narrative memorial that works through the trauma of loss by positing new constellations of presence and absence, which do not merely recapitulate clichéd formats or overreaching identity politics.

BAGGAGE: RECOGNIZED AND CLAIMED PRESENCE AND ABSENCE

Šehić's poem simply gestures towards the lasting trauma of missing persons in postwar Bosnian society, their omnipresent absence in memorial discourse and commemorative activity, and transnational efforts to make physically and ritually present the mortal remains and personal belongings of the missing. Danis Tanović's

⁷² This manner of naming the dead can be seen widely. Three particularly notable examples that employ some or all of these categories come to mind. First, the prominently displayed list of victims in and around Srebrenica on a bulletin board at the entrance to the Srebrenica-Potočari Cemetery. Second, the Monument to the Murdered Children of Sarajevo in the city's Great Park, which lists all of the children killed during the war. Finally, the four-volume *Bosnian Book of the Dead*, published after years of research in 2013 which lists all of the known victims of the war, organized by the victims' municipalities of residence.

2011 short film, *Baggage* [Prtljag],⁷³ meanwhile, is set squarely within the historical and symbolic legacy of this trauma and confronts issues of presence and absence within the larger social memory of missing persons in today's Bosnia. In its twenty-five minutes, *Baggage*'s entire narrative arc follows the path of a young Bosnian man, Amir, who returns to Bosnia from Malmö, Sweden (where he immigrated during the war) in order to collect the mortal remains of his parents at an International Commission on Missing Persons facility. Indeed, the film's treatment of the trauma of the missing seems straightforward: this trauma can be healed only when those who remain missing have been found. Moreover, the film has an explicitly social message. In its final frame, superimposed upon the rural road beyond which Amir drives with his parents' remains in a suitcase, is the following statement: "Sixteen years after the end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina the fate of 10,000 people remains unknown."⁷⁴ Contained within this stark articulation of statistics is a call to action. And, as Tanović put it in an interview shortly after the film's premiere at the 17th annual Sarajevo Film Festival in 2011, "it's so important that those individuals [who are still missing] are found, because how can someone whose grave is unknown be mourned? ... If, after [watching] this film, someone decides to reveal even one [concealed] grave, that would be sufficient for

⁷³ The film's title means both "luggage" and "baggage." It seems to be commonly translated as the latter, which I also use because the more abstract term meaningfully expresses the full range of physical and psychological associations developed in the film.

⁷⁴ That this statement is given only in English, within the complex and highly symbolic use of language in the film more generally, is not accidental. It gives some insight into the intended audience for this message. However, I hesitate to draw definitive conclusions from a use of only English in this context, because the choice can be read in a number of ways. One interpretation of this linguistic choice is that the local audience is so highly aware of the missing person statistics that it would be redundant to state them. Another interpretation, however, holds that local politics surrounding the issue of missing persons are simply too intractable – even after the 2005 cross-entity collaboration in establishing a single Missing Persons Institute – and, thus, a lasting solution must (continue to) involve international actors, activists, and funding.

me”⁷⁵ (Živković np). Thus, the outcome Amir achieves in the film becomes a successful model for the location and burial of missing family members in contemporary Bosnian society. However, as I will seek to demonstrate, the particular strategies used to narrate *Baggage*’s central focus on the trauma of the missing serve to complicate the idea that finding the remains of loved ones can fully lay this trauma to rest.

From its outset, *Baggage* establishes a universe in which the events of the war in Bosnia constantly inform the present. The trauma of the past is woven into the present in two major ways, both of which fundamentally evince how presence and absence are linked through traumatic loss and, as in both *Perfect Circle* and “There is This Story,” become inseparable. First of all, as mentioned above, the most apparent of the film’s losses occurs not only because Amir’s parents have been killed, but because their remains have not yet been located. A tip that their bones have been found is what motivates Amir’s return to Bosnia – a fact that is unspoken at the outset of the film, but is immediately apparent simply by the visual clues present in the film’s opening scene. A winding mountainous road indicates to the viewer a topographical proximity to Bosnia, which is confirmed at the border crossing into Bosnia. And, at this same border crossing, the single eponymous suitcase in the trunk of Amir’s car lays bare the reason for his visit. It is, however, the car’s Swedish license plate and the use of languages that reveal the film’s second major sphere in which presence and absence are thematized in reference to wartime loss and postwar realities. The border guard asks for Amir’s documents in English but, after inspecting them and the trunk of the car, welcomes Amir to Bosnia and Herzegovina in the local language. Meanwhile, throughout this

⁷⁵ “Jako je važno da se pronadu ti ljudi, inače kako nekoga oplakati kad mu ni grob ne znate. ... Ako nakon ovog filma neko odluči da pokaže jedan grob, meni je to dovoljno.”

scene, Amir says not a word. Thus, not only does the first scene both clearly and obliquely indicate that Amir has immigrated to Sweden during the war, but positions his long absence from Bosnia as a thematic arena in which issues of physical and symbolic absence and presence are worked out alongside those of the absence and presence of the mortal remains of his parents.

Baggage uses a series of recognizable tropes to begin its engagement with the trauma of murdered family members whose whereabouts have not been deciphered. Amir goes almost immediately to what is understood by the viewer to be the Tuzla International Commission on Missing Persons facility.⁷⁶ The Tuzla ICMP site houses both the Podrinje Identification Project and the Identification Coordination Division and primarily deals with analyzing and documenting the mortal remains and personal objects of victims of the Srebrenica and wider Podrinje area genocide. In the film, a familiar juxtaposition of forensic apparatuses, sterile medical laboratory-style furniture and tiled walls, white plastic body bags containing bones, and rows of green-wrapped coffins indicates to the viewer not only the setting, but also how this setting contextualizes loss and knowledge, presence and absence, in the film more broadly. Almost immediately after a lab worker presents Amir with the contents of a bag, it becomes clear to both the employee and the viewer that Amir recognizes that the bones do not belong to his parents. A man who is, likewise, searching and waiting for the

⁷⁶ It is clear that Amir first goes to a smaller Bosnian town, rather than to Sarajevo, on the night he arrives. Narrative and visual clues confirm this. For example, the hotel in which he is staying does not have internet, and yet there is a hotel at which to stay (which is not the case in rural villages in many parts of Bosnia). Yet Amir is close to the entity border, which becomes clear when he drives from the ICMP facility into Republika Srpska. In fact, the "Hotel Premium" where Amir spends the night is in Kakanj, located northwest of Sarajevo. And, correlating visual clues from *Baggage* with documentary photographs collected during my research, the "ICMP laboratory" actually depicts the Visoko City Morgue, the designated facility at which Srebrenica (and other Podrinje area) genocide victims' remains are fitted with coffins in the months leading up to their interment at the Srebrenica-Potočari Cemetery each July 11th.

remains of his two sons, asks Amir, “whom did they find for you?” Amir blankly replies, “no one.”⁷⁷ And, calling his wife immediately, he elaborates in Swedish: “it’s not them. It’s just not. I don’t know.”

The arc of the journey established in the first section of the film, thus, is a physical one that takes Amir from Sweden back to Bosnia, but it is, more importantly, one that traces out how unspoken knowledge, and barely visible traces, mediate the changing quality of absence. For, as *Baggage* makes clear in its opening sequence, the way in which absent family members are present in the lives of those who search for them changes based on context, in which certainty and recognition play important roles. Both in the reality of postwar Bosnia as well as in films that engage with the problem of missing persons, clues about the provenance of bones and personal objects – and confirmation that they either are or are not the lasting trace of a particular individual – are heavily mediated by scientific and forensic realms of knowledge. However, while “biotechnological” regimes provide a backdrop for this pivotal scene, it ultimately privileges pre-rational knowledge and the kind of evidence that can only be weighed by a loved one who, for instance, has insight into the clothes and objects owned by the deceased. Amir’s recognition that the bones do not belong to his parents, which takes place visually rather than through words, demonstrates on screen the way what seems to be a consistent type of ever-present absence is, in fact, an absence whose presence changes in quality.

In representing a scene in which Amir incontrovertibly realizes that he has no claim to the bones and clothing lying in front of him, the film highlights how the

⁷⁷ “Koga su tebi našli?” “Nikoga.”

missing come to be known and become once again present to the living. By opening with a failure to recognize and, thus, to locate formerly absent remains, the film engages with the fact that someone's remains are, nonetheless, present to Amir – but that these remains are not the ones he seeks. Indeed, the manner in which these bones are presented when the body bag is unzipped highlights their uncomfortable physical presence, both for Amir and for the viewer. At first, the camera focuses on them only from a position behind Amir, who likewise focuses on them. However, in the moment after Amir almost imperceptibly realizes that these are not his parents' remains, the camera jumps to a close-up of the dark skull surrounded by smaller bones. In this way, the film begins to articulate the fact that bones and personal objects are present and absent in several ways. The undeniable presence of another's mortal remains is interpreted as the absence of those belonging to one's own family member. And both the symbolic presence and actual absence are converted, once physical remains are not found, into what seems at first to be total absence – and yet, for Amir, becomes a new kind of symbolic presence of his parents, but one that lies elsewhere and motivates his own continued travel further into Bosnia. Thus, both intuitive knowledge and the act of claiming are central to the experiential way in which the missing are present and absent for those who have been traumatically bereft.

Motivated by this initial failure, Amir continues to what is understood to be his former town, in which is located the demolished house in which he once lived. He makes another attempt to find his parents' remains – this time through social and intuitive channels, rather than official and scientific ones.⁷⁸ Coming serendipitously into

⁷⁸ The landscape and, in particular, a shot as Amir enters the town, looking down from a hill at a winding road bordered by houses, strongly indicates that the town is located in the vicinity of Srebrenica. In actuality, the film seems entirely to have been filmed in and around Kakanj and

contact with a childhood friend, the Bosnian Serb Dušan, Amir haltingly reveals his quest by referring to an unnamed and impersonal source of knowledge (or, at least, failed knowledge): “‘they’ said they found my parents. I came to bury them. But it’s not them.”⁷⁹ In response to Amir’s bald and mildly accusatory statement about the double absence of his parents, Dušan, acting at some personal cost, points Amir in the direction of Miladin, a Serb townsperson and the only person who knows the whereabouts of Amir’s parents’ bodies. Confronting Miladin, Amir employs the same form of indirection he used with Dušan, claiming that “‘they’ said you know where they [my parents] are.”⁸⁰ The plural “they” serves to conceal Dušan’s identity by obscuring both his name and his singularity, albeit in a way that is transparent in this small town where “everyone knows everything”⁸¹ (as Dušan pithily and tiredly articulates). Consequently, Miladin pointedly answers by ordering Amir to “bring the one who told you that, so I can ask him how he knows that I know.”⁸² The guise of impersonal knowledge, the lack of attribution of the knower or what is known, indicates the extent to which guarded knowledge is crucial to the present and absent status, and the eventual fate of mortal

Sarajevo. This decision to film within the Federation was likely made as a result of the complicated procedure of securing permits to film on locations in Republika Srpska. This is particularly true for films involving “sensitive” topics. For example, Igor Drljača dwells at length in his 2010 MFA thesis, which analyzed filmmaking material that would become his 2012 film, *Krivina*, on the bureaucratic intricacies of obtaining necessary permits. See: Igor Drljača, *Foreign Memory* (Toronto: York University Press, 2010). Likewise, in a Sarajevo Film Festival “shoot on location” her 2013 *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales* [*Za one koji ne mogu da govori*], which deals with a Višegrad wartime rape camp and its legacy in the Republika Srpska town (field notes, 08/22/2013).

⁷⁹ “Javili da su mi našli roditelje. Došao da ih sahranim, ali nisu oni.”

⁸⁰ “Rekli su da znate gdje su.”

⁸¹ “Malo je ovo mjesto, Amire. Sve se zna.”

⁸² “Dovedi mi tog što ti je rekao da znam, pa da ga upitam kako on to zna da ja znam.”

remains in a polarized town (and country) dominated by secrets, rumors, and memory politics.

Meanwhile, in the next section of *Baggage*, Miladin offers to sell his knowledge about the final resting place of Amir's parents to him for the steep price of five thousand Euro. Amir takes this money from an envelope marked with the Swedish word "funeral,"⁸³ thus using money intended to preserve his parents' presence in ritual for the purpose of locating them physically. The journey to the forest in which Amir eventually collects his parents' remains serves as a meaningful contrast with the ICMP facility. The former requires a bumpy and circuitous journey in an all-terrain vehicle, past the abandoned ruins of homes and heavy industry alike, and without designated roads – let alone the smooth postwar highway on which Amir enters Bosnia. At the same time, however, the two scenes bear striking similarities. In each location, the sterile ICMP laboratory and the dark forest clearing, Amir is guided by very different kinds of experts, each with their own ability to make present, through regimes of knowledge, that which is absent. The lab worker uses DNA technology, systems of classification, and formal structures of communication to make visible and comprehensible to living relatives those shards and traces of relatives that have been buried and lost for decades. Meanwhile, scientific probing and analyzing have reached their limit in the film's first treatment of the confrontation between the living and the dead, the absent and the present. In contrast, Miladin (and, to some extent, Dušan) emerges as a figure with actual knowledge about the fate of Amir's parents. His knowledge is perfect, but dangerous: after showing Amir the spot where his parents' bones lie, Miladin (who carries a weapon in his pocket) makes a hurried dash out of the

⁸³ "Begravning."

forest. This tarnished knowledge, which implicates the one who knows as either a perpetrator of or a bystander to atrocity, thus, becomes a dark correlate to the complicated scientific apparatus established by organizations like the ICMP. Biotechnological regimes are set up, though, precisely because to compensate for a lack the kind of certain knowledge held in secret by Miladin and countless others in contemporary Bosnia.

In a filmic sequence that establishes even clearer correlates with the scene of failed recognition in the laboratory, Amir almost immediately identifies what the viewer understands to be the bones and belongings of his parents. In a clearing filled with multi-colored clothing, personal accoutrements, and exposed bones of other missing persons, Amir stumbles along a path formed from a rolled up paper, a toy car, and a shoe. His movement becomes purposeful when he catches sight of a shallowly buried watch, off of which he brushes the dirt and deposits into his pocket before beginning, tearfully, to caress and gather up the bones lying in the vicinity of the watch.⁸⁴

The film's choice of object is not random. In the historical aftermath of the genocide in Bosnia, the pocket watch occupies an important symbolic position. A pocket watch, among other selected personal belongings, is displayed in the small exhibit inside the former battery factory that serves as a remembrance room at the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Complex. Countless photographs of forensic investigations of mass graves exist in which pocket watches are uncovered. As an object typically owned by males, what has become a massive and dispersed collection of

⁸⁴ Viewers familiar with postwar Bosnian cinema cannot help but see in this gesture an homage to Pjer Žalica's 2003 classic tragicomedy, *Fuse* [*Gori vatra*]. In this earlier film, the discovery of long missing bodily remains – in forested landscape meant to convey rural eastern Bosnia and nearly identical to that in *Baggage* – is also preceded by the finding of a pocket watch.

pocket watches stands as powerful testimony to the gendered nature of the Bosnian genocide and the disproportionately rural identity of its victims.⁸⁵ Perhaps even more importantly, because these objects represent visually the way in which time is experienced as “standing still” both for genocide victims and the loved ones who search for their remains, pocket watches function in documentary, literary, and visual arts to convey the changed temporality of trauma.⁸⁶ Moreover, pocket watches are distinctly personal items, similar in both their decorative and individualized nature to jewelry and cigarette cases, both of which are also used to identify mortal remains and, in addition, exhibited as a way of memorializing the dead as individuals.

In *Baggage*, the pocket watch indicates the way in which absence is made fully present, by being both recognized and claimed. Amir empties his own suitcase and places the bones gently inside it, while the film’s soundtrack repeats the dream-like music-box tune that accompanied Amir’s visit to his former home. This time, however, the music-box track is gradually layered with a low and ominous one. Together with the jerky movements of the hand-held camera with which it is shot, this musical choice inserts a nightmarish and unreal quality to the scene.⁸⁷ Thus, rhetorical, visual, and audial components of this climactic scene effectively convey the way in which presence

⁸⁵ Not only does the low-tech nature of the pocket watch indicate the relatively limited permeation of electronic devices in many rural parts of Bosnia by the early 1990s. More importantly, the pocket watch can be read as belonging to a folk costume, insofar as it was traditionally worn on a *ćustek* [decorative chain] and carried as a status symbol. I am grateful to Victor Friedman for pointing out this second interpretation.

⁸⁶ In this way, pocket watches can function in representational media to convey the “chronos” of a larger chronotope, as discussed at length in Chapter Two.

⁸⁷ It should be noted that in addition to writing and directing the film, Danis Tanović composed the film’s score. A talented musician and composer, he also wrote the score for his 2001 Oscar-winning *No Man’s Land* [*Ničija zemlja*], perhaps the most famous postwar Bosnian film.

and absence bleed into each other and, more importantly, come to define each other after traumatic loss.

In this final section, I analyze the way in which *Baggage*'s treatment of presence and absence in finding mortal remains exists alongside several other ways in which these topics are treated narratively and visually in the film. As mentioned above, the film's treatment of presence and absence occurs on an overarching level that transcends the realms of the physical and the bodily, although it certainly adjoins and overlaps with these. Indeed, the Bosnia portrayed in *Baggage* (and so many other postwar films) has not only been depopulated as a result of its large numbers of "missing persons," it has been further emptied by confirmed deaths and the vast number of refugees who have fled either elsewhere in Bosnia (the euphemistically named "internal refugees") or abroad (so-called "external refugees"). The landscape depicted in the film, already sparsely populated before the war on account of Bosnia's low population density and very mountainous terrain, is visibly emptied. On screen and in reality, the shells of buildings in various states of disrepair indicate, in their ruined presence, the absence of inhabitants. Amir is one of these Bosnians who has not only left the country, but has created a life for himself in Malmö, with a Swedish wife and a young son. *Baggage* pointedly engages the notion that, for Amir, the trip to Bosnia is not entirely a return. He himself absents himself, affectively and linguistically, from the Bosnia in which he seems to be physically present. Moreover, though, the Bosnia to which he returns is, in important ways, also missing.

Driving from Tuzla to his former hometown, Amir is stopped by two Republika Srpska policemen in a license and registration check for which Bosnian highways are infamous. Afterwards, he asks a policeman "why the speed limit is 40 kilometers [per

hour],"⁸⁸ given what appears to be a desolate region, filled with obviously abandoned houses and nary a car on the road besides Amir's. "It's a populated area,"⁸⁹ the policeman replies, neither in jest nor defensively. Amir glances with a characteristically subtle but nonetheless incredulous movement of his forehead. However, the camera remains positioned inside the car, looking through the driver's side window at the passing ruins of what was only formerly a settled area.⁹⁰ In this way, what seems almost to pass without comment is, in fact, visually underscored to the extent that its point becomes undeniable. The area is not populated, and yet it is – both in official discourse and in the ruins of formerly occupied houses. By referring to the presence of a population, the policeman mimics the prevalent official stance on ethnically cleansed areas (in both the Republika Srpska and in the Federation), whose absence of certain inhabitants cannot be easily commented upon without also naming either the reasons behind such absence or the presence of new dwellers in these regions, in these same "abandoned" houses. Meanwhile, the spectral presence of absent owners continues to inhabit these houses, even as they are advertised as "for sale"⁹¹ in large capital letters scrawled on the bricks themselves, even as they crumble to nothing on Bosnia's hills. These buildings become, thus, sites of memory through the working of small- and large-scale acts of commemoration, narration, and visual mediation.

⁸⁸ "Zašto je ograničenje četrdeset?"

⁸⁹ "Naselje je."

⁹⁰ Indeed, the Common Slavic **sedlo* [village] gives both the BCS *selo* (as seen in Chapter Two) and *naselje*. The root of these two nouns, **sed* [sit], gives rise to a very rich and evocative semantic field: *seljak/seljakinje* [male/female peasant], *naseljavati* [to settle, inhabit], and *naseljavanje* [population]. Thus, the root gives rise to a number of related lexical items that all convey the act of dwelling in a certain location, the livelihood established in that place, as well as the tangible presence of multiple (if not many) inhabitants.

⁹¹ "Za prodaju" or "prodaje se."

Moreover, the first sentence that Dušan speaks to Amir lucidly indicates the way in which those who are physically absent from the postwar town – and Bosnia itself – are nonetheless present in the minds of those who still live there. “We thought you were dead, too,” Dušan exclaims in a rush, to which Amir tersely retorts, “Well, I’m not.”⁹² In contrast to the film’s other characters, who rely on euphemism or omission, Dušan alone speaks the word “dead.” While seeming to speak only about Amir’s long absence, Dušan in fact speaks about those countless others who are absent, but are known to be dead. Blurring the line gives insight into the socially acceptable possibilities for categorizing those who are absent. Dušan, as the film’s sole Bosnian Serb who is portrayed in a sympathetic light, is also depicted in action, gesture, and word as following his conscience, rather than towing a line that covers up Bosnian Serb atrocities perpetrated against Bosnian Muslims. It is, thus, fitting for the film’s consideration of presence and absence as they function after trauma that Dušan, who is presented as a complicated character and a witness to genocide, both confirms the widespread but largely unspoken link between the dead and the absent. Insofar as this automatic assumption is spoken with hints of relief, Dušan reveals, in his blurred sentence, the extent to which the absent dead (or presumed dead) haunt individuals still living in the town.

Meanwhile, Amir embodies another way in which one can be both present and absent after traumatic loss. As repeatedly emphasized, his emigration takes him from Bosnia even as his missing parents ground his continued virtual presence there. In the film, it is primarily through language that Amir performs his simultaneous presence

⁹² “Mi smo mislili da si i mrtav.” “Eto, nisam.”

and absence from Bosnia. In conversation with his wife (who mispronounces his name, putting the stress on the second rather than the first syllable), Amir speaks only in Swedish. Their conversations center around cultural differences, but nonetheless indicate the degree to which Amir is emotionally present in Sweden, even if physically in Bosnia.⁹³ In addition to his repeated switching between languages, Amir's affect indicates the extent to which he holds back, absenting himself from Bosnia emotionally. This is apparent both in the clipped phraseology with which Amir speaks, but also in his perpetually clenched jaw and stiff movements. Finally, throughout the film, Amir is physically set off from the other characters in his former hometown by his smart, expensive-looking, and formal suit that starkly contrasts with the casual and well-worn clothing worn by his interlocutors. Thus, Amir establishes himself as only present to the smallest degree possible in the postwar Bosnia to which he seems to return. He displays in language, affect, and appearance the way in which the traumatic loss of loved ones and a homeland, in fact, has foreclosed the possibility of being present in Bosnia in a manner that is not dominated by absence.

Thus, Tanović's brief filmic treatment both reflects upon the legacy of loss in postwar Bosnia and, as I have demonstrated, traces out the multiplicity of ways in which the context of this traumatic loss reconfigures understandings and performances of presence and absence. Its visual style further underscores the way in which absences make up what is present or visible, while what is present contains that which is absent. *Baggage* is punctuated by two camera techniques that, I argue, emphasize the film's larger themes. In one such technique, the center of the frame is lit and its surrounding

⁹³ For example, his wife urges Amir not to pay Miladin, suggesting instead that Amir go to the police and report his parents' absence; Amir, meanwhile, visibly mistrusts police and, indeed, everyone in his former hometown.

edges remain dark. This is used most notably when Amir is driving, when he is exiting the morgue after failing to find his parents' remains there, and when he confronts Miladin in the town bar. In the second technique, the camera is positioned within or behind an obstacle (often foliage) that partially obscures the subject, which is located on the opposite side of the obstacle. For instance, this shot composition is used when Amir visits his childhood home. The scene is filmed from within the ruins of this building, looking out on the town's landscape, which is partially blocked by the still extant corner beams of the ruined house. This particular use of the camera emphasizes the point of view of the shot, which often changes throughout the film. At times, the camera mirrors Amir's perspective, but Amir is also depicted as a subject from the perspective of other characters and, indeed, that of an omniscient observer (as in the case of the shot in his former home). Thus, even more than in the first technique's use of lighting, this second kind of shot composition highlights the relationship between presence and absence and, indeed, the way these qualities visually and narratively inhere in a single subject within the larger landscape of the film.

Baggage, in its final estimation, leaves unsettled and unstable certain valences of presence and absence. This inconclusive rendering is, in fact, a feature of all the works analyzed in this chapter. And, moreover, their open structure means that presence and absence are never conclusively fixed in meaning. For example, *Baggage* concludes with Amir driving off, leaving his former hometown to return to his new hometown. It does not portray on screen the ritual burial of the bones he carries in the suitcase in his trunk. The film chooses a different kind of ritual that serves yet again to reconfigure absence and presence. Amir eventually chooses to thank Dušan for the latter's instrumental actions that have enabled him to claim the bones of his parents. This gesture, after

which the two embrace, is performed in close physical proximity to these bones and in temporal proximity to Amir's leaving. Nonetheless, it establishes a single point in which Amir is present in the Bosnia of the postwar period, in the home where he will never again live, and with a friend whom he will likely never see.

Thus, in this minute scene, an interpersonal correlate to ritual mourning is created – and one whose implications bring together a number of issues raised throughout this chapter. The ritual burial of found remains, which is treated in both *Baggage* and in “There is This Story,” does not make fully present those who have been killed. The dead remain dead, while their bones do not substitute for the missing person. Likewise, Amir and Dušan’s embrace does not restore the full presence of prewar trust. However, by staging this ritual both outside of the cemetery and temporally prior to the burial of bones, *Baggage* – like both *Perfect Circle* and “There is This Story” – articulates how individual acts with social implications can, just as significantly, work to ritually repair the damage of loss by representing alternative narratives in which presence and absence are symbolically redefined in and outside of fictional narrative.

CHAPTER FOUR

COLLECTED MEMORY, COLLECTIVE MEMORY: RECALL, COLLABORATION, AND BELONGING IN THE COMMEMORATIVE PROJECT, *IT WAS A FAIR AND SUNNY DAY...*

In this chapter, I investigate a collaborative memory project, the 2008 collected volume, *May 2, 1992: It Was a Fair and Sunny Day...*, which undertakes the task of giving narrative shape to events that occurred early in the war in Bosnia. Approaching the beginning of the war from a moment of temporal remove, the project revolves around the date, May 2, 1992 – widely seen as the moment when the war reached Sarajevo in earnest and the city became completely besieged. The repeated foregrounding of the date throughout the resulting text positions May 2, 1992 as a multivalent mnemonic structuring device. This date functions powerfully in both the individual memories of the book's many authors and the social memory to which the authors and, indeed, the book itself contribute – and from which both authors and book derive meaning. I argue that the specific mechanisms of such mnemonic interaction and the creation of a coherent memorial landscape in which authors, text, and audience participate rests on a central idea about memory. It cannot be overlooked that the book's introduction concludes with the following warning (which is echoed, variously but unambiguously, in later texts): "And forget not that when one genocide starts to be forgotten, another one begins!!!"¹ (Kreševljaković 8). By causally linking a duty to remember with the prevention of further social traumas,² the book's mnemonic work is cast in strikingly

¹ "I ne zaboravite da kada jedan genocid počne da se zaboravlja, drugi počinje!!!"

² This formulation, in which memory of atrocity is viewed as a safeguard against future atrocities, infuses much scholarly and popular discussion of trauma and memory. The tenet's logical conclusions are: that memory is an ethical duty, that memory itself prevents repetition of the acts remembered, and, more broadly, that memory and human rights are intimately

ethical terms. This explicit connection of memory with ethical behavior is further solidified when the introduction points out that half of the book's proceeds will be given to the "Education Builds BiH [Bosnia and Herzegovina]" NGO.³ The resulting composite text, forged of individual voices that nonetheless speak in a unified way, leverages the high stakes of remembering May 2, 1992 in a way that allows for evocative insight into how autobiographical memory, active communicative memory, and social memory coexist and become mutually constitutive.

The specific manner in which the collection comes to fruition, however, points to a tension in understanding social memory: is it merely an aggregate collection of individual memories or, rather, is there something more accurately "collective" about it (Olick 1999)? Through close textual analysis, I hope to substantiate that *It Was a Fair and Sunny Day...* as a collaborative project is, indeed, both collected and collective; I argue that it functions in both of these ways because of the specific processes of mediated cultural memory in which it partakes. In positing this, I take my cue from the Assmanns' and Astrid Erll's notion of cultural memory as working on both the

connected. For a discussion of the ethical imperative to remember and its connection with human rights in a global political context, see: Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *Human Rights and Memory* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010).

³ This is a well-known and influential NGO, which focuses many of its efforts on socially and economically disadvantaged children and young people in Bosnia. The organization was founded after the war and still chaired by Jovan Divjak, a retired general in the Bosnian Army. Divjak is a polarizing figure. An ethnic Serb, he chose to remain in his adopted hometown of Sarajevo during and after the war. A military man by training, Divjak not only chose to serve Bosnia as a general in first the Territorial Defense and later the newly-created Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but played crucial strategic and tactical roles in the war. For the purpose of this chapter, it is especially significant that Divjak was one of the generals physically present and involved in the "Dobrovoljačka incident" and his actions during those hours are hotly contested: he either ordered the Bosnian militias to fire on the retreating JNA convoy or, as seems more likely based on available evidence, pleaded with the militias to stop firing on the convoy.

individual and the collective level to provide the “mental, material and social structures within which experience is embedded, constructed, interpreted and passed on” (Erll 112). In this way, undifferentiated lived experience is organized into a “usable past” (106) – and transformed into a site of memory – through the encounter and overlap between personal memory and mediated social experience.

The event(s) on which the collection is focused, moreover, indicate in a striking way that “what is known about an event which has turned into a site of memory, therefore, seems to refer not so much to what might cautiously call the ‘actual event,’ but instead to a canon of existent medial constructions, to the narratives, images and myths circulating in a memory culture” (Erll 111). *It Was a Fair and Sunny Day...* highlights how these narratives, images, and myths function, the purchase they continue to have in society, and, finally, the notions of group identity in which they take part. For, indeed, the project showcases the way personal experience of the war is not only allied with belonging to a self-conscious generation, but how the resulting structures of belonging critically inform the texture of narrated memories.

It was an image and a potent emotional sense, shared by many, that generated the idea for the volume that would later be called *May 2, 1992: It Was a Fair and Sunny Day...*. The image was a photograph of burned-out trams, halted on their eastbound journey through Sarajevo. This photograph, credited to Adnan Shahbaz, was only one of many documenting the evocative scene across the Miljacka river from the well-known sports, music, and shopping complex, Skenderija hall in May of 1992. Shahbaz’s photograph dominates the black and white cover of *It Was a Fair and Sunny Day...*

[FIGURE 4.1].



**FIGURE 4.1: TITLE PAGE, MAY 2, 1992: IT WAS A FAIR AND SUNNY DAY... (2008)
(© ADNAN SHAHBAZ, 1992)**

Nihad Kreševljaković, the project director and editor of *2 May, 1992: It Was a Fair and Sunny Day...*, notes in his afterward how this image “circumnavigated the globe. It was, for many Sarajevans, their last tram ride”⁴ (213). This image, thus, was not only shared by many, but, linked in this fashion with powerful affect and personal memory,

⁴ “Slika zapaljenih tramvaja obišla je cijeli svijet. Bila je to posljednja tramvajska vožnja za mnoge Sarajlije.”

formed a symbolic kernel around which memories of war were gathered. For it remains unclear whether Kreševljaković here is referring to Shahbaz's particular photograph, one taken by another photographer⁵ – or indeed a photographic image at all; the same Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian word, *slika*, can mean either “picture” or “image.” What is not in doubt, however, is that this image was bound up with other still and moving images, with spatial and temporal markers, with affect, and with notions of group belonging in a particularly tight web of mnemonic relations.

Before exploring the shape, texture, and momentum of these memories, it is necessary to elaborate two contexts: the date from the volume's title and the point at which the book project comes to fruition, 2008. May 2, 1992 in Sarajevo is noteworthy on account of a number of striking events that took place on it. Coming roughly one month after the beginning of the war in Bosnia, May 2 was the day on which the largest single bombardment of the city took place up to that point in the war.⁶ During this

⁵ For example, *Oslobodenje* (and later Reuters) photographer Danilo Krstanović captured the same scene in an image taken closer to the trams and from eye-level perspective, rather than an aerial shot. Krstanović's was likely taken earlier than Shahbaz's, given that a signpost featured prominently in the former's photo seems to have been destroyed or removed in the latter's.

⁶ The exact beginning of the war, taking place as it did amidst the larger Wars of Yugoslav Succession, is difficult to pinpoint (as discussed in the introduction). On March 3, 1992 Bosnia and Herzegovina declared independence, following February 29 and March 1 referenda. The movement to independence was viewed by many Serbs in Bosnia and Serbia as a declaration of civil war. After the withdrawal of Yugoslav National Army forces from newly independent Slovenia and Croatia, these were concentrated in Bosnia. Moreover, the make-up of the JNA officers was shifted in the early months of 1992: Milošević secretly ordered that those born in Bosnia be transferred to Bosnian territory; this enabled the JNA to be reconstituted as a local Bosnian Serb army in the eventuality of Bosnian independence. Between early March and early April, sporadic violence broke out between Bosniak-allied and Serb-allied groups. This violence gained strength and frequency in the early days of April, as large portions of eastern Bosnia were ethnically cleansed by the JNA and Serb paramilitaries and massacres carried out against the Muslim population of these regions. On April 4, Chairman of the Bosnian Presidency, Alija Izetbegović, called for the mobilization of a territorial defense. And on April 6, Bosnia and Herzegovina's independence was recognized by the international community. It is this last date that is most frequently cited as the official beginning of the war in Bosnia. For further reference,

bombardment, which was accompanied by sniper and sabotage attacks, the main post office was left in flames and the roughly 40,000-60,000 telephone lines that it housed cut (Silber and Little 231).

For many, the day May 2, 1992 is strongly associated with a heroic narrative of resistance. On this day, according to this narrative, a rag-tag group of patchily armed members of a hastily organized alliance between the Bosnian Territorial Defense forces [*Teritorijalna odbrana*], the so-called “Patriotic League [*Patriotska liga*],”⁷ and members of the police rose up and prevented a JNA-backed attempt to divide Sarajevo into a Muslim-Croat section and a Serb section. Indeed, the JNA incursion on May 2nd can be seen as this explicit attempt to carry out such a bisection, which had been discussed for weeks and months among the Bosnian Serb leaders (Donia 288).

May 2, 1992 was also the day on which Bosnian President Alija Izetbegović returned by plane to Sarajevo from Lisbon, where he had participated in peace talks. Flying into the Sarajevo airport, Izetbegović, along with his daughter, Sabina (who was serving as her father’s translator at the talks), and Deputy Prime Minister Zlatko Lagumdžija, was taken captive by JNA soldiers who had taken control of the airport. Izetbegović eventually negotiated the terms of his own release, which involved being exchanged for then commander of the JNA forces besieging Sarajevo, Milutin Kukanjac, who, on that day, was himself blockaded in the JNA army barracks in the Bistrik

see: Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* (New York: Penguin USA, 1996), 205-230.

⁷ The “Patriotic League” was a paramilitary organization set up in 1991 by Alija Izetbegović’s SDA (Party of Democratic Action) and headed by Sefer Halilović. It later merged with the Territorial Defense, as well as other paramilitary groups (the “Green Berets [*Zeleni beretki*],” “Black Swans [*Crni labudovi*],” etc.) to form the official Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. For further details on the structure and history of the army in BiH, see: Marko Attila Hoare. *How Bosnia Armed* (London: Saqi Books, 2004).

neighborhood near Skenderija. The hostage crisis and its eventual resolution were among the most dramatic incidents of the war – and one of the most controversial in its historiography.

During the exchange of Izetbegović and Kukanjac on the following day, May 3, between eight and forty⁸ JNA soldiers were killed by Bosnian militias in what is now known as the “Dobrovoljačka incident” (named for the Sarajevo street on which it took place).⁹ Between the original capture of Izetbegović on May 2 and the incident on the afternoon of May 3, several striking events had occurred. First of all, the capture of Izetbegović, seemingly carried out on a whim rather than as a deliberate strategy, was eventually leveraged into the JNA army barracks being emptied of its soldiers and weapons. This constantly changing deal involving Izetbegović’s safe return to the Presidency building, which evolved from a one-for-one exchange of Izetbegović for Kukanjac to that of Izetbegović for the entire army barracks, resulted in a dazzlingly chaotic system of communication, in which the chains of command on all sides – and, especially, the Bosnian one – were, at best, unrecognized and, at worst, violated. Indeed, to this day, it is not clear who gave the order to attack the JNA convoy during its withdrawal from the barracks. As Erjavec, Volčić, Poler Kovačić, and Vobič have indicated through close analysis of how the Dobrovoljačka event was portrayed by various Bosnian, Bosnian Serb, and Serbian media outlets in 2009, through “different interpretations of the Dobrovoljačka case, war actions become differently understood,

⁸ This number is hotly contested.

⁹ Dobrovoljačka Street was renamed after the war and is now Hamdija Kreševljaković Street (named after the famous Bosnian historian, and, incidentally, Nihad Kreševljaković’s grandfather).

justified and legitimated" (Erjavec et al. 95). This is because the "problem of defining the beginning of the war in BiH is ideologically and politically linked to the question of identifying the group responsible for the conflicts that followed" (ibid). Thus, whether the event was seen as "defending the [Bosnian] state" against the "terrorist act" of the president's kidnapping, or as a counterweight to the list of Serbian and Bosnian Serb war crimes that took place during the war in Bosnia, the event has assumed legendary proportions, and carries a polarizing potential.

Thus, a composite of discrete events forms the context in which *May 2, 1992: It Was a Fair and Sunny Day...* is positioned and to which so many of its contributors allude in their memory texts. As media personality Faruk Čaluk puts it in his contribution to the volume, "The Post Office is on fire, this is burning, that is burning... and then a clap of thunder... Alija Izetbegović is captured. After that, nothing was important anymore"¹⁰ (43).

An additional reason that this time period becomes particularly prominent and important to the framing of the resulting collected memory project is the unforgettable way citizens of Sarajevo found out about Izetbegović's capture. On the evening of May 2, a series of unlikely coincidences resulted in Alija Izetbegović and Milutin Kukanjac being interviewed on live television by the well-known Sarajevo Television anchorman, Senad Hadžifejzović [FIGURE 4.2]. After Izetbegović had been captured, a phone rang in the airport director's office, where the president was being held. On the line was a woman from Sarajevo, calling to inquire about the status of a departing flight. Izetbegović ended up on the phone with this woman, requesting that she inform either

¹⁰ "Gori Pošta, gori ovo, gori ono... i onda grom, iz ne baš vedrog neba: Alija Izetbegović uhapšen. Dalje, više nije bilo važno ništa."

the Presidency or Sarajevo's radio and television stations about his situation.¹¹ She carried out this task, which ultimately led to "one of the most extraordinary pieces of current-affairs broadcasting in the history of the medium" (Silber and Little 237). In what Hadžifejzović recalls as the "longest and most dramatic daily report...in the history [of Sarajevo Television and, related, Television Bosnia and Herzegovina]" (Hadžifejzović 110) the newscaster not only interviewed the president, but also facilitated communication between Izetbegović and the rest of the presidency.



FIGURE 4.2: LIVE BROADCAST STILL OF MAY 2, 1992 NEGOTIATIONS, TV SARAJEVO

Top: anchorman Senad Hadžifejzović

Middle: Bosnian President Alija Izetbegović

Bottom: JNA Colonel General Milutin Kukanjac

¹¹ In some accounts, the director picked up the phone; in others, Izetbegović himself; in still others, his daughter, Sabina, answered and then handed the phone to her father.

Here it is necessary to recall that lines of communication had, in a very physical sense, been severed, when the main post office was firebombed earlier in the day. The television station was located in the Otok neighborhood on the far west side of Sarajevo (and roughly equidistant from the Presidency, located in its center, and Lukavica barracks, where Izetbegović was being held during the television broadcast). Because of its position, the television station's phone line had not gone out when the post office's phone lines were cut; moreover, the station was connected by a dedicated line to the Presidency, which was in fact the only line working in the latter building (Silber and Little 236). Thus, the line through the television station, moderated by Hadžifejzović, was the only possible way for members of the Bosnian presidency to communicate with Izetbegović. Even more remarkably, Hadžifejzović took it upon himself to negotiate directly with JNA General Vojislav Đurđevac, who was overseeing Izetbegović's imprisonment, first at the airport and then at the Lukavica barracks. Hadžifejzović had done his mandatory Yugoslav army service under Đurđevac. The latter's good impression of Hadžifejzović seems to have been a clinching factor in the successful negotiation of the initial terms of Izetbegović's release: that he would be exchanged for Kukanjac alone (*ibid* 237-238).

The distinct historical moment in which *May 2, 1992: It Was a Fair and Sunny Day...* emerges is significant. Put together in 2007 in preparation for its 2008 publication date, the collection marked fifteen years since the date commemorated in its title. The fifteen-year mark bore some striking contrasts with the first decade following the war (from 1996 to roughly 2006). In this immediate postwar decade, Slobodan Milošević had been indicted and was on trial at the ICTY in the Hague; Bosnian Serb leaders Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić were both on the loose. The ICTY had not yet transferred

some operations to a War Crimes Chamber of the local Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The NATO SFOR (Stabilization Force) mission was on the cusp of being transferred to the European Union's EUFOR for Bosnia. Land across the road from the former battery factory in Srebrenica-Potočari that the DUTCHBAT troops used as their base during 1994-1995 had been set aside for the Srebrenica Genocide Memorial Complex and a foundation stone laid, but the complex had not yet been opened.

Many societal changes that were in process in the early 2000s, meanwhile, had been instituted by 2007/2008. In contrast to what were widely seen as positive (if slow) developments in transitional justice and milestones in postwar social restoration, however, the Dayton Accords that had ended the war were increasingly being interpreted as a limitation to Bosnia's ability to function as a state. The ethnic divisions codified in the Accords meant that, fifteen years after the war, the rate of refugee return (both of internally and externally displaced persons) had dwindled after an initially high rate of return in the first three years after the war.¹² The likelihood of Bosnia entering the European Union had decreased, as negotiations about a Stabilization and Association Agreement had stalled in 2007, the result of Bosnia's failure to enact police reforms. The economic climate did not inspire confidence: foreign banks controlled most of the banking sector, wages that had seen an initial increase in the early 2000s had reached a plateau, privatization of formerly state-owned industry and companies resulted in widespread corruption and wealth inequalities, and unemployment was

¹² Since no fact sheets are available for the 2007-2008 time period, this information taken from the 2005 UNHCR Statistical Yearbook.

high.¹³ The situation would only get worse when the global economic crisis hit Bosnia in 2009. Thus, when Nihad Kreševljaković situates the volume temporally in its forward, he uses both economic as well as affective markers: “we recall a time when we were more aware of the need for goodness and spirituality than we are today, in this transitional period, a time of rapid and primitive accumulation of capital, that seeks to reduce human needs to the solely material”¹⁴ (Kreševljaković 7-8). Both the phrase “transitional period” and pointed critiques of its use have gained purchase in local and international discussions of today’s Bosnia. And while the positions from which or to which the country is “transitioning” remain conspicuously vague, the phrase refers obliquely to a widely felt socio-political sense of being trapped and immobilized by the conditions of postwar, post-Dayton existence. For *It Was a Fair and Sunny Day...*, this “transition” stands explicitly between the wartime past, which is occasionally viewed in the rosy light of nostalgia, and an uncertain future, to whose generations the book’s collected memories are addressed – and for whom they are presumed not only interesting, but also useful.

The idea for the book project *May 2, 1992: It Was a Fair and Sunny Day...* came in 2007, as a joint venture between several prominent members of Sarajevo’s arts and culture community. Nihad Kreševljaković, an amateur historian, filmmaker, and

¹³ See: Naida Trkić-Izmirlija and Adnan Efendić, “Effects of the global economic crisis and public spending on income distribution in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” *The Wiener Institut für Internationale Wirtschaftsvergleiche* [Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies] *Balkan Observatory Working Papers* 108 (February 2013), 1-35.

¹⁴ “Sjećamo se vremena kada smo bili svjesniji potrebe o dobru i duhovnosti nego li smo to danas u ovo tranziciono doba, u vremenu užurbane prvo bitne akumulacije kapitala gdje se čovjekove potrebe žele svesti iskuljučivo na one materijalne.”

director of both the MESS international theater festival and the Sarajevo War Theater (SARTR), was at its helm. Kreševljaković used resources from the MESS-affiliated multi-media arts and culture project, Modul Memorije, which he also directs, to publish the volume. Modul Memorije, as Kreševljaković notes,

was initiated right at the end of the siege, with the goal of answering the following questions: how is genocide and the destruction of cities and of cultural and religious inheritance possible in the heart of Europe? How is it possible for rapid technological development to take place so effectively while, simultaneously, everything that technology produces is being destroyed? How can these be defended against? What effect does all of this have on art? All programs organized up until now had the intention to preserve the memory of the tragic past, but also to recognize the full value of what that period had produced, paying special attention to art, as a synthesis of ethical and aesthetic norms.¹⁵ (7)

The impetus and guiding principle for the specific project, *It Was a Fair and Sunny Day*, were the variety of emotions and different reactions people conveyed when talking about the war in Sarajevo.¹⁶ As an overt structure, the date, May 2, was chosen as a “frame”¹⁷ (Radiosarajevo interview). As Nihad Kreševljaković maintained in personal communication on this topic, contributions were solicited widely through various blogs and word of mouth (email 10/14/2015). Moreover, while the date was chosen beforehand and included in the call, the epithet “fair and sunny day” emerged organically out of the pieces that were submitted (ibid). Thus, we see evidence of what

¹⁵ “Sam program Modul memorije pokrenut je po samom završetku opsade sa ciljem da odgovori na pitanja: Kako je usred Evrope moguć genocid, razaranje gradova, kulturnog i religijskog nasljedja? Kako je moguće da istovremeno tako efikasno djeluju toliko brz tehnološki razvoj i destrukcija svega što on stvara? Kako se odbraniti od toga? Kakav je efekt svega toga na umjetnost? Namjera do sada svih organiziranih programa bio je očuvati sjećanje na tragičnu prošlost, ali i prepoznati sve vrijednosti koje je taj period proizveo favorizirajući umjetnost kao sintezu etičkih i estetičkih normi.”

¹⁶ It is actress and contributor Sabina Šabić Zlatar who, in the volume’s introduction, identifies these emotions as the conceptual kernel around which the book came to fruition (4).

¹⁷ “... 2. maj je zadat kao okvir.”

is commonly called a “flashbulb memory” in psychological theories of autobiographical and social memory. This term, coined in 1977 by psychologists Roger Brown and James Kulik, has generated a substantial theoretical literature.¹⁸ In general, it refers to a vivid memory of an event that is felt to have been almost imprinted in memory “as a photograph preserves all the details of a scene” (Conway 3). These memories are often extremely detailed and held, by the one who remembers, to be completely accurate to events (whether or not this is actually the case). These memories often pertain to large-scale historical events (for instance, many Americans claim to have flashbulb-type memories of the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center, as well as the earlier assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr.). The structure, themes, and quality of many of the narrated memories submitted to the volume *May 2, 1992: It Was a Fair and Sunny Day...* bear evidence of developing from flashbulb memories created by those in and outside of Sarajevo on the historical day.

Collecting the sixty individual narratives that made up the volume took place over the course of a year; the finished volume was brought out in 2008, on precisely the sixteenth anniversary of May 2, 1992.¹⁹ The editors claim to have made little to no editorial interventions into the materials submitted, which were handled according to the principle that “each has its own value in itself”²⁰ (6). These pieces were carefully

¹⁸ See, for example: Olivier Luminet and Antonietta Curci, *Flashbulb Memories: New Issues and New Perspectives* (Hove, NY: Psychology Press, 2009).

¹⁹ A second edition was published in 2010, which included additional texts contributed by other authors unable or unwilling to write texts for the first edition.

²⁰ “Sigurni smo da bi sve one bile zanimljive i dobre iz jednog jednostavnog razloga što svaka od njih ima neku vrijednost sama po sebi.”

organized and sequenced: variously obvious thematic threads tie one narrative to the next, creating an overarching sense of continuity and resonance.

Only a few were rejected, on the grounds that they advanced a political agenda (ibid). Besides those persons who sent in their narrative recollections, "many of those who wrote their own stories simply did not have the strength to send them, viewing them as a part of their intimate life. Some couldn't be persuaded [to contribute]. Others refused to write their story down, completely erroneously concluding that they had nothing to say"²¹ (5). As its editor maintains in the book's afterword,

The idea was to reconstruct people's emotional states, to return them [the book's contributors] to that time when a project like this seemed impossible. For everyone seriously occupied with the question of the siege of Sarajevo, May 2 is always singled out as a special day. It is not so easy to grasp why this is the case.... Taking tragic consequences as a criterion, there were much worse days than May 2, 1992...and yet, nonetheless, May 2, 1992 truly is the day that most clearly lodged in the memories of all citizens of Sarajevo.²² (211-212)

Each entry is presented in the same way: headed by a title, the author's name and date of birth. This editorial choice was an attempt to avoid differentiating between contributors on any grounds: neither by profession or social status, nor "by [textual] format, nor by whether you experienced May 2, 1992 first-hand, watched it on TV, or heard about it from someone else"²³ (4-5).²⁴ The experience of reading such a formally

²¹ "Znam da mnogi od onih koji su napisali svoje priče jednostavno nisu imali snage da ih pošalju smatrajući ih dijelovima vlastite intime. Neki se jednostavno nisu nakanili. Neki su od pisanja priče odustali potpuno pogrešno smatrajući da nemaju šta napisati."

²² "Ideja je bila rekonstruirati emotivno stanje ljudi, vratiti ih u ono vrijeme kada se činilo da ovakav jedan projekat nikad neće biti moguć. Po svima onima koji su se ozbiljnije bavili pitanjem opsade Sarajeva 2. maj se uvijek izdvaja kao poseban datum. Nije baš lahko shvatiti zašto je to tako.... Ako bi se sudilo po tragičnim posljedicama bilo je mnogo gorih dana od 2. maja 1992.... Bez obzira na sve što je navedeno, 2. maj 1992. ipak je vjerojatno datum koji je najjasnije ostao u memoriji svih građana Sarajeva."

²³ "Zaista ovu temu nismo željeli ograničiti bilo čime. Niti formom, niti time da li ste 2. maj 1992. doživjeli na vlastitoj koži, gledali ga na TV-u ili slušali o njemu od drugih."

homogenized text, however, at times has the opposite effect. Even if Sarajevo were not such a small place, many of the text's authors are prominently engaged in fields of art and culture either permanently in the city or in a way that brings them into frequent residence there. The volume, thus, sometimes gives the impression of a small and select group, relating shared memories.

Therefore, we can certainly view the project as one of "collected" memory (Olick 1999, Young 1993). In this respect, the texts can be seen as an aggregate of individual memories, grouped together into a "common memorial space" (Young *xi*). Moreover, they are, quite literally, "collected" in that they were compiled and organized into a single entity under an overarching title. The collection gives meaning and value to the individual narratives which, in a sense, are stripped of their immediate context and come to exist only in the collection (cf. Clifford 1988, Pearce 1992, Bal 1994). This archiving of individual memories in a social context, of collecting personal narratives that are nonetheless informed by larger social institutions, is seen to serve a purpose: to preserve them for future generations and to shape "whether we remember and how we remember"²⁵ (Nihad Kreševljaković, Radiosarajevo interview). Moreover, it is important to the editors that these memories are not "boring"²⁶ and that their "intimacy," as well

²⁴ The issue of whether one spent the war in Bosnia or left the country is one that dominates much of the discourse about the war. A strong judgment is often leveled, overtly or covertly, at those who left Bosnia during the war by those who stayed. Indeed, the word most commonly used for the act of leaving is *napustiti* [to abandon].

²⁵ "[T]o pitanje da li se sjećamo i kako se sjećamo."

²⁶ Here Kreševljaković makes a comparison with the experience of listening to stories about the Second World War, told by his generation's grandparents.

as their aesthetic qualities, gives the collected narratives the power to “enrich both us, as well as a new generation”²⁷ (ibid) of those who encounter them.

The aggregate nature of these reflections, however, does not entirely account for their memorial capacity. That is, in addition to being “collected,” the narratives organized into the volume are “collective” insofar as they are shaped by a common set of social, political, and cultural processes and contribute to articulating aspects of these processes. Here I invoke Halbwachs’ term in its broadest sense, that

frameworks of memory [*les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*] are not constructed after the fact by the combination of individual recollections; nor are they empty forms where recollections coming from elsewhere would insert themselves. Collective frameworks are, to the contrary, precisely the instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society. (Halbwachs 40)

The frameworks at work in shaping *May 2, 1992: It Was a Fair and Sunny Day....* are, in addition, communicative (J. Assmann 1995). As evidenced above, a great many of the individual contributors live, work, and engage frequently with each other; they partake of the same cultural and socio-economic milieu and, moreover, participate in setting the terms for civic engagement and cultural production in the public sphere.

These authors, thus, belong to the same generation, whose contours are traced by the experience of living through the war rather than being of a certain age. Theories of generation as a sociological and narrative trope connect with and contribute to larger understandings of social and cultural memory. Karl Mannheim’s seminal work on the theory of generations positions it as a conceptual tool that meaningfully bridges biological age, socio-political awareness, and cultural production (Mannheim 1927).

²⁷ “Kroz intimne priče.... [n]amjera nam je da ne budemo dosadni, da to sjećanje sačuvamo na najljepši način kako bi oplemenilo i nas, a i nove generacije.”

Membership in a generation is constructed after the fact through what Wulf Kansteiner calls the “memory activism” of “shared narratives, images, institutions and rituals” (Kansteiner 115). The war years, as a traumatic experience, both stabilize a shared memory field and serve as a kernel around which memorial practice is organized. By participating in acts of commemoration, not only is intense focus paid to the time period bounded by 1992-1996, a sense of community is also created through this commemoration. The “shared experience of incisive events” combines with “ongoing meta-discourse” (A. Assmann 23) to establish in participants a sense of belonging to a generation.

May 2, 1992, as one such incisive event, filters into the volume’s narratives in a variety of ways. The use of superlatives punctuates its texts: it was the “most difficult day in the history of Sarajevo”²⁸ (140, 216), “one of the bloodiest days of the war”²⁹ (145), its events “most dramatic and most interesting”³⁰ (151), the one that remains “most clearly”³¹ (212) in the minds of Sarajevans. In approaching this exceptionality and superlative status, contributors bridge the gap between large-scale and hitherto unknown violence in the city and novel events in their intimate lives. Thus, we see narratives that are structured around a number of “firsts.” Nedim Zlatar associates May 2 both with the first time he saw his father cry (23), as well as being the “day on which

²⁸ “[B]io je to do sada najteži dan u njegovoj istoriji.”

²⁹ “Jedan od najkrvavijih dana rata.”

³⁰ “Ono što nismo [sic] snimili tog dana, vjerovatno je bilo najdramtičnije [sic] i najzanimljivije.”

³¹ “... datum koji je najjasnije ostao u memoriji svih građana Sarajeva.”

we experienced many things for the first time. ... the day we first experienced war"³² (29). Likewise, novelist Melina Kamerić in her section, entitled "Adrenaline Memory,"³³ isolates the moment in which she "first smoked a cigarette in front of her now-deceased father. Not in front of him. With him. The memory is condensed into a picture. His hand bringing the match up to the Drina [cigarette] between my lips"³⁴ (111). This perfect still image contains within it the knowledge that, as Kamerić continues, "after that day, after everything that had just begun, I would never be the same again"³⁵ (ibid).

The individual parts of the volume's title serve as two framing devices that both evoke and organize the narrative components. The phrase "fair and sunny day" and the date "May 2, 1992" become two of the work's clearest leitmotifs. Beyond emerging as structuring themes, however, the two are integrated conceptually into the memory work taken on by the collection. They overtly model mnemonic techniques for narrating a past event. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, the two frameworks demonstrate the inseparability of individual and social memory, and the way collected memory and collective memory are imbedded in each other.

From the introduction, where the formulation "fair and sunny" is first used, we see the phrase employed as a way of circumscribing or summing up one's narration. It

³² "... 2. maj bio je dan kada smo mnogo toga doživjeli prvi put. ... Dan kada smo prvi put doživjeli rat."

³³ "Adrenalinsko sjećanje."

³⁴ "Sjećam se samo da sam tog dana, prvi put u životu, zapalila cigaru pred svojim, rahmetli, ocem. Ne zapalila pred njim. Zapalila sa njim. Sjećanje svedeno na sliku. Njegova ruka koja prinosi šibicu Drini, koja mi je među usnama."

³⁵ "Svijest da nakon tog dana, nakon onoga što je tada počelo, ja više nikada neću biti ista."

is frequently used as a starting point, and occasionally as a concluding phrase. Sead Kreševljaković (Nihad Kreševljaković's twin brother) uses it to wrap up his text: "I forgot to mention that the second of May that first war year was, as usual, a fair and sunny day. The cherry trees in the garden had blossomed and were about to bear fruit"³⁶ (163). Sead Kreševljaković's use of the phrase, combined with his gorgeous and evocative description of incipient spring in Sarajevo, embodies eloquently how the natural beauty of the day's calm weather left an indelible trace on the minds of many and, thus, emerged as a common feature in their narrative accounts of the day.

Once noted, however, the phrase almost invariably calls up – either explicitly or implicitly – its opposite, as a contrast is established between the "all-too-fair weather, nature, and spring" and the "war horror"³⁷ (29). The author of the previous phrases, the musician Nedim Zlatar, explicitly situates his memory process within the idyllic scene, saying, "I'll never forget the heavy scent of gunpowder on that gorgeous spring day.... How much those lovely days owe us!"³⁸ (*ibid*). Furthermore, the sunny, bright clarity of the day is both allied with and contrasted to processes of recall. While the striking image indelibly etched in numerous authors' minds facilitates memory, serving as a type of screen memory, it can also foreclose narrative memory. Asja Hafner, for example, notes that, "May 2nd was sunny, but its memory is foggy"³⁹ (36).

³⁶ "Zaboravih spomenuti, da je drugi maj te prve ratne godine kao i obično bio lijep i sunčan dan. Trešnja u bašči je probiharala i uskoro će roditi trešnje."

³⁷ "...[I] taj kontrast između prelijepog vremena, prirode i proljeća s jedne strane, i ratnog užasa sa druge strane."

³⁸ "Nikada neću zaboraviti teški miris baruta na tom prelijepom proljetnom danu.... Koliko nam tako lijepih dana duguju!"

³⁹ "I 2. maj je bio sunčan ali na njega sjećanje je maglovito."

Similar to the “fair and sunny day” subtitle, the date around which the collection is organized functions as a formal structuring device in its own right. First of all, May 2nd follows on the heels of May 1st, a memorable day in socialist Yugoslavia’s calendar and cultural imagination. The holiday Labor Day [*Praznik rada*] was publically celebrated in visually striking ways that dominated public space, as cities across the country held marches and gatherings, waving festive banners with socialist iconography and slogans. More importantly, however, the holiday encouraged individuals to engage with key tenets of official Yugoslav socialism – including “worker self-management” and “brotherhood and unity” – in a way that, for many, informed how they viewed themselves as Yugoslavs, as citizens of their particular republic or province, and as individuals. Moreover, for the First of May, workers enjoyed a two-day rest (which was only true for two other holidays, New Year’s Day and Republic Day).⁴⁰ Thus, May 2nd was firmly and ritually included in the celebration of the annual workers’ holiday. Multiple contributors remarked on the date, linking its public significance in Yugoslavia in some way with the events of 1992.

In this way, the date was invested with a constellation of private and public meanings that allowed it to function as a mnemonic device for approaching May 2nd, 1992. Sead Kreševljaković notes that “although hardly anyone had been working for almost a month, the First of May – Labor Day – was celebrated”⁴¹ (158). The celebratory

⁴⁰ For further details about public holidays in and after Yugoslavia, and the ongoing significance of these commemorated dates, see: Breda Luther and Maruša Pušnik, *Remembering Utopia: The Culture of Everyday Life in Socialist Yugoslavia* (Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing, 2010); and Ljiljana Šarić, Karen Gammelgaard, and Kjetil Rå Hauge, *Transforming National Holidays: Identity Discourse in the West and South Slavic Countries, 1985-2010* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2012).

⁴¹ “Iako skoro već mjesec dana niko skoro ne radi, proslavlja se Prvi maj – praznik rada.”

quality of the day contrasts with the current war conditions, and yet the ritual continues to hold significance, and perhaps even increases in importance. And it is the observation of the “old” holiday in new conditions that brings to the fore how these new conditions were integrated into individual and social memory. When Saudin Bećirević notes in his contribution, taken from his war diary, that, “if this war ends one day, I’m sure that each of my next First of Mays will take place on May 2nd”⁴² (67). Here we see several thematic moves taking place at once. First, the anticipation of retrospective commemoration explicitly entangles temporality with processes of memory and evaluation in a way that exposes the way dates are bestowed with significance. Not only does Bećirević prefigure the future importance of May 2nd in the postwar Bosnian context, but he does so by moving the socially sanctioned First of May to the following day: the pomp and ceremony already inherent to the labor holiday are transferred and repurposed in order to adequately mark the events Bećirević sees unfolding in the present and finds as redolent with meaning that rivals the social significance given to the First of May.

We see in frequent mentions of birthdays another critical way in which noteworthy dates are used as a way of calibrating the significance of May 2, 1992. Not only are birthdays and their celebrations included as plot points in various contributions (83, 104-105), but they are used as events from which meaning can be derived or to which meaning can be granted, when viewed in light of the events of May 2, 1992. Nurudin Imamović, as Alija Izetbegović’s bodyguard, was held at the Sarajevo airport and at the Lukavica barracks along with the President on the day in question.

⁴² “Ako se ovaj rat jednog dana završi, siguran sam da će moj svaki sljedeći Prvi maj, biti drugog maja.”

When recounting his memory of the experience over the period of May 2-5, in which Imamović himself volunteered to remain behind in Lukavica as collateral while Izetbegović returned to Sarajevo, Imamović isolates May 5th as the red-letter day. The day, marking his return to the city and his family, was, he writes, “a second birth. Even now, I celebrate May 5th like my second birthday”⁴³ (135). What’s more, in his own text, Nurudin Imamović’s son, Edin, further elaborates and extends the web of signification into which the events of early May, 1992, are placed for the Imamović family. Starting on “that day, my dad and my brother celebrate their birthdays on the same day [May 5th]”⁴⁴ (137).

In addition to the refiguring of birthdays, the mention of these dates of personal and familial importance highlight both the interaction between the individual and the social or “historical,” as well as the role structures of emplotment play in narrating memory. When Jasmin Viteškić identifies the difficulties he has, in the years following 1992, in remembering his own birthday, this is not a moment of mere forgetting, but of interference:

I heard it repeated so many times after that day, that I was lucky to be alive and that May 4th came to me like a second birthday, that with time, I accepted this date.... It seems odd to them, but when people ask me when my birthday is, I pause for a second and then think. Sometimes I say I was born on the third, and sometimes on the fourth of May. (177)

In addition, forgetting and remembering are caught in an intricate bond that reconfigures Viteškić’s notion of identity. As he goes on to note:

⁴³ “To je za mene bilo drugo rođenje. Ja i danas 5. maj obilježavam kao svoj drugi rođendan.”

⁴⁴ “Od toga dana moj babo i moj brat istog dana slave rođendan.”

I believe the [precision of the date] matters a lot for my CIPS [card]⁴⁵ and my passport, but, honestly, it's all the same to me....⁴⁶ (178)

By blurring the date of his birth (May 3rd) with the date on which he participated and was wounded in a patrol on the outskirts of Sarajevo against the attacking JNA forces (May 4th), Viteškić marks the significance of his having escaped death. As all of these narratives make evident, dates with prefigured meanings, like birthdays and the First of May, can be flexibly appropriated in order to commemorate the early days of May, 1992 on a personal as well as a wider social level.

The cutting of 40,000-60,000 of the city's phone lines on May 2 also becomes an event that contributors integrate into their own narratives. Several embed dialogues over the telephone, the interlocutors positioned in various parts of the city, as a way of giving texture to the narrated memories. These dialogues range from the mundane to the humorous. Nedim Zlatar uses a series of telephone conversations to dramatically represent the sense of dislocation and lack of understanding that pervaded the city at the time. He positions the telephone itself as "one of the main heroes"⁴⁷ (26) of that time; narrating in dialogue format the moment the line is decisively cut is imagined as the

⁴⁵ The Citizen Identification Protection System was implemented in Bosnia in 2003 as a replacement for previous systems of personal identification. CIPS keeps a central database of BiH citizens, and the CIPS card is required in all everyday bureaucratic procedures (of which there are a large number in today's Bosnia).

⁴⁶ "Elem, toliko puta sam poslije toga dana čuo, kako sam imao veliku sreću što sam ostao živ i da mi je taj 4. maj došao kao drugi rođendan, da sam vremenom taj datum tako i prihvatio. Zbog toga svaki put zastanem kada me pitaju za datum rođenja, bez prostora za razmišljanje, ni sam ne znam koji je pravi.... Čudno bude ljudima što kada me upitaju za datum rođenja malo zastanem, pa se mislim, nekada kažem da sam rođen trećeg, a nekada četvrtog maja. Vjerujem da je CIPS-a i pasoškom to vrlo bitno, a meni je, iskreno, svejedno."

⁴⁷ "[T]elefon tog dana bio jedan od glavnih junaka."

death of this hero. May 2, 1992 becomes forever associated with the day on which “the ‘hellos’ stopped”⁴⁸ (69), replaced as they were by “silence”⁴⁹ (114).

Silence, indeed, punctuates the narration of the collection’s memories and serve to establish a more intimate context in which to relate personal memories that nonetheless link thematically and temporally with public memories of May 2nd. Thus, the actress Vedrana Seksan chooses a lack of dialogue as a way of relating and connecting two conflicts: that of the violent war outside her house and a wordless interpersonal standoff between Seksan and her mother.

[T]he UNHCR sheeting [used to cover broken windows], which you were now numbly turning over in your hands will be something we’ll get used to. I wanted to tell you that they were just windows. That it doesn’t matter. That we’ll buy new ones. I didn’t. Instead, we spent the third of May cleaning up the damage. Stapling the nylon to window frames we’d painted only seven days before the war began. Which we still needed to finish. That’s what you told me. That it would be done by my birthday. By the end of April. I wanted to ask you whether it might be done by the end of May. But I didn’t. I just passed you the stapler and tried to pick up all the shards of glass. Silently. We stayed silent the whole third of May. Just as we had been silent for the second. After you told me I could only leave the basement over your dead body. After you plucked us up and locked us in the basement. After it became clear the war had started. I was silent because I was angry...that you were treating me like a child.... You were silent because you were afraid⁵⁰. (83-84)

⁴⁸ “[O]d tog datuma prestalo je ‘halo’ za grad Sarajevo.”

⁴⁹ “Ostala je tišina.”

⁵⁰ “Kada folije UNHCR-a koje si sada tupo prevrtala po rukama budu nešto na što smo se navikli. Htjela sam ti reći kako su to samo prozori. Kako nema veze. Kako ćemo kupiti nove. Nisam. Umjesto toga smo treći maj provele popravljajući štetu. Zabijajući spajalicom najlone u prozorski okvir koji smo ofarbali samo sedam dana prije nego je počeo rat. Koji se do sada trebao završiti. Tako si mi rekla. Da će sve biti gotovo do mog rođendana. Do kraja aprila. Htjela sam da te pitam da li će se možda završiti do kraja maja. Ali nisam. Samo sam ti dodavala spajalice i trudila se da sakupim sve krhotine stakla. Šuteći. Šutjeli smo skoro cijeli treći maj. Jednako kako smo šutjeli i drugi maj. Nakon tvoje rečenice kako mogu izaći iz podruma samo preko tebe mrtve. Nakon što si nas pokupila i zatvorila u podrum. Nakon što je postalo jasno da je rat počeo. Ja sam šutjela zato jer sam bila ljuta.... Ti si šutjela zato jer te je bio strah.”

Recalling the day, Seksan uses the window, its physical frame becoming a narrative frame through which it is possible to view the effects of the war on a girl and her mother. The short narrative relies on familiar objects in a domestic setting, as well as a stereotypical mode of engagement between teenager and parent, to convey the extent to which war has disrupted both the world outside and inside the home. Seksan's text is an internal monologue that replicates the one taking place in the present of 1992. Meanwhile, the first person narrator is distant from the girl she was those fifteen years before and the "I" of her narrative contains two perspectives at once: it conveys both the petty solipsism of the teenager and a more expansive view – a "we" in the present of 2008 that has integrated the events of May 1992 into a larger narrative. The story concludes with such a first person plural that immediately encompasses the two protagonists, but has a larger resonance. Finally, "when we had finished affixing the sheeting, nothing could be seen through the window. And it stayed like that for four years"⁵¹ (85). The text links silence and opacity, using a domestic scene in which misunderstanding reigns, to comment on the larger situation in Sarajevo during the war. This is what is being commemorated here: a city under siege, where communication is difficult, and windows do not provide the visibility they, by definition, promise.

Many of the collection's authors were children or teenagers in 1992 and their contributions are memorable both for the high drama – often of a puckish nature – that they convey, as well as the use of informal speech patterns, youth slang, and a

⁵¹ "Samo se na kraju, kada smo završile zakucavanje folija kroz prozore nije više vidjelo ništa. I tako četiri godine."

humorous, ironic, or irreverent tone. The events of May 2, 1992 serve as a hazardous and compelling background in which the narrator-protagonist emerges as an unlikely – and often unwitting – hero. As Nedim Zlatar puts it, in the violent chaos of Sarajevo on that day, “everything is somehow interesting” to a narrator who encounters it without fear, “not because [he is] brave, but because [he doesn’t] grasp the severity of the situation”⁵² (15-17). This contrast between extreme danger outside and the haphazard, ill-informed, and rash actions of young men – because, yes, the relevant stories, among all those in the collection, are written only by men – is established by several authors, creating a composite portrait of what it meant to be a male youth in besieged Sarajevo, and what it means to reflect back on this youth dominated by war.⁵³

The particular admixture of cockiness and inexperience comes through in a number of such texts, made readily apparent by the register and style in which they are told. As rock musician Hamdija Kreševljaković (Nihad and Sead’s brother) begins, “so, here you go: a war scene, like a joke: the first day of the war, everything is fucked up and wrecked, no one has any idea what’s going on, nor does anyone know who’s

⁵² “[S]ve to mi je bilo nekako interesantno.” “Ja se nisam plašio, ne zato što sam bio hrabar, nego zato što tada nisam shvatao ozbiljnost situacije.”

⁵³ A sizeable literature (mostly memoirs) has been established on the theme, lens, or subject position traced out by “youth in wartime” in the former Yugoslavia, and BiH in particular. My discussion here engages different themes and stylistic elements, since I focus on texts written by those who were teenagers or in their twenties. For comparison, see: Ismet Dizdarević, *Prekinuto djetinjstvo* [Broken-off Childhood] (Sarajevo: Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava Univerziteta, 2008). Zlata Filipović, *Zlatin dnevnik* [Zlata’s Diary] (Zagreb: Znanje, 1994). Nadja Halilbegovich, *My Childhood Under Fire* (Toronto: Kids Can Press, 2006). Jasminko Halilović, *Djetinstvo u ratu* [Childhood in War] (Sarajevo: Impresum, 2013). Savo Heleta, *Not My Turn To Die: Memoirs of a Broken Childhood in Bosnia* (New York: AMACOM, 2008). Razija Lagumdžija, *Mama, Neću u Podrum* [Mama, I Don’t Wanna Go to the Basement] (Sarajevo: Veselin Maslesa, 1992). Elma Softić, *Sarajevski dani, sarajevske noći* [Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights] (Zagreb: VBZ, 1994). Saša Stanišić, *How the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone* (New York: Grove Press, 2006). Kenan Trebinčević, *The Bosnia List* (New York: Penguin, 2014). Nenad Veličković, *Konačari* [Lodgers] (Sarajevo: Zid, 1995).

shooting at Sarajevo or who's defending it (ahhhaaaaaa)"⁵⁴ (62). Framing the narrative within the genre of *šega* (from Turkish *şaka*, "joke"), as well as using colloquial and vulgar vocabulary and style, immediately establishes the narrator as boisterously sympathetic and the narrative as humorous and intimate. A *šega* might more accurately be translated as "bullshitting," since it is strongly allied with *zajebancije* and *zezanje*, other oral bantering traditions, which privilege the non-serious, the exaggerated or the outright false. By using a light and energetic style and register, the narrator is cleverly able to marshal a memorable construction to sum up the chaotic and dangerous situation in Sarajevo: he creates a phrasal parallel between *ne zna se ko pije, a ko plaća* [it's not known who's drinking and who's paying] and *nit' se zna ko puca na Sarajevo nit' ko ga brani* [it's not known who's shooting at Sarajevo and who's defending the city]. This jovial treatment serves, perhaps paradoxically, to underscore and communicate the gravity of the escalating war on the streets of Sarajevo.

This effective use of informal language replete with slang, combined with a familiar or even clichéd scenario, occurs in several other texts. For instance, the drummer Darko Jelišić "Dare"⁵⁵ relies on a jaunty and comic conversational opening, in much the same way as Hamdija Kreševljaković did above, and, further, establishes a narrative parallel between the war and a lost love interest. "Weeeeeelllll," Jelišić begins, "in those days everyone was getting ready for the war, while I was getting

⁵⁴ "Eh evo ovako, kao *šega* događaj iz rata: prvi dani rata, sve sjebano i razvaljeno, ne zna se ko pije, a ko plaća, nit' se zna ko puca na Sarajevo nit' ko ga brani (ahhhaaaaaa)...."

⁵⁵ The use of nicknames, usually created from surnames, is prevalent in Bosnia and elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia. In the volume, many figures' nicknames are included along with their date of birth. In some cases, usually with well-known individuals, these nicknames are used instead of given names (for example, the artist Nebojša Šerić "Šoba" is almost exclusively referred to as "Šoba").

ready to die because Selma Ramić had left me high and dry”⁵⁶ (149). Not only is the fact that Selma has dumped him more important than the war going on around, but Selma’s name is also what evokes a larger memory of May 2nd: “I remember I was really really sad... Selma.... That’s what I think about first when somebody mentions the war... May 2^{nd”}⁵⁷ (ibid). Indeed, the entire narrative is structured around the departed Selma: it concludes with Jelišić becoming a volunteer in the Bosnian Army – not out of a strong desire to defend the city, but rather because he has heard that Selma has taken up with “some dude with a Kalashnikov who was defending the city”⁵⁸ (150). Joining up with a unit stationed on Koševo hill means being stationed near her house... albeit across the front line from her.

Thus, Jelišić’s narrative establishes a microcosm in which youthful stupidity, fleeting romance, and the reality of being a twenty-something in the middle of a war are brought together. Jelišić and his friends, worried about being mobilized back into the JNA, go to Dobrinja, a suburb on the western edge of Sarajevo and a “great place for a party!”⁵⁹ (ibid). There, they “drink like fish,” get “deathly drunk, not realizing the danger lurking just a few doors down from us”⁶⁰ (149). This extended section of drunken stumbling in Jelišić’s plot, while the Chetniks are literally outside the

⁵⁶ “Paaa, tih dana, svi su se spremali za rat, a ja sam spremao da umrem jer sam dobio nogu od Selme Ramić.”

⁵⁷ “Sjećam se da sam strašno bio tužan... Selma.... To je prvo na šta pomislim kad neko kaže rat... 2. maj....”

⁵⁸ “Ja sam čuo da se Selma počela zabavljati sa nekim tipom koji je uzeo Kalašnjikov, u smislu odbrane grada....”

⁵⁹ “[S]uper mjesto za dernek,” “extra frka.”

⁶⁰ “I tu smo cugali k’o konji.... Mi smo bili mortus pijani, nismo kontali opasnost koja je bila samo nekoliko ulaza od nas.”

apartment building, is mimicked by the slurring of his prose. The sloppy texture, in a memory text, takes on overtones of both mild recrimination and pride.

Reflecting back on the events of May 2, 1992 from a distance of fifteen years means negotiating a critical gap in personal biography, a gap that seems wider for those who, from middle age, reflect on their youth. Hence, the decision to represent their memories as action-packed adventure stories told by a youthful narrator is, for many, a nostalgic gesture. Describing the way he and his friends cavorted while hunkering down for safety in a shelter, writing “death to everyone”⁶¹ in big letters on its walls, and otherwise raising havoc and the ire of the adults, the well-known artist, Nebojša Šerić “Šoba” notes that “it’s silly to say this, but we, the youth, spent some of the best moments of our lives there [in that shelter]. So much so that we didn’t even want to leave it and go outside”⁶² (120). The strong sense of nostalgia that characterizes the conclusion of Šoba’s text extends to others, who likewise place youthful antics at the forefront of their narratives.

Indeed, even when they are written by those who were not exactly young in 1992, many narratives contributed by men are thematically and stylistically positioned on the boundary between impulsivity and courage; the texts’ focal points are, frequently, incidences that are surprising or funny; they often establish the narrator as

⁶¹ “SMRT SVIMA!” This formulation clearly references in a parodic way the iconic World War Two-era slogan, “Smrt fašizmu, sloboda narodu [death to fascism, freedom to the people],” which was primarily used by the Yugoslav Communists and their supporters. Associated in cultural memory with this slogan is a widely disseminated photograph of the young Partisan soldier Stjepan Filipović who, famously, raised his hands above his head in a gesture of defiance, moments before he was executed by Axis forces in Serbia, and proclaimed “death to fascism, freedom for the people” in a loud voice.

⁶² “Mi mlađi smo ipak tu proveli (glupo je reći) neke od najljepših momenata svog života, nije nam se izlazilo napolje.”

sympathetic but inept, charming and lucky to have survived. Muhamed Gafić, the author and alpinist, memorably casts in his May 2nd drama a local Sarajevan Hare Krishna woman, who discusses the tenets of nonviolence as fierce street fighting commences (128-129). Besim Mulamuhić inserts a scene in which Dragan Medenica, a Serbian neighbor and member of the BiH reserve police successfully and expertly negotiates with a typical JNA-type⁶³ from Niš, convincing the latter to call the fire department to handle the burning post office in exchange for the former bringing a wounded JNA soldier to the hospital (40-41). The drama of the scene hinges on Mulamuhić's use of dialogue, much of it in dialect, and the quick-witted Dragan's exploitation of his obviously Serbian name, and an assumed camaraderie between the JNA soldiers outside, to secure a small advantage.

Finally, the singer Benjamin Isović relates possibly the most amusing episode of the entire volume, again situated in the genre of *šega*. He loves to recall these episodes, which “always make him smile and give him a hidden jolt” because, “having gotten through that, there’s no obstacle we can’t surmount and, what’s more, turn into a joke”⁶⁴ (182). Its three separate but thematically linked short stories are set in a time that seems, to Isović, “completely unreal, like in a dream, half possible, and four fifths impossible”⁶⁵ (*ibid*) and populated by a motley crew of inexpert men carrying out various guard duties in the city under attack. In one scene, after cycling through and

⁶³ “[T]ipičan jnaovski.”

⁶⁴ “Ali onih epizoda sa signalima se baš rado sjećam, jer me nasmiju u svakom trenutku, i usput mi daju i neviđen podstrek, jer kad smo to predeverali, onda nema nedaće koju nećemo pregrmiti i šta više, okrenuti na šegu!”

⁶⁵ “Danas mi taj period izgleda potpuno nestvarno, kao što to i biva u snovima, pola moguće, a četiri petine nemoguće.”

rejecting a series of passwords, which are used to distinguish between friends and enemies on the nighttime streets of Sarajevo, they eventually hit upon a fool-proof one “taken from home cooking: HURMAŠICA [a famous Bosnian pastry soaked in syrup]!”⁶⁶ (183). This perfect password works only because of an extended joke that relies on the fact that the letter “h” often distinguishes Bosnian pronunciation from Serbian or Croatian variants of the common language: if the person says “hurmašica,” they are Bosnian and can be let through, while those who say “urmašica” should be shot at.⁶⁷

Gafić’s, Mulumuhić’s, and Isović’s episodes, detailed above, feature prominently in the theatrical version of *It Was a Fair and Sunny Day...*, which has been adapted from the text and performed in the Sarajevo War Theater (SARTR) each season since 2012. The play was directed by Tanja Miletić Oručević and created as a co-production between SARTR, the MESS Theater Festival, and the Swiss cultural program in the Western Balkans entitled “Network for Participative Cultures of Remembrance.”

The collection *May 2, 1992: It Was a Fair and Sunny Day...* comprises a variety of media. It opens with a reproduced front page from the May 2nd edition of *Oslobođenje*, a major Yugoslav – and later, Bosnian – newspaper and closes with the first page of the

⁶⁶ “[T]ek ispostavilo se da je ta univerzalna lozinka, nazovimo je tako, bila svima dobro poznata, domaća riječ iz porodice gurmanluka: HURMAŠICA!”

⁶⁷ This trope of adding or removing “h” to words is a standard of Bosnian war humor that hinges on the nationalistic insisting on linguistic differences between the variants of what was once called Serbo-Croatian. Nenad Veličković uses it in his novel, *Konačari*. Senad Hadžifejzović has a famous broadcast in which pointedly uses adjectives with the letter “h” (*lahko, krhka, prhka, mehka*) in imitation of what he describes the “Bosnian old and new speech,” which is supposed to contrast with the Croatian way of speaking, despite the fact that, for half of these adjectives (*krhak* and *prhak*), there is no version of the word that does not have an “h” (Croatian Radio Television broadcast on August 1, 1995).

May 3rd one.⁶⁸ These pages frame the volume, serving as paratexts that establish expectations for the reader. Not only is this paratext created through use of the genre of the newspaper, with its journalistic language and goal of factual accuracy, but the reproduced page, as a document, serves rhetorically to establish veracity in the volume as a whole. This realist technique is amplified by the fact that the included page is marked up and creased: someone has drawn circles around several paragraphs on the page, and a fold runs from top left to middle of the page [FIGURE 4.3 and FIGURE 4.4].⁶⁹

⁶⁸ The editors employ an additional framing technique in their use of these newspaper documents: the May 2nd page is from the Latin alphabet version of *Oslobodenje*, while the May 3rd text is from the Cyrillic version.

⁶⁹ These markings are common on wartime news materials in Bosnian archives. Because of a shortage in paper and ink, the runs of Bosnian newspapers and magazines were severely curtailed and editions were printed on cheap, easily degradable paper. During the winter months of the siege years, fuel shortages meant that Sarajevans burned everything imaginable – including shoes, garbage, trees from the city's parks, and personal libraries. Thus, extant copies of newspapers currently in archives are often the result of an individual's special preservation; both marks of use (including filled-in crossword puzzles, penned and often vociferous reactions to articles, and other marginalia) and evidence of wear serve as material legacies of the conditions under which the pages were manufactured and the significance they bore to contemporary readers.



FIGURE 4.4: FRONT PAGE OF MAY 3, 1992 EDITION OF *OSLOBOĐENJE*

These two *Oslobodenje* front pages, one from May 2nd (written in Latin script) and the other from May 3rd (in Cyrillic), are found abutting the book's narratives. While the majority of these are local and global news stories, there are striking exceptions. A photo introducing an "unusual toy" manufactured by a Japanese company from the "Of Interest" section of the day's newspaper is photocopied below the text of an actress who, in 1992, was seven years old [FIGURE 4.5]. Likewise, the handwritten May diary of the late traditional Bosnian singer, Safet Isović, is reproduced as a document [FIGURE 4.6]. "Heavy bombardment" (9) marks the second of May, while this notation becomes increasingly abbreviated as it is appended to additional days in the month, moving into the shorthands "heavy bombard." and "heavy bomb." The diary consists only of bombings, grenades, battles, the burning of the Olympic complex "Zetra," and funerals in various city cemeteries.



FIGURE 4.5: REPRODUCED ADVERTISEMENT FOR "AN UNUSUAL TOY"

SAFET ISOVIĆ
(1936. - 2007.)

april

1 MI	
2 DO	
3 FR	
4 SA	RAZRAM - BIRLAKA
5 SO	VRBANJA MOST
6 MI	HOLDETIN - MARCIREA
7 DO	SKUPITINA I KUPITINOM
8 MI	SKUPITINA
9 DO	
10 FR	23.45
11 SA	UMRO MECO 20.45
12 MI	
13 DO	18
14 DI	DŽENADA - BARE
15 MI	
16 DO	
17 FR	
18 SA	
19 MI	
20 DO	
21 DI	17
22 MI	
23 DO	
24 FR	
25 SA	
26 MI	
27 DO	18
28 DI	
29 MI	
30 DO	

ZAPISI IZ OPSADE

mai

1 FR	
2 SA	JAKO BOMBARDOVANJE
3 SO	
4 MO	JAKO BOMBARD. 19
5 DI	JAKO BOMBARD.
6 MI	
7 DO	
8 FR	
9 SA	
10 SO	
11 MO	20
12 DI	JAKO BOMBARD.
13 MI	
14 DO	JAKO BOMBARD.
15 FR	
16 SA	JAKO BOMB. JUFO, FAIK
17 SO	
18 MO	DŽENADA - KOVACI 21
19 DI	
20 MI	
21 DO	IZGURJELA ZETRA
22 FR	
23 SA	JAKO BOMB. BITE
24 SO	
25 MO	22
26 DI	GRANATA NA RUCU - POKODILO
27 MI	POKOLJ U FERHADICI
28 DO	NAJVEĆE BOMBARD. GRAD
29 FR	
30 SA	MINE NA VIŠE NASELJE ADEM ACA
31 SO	

juni

MO	23
DI	
MI	
DO	
FR	BOMBARDOVANJE
SA	"
MO	BUČCIJA MINE NALAS - PAJ VELJE BOMBAR. KONTAKAN
DI	BOMB.
MI	BOMB.
DO	BOMBARDOVANJE
FR	"
SA	SYANTE "

FIGURE 4.6: REPRODUCED PAGE FROM SAFET ISOVIĆ'S WARTIME DIARY

In addition to functioning as paratexts, reproductions of contemporary documents to which contributors refer are included as intertexts. Thus, the day's television schedule stands both as an entry in its own right and one to whose programs authors allude in their memory narratives [FIGURE 4.7]. Photographs by Milomir Kovačević "Strašni" and Rikard Larma both commemorate the day and are integrated into either the photographer's own narrative or that of another contributor. Included in a similar way is Andrej Đerković's piece "The Star-Spangled Banner," which was installed on the walls of the famous Jadranka cake shop in 2008 to commemorate both the victims of the siege of Sarajevo and those of the 9/11 World Trade Center attack. Screen captures from documentary footage shot by Nihad and Sead Kreševljaković, as well as from TV Sarajevo broadcasts, visually punctuate the narrative texts, while being thematically and stylistically entwined with them. Finally, transcripts from television media are inserted verbatim into the texts. The inclusion of sections of Senad Hadžifejzović's epic broadcast establish verisimilitude, while its urgent present-tense language raise the stakes of the commemorative work of the volume: "Here they are, the grenades are falling on the Radio-Television Sarajevo building!... We're telling the truth!" (33).

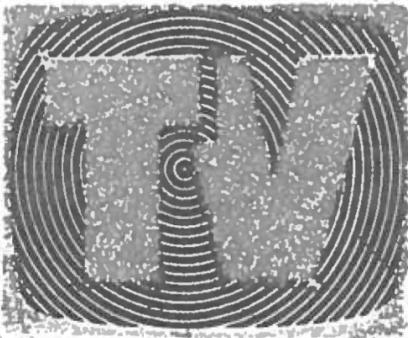
 <p>ТВ ДАНАС</p>		18.30 Веско Кадић: »Гундулићева улица«, документарни филм 19.00 Цртани филм 19.30 Дневник 21.00 Черни 2000, америчкиigrани филм 22.35 Мали концерт 23.00 Дневник 23.30 Ноћ и дан: Авто-превозник, серијски филм, I. епизода 00.20 Вијести 00.30 Преглед програма за недељу
<h1>1 КАНАЛ</h1>		<h1>2 КАНАЛ</h1>
7.40 Тест 7.55 Преглед програма 8.00 Вијести 8.20 Чувајмо природу, дижимо глас, програм за дејцу 8.50 Опстанак 9.20 Тајни врт,igrани филм 11.00 Вијести 11.20 Опстанак 11.50 Цртани филм 12.05 Концерт у подне: Моцарт поинт 12.50 Цртани филм 13.00 Вијести 13.20 Ноћ и дан; реприза 14.10 У сусрет висинама, документарна серија, 12. епизода 15.05 Вијести 15.25 Најљепше приче класичне старине, програм за дејцу 15.45 Кућни биоскоп: Рон против Вејда,igrани филм 17.20 Вијести 17.40 Херојски потхватај: Историја хирургије, документарни програм		14.00 Тест 14.25 Преглед програма 14.30 Открића без граница, цртана серија 14.55 Фантастични шоу госпођице Гице, анимирани филм 15.45 Цртани филм 15.55 ФУДБАЛ: Сутјеска - Пролетер, пренос 17.45 Цртани филм 18.00 ФУДБАЛ: Бундес лига 19.30 ПЛЕЈ-ОФ У КОШАРЦИ: Црвена звезда - Партизан, пренос 21.15 РУКОМЕТ: Црвена звезда - Партизан, снимак 22.25 YUTEL 23.25 Преглед програма за недељу
<h1>3 КАНАЛ</h1>		16.00 Програм CNN-а

FIGURE 4.7: SARAJEVO'S TELEVISION SCHEDULE FOR MAY 2, 1992

In the texts that make up *It Was a Fair and Sunny Day...*, authors meta-textually engage with the processes and task of memory, even as they pen their individual contributions to the larger commemorative project of the volume. The overlapping of these two narrative modes establishes textures of memory that pervade the book. These memories, explicitly linked up with moments of critical importance in media, are, taking a cue from Alison Landsberg, prosthetic in nature. They demonstrate the interconnectedness of individual and social memory in the context of mass culture, and the way in which these technologies of mass media serve to entangle memories and memory processes that might otherwise be seen as the exclusive domain of the personal or the collective. Prosthetic memory serves as “an interface between a personal and a historical narrative about the past” and enables a “person [to] suture...him or herself into a larger history” (Landsberg 2).

Indeed, contributors themselves explicitly reference this prosthetic quality of memories. The actor Mladen Jeličić “Troko” points to what he calls the “support mechanisms of the press, radio, TV, books, and film”⁷⁰ (165). The prosthetic effect of public memories experienced as private reflections takes two distinct forms in *It Was a Fair and Sunny Day....* First, episodes, themes, and aesthetic features of widely seen films are important in articulating individual memories about May 2, 1992. Second, the technology of still and moving images itself becomes critically important to articulating both the process of memorialization and the content of memory. Finally, the highly mediatized nature of the war in Bosnia and, in particular, the crucial role of media in

⁷⁰ “Međutim postoje, kao ih ja zovem, pomoćna sredstva, to su štampa, radio, TV, knjiga, film....”

the events of May 2, 1992 in Sarajevo means that these two aspects of memory prosthesis stand out clearly in the volume in question.

The imagery, sound, and affective qualities of key popular films and television series are frequently referenced in the texts that make up the volume *It Was a Fair and Sunny Day*.... More accurately, I argue, these filmic intertexts work prosthetically in that they allow individuals, with recourse to films viewed and appreciated in common, to both shape and articulate lived experience to a public in a way that creates a community of comprehension. Asja Hafner uses visual and aural imagery taken from disaster films to describe the scene outside on May 2: “as though the sky is on fire,’ we uttered that sentence, hypnotized by the huge blaze completing the film atmosphere”⁷¹ (37). Likewise, “outside they were shooting so much that I was sure we would go out into a scene from a Hollywood production about a post-nuclear catastrophe”⁷² (ibid). Hafner borrows stock footage from films in order to narrate her own encounter with violent destruction; this blend of mass media and personal memory is prosthetic and, as such, becomes a product of shared memory in addition to individual recollection.

We see an even more nuanced prosthetic gesture in Nedim Zlatar’s text. In it, he describes the experience of standing on empty and glass-littered Titova Street, after emerging from the building in which he, along with many others, sheltered during the violence on May 2. The site is “unreal, apocalyptic...empty and calm” and he feels,

⁷¹ “Kao da nebo gori,’ izgovarali smo tu rečenicu hipnotisani velikom vatrom upotpunjavajući si [sic] filmski ugođaj.”

⁷² “Napolju je toliko pucalo da sam vjerovala da ćemo izaći u scenu kao iz holivudskog spektakla o postnuklearnoj katastrofi.”

himself, like “a hero from an episode of *The Twilight Zone*”⁷³ (20). In this passage, Zlatar not only explicitly references the specific *Twilight Zone* episode, “Time Enough at Last,” in which the episode’s hapless protagonist, Henry Bemis, goes outside after surviving a nuclear catastrophe in a bank vault. Zlatar establishes a further alliance between Bemis and himself, engaging with the realization that time has stopped, “I always wondered what that would feel like. But now that I’ve experienced it to some extent, it’s not the picnic I imagined it to be”⁷⁴ (ibid). The famous television scene provides Zlatar’s narration with a clear visual landscape, a distinctive cluster of themes, and a haunting affective quality; thus, in a few short sentences, Zlatar conveys a strong impression that is made readily accessible and communicable to the reader by virtue of its familiar intertext and the prosthetic quality of memorialization in which it participates.

In one of the most evocative chapters of the collection, historian Mirza Redžić visually and, more memorably, affectively links the iconic May 2 sight of burned-out trams at Skenderija with the famous “Tears in Rain” scene from Ridley Scott’s 1982 cult dystopian sci-fi film, *Blade Runner*. Moments after saving the life of the human protagonist whose mission it is to kill him, the dying replicant, Roy Batty, describes a series of unbelievable and extremely specific life experiences. In this monologue, Batty movingly lists the incredible sights he has witnessed, and which will be lost, “like tears in the rain.”⁷⁵ Redžić uses the scene from *Blade Runner* – and not just *Blade Runner* as

⁷³ “[Titova ulica je izgledala] nestvarno, apokaliptično.... Sve je bilo pusto i mirno. Dok sam hodao po staklu... osjećao sam se kao junak epizode Zone Sumraka....”

⁷⁴ “[U]vijek sam se pitao kakav je to osjećaj i sad kad sam u neku ruku to doživio, nije mi bio toliki merak kao kad sam to zamišljao.”

⁷⁵ Rutger Hauer, the actor playing Roy Batty, famously (and perhaps legendarily) improvised away from the script in such a virtuosic manner that the improvised version of his speech was included in the final film.

such, but his own pirated VHS copy of the film – as a way of framing his own narrative, which is structured around a longstanding question: “what do ‘attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion’ really look like”⁷⁶ (46)? It is in the red Prague-built tram that he finds his answer.⁷⁷ The powerful and evocative speech bolsters and animates the portrait Redžić establishes in the opening to his piece. However, what remains unsaid in Redžić’s narrative also serves as the fulcrum on which it operates rhetorically. In *Blade Runner*, the replicant ends his speech, haltingly saying, “time to die.” Redžić, meanwhile, absorbs the thematic and affective content of this moment in order to, then, turn it on its head: his narrative takes Sarajevo and its inhabitants, “under attack and on fire”⁷⁸ (ibid), and locates in it, not imminent death, but a “powerful, decisive, and uncompromising resistance”⁷⁹ (47). Marshalling the sense of this vivid scene thus allows Redžić to use its collectively accessible affect to memorialize May 2nd.

Authors, thus, both rely and riff on the formal, thematic, or sensory characteristics established in popular film. They use both congruity and dissonance as foundations upon which to situate their own commemorative gestures, which operate

⁷⁶ “Sjećam se da sam nakon gledanja Blade Runnera Ridleya Scotta sa neke užasne, piratizirane VHS kopije zapitao kako li to zaista izgledaju ‘napadnuti brodovi u vatri na rubu Oriona.’”

⁷⁷ Sarajevo’s electric tram network was launched in 1885, serving as a test-run by Austro-Hungarian engineers for later tram systems in Vienna and elsewhere in the Empire. Its fleet largely comprised the Czech-manufactured Tatra K2 tram cars. This was supplemented with donations from Washington DC in the 1960s (Donia 65, 214). Much of the tram system’s infrastructure, including lines and cars, was badly damaged during the war of the 1990s; donated trams from various countries now trundle along repaired tracks. This network appears widely as a backdrop – or even a “character” – in fiction and non-fictional representations of the siege of Sarajevo (for a particularly noteworthy example of such characterization, see Goran Stefanovski’s 1993 play, *Sarajevo*). As such, the long and narrow tram system occupies a prominent place in the cultural history of Sarajevo and functions, indeed, as an important site of memory.

⁷⁸ “No, iako napadnuto i u vatri, Sarajevo i Sarajlije...”

⁷⁹ “[S]nažan, odlučan i beskompromisran otpor....”

simultaneously on individual and social levels. In several notable cases, as in Redžić's above, the rhetorical move from alliance with to divergence from certain conventions of popular film propels the narrative. Nedim Zlatar draws a sharp contrast between the violence portrayed in films, and that which is taking place around him. This difference can be located specifically in the sound of shots and grenades, which are totally unlike the way violence is presented audially in Schwarzenegger and Rambo films (15). In contrast to the "gratifying thud" of thrown pillows, used to imitate action film explosions in Zlatar's childhood, bullets and grenades in present reality have a "metallic sound"⁸⁰ (ibid). Replacing childhood assumptions, solidified through the film medium, Zlatar traces out an alternate soundscape for his memory text.

Similarly, the conclusion to Asja Hafner's vision of the bombed city, discussed above, in which she expects to discover a Hollywood-esque post-nuclear disaster zone, is deflated immediately thereafter: she assumes that, upon emerging outside, "everything will be ruined. But it wasn't"⁸¹ (37). Hafner's method of creating expectations, based on the clichés of Hollywood films, and then quickly overturning them portrays Sarajevo on May 2nd as distinct from these generalized catastrophes. Her technique, which is repeated several times in the text, finds a thematic or philosophical parallel in her larger commentary on the prevalence of naiveté in her own approach to the developing war, and that of others around her. Just as the author's experience has

⁸⁰ "Ni nalik onim na filmovima; u filmovima eksplozije imaju neki merački zvuk koji smo kao djeca imitirali bacajući se po jastucima kao Rambo ili Švarcineger u Komandu. Ove eksplozije su bile drugačije, parale su uši metalnim zvukom...."

⁸¹ "Sve će biti srušeno. Ali nije bilo."

replaced naïveté, so too have the stock film images given way to those of a less clear-cut nature.

Visual and audio-visual technological metaphors for memories of May 2, and of war in general, occupy prominent positions in many of the texts. These memories are approached not only through the process of seeing, but through the creation of a photographic or film image, which persists. And while the photographs taken by a still camera are present, it is largely the video camera that becomes the salient technological metaphor for the work as a whole. Melina Kamerić explicitly addresses the relation between still and moving images in processes of memory, and as a way of analogically narrating memory. She maintains that her “memories are sometimes like a slow-motion film. So slow that they become photographs. Sped up, sometimes, to such an extent that their colors and sounds blend together”⁸² (110). Asja Hafner, too, hesitates when choosing between technological metaphors. First, she “evokes war more like torn images than a story,” but the resulting memory is “fragmentary and flickering as though a camera shutter is opening and closing. These images, with their sound and smell, are difficult to logically sequence in time”⁸³ (35). Thus, film technology becomes crucial in approaching memories from the war, not only in its filming or viewing processes, but also in its post-production sequencing and editing.

The war in Bosnia and, indeed, the Wars of Yugoslav Succession in their entirety, were not the first “mediatized” wars. Since at least the 1960s, innovation in film

⁸² “Sjećanje mi je ponekad kao usporeni film. Toliko usporen da postaje fotografija. Nekad toliko ubrzan da su boje i zvuk stopljeni u jedno.”

⁸³ “[R]at evociram više kao iskidane slike nego kao priču na moždanoj traci. ... [O]vo sjećanje u bljeskovima je isprekidano, kao da se blenda fotoaparata otvara i zatvara. Ove slike sa zvukom i mirisom teško je logički poredati u vremenu.”

technology and global broadcasting capabilities, as well as easy access to home television sets, have increasingly brought the war into the living rooms of the world.⁸⁴ The war in Bosnia was significant, in the history of media and conflict, for two reasons. First, it demonstrated not only the contested nature of images, but also their power in influencing policy.⁸⁵ Second, amateur documentary and feature film-making became a hallmark of the war, as Bosnians increasingly turned cameras of their own – made more available and affordable than in prior decades – on the violence around them.

These home movies occupy a central position in the cultural imagination of the war, both insofar as they have left behind private and public archives of footage, but also in their contemporary dissemination and remediation in later projects dealing with the war in Bosnia.⁸⁶ Importantly for the purposes of *It Was a Fair and Sunny Day...*, the brothers Nihad and Sead Kreševljaković were actively involved in filming Sarajevo during the war and, what is more, encouraging others to take their own videos. Nihad Kreševljaković links the processes of filming with remembering, claiming,

I don't know whether I would have remembered that [it was a fair and sunny day] had I not had a little Siemens video camera. Thanks to that, my memory is assisted by the 8-millimeter tape on which the many dramatic scenes taking place that day were recorded. Because we only had three cassettes and the power was often cut, we recorded over a lot of material, believing the new footage to be more important than what we filmed over. That wasn't the case with the material

⁸⁴ I consider the war in Vietnam to be the first mediated war: this conflict was the first to be broadcast around the world in the way that is now standard. In each war since Vietnam, the dissemination of photographic images and film has become more and more immediate, such that war footage is now broadcast as it is taking place

⁸⁵ As discussed in the introduction, the same images of atrocity and destruction were used to fan war hysteria on all sides of the conflict. In addition to references mentioned in footnote 23 of the introduction, see also: James Gow and Milena Michalski, *War, Image and Legitimacy: Viewing Contemporary Conflict* (Oxon: Routledge, 2007), especially pp. 118-123.

⁸⁶ See, for example: Aida Begić's *Djeca* [*Children of Sarajevo*], Ademir Kenović's *Sarajevo: A Street Under Siege* and *The Perfect Circle* (discussed in Chapter Three), Danis Tanović's *No Man's Land*, and Leslie Woodhead's *Srebrenica: A Cry from the Grave*.

shot on that sunny May 2nd. That remained preserved in its entirety, some of which was included in the film *Do You Remember Sarajevo?*⁸⁷ (151)

This documentary film, *Do You Remember Sarajevo*, produced in 2002 by Deblokada,⁸⁸ blends amateur footage and professional broadcasting to trace out a complex and nuanced portrait of the audio-visual landscape of wartime Sarajevo. Beyond the material included in this film, the brothers Kreševljaković maintain a video archive of footage taken during the war as part of an NGO, called Videoarhiv, that facilitates documentary film production and supports cultural and natural heritage in BiH.

Contributing to its overall texture of memory, *May 2, 1992: It Was a Fair and Sunny Day...* is frequently punctuated by authors who maintain that they do not recall the day's events. Those who most ardently aver a lack of memory often go on to isolate a detail that, by contrast, they do remember. For instance, Melina Kamerić says that she "remembers the feeling and almost nothing else"⁸⁹ (110). When her mother berates her, asking Kamerić why she cannot remember the day, the latter remains silent; she simply does not. Mladen Jeličić also describes the pressure to remember and, moreover, to have these memories fit into a calendar structure:

It always bothers me when somebody forces me to recall events that are precisely connected with a specific day. Of course, I should be fair and accept that they're not to blame – I am. Often, for no reason at all, I remember entire scenes in

⁸⁷ "Zapravo, ne znam da li bi se toga sjećao da nismo imali malu 'siemensovu' video kameru. Zahvaljujući njoj, moja memorija je potpomognuta trakom od 8 mm na kojoj su zabilježene mnoge dramatične scene koje su se dešavale tog dana. Kako smo imali samo tri kasete, a stuje često nije bilo, mnoge materijale smo kasnije presnimavali nečim novim vjerujući kako je to bitnije od onog što je već bilo snimljeno. To nije bio slučaj sa materijalima snimanim sunčanog drugog maja. Oni su ostali sačuvani u potpunosti, a neke smo ubacili i u film *Sjećaš li se Sarajevo.*"

⁸⁸ Deblokada is a film studio that was founded by Jasmila Žbanić in 1997.

⁸⁹ "Osjećanja se sjećam i skoro ničega drugog."

documentary-filmic detail, what people said, really everything – everything except the date, that is. Dates just destroy me: don't ask me what happened in what year, and whether it was such-and-such a month and day.⁹⁰ (165)

Memories, for Jeličić, are organized without reference to dates. Thus, being forced to bring these two spheres together is not only impossible, but irritating. Jeličić demonstrates how a form of recall that does not include dates does not pose a problem for the type of memory work in which he is engaged, even as it diverges from psychological assumptions about autobiographical memory.

Nazif Hasanbegović, meanwhile, ponders the way in which memory works, first by summarizing salient points in memory studies research and then by reflecting on his own processes of memory. It is the issue of gaps in memory that trouble him, even though the theories he cites indicate that “memory is not always reliable. Accordingly, the continuity of memory is not a guarantee of accuracy, just like a loss of memory does not necessarily indicate inaccuracy”⁹¹ (171). However, when it comes to what he, himself, remembers, Hasanbegović acknowledges with no small amount of disappointment, that he has no memory of the “whole.” He remembers the basic details but, he says, “I, who remember in images, I who carry the burden of a visual memory down to the last detail, am simply surprised by the fact that I remember so little of that day. And my memories of those events are full of sparks, others flash and overpower

⁹⁰ “Uvijek me isfuravalo kada me neko tjera da se prisjetim događaja vezanih tačno za određeni datum. Naravno treba biti pošten i priznati da nisu krivi 'Oni' nego ja, često gotovo bez ikakvog povoda sjetim se do [sic] u detalje dokumentarističko-filmski precizno cijelih scena, ljudi izgovorenih rečenica, ama svega, baš svega osim datuma. To sa datumima me uništi, šta je bilo koje godine, a gdje li kojeg mjeseca i dana, ne pitaj me....”

⁹¹ “[P]amćenje nije uvijek pouzdano. Prema tome kontinuitet pamćenja nije garancija tačnosti, kao što ni gubitak pamćenja nije garancija netačnosti.”

them”⁹² (172). We see in his description a kind of competition of memories, where some are blocked out and others preserved.

Faulty and spotty as memory is for those who attempt to recall in textual form the events of May 2, 1992, various authors remain uncertain about the memories that are preserved. This takes striking narrative shape in well-known actor Izudin Bajrović’s submission: “I’m going to buy yogurt (or at least I wanted to). My wife in her fifth month of pregnancy. The day, fair and sunny. Peaceful.... In my hand a bag with the yogurt (or at least that’s what I wanted). But maybe it was kefir.... I’m running. Uphill. Then downhill. My wife in her fifth month. I’m coughing up blood”⁹³ (34). This fragmentary narrative conveys the way some details can be immediately recalled, while others remain uncertain. Yet the overall structure of the text, with its halting and abrupt sentences, joins these shards of memory into a composite: those things which remains blurry (whether it was yogurt, kefir, or nothing at all) that Bajrović bought on that sunny day are fused with the indelible memory of his wife’s pregnancy and his injury.

The journalist Nidžara Ahmetašević, too, identifies a single episode that remains in her mind after fifteen years, and uses it to structure her text. “I really don’t remember May 2, 1992,” she begins,

I don’t know how the war I lived through started. And I never will be able to remember. I’ve read that people remember important life events to the last detail.... There’s just one sentence that sticks in my head after all these years and

⁹² “Ja koji pamtim u slikama, ja koji imam opterećujuće vizuelno pamćenje i na najmanje detalje, naprsto sam zatečen činjenicom da tako malo pamtim od tog dana. A sjećanja na događaje su poput fleša, bljesnu i potisnu ih druga.”

⁹³ “Kupujem jogurt (ili sam to samo želio). Žena u petom mjesecu trudnoće. Dan lijep, sunčan. Mirno. ... U ruci kesa s jogurtom (ili sam to samo želio). A možda je bio kefir.... Trčim. Uzbrdo. Pa nizbrdo. Žena u petom mjesecu trudnoće. Iskašljavam krv.”

which I can't completely erase from that May 2, 1992. The plea of my little neighbor at the time, Slaven, who couldn't say the 's' sound.⁹⁴ (91)

This little boy, begging his father to "buy Shlaven an ishecream"⁹⁵ (92) is the germ that gives Ahmetašević access, despite her claims to the contrary, to a memory – but also taps into a larger theme for her war experience. She remembers "a boy who wanted just an ordinary spring day, and couldn't have it. Just like me"⁹⁶ (ibid). This narrative and mnemonic alliance, between Slaven and Ahmetašević, becomes a key to the author's narration of May 2, 1992. Moreover, it establishes a common experience, a wish for a "fair and sunny day," that can be both generalized and accessed by others in their own acts of private and public memorialization.

Thus, in the volume, issues of belonging and identity come to the fore; contributors, in their own way, grapple with the way in which "we" and "they" groups became crucial at the war's beginning and, moreover, how these groups either solidified or changed since the war's end. Journalist Snježana Mulić points to a specific moment, which is echoed and refracted through the texts of others, when belonging was both presented as important, even as the terms of this group identity remained opaque:

On the screen with the TV Sarajevo logo was written: 'the factions in this conflict are requested to refrain from using weapons.' I was standing there with the remote control and just stared at that sentence. I couldn't grasp who the opposing sides were. I knew that the Chetniks and the JNA were the ones who

⁹⁴ "Ja ne znam kako je počeo rat koji sam preživjela. I nikad se neću moći sjetiti. Čitala sam u knjigama kako se ljudi sjećaju važnih događaja iz svog života do svakog detalja. ... Jedna jedina rečenica mi ipak već godinama zvoni u glavi i ne da da potpuno izbrišem taj 2. maj 1992. godine. Zahtjev mog, tada malog, komšije Slavena koji nije znao reći slovo S."

⁹⁵ "Tata, kupi Šlavenu šladoled!"

⁹⁶ "Samo se sjećam dječaka koji je želio tako običan proljetni dan, a nije ga imao. Baš kao i ja."

had started the conflict, but I couldn't get my mind around who the other side was. Was it us, those in the city? But we weren't fighting!⁹⁷ (103)

For many authors, May 2 stands out as a time at which groups had not yet solidified; the confusion about belonging both bled into and was fed by a general lack of clarity about events taking place in the city on that day. Šoba, for instance, evocatively notes that “there was just a big question mark about our heads...WHY?”⁹⁸ (119). He wonders whether he or his parents had offended someone, a narrative framing of the day’s memory that showcases a youthful take on the chaos unfolding and, perhaps, a commentary from a distance of fifteen years about a lasting belief that the violence was unnecessary and arbitrary. These narrative treatments highlight the visceral confusion and shock at being called to differentiate between “us” and “them” and, further, to come to terms with what constitutes belonging to the “us” group.

The group into which authors write themselves as they pen their memories of May 2, 1992 is often defined through its status as victim. However, it is rarely seen as a passive victim, but as a group that defends itself – albeit with limited resources. In Mulić’s discussion above, her distinction between aggressors and victims is sufficiently strong as to disqualify those in the city as a willing “side” in the war. Nedim Zlatar, meanwhile, articulates how attributes of victimhood and self-defense fit together, even as he uses the confusion about the existence of “sides” in the conflict as an entry point. During the same episode in which he is hunkered down with others in a spontaneous shelter on Titova Street, he testifies to the fact that

⁹⁷ “Na ekranu sa logoom TV SA pisalo je: ‘Mole se strane u sukobu da se uzdrže od upotrebe oružja.’ Stajala sam sa daljinskim upravljačem i buljila u tu rečenicu. Nisam mogla skontati ko su sukobljene strane. Znala sam da su četnici i JNA ti koji su izazvali sukob, ali ko su drugi koji se sukobe nije mi išlo u glavu. Jesmo li to bili mi u gradu? Pa mi se nismo sukobili!”

⁹⁸ “Bio je samo jedan veliki upitnik nad našim glavama...ZAŠTO?”

in general, nothing was very clear to me and I couldn't make connections about who was on which side until I fit together the images and events and commentary by the people in the shelter. I got that the uniformed soldiers – that is, the JNA – were our enemies (although it still wasn't clear to me who 'we' were and who 'they' were until years later, when I really felt the difference between those who were here, trying to survive, and those outsiders who were trying to prevent such survival. I thought we were all the same). There were those others, rag-tags with guns, wearing bits and pieces of uniforms, who looked much scarier than any irregular paramilitary force. But in reality, these latter were people from the city, my neighbors who were defending it.⁹⁹ (19)

The volume's introduction claims that the volume does not pass judgment on how one experienced May 2, 1992, or where one was on that day. However, many individual entries make palpable a sense of bitterness or anger by those who stayed in besieged Sarajevo towards those who left. Melina Kamerić, in an attempt to trace out her own memories of May 2, goes on a quest to ask others about what they remember:

I only ask those who I know with certainty were in my reality. I'm not interested in those who can tell me about the refugee apartments in Zagreb. Or those whose stories begin with, 'we were in Dubai during the war, the climate almost did us in...'. No... I won't ask those people. I'll ask the ones who, like me, all at once became 'different.' Those who learned that only cold water washes out blood. Those whose stomachs, to this day, flip-flop whenever they hear fireworks being set off, although they rarely talk about it. Those who know that life isn't life until you smell death.¹⁰⁰ (110)

⁹⁹ "Meni uglavnom nije ništa bilo jasno, i nisam mogao povezati ko je na čijoj strani, dok nisam povezao slike i događaje i komentare ljudi u skloništu; shvatio sam da su uniformisani vojnici tj. JNA naši neprijatelji (iako mi nije još bilo jasno ko smo to mi a ko oni? dok nisam kasnije osjetio u godinama rata razliku između onih što su tu i pokušavaju preživjeti i onih drugih što su došli sa strane i pokušavaju prekinuti to preživljavanje, mislio sam da smo svi isti), a oni drugi, jalijaši sa puškama i pokojim dijelom uniforme na sebi, oni koji ustvari izgledaju puno strašnije poput nekih paravojnih formacija van kontrole, su ustvari ljudi iz ovog grada, moje komšije koje brane grad.

¹⁰⁰ "Pitam samo one za koje sigurno znam da su bili u mojoj realnosti. Ne zanimaju me oni što mi mogu pričati o izbjegličkim stanovima u Zagrebu. Ili oni što im priče počinju sa: 'Mi u ratu u Dubaiju, zamalo nam klima nije glave došla...'. Ne... Njih neću da pitam... Pitam one, što su kao i ja, odjednom postali 'drugačiji.' One koji su naučili da se krv može biti saprati samo hladnom vodom. One kojima se i dan danas, mada o tome rijetko pričaju, stomak okrene naopako, kad čuju ispaljivanje vatrometa. One koji znaju da život nije život dok ne pomirišeš smrt."

In this passage, we see the stigma, that Cynthia Simmons rightly points out as being attached to those who “abandoned” Bosnia during the war, particularly those who left in 1992 (Simmons 2001A 56-57).

In his text, Almir Kurt “Kugla” expresses both more vehemently and more ambivalently the way leaving the country was viewed, by those who stayed, as a shameful sort of evasion. Kurt’s text, which has at its thematic core a one-time friend who left early in the war for Slovenia, is situated in two time frames: May 2, 1992 and an unspecified date in 1996. The narrative opens with Kurt’s friend phoning from Portorož, complaining incessantly about his own uncle and failing to ask how Kurt is faring in Sarajevo. Outside the narrator’s window, a MiG fighter breaks the sound barrier. The phone line is cut mid-conversation, as the “beasts” burn down the post office¹⁰¹ (146). The first episode is rife with bitterness. Meanwhile, in the frame set in 1996, the friend returns to Sarajevo after the war to find his parents traumatized. Kurt and his friend meet, and things seem back to normal. However, the text ends with Kurt wondering “who was fucked, us or Him? Obviously Him! When someone goes through what He went through, then they are fucked, because ‘fucked’ is a nice way of putting what we went through”¹⁰² (147). The unexpected twist to this text, then, occurs because what seems to be a gulf between the two friends becomes a commonality, only to be turned once again into an insurmountable difference. This interpretation tinges memories from the time with pain, leading Kurt to avoid putting them into words: “that’s why I don’t like to talk about this period of time, especially with people like

¹⁰¹ “Zapalila stoka poštu, šta li?”

¹⁰² “Ležim u krevetu i kontam – ko je ovdje najeb’o mi ili On? Ašćare On! Kad neko proživi što je On proživio onda je najeb’o, jer je ‘najeb’o’ blaga riječ za ono kroz šta smo mi prošli.”

Him, people who weren't here. Fuck this topic!!! Fuck His uncle!!!”¹⁰³ (*ibid*). Cursing the whole situation functions as a way of “selectively erasing the ugly memories, and with them the nice ones”¹⁰⁴ (146), a mechanism to which Kurt subscribed earlier in the text.

While these two curses, directed simultaneously at “the topic” and “His uncle,” may conclude the text, the page below this final exclamation contains a set of classified ads from the May 2, 1992 edition of *Oslobodenje* [FIGURE 4.8]. Wartime Bosnian “little advertisements [*mali oglasi*]” give piercing insight into the material and political climate as it constantly underwent changes. This one is particularly apt: advertised on the page two residences in Bosnian Serb held territory, one in the nearby Pale and one in the Sarajevo suburb of Iličići, offered in exchange for ones in Sarajevo proper. The second column advertises matches for sale in bulk (147). Together, these twelve lines of newspaper text serve to contextualize the claims these authors make about a “we” that consists of only those who stayed in Sarajevo, suffering its wartime privations. However, the classified also testifies to the way in which leaving was, perhaps, not such an easy choice.

¹⁰³ “Zato ne volim da pričam o tom periodu, pogotovo ljudima poput Njega, ljudima koji nisu bili tu. Jebeš tu temu!!! Jebeš i Njegovog daidžu!!!”

¹⁰⁴ “[S]ve ružne uspomene selektivno brišem, s njima i lijepe.”



FIGURE 4.8: CLASSIFIEDS FROM *OSLOBOĐENJE*

*Left: advertisements for home swaps
 Top right: advertisement for bulk matches
 Middle right: advertisement for a 24-hour notary*

An investigation into *It Was a Fair and Sunny Day...* reveals the complex interaction between individual autobiographical memory and larger social memory. In that the texts of which the volume is composed deal, overtly and implicitly, with the difficult issues of lived experience, memory, and belonging in the context of trauma, facts of personal biography become inextricably linked with social values and

interpretation. As a point of both illumination and conclusion, I integrate the acute observation of Boris Dežulović, a author, humorist, and columnist. Speaking about post-war Croatian society, but in a way that is very much applicable to the Bosnian (and, indeed, entire former-Yugoslav) context, Dežulović highlights the way these thorny issues are brought together in the postwar period. He points out the overwhelming value placed on “those same famous six words: and where were you in ninety-one?”¹⁰⁵ (Dežulović np). The version of this question for postwar Bosnia is, first: where were you in ninety-two? And, second: where were you between ninety-two and ninety-five?¹⁰⁶ The question of where one spent the war constitutes the “mother of all questions” at the root of “society, politics, and poetry” (*ibid*). Its straightforward formulation seems to call for an equally straightforward answer. One may say, “Sarajevo,” or “Srebrenica,” or “America,” or “Belgrade” – or “on the front lines,” “not yet born,” “in my neighbor’s basement.” Each of these answers fits one into a particular generation and its associated narrative. At the same time, however, as Dežulović rightly points out, the question is fundamentally “rhetorical, because there exists no answer to it, at least not an accurate one”¹⁰⁷ (*ibid*). By presuming an essential connection between biography and socio-political identity, the question parodies the meaningful understanding of generation as it mediates between experience and interpretation, between individual and social community, between what is experienced “on the skin” and through various forms of media.

¹⁰⁵ “[U]vijek čete čuti istih famoznih šest riječi: gdje ste vi bili devedeset prve?”

¹⁰⁶ There exists a third important question that operates along the same lines as the other two: “where have you been since 1996?”

¹⁰⁷ “Pitanje je, jasno, retoričko, jer na njega ne postoji odgovor, barem ne točan.”

CHAPTER FIVE

TRAUMA MARKET: TRANSMISSIONS AND TRANSACTIONS OF TRAUMA IN POSTWAR COMMEMORATIVE LANDSCAPES

This final chapter takes a hard look at how representations of trauma have not only been marshaled to commemorate the wartime past in today's Bosnia, but also how these representations have been transmitted, identified with, and even commodified. These processes are not unique to the Bosnian case. In fact, the "memory boom" of the last three decades is increasingly characterized by various alter-egos of witnessing: secondary traumatization, over-identification with the victims of trauma, dark or trauma tourism, and the creation of kitsch spectacles out of representations of trauma (e.g., Rothe 2011, Cole 2012). In the analysis that follows, I look at several key moments in postwar Bosnian literature, film, and memorial culture that engage with these wider trends in the global circulation of trauma – some by partaking in or furthering them, and some by critically intervening in them.

First, I investigate the very notion of marketing, or selling Bosnian trauma – especially when it is aimed at a foreign audience or consumer. In order to do so, I begin by analyzing Adisa Bašić's 2004 poem, "Trauma-market." This piece powerfully and controversially stages a member of the American elite interrogating a Bosnian woman. The American asks the Bosnian, "aren't you just a victim/who peddles her own trauma?" This central question, and the Bosnian woman's unvoiced response – "I'm afraid [my trauma] is the only thing of value that I have" – have become idioms for grappling with the legacy of trauma, its increasingly packaged and clichéd representations, and the socio-economic value given to these representations and

memorial tropes in contemporary Bosnia. In order to delineate the way in which Bašić's notion of a "trauma market" is more than an evocative metaphor, though, I integrate into this first section rhetorical analysis of practices of dark tourism that have become ubiquitous in Bosnia in the postwar period. Looking in particular at two such tours, the "Sarajevo Total Siege" tour and the "Never Forget Srebrenica 11.07.1995" tour, I analyze the often unspoken assumptions about trauma and its narration, ideas of victimhood and witnessing, understandings of memorial space, and popular notions of trauma that underscore touristic practices in today's Bosnia.

I argue in this chapter that processes of transmission and transaction of trauma, of which dark tourism is a major example, are not simply products of postwar socio-economic and commemorative realities. The tendency to market trauma, through its representation, to audiences who are simultaneously repulsed by and drawn towards these traces of trauma has its root in the particularities of wartime foreign spectatorship that defined the war experience for both local Bosnians and foreigners, scholars and laypeople alike.

Therefore, in the second section of this chapter, I investigate three works that deal with issues of problematic wartime spectatorship and both the ethics and aesthetics of witnessing trauma and artistically representing it. Semezdin Mehmedinović's "Bernard-Henri Lévy" critiques the French intellectual's celebrated – and televised – 1992 visit to Bosnia in order to articulate how Bosnian wartime spectatorship problematically combines the appeal of being close to trauma with mass mediated representations of trauma. I correlate Mehmedinović's polemical piece with footage from the actual, and widely broadcast, 1992 interview with Lévy that is narratively rendered in "Bernard-Henri Lévy." I look next at Ferida Duraković's 1993 poem, "A

Writer Regards Her Homeland As a Learned Postmodernist Enters Her Town [Spisateljica sagledava domovinu dok učeni postmodernist ulazi u njen grad]," which also employs Lévy as a stand-in for foreign spectatorship more generally. By laying out two models for witnessing and representing Bosnian trauma, one associated with the Parisian Professor (Lévy) and one with the "unreliable" titular Bosnian writer, Duraković's piece probes the representational ethics of attending to trauma in lyric poetry. Jasmila Žbanić's 2003 short documentary, *Pictures From the Corner* [*Slike sa ugla*], explores similar ethical issues at stake in documenting trauma in visual media. Like Duraković's poem, *Pictures from the Corner* models techniques of witnessing and representing trauma that differ from, and intertextually critique, dominant modes of documenting and disseminating images of trauma in mass media both during and following the war in Bosnia.

So much has been said about the highly mediated and highly public way in which the war in Bosnia took place "in full view" – images of Bosnian suffering broadcast daily on the televisions around the globe – that this has almost become a cliché.¹ Images of trauma constantly "pierce[d] the eyes"² of the world, as Bosnian director Haris Pašović put it. Global media channels were saturated with footage from

¹ See, for example: Thomas, Keenan, "Live from...," in Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio (eds), *Back to the Front:Tourisms of War* (Normandie: Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain Basse Normandie, 1994), 130-63; James Gow, Richard Paterson and Alison Preston (eds), *Bosnia by Television* (London: BFI, 1996); Piers Robinson, *The CNN Effect: The Myth of News, Foreign Policy, and Intervention* (London: Routledge, 2002); Gregory Kent, *Framing War and Genocide: British Policy and News Media Reaction to the War in Bosnia* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2006); Michal Sládeček and Amer Džihana, "Spinning Out of Control: Media Coverage in the Bosnian Conflict," in Pål Kolstø, *Media Discourse and the Yugoslav Conflicts: Representations of Self and Other* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009); Keenan, Thomas. "Publicity and Indifference: Media, Surveillance and 'Humanitarian Intervention.'" In ten Brink, Joram and Joshua Oppenheimer (eds). *Killer Images: Documentary Film, Memory and the Performance of Violence* (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2012), 15-40.

² "[B]ode oči."

wartime Bosnia, much of it created and disseminated by foreign visitors to the country, often with the intention to persuade their own governments to intervene in and end the conflict. The resulting glut of images – made possible by advances in video and communication technologies – did not, meanwhile, achieve its end. The war continued, even as it continued to be photographed, filmed, and broadcast in real time. The so-called “lessons of Bosnia” rest on the fact that, as media theorist Thomas Keenan puts it, “a country was destroyed and a genocide happened, in the heart of Europe, on television, and what is known as the world or the West simply looked on and did nothing” (Keenan 2012, 19). That is, the war was characterized by the coincidence of traumatic war and the consumptions of images of this war.

It is necessary to question, as Keenan goes on to do, “what...’in full view’ mean[s]” (20). As he maintains,

[t]here is no denying the simultaneity of this watching and that destruction. They happened together – and what happened should not have happened. But what did the surveillance and the watching have to do with what happened? What links the thing we so loosely call ‘the media’ and its images with action or inaction? (ibid)

That the near instantaneous dissemination of images of Bosnian suffering was met with inaction is frequently explained using two major arguments. In the first, which relies on Balkanist understandings of symbolic geography, “the West” saw Bosnia as a distant and “Eastern” problem, so distant, in fact, as to be unimportant and unworthy of intervention. The second uses theories of media reception to argue that, being inundated with images of the war in Bosnia for years on end, foreign viewers and political actors alike became inured to the power of these images. Keenan himself makes a more sophisticated argument than either of these, arguing that the “link” between media images and action occurs because “the television image constitutes a

field of action – not just a representation of actions somewhere but a field in or on which actions occur – a public field” (25). Thus, television and its broadcast images are not merely virtual, but constitute a very real field – one that “displaces” other publics and one that is, moreover, rhetorically, intellectually, and socially characterized by the “substitut[ion of] emotion for reason, immediacy for the delay proper to thought” (Keenan 2012, 27).

Meanwhile, precisely because of the capacity these broadcasts had to evoke emotion, which Keenan rightly points out as central to media production and consumption during the war in Bosnia, widely disseminated still and moving images of Bosnian atrocity spurred both particular kinds of inaction and particular kinds of action. Foreign governments, with their own priorities, proved themselves loathe to intervene in the war in Bosnia. During the course of nearly four years of war, though, countless foreigners had been compelled to repeatedly consume these images, invest themselves emotionally in Bosnia’s suffering, and travel as tourists to Bosnia in order to vicariously experience this suffering themselves.

BUYING AND SELLING TRAUMA: “TRAUMA-MARKET” AND THE RHETORICS OF BOSNIAN “DARK TOURISM”

The title of this chapter borrows from “Trauma-market,” a 2004 poem by Adisa Bašić, which is climactically situated in a volume entitled *Trauma-market*, and a chapter that is, likewise, called “Trauma-market.” This double nesting and tri-fold repetition of the neologism brings into stark relief many of the larger themes of Bašić’s writing, both in *Trauma-market* and in her other volumes of poetry.³ Furthermore, as I maintain in this

³ This is especially true of *Trauma-market* and Bašić’s poetry published thereafter: *Promotivni spot za moju domovinu* [A TV Ad for My Homeland] (Sarajevo: Dobra knjiga, 2010), *Motel neznanih*

chapter, Bašić's collocation succinctly encapsulates larger concerns that punctuate Bosnia's memorial landscape. Bašić and many other Bosnian artists have, during the war and in particular in the postwar period, voiced acute anxiety about the mass mediatization, circulation, and consumption of traumatic images – and their power to both arrest and attract viewers.

"Trauma-market" begins *in medias res*, thrusting the reader into the same uncomfortable question that the poem's narrator finds herself forced to answer:

*Aren't you just a victim,
peddling your own trauma?
a Harvard blonde,
whose brain is worth at least half a mil, asks me.*⁴ (Bašić 36)

From the very first line, the notion of traumatic victimhood is cross-examined, rather than unquestioningly upheld. Several excellent studies have documented, analyzed, and critiqued the way in which, particularly after the Second World War, a sacred status has been conferred on the idea of traumatic victimhood. As Hal Foster puts it, in many theories of trauma, the subject of the victim is "evacuated and elevated at once" (Foster 168). Even more explicitly, Dominick LaCapra's *Representing the Holocaust* and *Writing History, Writing Trauma* both interrogate the use of overtly theological language and symbolism to narrate the experience of trauma, thereby sacralizing it.⁵ In Bašić's

junaka [The Motel of Unknown Heroes] (Sarajevo: Dobra knjiga, 2014). See also her short story, published in English: "Fall and Recovery in Five Easy Steps," in Natasa Durovicová and Hugh Ferrer, *Fall and Rise American Style* (Bloomington, IN: Autumn Hill Books, 2015).

⁴ "Niste li Vi samo žrtva/ koja prodaje svoju traumu?/ pitala me je plavuša s Harvarda/ čiji mozak procjenjuju na po' miliona."

⁵ The school of trauma theory established by Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub, and Bessel Van der Kolk also tends to sacralize the experience of trauma and venerate the victim, albeit on post-structuralist rather than religious grounds. By viewing trauma as an "unclaimed experience" (Caruth) that is "without a witness" (Felman and Laub) and encoded in the brain through a totally different mechanism than ordinary memory (Van der Kolk), these theorists

poem's short opening, though, not only are the concepts of victimhood and trauma taken from their erstwhile pedestal and scrutinized. In addition, having the implied alliance between the veneration of trauma and the "market" for trauma to be voiced by the poem's "Harvard blonde," a character who is both privileged and clueless, the poem itself levels trenchant criticism both against global cultural tendencies to commodify trauma and also against blithe obliviousness to the power these tendencies have to shape narratives and conceptions of trauma as well as the social and individual treatment of its victims.

Underscoring the way traumatic victimhood can be perceived as constituting social, economic, or media capital, the second half of the poem's title comes into stark relief. What is more, the poem's use of voices underscores the seeming inescapability of trauma's being marketed. While its opening is ventriloquized by the Harvard blonde, a Western bystander to the realities of Bosnian trauma, the variously italicized and non-italicized lines that follow are either thought or silently voiced by the narrator. In the lines immediately following the Harvard blonde's insensitive barb and, even more pointedly, in the poem's conclusion, the poetic narrator seems to grudgingly accept the terms established by the mouthy Harvard blonde. As she maintains,

I couldn't say in English,
*Do you have any idea how right you are?*⁶ (ibid)

elevate the experience of trauma beyond comprehension and, especially, beyond language. In post-structuralist estimation, where language and text have become the new absolute values, this amounts to a re-sacralization of trauma and, by proxy, the victim of trauma. For masterful elaborations of this line of criticism, see: Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) and Susannah Radstone, "Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, Ethics," *Paragraph* 30:1 (2007), 9-29.

⁶ "Na engleskom nisam umjela reći / Slutite li koliko ste u pravu?"

And then, in the final lines,

*And yes, I didn't have the English to say,
I'm afraid
[my trauma] is the only thing of value that I have.*⁷ (ibid)

The narrator's formulation here reveals a larger social context in which trauma confers a particular kind of value. However, her discomfort with this trauma "market" allows the narrator – and the poem as a whole – to make a critical intervention into processes of trauma's commodification and troped narration.

In order to understand the magnitude of this poetic realization – that trauma can be, but does not need to be, the (only) thing of value – as well as the resonance "Trauma-market" has in the wider memorial sphere both in and beyond Bosnia, it is necessary to incorporate into this analysis three crucial aspects of the poem's rhetorical and cultural context.⁸ First of all, the lines that suture the narrator's unspoken question, "Do you have any idea how right you are?" to the poem's grim conclusion pithily trace out the way trauma has become a watchword:

*Ten deaths, bleeding from the eardrum,
Twitching in between bullets –
The word 'trauma' covers everything.*⁹ (ibid)

Here we see the poem both highlight and critique the way, in recent decades, the term "trauma" has come to denote a wide variety of experiences. This tendency has been analyzed by Mark Seltzer, whose "Wound Culture" opens with a diagnosis that, in what he calls the "pathological public sphere,"

⁷ "I da, nisam umjela reći na engleskom, / bojam se, / to jedino je vrijedno što imam."

⁸ In fact, Bašić's poem is commonly referenced and quoted in discussing postwar treatments of trauma in commemorative (and commodified) contexts.

⁹ "Devet smrti, krv iz bubne opne,/ Migoljenje između metaka –/ Sve staje u riječ trauma."

trauma has surfaced as a sort of crossing-point of the ‘psycho-social.’ The very uncertainties as to the status of the wound in trauma – as physical or psychical, as private or public, as a matter of representation (fantasy) or as a matter of perception (event): these uncertainties are markers, on several levels, of this excruciated crossing.... The wound and its strange attractions have become one way, that is, of locating the violence and the erotics, the erotic violence, at the crossing-point of private fantasy and collective space” (4-5).

By calling it a “black box” (4), Seltzer indicates the extent to which ‘trauma’ becomes a flexible and capacious term for describing personal or collective events, physical and psychological wounds, and factual and fictional representations. We see this slippage between different types of things, all of which are, together and separately, called “trauma” come into focus as Bašić’s narrator groups together ten deaths, an injured ear, and the anxiety which marks a pause between shots. Meanwhile, the slightly ironic tone of the last of these lines sustains the poem’s overall critique of “wound culture” or “trauma culture” – the context in which the word “trauma” covers everything. Thus, with trauma both commonplace and ubiquitous, rhetorical and ideological market forces drive down its price: not only is trauma for sale, it is also on sale.

The poem’s prominent reference to the act of “peddling” trauma elaborates the fact that trauma has been made into a cheap commodity. The BCS term *prodati* (“to sell”) is, indeed, just the ordinary word for any kind of sale. However, both the fact that the Harvard blonde’s question is bitingly critical as well as the fact that the choice of verb is followed by a reflexive possessive pronoun, the entire phrase, *prodaje svoju traumu*, becomes emotionally colored, taking on the connotations of a person selling off, peddling, or even hawking something.

Finally, the context of the “trauma-market,” both within the poem and beyond it, is clearly determined by seemingly inflexible relations of power. These relations are rooted most obviously in money and value. However, these relations are also grounded

in social status and marked, significantly, by language choice and ability. The iconoclastic reversal of sacred victim to peddling victim, thus, takes place in a rhetorical context that is defined by an imbalance of power between the narrator and her interlocutor. This meeting of apparent unequals is controlled by the Harvard blonde, with her powerful wealth and bravado to match. The narrator, from the start, seems to be in a decidedly subaltern position to the Harvard blonde precisely because of her “peddling” – an act for which someone with a brain worth a half million dollars, apparently, has no need. Meanwhile, however, the Harvard blonde is presented both as lacking in both intelligence and compassion. By accusing the poem’s narrator of peddling trauma, the Harvard blonde may have hit on something true about the cultural value placed on narratives of trauma in the last decades of the 20th century. However, the Harvard blonde is also missing large pieces of this narrative, both because she is presented as being unable to grasp these nuanced representations and because they remain either unspoken by the poem’s narrator or, at least, unspoken in the Harvard blonde’s native language, English.

The poem’s first-person narration is perpetually deferred, not voiced aloud but in imagined speech. The apparent reason for this nested dialogism is the fact that, as the narrator repeatedly states, she “didn’t have the English” to respond adequately to the Harvard blonde’s question. The poem marks in italics what the narrator would have said, if she had had the words and had them in a language the blonde understood. Thus, the poem captures a seemingly impossible narrative position. What the Harvard blonde hears is silence, which seems to confirm her own assumptions about trauma and its narration and, moreover, justifies her own cruelty. Meanwhile what the narrator and reader hear is both a nested story of trauma, one augmented by the Harvard blonde’s

callous ignorance. First comes the trauma of being confronted for “peddling” trauma. Then emerges the trauma of being able to articulate neither what is traumatic about the wartime past nor the postwar present. And, at the poem’s core, stands a near haiku of trauma: “ten deaths, bleeding from the eardrum, twitching in between bullets.” The poem’s layered narrative is framed by and shot through with awareness of trauma’s social, economic, and political ramifications. And, fundamentally, the poem’s choice of language and commentary on language use highlights how its represented trauma exists in and bears upon the poem’s extra-textual context.

Ultimately, the narrator finds herself unable to respond to the Harvard blonde’s accusations in English. She responds in BCS, in italics, privately. “Trauma-market” thus integrates language choice into the overarching power dynamics established from the poem’s beginning. Language use also contributes to the poem’s sinking conclusion, seeming to substantiate and to solidify the narrator’s fear (that all she can do is “peddle” her own trauma) precisely because she cannot, or does not, speak her intended doubts to the Harvard blonde in a language that permits understanding. Thus, comprehension and communication, at the root of language use, are marshaled in the poem to trace out the isolation and fear that one inhabits when trauma has become something one has to sell and, moreover, to sell to English speakers, even Harvard blondes.

Peddling trauma – or at least representations of trauma – goes beyond the scathingly metaphorical context of Adisa Bašić’s poem. Indeed, not only in postwar Bosnia, but also at locations the world over, the experience of individual and social trauma has been turned into a source of income. Often, these experiences are grounded in and represented by spaces, which become recognized sites that both permit and

encourage visitors – and even tourists. This phenomenon has been termed “dark tourism” or “trauma tourism” (Foley and Lennon 1996, Seaton 1996, Clark 2010, White 2013). Trauma tourism as a phenomenon emerges out of a context in which sites of historical trauma take on cultural, political, and economic significance because their particular narratives of trauma are compelling to a wide audience.

First of all, the notion that trauma leaves indelible scars on both human psyches and physical landscapes is fundamental to the practice of trauma tourism. Sites of trauma are seen as revealing legacies of trauma through physical traces. To the uninformed tourist, however, these traumatic traces may be less than transparent, and even difficult to observe. Therefore, a local guide – preferably one who survived the very trauma that organizes the site and the tour – becomes indispensable to the process of approaching, witnessing, and vicariously experiencing trauma. The tour guide possesses not only geographical or historical understanding of the site, but, more importantly, is seen as having special knowledge that is conferred through the experience of trauma. The fascination with trauma that undergirds and monetizes global practices of dark tourism derives, at least in part, from widespread notions that trauma confers a semi-sacred status on victims, as discussed above. Thus, through the tour itself, visitors are situated in the physical site of trauma. Moreover, in the case of sites of recent trauma in the former Yugoslavia, tourists are frequently led through the site by an “authentic” victim who, through his/her dual capacity as a guide and a witness, narrates the site’s traumatic history in the first person. Moreover, as a guide, this individual makes such a first-person account of trauma accessible not only intellectually, but also affectively.

With roots in ritual pilgrimage to places of death (Willis 2014), forms of trauma tourism that have emerged in recent decades rely on the modern apparatuses of increasingly global mobility, media technologies, and the commodification of experience. As Malcolm Foley and John Lennon argue, the phenomenon is

both a product of the circumstances of the late modern world and a significant influence upon these circumstances. Moreover, the politics, economics, sociologies and technologies of the contemporary world are as much important factors in the events upon which this dark tourism is focused as they are central to the selection and interpretation of sites and events which become tourism products. (Foley and Lennon 3)

Socio-economic, technological, and ideological factors make possible practices of trauma tourism, even as the shifting nature of tourism to sites of trauma circumscribes and popularizes understandings of trauma that influence these very socio-economic, technological, and ideological realms. By solidifying notions that trauma has social and economic value, that it can – and often must – be represented in a marketable way, and that it can, very literally, be bought and sold, the ubiquity – in Bosnia – of trauma tourism concretizes issues at stake conceptually in Bašić’s “Trauma-market.”

Investigating trauma tourism in postwar Bosnia reveals how fixed narratives of trauma, organized paths through commemorative space, and the appeal of vicarious suffering as an affective experience come together and, moreover, make for a solid business model. Visitors to Bosnia’s capital are, for example, bombarded with pamphlets from the popular tourist company, “Sarajevo Funky Tours [SAFT].”¹⁰ The agency offers a number of guided tours to various cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹¹

¹⁰ See: <http://www.sarajevofunktystours.com/> (Accessed 3/20/2016)

¹¹ One Herzegovina tour includes Dubrovnik, Croatia (which is seen as belonging to the same cultural and geographical space as western Herzegovina). Another tour takes visitors through eastern Bosnia and Western Serbia to Belgrade. This latter tour might be called the “Emir Kusturica tour,” as it traces not only Kusturica’s exodus from Sarajevo to Belgrade, but

The tours are organized into a number of categories, some of which overlap: hiking/mountaineering, historic, nature and panorama, religious, sport and adventure, walking – and siege, war, and genocide. These tours range in duration from a few hours to several days, and in price from 20 Euro to 119 Euro. SAFT's print and online promotional materials are almost exclusively in English and aimed at foreigners visiting Bosnia.¹² Two of the most popular tours fall squarely into the “siege, war, and genocide” category – and also provide insight into larger mechanisms that ground trauma tourism. The “Sarajevo Total Siege” tour guides visitors to sites of particular violence and destruction in the Bosnian capital, while the “Never Forget Srebrenica 11.07.1995” tour involves a full-day trip to the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Center and Cemetery.¹³

These tours present visits to these two sites of trauma as a particularly illustrative way of seeing “where the real destruction appeared,” as the Sarajevo tour materials claim. The tour begins at the tunnel at the western edge of the city, which served as an almost unique point of access into and out of besieged Sarajevo during the war. It moves then to the Jewish cemetery, located just behind one of the southern front lines and used as a position from which the city was heavily shelled between 1992 and

showcases both Küstendorf [Drvengrad], the director's self-reflexive ethno-village, and his more recent Andrićgrad, a stylized replica of part of Višegrad from Ivo Andrić's historical novel, *The Bridge on the Drina*.

¹² While the SAFT website offers a “Bosnian language” option, as of 5/10/2017, this in fact only translates the website headings and cursory details (length of tour, basic information about the agency, etc.) into Bosnian. The promotional descriptions of the various offerings remain in English. The “War Tunnel Sarajevo – Tunnel of Hope” tour is the single exception, exhibiting a full description in Bosnian.

¹³ This memorial site and its central role in postwar Bosnian politics of memory are discussed at length in Chapter Three.

1995 by Bosnian Serb forces. The remaining tour is spent in Sarajevo's downtown area, particularly its Ottoman-era *čaršija*. The Sarajevo tour points out locations that were particularly dangerous during the siege, as well as sites of mass death like the Markale outdoor market (where sixty eight people were killed and two hundred wounded when a shell hit the crowded market on February 5, 1994). In addition, the tour dwells particularly on lasting architectural damage, underscoring the notion that the landscape of contemporary Sarajevo is so marked by the traumatic past that the visitor can readily observe these traces:

the remains of bunkers, minefields, tank caterpillar traces, trenches, bullet and grenade shrapnel and many many other interesting sites of destruction, which today, at the present time, haven't yet [been] repaired or somehow restored. They just stand there like the 15 years [sic] after the war haven't even passed already. ("Sarajevo Total Siege" description)

Visiting these chosen points in space is conceptualized as a way of witnessing past events by observing traces of the past in the present. Thus, sites of destruction are reconfigured as sites of memory. These memorial sites, whether official or ad hoc, preserve and call attention to residual traces, thereby recapitulating a notion that trauma involves the persistent legacy of the past in the present.

As the promotional materials for both the Sarajevo and the Srebrenica tours make clear, however, not all traumatic traces can be transparently interpreted by the (foreign) visitor. For this reason, local guides, who have themselves experienced war first-hand, come to the fore. The Sarajevo tour boasts that "the whole tour is 100%... covered with stories from the first class guide always willing to answer any kind of question at all times." This guide recounts personal anecdotes from the years of siege,

explicitly connecting this first-person testimony with the points in space being toured.¹⁴ Likewise, the Srebrenica tour is also structured around testimony. It includes the personal accounts of survivors, one of whom is invited to speak to the tourists on each tour. They also hear from Mersed Smajlović, director of the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Center. Indeed, because witness and survivor testimony plays a central rhetorical and memorial focus in it, the Srebrenica tour is described as a “story-telling journey.” First-person accounts by witnesses not only accompany visits to sites of trauma, but also organize these sites in their rhetorical, as well as spatial, context.

The figure of the witness to trauma is crucial to the narrative of trauma and its memorialization in which these tours participate and to which they contribute. Such a witness, who both interprets the landscape and emplots it into a first-person narrative, both models an affective relationship with historical trauma and, moreover, promises tourists the possibility of forging their own affective relationship with sites of trauma. Thus, while both the Sarajevo and the Srebrenica tours are called “historical,” and provide tourists with information about the way war unfolded in these two regions between 1992 and 1995, this is not their main goal. Instead, these tours focus on narrating trauma through sites and witnesses in order to highlight the experiential feeling of trauma – and, in addition, to transmit this palpable sense to tourists. In this, they offer an affective, rather than intellectual, education.

The “Never Forget Srebrenica” tour description explicitly casts affective responses to traumatic past events as a form of knowledge, and one that can be

¹⁴ As I discovered doing participant observation on the Sarajevo tour and interviewing others who had taken it, this strategy of inserting personal narratives (as well as recounted third-person narratives) is used by most, if not all, Funky Tour guides.

achieved by a visitor who has not lived through these events. It begins by stating that, “to really know, see and feel the unfortunate Bosnian Genocide, there is no better way but to visit Srebrenica.” In a similar vein, the “Sarajevo Total Siege” tour materials establish a link between being taken to physical sites of trauma by a local guide who lived through the war and what it calls being “properly introduced to suffering.” It enjoins the would-be tourist, saying,

please do not leave Sarajevo without being properly introduced to the suffering that this city has been through in the bloody 90s, and without getting the real picture of what the War/Siege really was. This tour will help, believe me :) [sic].

Visitors “get the real picture” by visiting a site in a way that creates a secondary witness. The tourist not only stands at the site of trauma, but listens to its narration by someone who, autobiographically and rhetorically, adopts the position of victim. Rendered in space and words in a way that prioritizes emotion as a means of understanding traumatic violence, these tours allow, and even encourage, visitors to engage with the traumatic pasts of others to such an extent that they become their own. Both of these tours are therefore ideologically grounded on the notion that the felt sense of trauma is not only capable of being represented and transmitted to another person, through physical site and first-person narration, but that, in addition, it should be represented and transmitted in this manner.

By both foregrounding and encouraging a vicariously emotional connection to a site of trauma, mediated through space and the testimony of a witness, SAFT tours attract visitors seeking such an affective experience. By capitalizing on the simultaneous repulsion and attraction of sites of trauma, and by narrating trauma using rhetorical techniques that highlight and encourage its transmissibility, the Sarajevo and Srebrenica tours succeed in packaging a commodified notion of traumatic experience for

consumption. They create and foster a relationship of exchange that hinges on selling an affective experience that tourists (and perhaps touristic companies) see as directly related to trauma. What is this, if not “peddling trauma”?

Meanwhile, the monetization of strong affective responses to historical atrocity and the consumption of simplistic narratives of trauma that emphasize first-person testimony are not new phenomena – nor are they the exclusive purview of modern dark touristic enterprises. As theorist Emma Willis notes, even in the early modern period, tourists to sites of death “hoped that they might grasp something of the mysterious darkness, into which they had witnessed the formerly living disappear, and that this contact might have a transformative effect” (Willis 19-20). In intervening centuries, established practices of tourism to battlefields, concentration camps, and other sites of war, conflict, and mass death have continued to promise visitors affectively charged contact with historical trauma. These sites themselves, because of their history of conflict and the emotional narratives of trauma in which they are inscribed, have been termed “hot” by virtue of their capacity to stir emotions. “Hot interpretation,” as a specific technique of curating cultural heritage sites as well as places of historical or political significance, involves marshaling these strong emotions in order to present information and guide viewers (Uzzell 1989, Uzzell and Ballantyne 1998). In addition to giving pride of place to visitors’ emotions, “hot interpretation” is fundamentally grounded in several other tenets. These include: “the central place of personal stories; the need to balance despair and hope; the need to balance education and persuasion; providing a place for reflection; and focusing on the past to inform the future” (Ballantyne, Packer, and Bond 160). We have seen several of these principles at work in the method SAFT uses to structure its Sarajevo and Srebrenica tours – from their use of

first-person accounts to their dual focus on historical and affective instruction. These tours also provide some space for visitor reflection and, overwhelmingly, ascribe to a notion that the past can inform the future.

This final idea – that the past is legible and can be accessed, through particular representations of trauma and emotional forms of engagement, in service to the future – can be seen as the culmination, the main thesis of both of these tours. The capsule introduction to the Srebrenica tour articulates this most clearly. It claims that, “we¹⁵ honestly think that visiting Srebrenica can, one day, be a peak of infinite salvation for the lost valleys of human souls.” Here, the experience being sold by the packaged tour goes further than the “introduction to suffering” offered to visitors on the Sarajevo tour. In fact, the Srebrenica tour is positioned, by virtue of its touristic elements, as having a potentially salvific effect, even an “infinite” one. The idea that, through heightened emotions and first-person testimony, visiting a site of trauma can not only transmit memories of trauma to visitors but also, itself, holds the key to social change rests on a specific politics of memory regarding historical trauma. This is the politics of memory that emerges most strongly in response to the Holocaust. In it, a number of seemingly disparate memorial strategies – including assembling and disseminating survivor testimony, documenting atrocity, commemorating trauma and loss at the sites where it occurred, and organizing museum exhibits that privilege personal narratives – are all seen as effective ways of preventing future atrocities.

In this “never again” conception of trauma, narration, memorialization, and education, cultural heritage sites function crucially to mediate between past trauma and

¹⁵ Who this “we” is remains unspecified. It is unclear whether it is intended to refer to the touristic company, Sarajevans, Bosnians in general, or a wider group.

future social recovery. Techniques of “hot interpretation” at dark tourist sites encourage visitors to understand trauma as a profound (and even a sacred) experience that cannot be understood rationally or cognitively. Meanwhile, trauma is also seen as demanding representation and memorialization in space and in narrative. Engaging with trauma through its representation and commemoration is cast as a difficult, but also ethically necessary act. Tourists are thus invited to approach trauma through its residual sites, through the testimony of witnesses, and through their own emotions. By participating, for example, in the “Never Forget Srebrenica” tour, the affective experience of secondary witnessing – and even secondary traumatization – is recast as an ethical obligation that can prevent future genocides from taking place. Thus, dark tourism’s specific commitment to transmitting and commodifying trauma both emerges from widespread understandings of trauma, memory, and social change and significantly contributes to solidifying these notions in both scholarly and vernacular spheres.

In postwar Bosnia, practices of dark tourism have certainly become commonplace. In addition to SAFT, companies like Sarajevo Discovery and Sarajevo Insider run organized tours in the capital and throughout Bosnia. These coexist with ad hoc tours by private individuals, often affiliated with and working out of Bosnian hotels or hostels.¹⁶ But precursors to these postwar tours were a feature of the Yugoslav memorial landscape, which highlighted visits to sites of World War II atrocity (the former concentration camp at Jasenovac) and to the locations of tragic battles (e.g., sites on the Neretva river and in the Sutjeska region of Bosnia). Moreover, during the most recent war in Bosnia, these organized tours began even before the fighting had ended.

¹⁶ This is, in fact, how SAFT itself got started. Before SAFT owner Skender Hatibović launched his stand-alone company, he operated tours out of a Sarajevo hostel.

As early as October of 1992, practices of foreign-run tours of ex-Yugoslav conflict zones, including Sarajevo, had emerged (Keenan 1994, Lisle 2006, Johnston 2011). As is widely noted in both scholarly literature and anecdote, “an Italian travel agent, Massimo Beyerle, was offering war tours to the edge zones of conflict.... [A]t \$25,000 per person, [one] could visit regions such as Sarajevo, Vukovar or Dubrovnik to see, first hand, history in the making” (Johnston 50). The language of “seeing first hand,” witnessing history “in the making” persists, as we have seen, in postwar touristic materials.

In light of tours like Beyerle’s, the series of guidebooks and practical commemorative works discussed in Chapter One takes on a new significance. By inscribing the trauma of war into tourist manuals, by printing maps, by publishing glossaries to the besieged city, these works establish formal allegiances with the routes and stances of dark tourism that took root in Bosnia from the very start of the war and continued to grow and dominate the memorial landscape in the years following the war. Meanwhile, the ironic tone of works like the FAMA *Survival Guide*, Ozren Kebo’s *Sarajevo for Beginners*, and Mehmedinović’s *Sarajevo Blues* as well as the way works like these construct a knowledgeable reader – rather than a foreign dark tourist – strongly sever any apparent commonality with actual tour guides to wartime and postwar Bosnia.

Both inside and outside artistic spheres, the Bosnian wartime and immediate postwar periods have been marked by anxiety about dark tourism’s commodification of wartime experience. Ambivalence about and critique of touristic practices of viewership and representations of trauma were discussed in the press and thematized in literature

and film.¹⁷ In a 1996 article, correspondent Dominic O'Reilly describes the quick development of postwar dark tours in Sarajevo as a "massacre trail," bringing an "invasion of war tourists coming to the capital to gaze at the sites of some the worst horrors of the conflict" (O'Reilly 3). The path traced out by these tours is almost precisely the one used by SAFT in the present day, from its "sniper alleys" to the Jewish cemetery to the souvenir shops in Sarajevo's *čaršija*, with its stalls selling key chains made of bullet casings. Meanwhile, even O'Reilly's early article gives voice to the conflicting interpretations of such touristic consumption of the immediate postwar landscape. As Igor Velimirović, a former Bosnian army soldier and one of O'Reilly's interlocutors, trenchantly points out,

Anyone is welcome here [to Sarajevo], but they have to come for the right reasons.... Come and sample our culture and cuisine but remember that the bullet holes you see were not accidents. Many people died defending these streets, and they should be remembered properly, not by having their city turned into a war zone theme park. (ibid)

In voicing this worry, Velimirović echoes more widespread concerns about the role of tourism in commemorating trauma. Watching the postwar cityscape organized, in part, by tourism's specific socio-economic and rhetorical regimes, Velimirović not only fears that Sarajevo will become a "war zone theme park," but also worries that the presence of touristic practices will contribute to the "improper" memorialization of the city's individual and social traumas. Both the terminology and the structure of Velimirović's critique point to larger issues concerning representational and commemorative ethics and agency. And representing and memorializing trauma in wartime and postwar

¹⁷ Unease about the packaging of traumatic experience for transmission and exchange was primarily aired by local Bosnians, especially in the wartime period. After the war, the uncomfortable alliance that had been established between traumatic violence and spectatorship became a point of discussion in both local and international spheres.

Bosnia has been inextricably bound up with both the constant presence of spectators – both actual and virtual – and related ethical considerations of observing, mediating, disseminating, and consuming suffering.

WATCHING AND CONSUMING TRAUMA: CRITIQUES AND ALTERNATIVE MODELS

Critiques of dark tourism hinge on both the problematic role of spectators and secondary witnesses in visits of sites of trauma, as well as questionable understanding of trauma's transmissibility and marketability that buttress these touristic practices. And while wartime and postwar tours constitute a particular way of transmitting and transacting trauma, these exist alongside and occupy the same practical and ideological space as other forms of foreign visiting, witnessing, and representing Bosnia's traumatic past. Most notably, traditions of dark tourism in postwar Bosnia can be directly related to the large number of foreign visitors who flocked to besieged Sarajevo aboard UN flights or across the Croatian border, hiring private drivers. High-profile figures like Christiane Amanpour, Joan Baez, Leslie Fratkin, Bernard-Henri Lévy, Joe Sacco, and Susan Sontag (to name just a few) made repeated trips to Bosnia during the war. Many of these figures worked in the fields of media or culture, and used the tools of their trade to represent the war in Bosnia for mass consumption. Sontag herself called journalists "professional, specialized tourists" (18), but the same might be said of many of these visitors to wartime Bosnia.¹⁸ In addition, many of these figures cast themselves,

¹⁸ Perhaps Sontag saw herself as a "spectator of calamity" (18) as she puts it in *Regarding the Pain of Others*. What is more likely, however, is that she drew a medial distinction between representing suffering in photographs and representing it in other ways – and did not see herself indicted for watching Bosnia in wartime, for adding to her professional reputation on the basis of having visited and staged plays in Bosnia during this period, the most notable of these being her August 1993 production of *Waiting for Godot*.

by virtue of heeding a call to venture to Sarajevo, as activists. By being in Sarajevo, by expressing solidarity with Bosnians (and, in particular, Sarajevans), and by raising awareness of the atrocities being perpetrated, they portrayed themselves as taking action – rather than sitting idly by. Thus, the act of spectatorship was recast as something active and, moreover, as something ethically and politically necessary. Meanwhile, many of these foreign tourists to besieged Sarajevo also documented and narrated their experiences for global consumption. For this reason, to many locals, these celebrity visits both resembled organized war tours and, moreover, raised troubling issues of the relationship between war and voyeurism, trauma and tourism.

Forms of spectatorship that emerged during the war did more than buttress the reigning touristic practices that came to the fore after it. Spectatorship and dark tourism share, as a common affective and ideological foundation, the desire to experience traumatic legacies (safely) on one's own skin, to become a secondary witness to trauma, and to achieve knowledge that is believed to issue uniquely from trauma – but that can perhaps be grasped by a visitor to a site of trauma who is guided by a survivor's first-person narrative.

As discussed in Chapter One, wartime Bosnian authors and artists were intensely aware of the way atrocities in Bosnia were being watched and consumed by audiences around the globe and Bosnian traumas were narrated and represented by and for foreigners. This social and media context, made possible in new ways because of technological innovations of the 1990s, was itself experienced as traumatic for many Bosnians. The experience of having one's own suffering watched by a foreign observer became, for many, a microcosm of the war's various traumas. The contours of this traumatic spectatorship were traced out in literature and art, both during and after the

war, in ways that have influenced how this traumatic experience has been remembered and recalled to the present day. As I will demonstrate in the second part of this chapter, wartime issues of spectatorship that dominated discussions of representational ethics form the foundation for postwar debates about the commodification and transmission of traumatic experience that lie at the heart of interpretations of Bosnia's dark tourist industry in its wider social and memorial context.

I focus in this section on three works, each of which highlights problematic foreign spectatorship, the unsettling fascination of watching scenes and images of trauma, the production and consumption of these images, and the representational and commemorative ethics at work in engaging with trauma through mediated images that are commodified and exchanged. I look first at Mehmedinović's "Bernard-Henri Lévy," which frames Sarajevo's wartime foreign spectatorship as an issue of trauma's problematic rendering in mass and global media, as well as one that highlights the appeal of witnessing atrocity.

Mehmedinović's micro-essay, published in the first edition of *Sarajevo Blues* in 1993, focuses specifically on the French intellectual as a metonym for the ongoing parade of foreign spectators in besieged Sarajevo. By picking out one such celebrity tourist, the always camera-ready Bernard-Henri Lévy, Mehmedinović's short piece elaborates critiques of both wartime practices of spectatorship as well as processes of mediatizing trauma. Moreover, "Bernard-Henri Lévy" highlights how trauma both fascinates and repulses, both draws viewers to the scene of atrocity and prompts them to speak about these atrocities. The act of witnessing from dangerous and traumatic situations is seen as a substitute for experiencing trauma first-hand. Thus, someone like Lévy positions himself as an authentic witness, who has insight into Sarajevo's trauma

because of his close connection to actual victims. Spatial proximity and first-person narratives connect the secondary witness to trauma and its victims, fostering the same strong emotions and elevation of the traumatic experience as those at work in legitimizing and popularizing dark touristic routes. Lévy, though, not only positions himself as close to trauma, and thus as capable of offering particular insight into it, but does so on screen and for a wide and global audience. Mehmedinović's essay critiques this representational strategy, not only because of its basis in questionable forms of spectatorship and strategies of dark tourism, but because television has the capacity to “turn war into a war game¹⁹” (Mehmedinović 55).

As has been demonstrated in Chapter One, the short pieces that make up Mehmedinović's *Sarajevo Blues*, particularly its prose works, regularly and bitterly critique the role of the foreign observer, often contrasting this with the work of local journalists, photographers, and videographers. The brief essay, “Bernard-Henri Lévy,” uses polemical rhetoric to synthesize many of these criticisms. The essay itself focuses on a particular interview that Lévy did for BH Television in June of 1992. It was called, simply, “Lévy in Sarajevo” [FIGURE 5.1].

¹⁹ Ammiel Alcalay translates *igra rata* as “simulation of war.” While certainly evocative, this seems to stretch the meaning slightly too much.



FIGURE 5.1: TITLE SCREEN FROM BH TELEVISION INTERVIEW WITH BERNARD-HENRI LÉVY

As the French philosopher is interviewed by reporter Nedim Longarević, shots ring out in the distance. The interview might more accurately be described as a monologue, since Lévy speaks for the overwhelming majority of it, and often only tenuously in response to Longarević's direct questions. Not only do Lévy's physical and rhetorical stances position him as a spectator of the traumas unfolding in the first months of the war in Sarajevo. As he claims in this interview, "I'll testify about the things I've seen and heard in Sarajevo" [FIGURE 5.2]. In detailing the intended audience for this testimony, he promises to speak directly with French president, François Mitterrand.²⁰ In this, Lévy establishes himself as someone who is in a position to tell the

²⁰ Indeed, Lévy did relate his own experiences in Sarajevo to Mitterrand. And the French president himself visited Sarajevo later, on June 28, 1992. This visit was timed to coincide with St Vitus' Day, an important holiday in the Orthodox calendar and, in particular the Serbian Orthodox calendar. This is primarily for historical-political reasons: the battle at Kosovo Polje took place on that day, June 28, in 1389; Archduke Franz Ferdinand was killed in Sarajevo on that day in 1914; Slobodan Milošević gave his infamous "Gazimestan speech" at Kosovo Polje on St Vitus' Day in 1989.

Mitterrand's dramatically staged and highly mediated visit to Sarajevo was a spectacle. He succeeded, with this action, in opening the airport to humanitarian aid. Many locals hopefully viewed this visit, thinking that it heralded the possibility of international intervention in ending

“real story” of the violence taking place and, moreover, one whose status and high-ranking connections will make sure that this story is heard.



FIGURE 5.2: NEDIM LONGAREVIĆ INTERVIEWS BERNARD-HENRI LÉVY

Lévy says: “I'll testify about what I have seen and heard in Sarajevo.”

the war in Bosnia. However, while Mitterrand's visit did fundamentally shape the terms of foreign engagement with Bosnia, it did so by making an argument that “humanitarian intervention” was sufficient. As Silber and Little put it, “[Mitterrand's] mission was successful in that he appeared to demonstrate to the world that a military intervention was not necessary to bring sanity and progress to Bosnia's chaos. A bold and heroic gesture of the type Mitterrand had self-promotingly made appeared sufficient” (256). For discussion, contextualization, and critique of Mitterrand's visit, and Lévy's part in setting up this visit, see: Richard Golsan, *French Writers and the Politics of Complicity: Crises of Democracy in the 1940s and the 1990s* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 108-111; Reneo Lukić and Allen Lynch, *Europe from the Balkans to the Urals: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 291-292; and Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* (New York: Penguin USA, 1996), 255-256.

Mehmedinović's representation of this widely broadcast interview highlights the way in which the television medium profoundly broadens the scope of spectatorship. The essay opens, placing Lévy "in front of the TV cameras" as he "talks about what is happening in Sarajevo. Images of this interview will go around the world: he saw it all, there can be no illusions, he knows exactly what is going on here – his words inform Europe" (Mehmedinović 55). Lévy not only readily adopts the role of witness to "what is happening in Sarajevo," but he rhetorically and affectively positions himself as one who is equipped to inform the world of what he has seen. He positions himself as a witness to trauma because he has appeared on television with war as a backdrop.

Central to this self-ascribed status as witness, thus, is the fact that, during the interview, Lévy is "forced to lie down properly and find cover as the bullets whiz by" (ibid). In fact, in the actual interview, Lévy almost leisurely lowers himself behind a small cement wall. Never losing the cigarette that remains in his hand throughout the interview, he continues to gesticulate. His gaze is fixed on the camera filming him, rather than on Longarević, who sits beside him and holds a microphone in his face. Using sarcasm to inflate the danger facing Lévy at the moment of his interview, Mehmedinović's essay highlights the way Lévy himself uses the backdrop of danger, of war, and of impending injury as a way to legitimate the claims he is making about Sarajevo's heroic resistance and its being abandoned by the world. More than this, however, Lévy rhetorically highlights his own precarious position in order to perform the role of a witness upon whom has been conferred special knowledge by virtue of his proximity to potentially traumatic extremity. Lévy speaks, Mehmedinović's notes, "in front of the camera, not without some satisfaction... as the bullets fly by. There is a

perverse sense of pleasure in this for a thinker whose positions are confirmed at the very moment he announces them to the world" (ibid).

From this position, Lévy casts himself as an "engaged philosopher, fighting for freedom, human rights, and democracy" (BH Televizija interview). He has, in fact, come to Sarajevo because the city, in his opinion, exists at the "epicenter" (ibid) of the struggle for these ideals. Meanwhile, it is primarily because Lévy himself is speaking from Sarajevo and, moreover, because bullets are punctuating his assertions that he locates this epicenter in Sarajevo. Drawn to Sarajevo because of the trauma taking place in it, Lévy does more than take a "perverse sense of pleasure" in being up close with war. He also frames his own position in wartime Sarajevo as being directly connected to trauma, as "participating in the war, everyone can see that now" (Mehmedinović 55). Lévy grounds his representation of Sarajevo's siege – in which he, himself, figures prominently – in this implied participation. And his particular way of narrating Sarajevo's siege relies on a mixture of apocalyptic images and secular humanist principles. Thus, not only is Lévy's position as a witness confirmed because of his being embedded in the scene of trauma, but he portrays this experience in abstract, absolute, and almost ecstatic terms. "We are all guilty," he claims, in a response to Longarević's question about whether "Europe can have a clean conscience at this moment" (BH Televizija interview). If "we" – by which Lévy clearly means "the West" – are all guilty, Lévy sees the path from guilt to absolution running through the type of vicarious suffering that he himself is performing in Sarajevo. Expressing his "friendship and his admiration at Sarajevo's struggle" (ibid) on television, Lévy identifies with the personified city. And he interprets this identification as a way in which to absolve

himself. His spectatorship loses not only its unseemly quality, but becomes a necessary act of representation.

This representation always includes self-representation. As Lévy finally consents to duck behind the low wall, immediately after proclaiming the West's guilt, he points out that "this is not the first time [he has] been in a war" [FIGURE 5.3].



FIGURE 5.3: BERNARD-HENRI LÉVY CROUCHES FOR SAFETY

Lévy says: "No, I think that we are all guilty. This is not the first time I've been in a war"

Lévy's statements here appear, at first, strange rhetorical choices: his own familiarity with visiting wars seems not to follow in an immediately logical way from the collective guilt he identifies. However, as demonstrated above, it is crucial for the implicit argument that Lévy is constructing: it forms a bridge between the problematic and "guilty" sort of spectatorship, which amounts to mere watching and a lack of action, and what Lévy propounds as his own ethical form of spectatorship, which involves identification with victims and the narrating of trauma in ethical absolutes. Having made a practice of "being in wars," Lévy self-reflexively elevates this kind of spectatorship into a principle.²¹ Moreover, he writes himself into Sarajevo's struggle, which is, reciprocally, seen as heroic and worthy of admiration because it can be narrated in the terms that Lévy, as philosopher and public intellectual, uses to make sense of the world: freedom, human rights, democracy.

Both owing to the style of this representation and because it is televised in a way that showcases Lévy's own position in wartime Sarajevo and in the representation of Sarajevo and of war, Mehmedinović critiques Lévy because his "engagement becomes a tool of television" (55). Lévy merely gives "the mass media monster a little help in turning war into a game of war" (*ibid*). Thus, beyond the mere presence of Lévy and other spectators, tourists, and photographers in Bosnia during the war, beyond their fervid attempts to capture images of trauma as they were occurring, what was and has

²¹ In fact, Lévy has indeed made a habit of visiting wars. In addition to his prominent travels to Bosnia during the 1990s, he began his career in 1971 as a war reporter Bangladesh for the prominent newspaper, *Combat*, covering the war in Pakistan that created Bangladesh as a nation. He later visited Afghanistan, Colombia, Darfur, Sri Lanka, and other conflict zones. He has represented these wars and his own position in them in the press, in interviews, and in various other media. See also Lévy's collection of writings, *War, Evil and the End of History* (Hoboken: Melville House Publishing, 2004).

remained intractably controversial about wartime spectatorship is the way these visitors' still and moving images were, almost instantaneously, shown around the world.

Now I turn to two works that further engage with the larger ideological and media contexts of spectatorship. I investigate two very different works: Ferida Duraković's 1993 lyric poem, "A Writer Regards Her Homeland As the Learned Postmodernist Enters Her Town,"²² and Jasmila Žbanić's 2003 short documentary film, *Pictures from the Corner*. These two works provide insight into how dark touristic practices have shaped the contours of troped (and usually foreign) representation of war in Bosnia and how, in response, Bosnian artists have both problematized these voyeuristic representations and also crafted their own. Duraković's lyric poem and Žbanić's documentary film focus on the arresting nature of traumatic images, the social and intellectual capital these images have, and the impact of marketability on representational choices and tropes used to depict trauma. Albeit in different media and employing different rhetorical and visual techniques, both of these works advance a coherent notion of a representational ethics that stands in stark contrast to and metatextually engages with that of the spectator-tourist who gravitates towards trauma, identifies with its victims, and represents this trauma as though it is his/her own and for a ready audience.

²² Because I am a specialist only in prose translation, in rendering Duraković's poem in English here, I have consulted Amela Simić's and Zoran Mutić's translation, published in: Ferida Duraković, *Heart of Darkness* (Fredonia and Buffalo, NY: White Pine Press, 1998). One major flaw in this translation, which I have corrected in my own, is the poem's title. Simić and Mutić render the titular author [*spisateljica*] as masculine.

Ferida Duraković's lyric poem was written in 1993 and published the following year by Bosanska knjiga, which was temporarily housed in Zagreb during the war.²³ A 2007 reprint of "A Writer Regards Her Homeland" added an explicit dedication to the end of the poem: "to Bernard-Henri Lévy, with a handful of salt" (34).²⁴ Like Mehmedinović's essay from the previous year, "A Writer Regards Her Homeland" bitterly and overtly addresses the French intellectual as a stand-in for wartime foreign spectatorship and a touristic stance toward traumatic experience more generally. In addition to critiquing the way Lévy represents and participates in war, though, Duraković's poem also offers an alternative, one that emerges from a local witness. The poem constructs two very different witnesses: one is "reliable" and, like Lévy, uses a seamless series of clichés to create a trope of trauma, while the other is "unreliable" and relies on fragmented and perspectivally variable images. By linking each of these two stances of a witness with a characteristic mode of representing trauma, Duraković elaborates the problem of trauma's attraction, its identification, and its commodification. Meanwhile, her poem's critique alludes to, but goes further than, Mehmedinović's: not only does it, like his "Bernard-Henri Lévy," implicate mediatized representations in commodifying trauma, "A Writer Regards Her Homeland" also

²³ Bosanska knjiga published many prominent Bosnian authors during and shortly after the war years, including Dubravko Brigić, Dževad Karahasan, Tvrko Kulenović, Alma Lazarevska, Goran Samardžić, Abdulah Sidran, Marko Vešović.

²⁴ "Za B.H. Levyja, sa šakom soli 1993." The phrase "handful of salt," in this context, seems to have several possible connotations: it could express a large amount of suspicion towards Lévy (many "grains of salt" combined). It could also express a gesture of "returning" to Lévy the "salt" that he "rubbed in Sarajevo's wounds." Finally, because the poem's date is not separated from the phrase "with a handful of salt" by a comma, the full dedication could also be read as, "to Bernard-Henri Lévy, with a handful of 1993's salt."

models a type of representation that resists commodification because it resists mediatization.

The poem begins with three related images: “the face of a young man whose life drained away all night long, through your hands, through a hole in his back” “a pool of blood: in the middle, a bread loaf/ soaked with blood as if with morning milk,” and the “heavy Sarajevan clay which falls on a boy’s/ big feet in Reebok sneakers/ on the too-short *tabut*²⁵ made of a cabinet door”²⁶ (109). The scene conveys either a single scene of death or, more convincingly, a series of images separated in time, all of which add up to a portrait of traumatic death. First, the young soldier dies, his blood soaking a loaf of bread.²⁷ Then, later and in a different location, his body is laid out on a make-shift *tabut*.²⁸ Each of these images is visually striking and portrayed as a verbal approximation of a close-up photograph. They rely on familiar and everyday objects, those found only locally as well as ones indicative of globalization. All of these objects –

²⁵ *Tabut*: a board for carrying a dead body or coffin in a Muslim funeral. This word is sometimes used for the coffin itself, although Islam does not require a coffin for the procession and does not permit it for the actual burial except under exceptional circumstances, and then only by certain legal schools. Here it clearly refers just to the board, which is made from a cabinet door. The image is of a corpse being carried without a coffin, which is both an Islamic norm and a practical necessity of wartime circumstances. See, for example: Abdulah Sidran, *Sarajevski tabut* (Sarajevo: Bosanska knjiga, 1994).

²⁶ “[L]ice mladića čiji je život čitavu noć/ oticao kroz tvoje ruke, kroz rupu/ na njegovim ledima.” “I jezerce krvi: usred jezera kruh/ natopljen krvlju kao u jutarnjem mleku z bregov....” “[O]lovnu sarajevsku glinu što pada na dječakova/ velika stopala u Reebok patikama/ na prekratkom tabutu od ormarskih vrata....”

²⁷ The choice of object conveys a strong sense that his death has occurred not in the trenches, but in a “civilian” setting – a marketplace (like Markale) or, because of presence of the loaf, in a queue for bread, both infamous sites of massacres in wartime Sarajevo.

²⁸ During the war, there was a severe and documented shortage of *tabuts*. This occurred not only because of the high numbers of deaths, but also because of a shortage of wooden objects large enough to carry a person. Sarajevo’s wartime absence of reliable electricity meant that everything made of wood was burned, in winter, for heating and, throughout the year, for cooking.

from the mud to the bread, the makeshift *tabut* to the Reebok sneakers – work together to convey the magnitude and manner in which the familiar has been traumatically altered and rendered unfamiliar.

In addition to these three images that establish the scene of the poem up close to traumatic death, however, the poem consistently addresses a second person singular “you.” This person is a witness to the death and the lifeless body of the young man, but is not merely a bystander to these scenes of death. The poem addresses a “you” who held the soldier’s head as he died, as his blood “drained through your hands” (ibid). The poem’s addressee is established, by proximity and involvement in these scenes, as integral to their representation in poetic form – in their particular visual clarity and in their use of everyday objects to convey narrative sequencing.

Meanwhile, the poem’s addressee is, in each of these three scenes with their distinct images, accused by the poetic “I”: “you’re making things up,” the lyric subjects says. “You’re making them up, [he/she] repeat[s],” and “no, you really are not to be trusted, you are coming from the heart/ of darkness”²⁹ (ibid). This accusation directly calls into question both what the witness saw and how she has represented these sights in poetic language.³⁰ In addition, however, the repeated skepticism casts doubt on the witness herself, both because of the implied fabrication of images and, more fundamentally, because the witness has come from the “heart of darkness” that,

²⁹ “Izmišljaš, ponavljam, opet po prvi put/ … / Ne, tebi/ ne treba vjerovati, ti stižeš iz srca/ tame....”

³⁰ I use the female pronoun here and throughout because, as the poem makes clear, it is the titular writer, regarding her homeland, who is addressed as “you” by an “I” who is sympathetic of, but distinct from, the male and Lévy-esque learned postmodernist.

moreover, “has burst and gushed into the light of day”³¹ (*ibid*). Duraković here further extends Conrad’s famous formulation, employing a setting in which this “heart of darkness” breaks out into visibility.

This intertext carries with it an entire history of European colonialism and racism, as well as a literary history of portraying and engaging with these social ills and their legacies in poetry and prose. The war in Bosnia, and in the former Yugoslavia more generally, brought these issues of symbolic geography to the fore. As Western Europeans, both individual citizens and governments, reckoned with the bloody reality of war, atrocity, and even genocide in the former Yugoslavia, reigning binaries that symbolically divided “Eastern Europe” (and, in particular, “the Balkans”) from “Europe” itself entered into public debate and private opinion. The fact that a brutal war with similarities to the Second World War was again taking place in Europe, but this time was viewed in almost real time, was perceived as an uncomfortable, even unpalatable, truth. What was misleadingly interpreted as an “ethnic” conflict in the former Yugoslavia was condemned as barbaric and viewed as something that should not take place in “civilized” Europe.³² In response, “the Balkans” were again (as they had been in the past) construed as not quite “European” for having a war like this at all, in late 20th century Europe. Duraković, in this concise poetic allusion, engages both with a centuries-old legacy of colonial attitudes in general, as well as the particular way this legacy was being used contemporaneously during the war in Bosnia to buttress Balkanist interpretations of the conflict and to downplay the wartime suffering of

³¹ “... što je pukla i pokuljala u dan.”

³² This despite the fact that, not fifty years before, the world’s most infamous genocide had taken place in Europe.

Bosnians. As a testament to the primacy of Conrad's phrase on Duraković's poetic stance and intellectual outlook at this time, the volume in which "A Writer Regards Her Homeland" was first published is, itself, entitled *Heart of Darkness [Srce tame]*.³³

Here, the fact that the poetic addressee is criticized for coming from the "heart of darkness" is further developed into a criticism of her capacity for witnessing and representing trauma in what is held up as a proper way. "You are an unreliable witness, a biased one besides"³⁴ (109), the poetic subject disparages the writer. She is seen as unreliable and biased because her descriptions, the images she picks out of the dying young boy, depict trauma using a fragmentary and subjective perspective. These fragments are condemned as "raw" and "irresponsible"³⁵ (34). In opposition to this poetic stance and mode of representing trauma, "the Professor, Parisian through and through"³⁶ (*ibid*) has come to school the writer (and, it is implied, other Bosnians) on the correct way to depict the traumatic disintegration of Bosnia and convey the implications this trauma has.

The Professor's reliability as a witness stems from his capacity to "look into the face of History" (*ibid*). Earlier, the poetic subject critiques the writer's own choice to

³³ A later reprint, in *Locus minoris*, of "A Writer Regards Her Homeland" is included with a collection of Duraković's other wartime poems in a section entitled, "Imagining Bosnia" (English in original). See: Ferida Duraković, *Locus minoris* (Sarajevo: Connectum, 2007). The section title refers to the poem's repeated accusation, that the writer is "making up [izmišljati]" her testimony. While *zamišljati* is a more accurate translation of the English *to imagine*, the two Bosnian words are clearly and semantically related. In addition, the section title explicitly references Maria Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). In Todorova's seminal text, the historian outlines the way the Balkans region has been regarded and symbolically situated as "the other Europe" since the late eighteenth century.

³⁴ "Nepouzdan si svjedok, pristrasan pri tom...."

³⁵ "...u sirovim neodgovornim ulomcima...."

³⁶ "Došao/ zato je Profesor, pariski sasvim."

represent the face of the young man, rather than the “calm and distant face of History”³⁷ (109). It is more accurate to say, however, is that the writer’s representational stance is being critiqued not because she chooses the face of the dying man over that of History, but rather that she fails, in representing the young man, to link it with History writ large. In contrast, the Professor proclaims (using his favorite term of address for the local Bosnian audience),

Mes enfants, Europe is dying here. Then he arranged everything into a film,³⁸ into images, into great words like *histoire, Europe, like responsabilité* and, of course, *les Bosniacs*. So this is how one looks into the face of History.³⁹ (34)

Not only is the Professor attuned to abstract concepts like history, Europe, responsibility, but he narrates “les Bosniacs” into these concepts only insofar as Bosnia constitutes the “death of Europe.” By focusing on these “great words,” which we have seen at the center of Mehmedinović’s essay, Duraković highlights the way an abstract and universalizing philosophical perspective shapes the Professor’s narrative and visual representation of the trauma to which he is a particular kind of witness. The Professor arranges that which he sees into film and image, but his representational strategy and ethics clearly derive from and contribute to his larger focus on abstract principles – whether “history,” “Europe,” and “responsibility,” as the poem would

³⁷ “[L]ice mladića.... lice vojnika... nije to mirno i daleko lice Historije.”

³⁸ Lévy in fact made a documentary film during his wartime visits to the country during wartime. See: Bernard-Henri Lévy, *Bosna!* (1994). The film title’s punctuation is telling.

³⁹ “*Mes enfants, ovdje umire Europa.* Potom sve je/ u film poredao, u slike, u riječi velike, kao/ *histoire, Europe, kao responsabilité i, naravno, / les Bosniaques.* Tako se, eto, gleda u lice Historije....”

have it, or “freedom,” “human rights,” and “democracy,” as Lévy himself put it in the aforementioned BH Television interview.

“Not like you,” the poem continues, creating a stark break between the Professor’s way of “looking into the face of History” and narrating Bosnia’s trauma in a way that conforms with lofty notions of history. If it has not been clear up to this point in the poem, the poetic subject’s ironic tone in this line reveals the poem’s rhetorical core – the dialogic relationship between the poetic “I,” the Bosnian “you,” and the French Professor – as a thoroughgoing investigation of what it means to be a “reliable” witness to atrocity. By feigning to cast the Bosnian writer as supremely unreliable and the Professor as reliable, the poem itself reveals the ethical vacuity of the Professor’s stance as a spectator, his adopted role as a witness, and his creative convictions in representing trauma. The writer’s “irresponsible fragments,” her series of sequential images, and her subjective perspective on proximal death are all held up as ethical alternatives to the Professor’s now deflated tenets:

not like you: in raw, irresponsible fragments,
in a sniper shot that penetrates the skull,
in graves already covered with tireless grass,
in your palms, laid upon
Edvard Munch, who alone, once,
invented everything, in vain.⁴⁰ (ibid)

Here we see, laid out in full, not only the process by which the writer traces out the texture of trauma, but also her rationale for doing so in a way that does not elevate these fragments to the status of universal “History,” but keeps them in a highly

⁴⁰ “... ne kao ti: u sirovim neodgovornim ulomcima,/ u snajperskom hicu što se zabija u lobanju,/ u grobove koje je već pokrila neumorna trava,/ u tvoje dlanove položene preko/ Edvarda Muncha, koji je i sam, jednom, / izmislio sve, uzalud.”

subjective and perspectival frame. The poem itself is completely circumscribed by the perspective of the writer: it both begins and ends with her own hands touching the body of another. At its beginning, her hands catch the wounded and dying soldier's blood, while, at its end, these hands press into the head of Edvard Munch.

By juxtaposing the dying young man with Edvard Munch and positioning the writer's hands on both of these figures, "A Writer Regards Her Homeland" again relies on a prominent intertext in order to establish new poetic meaning. Given the strategic positioning of hands, it would be difficult to read Duraković's reference to Munch as anything but an ekphrastic insertion into her poem of the Norwegian artist's most famous painting, the expressionistic *The Scream* [FIGURE 5.4].

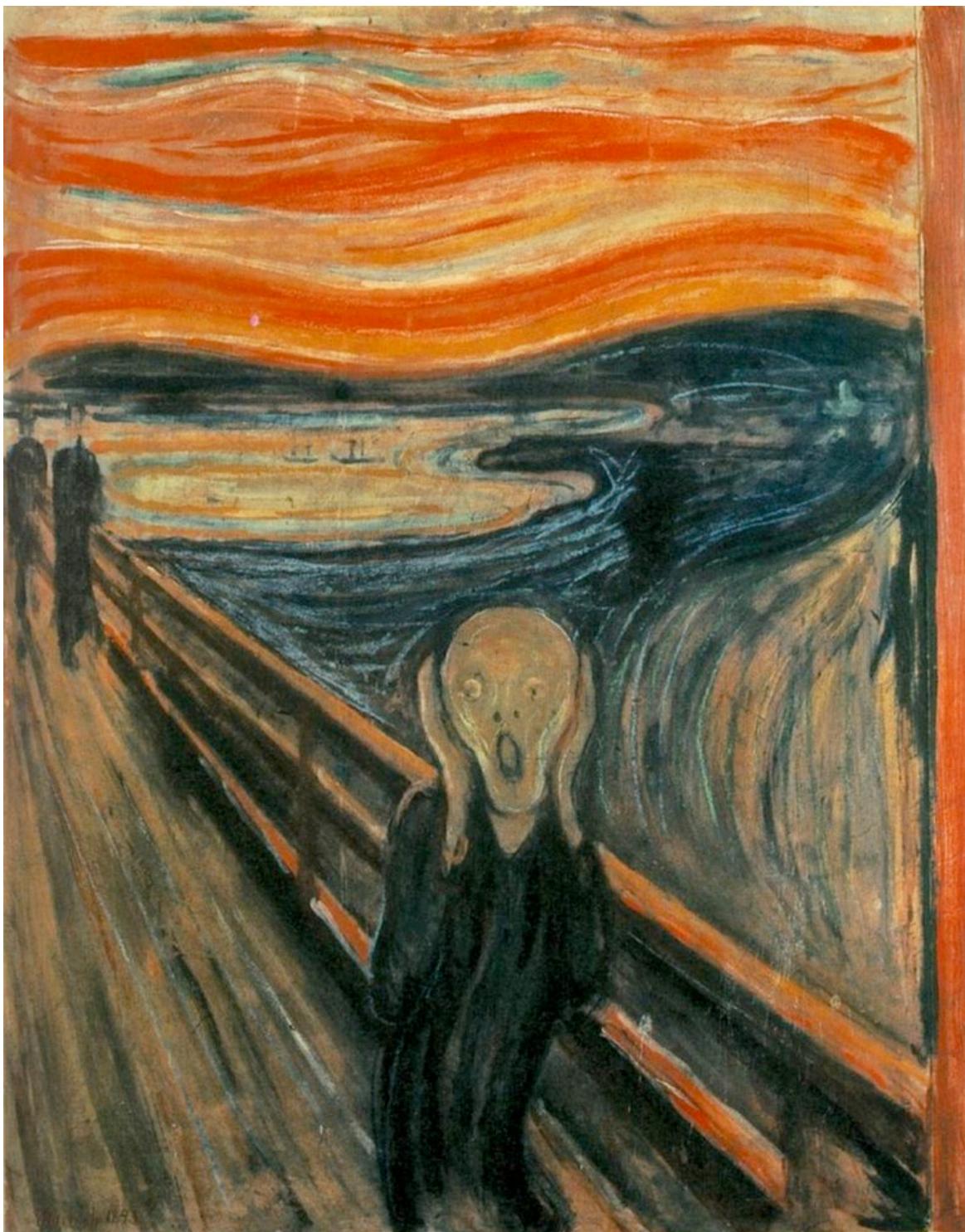


FIGURE 5.4: EDVARD MUNCH, *THE SCREAM* (1893)

Like Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Munch's *The Scream* carries with it a rich set of prior associations and implications. Munch's often-recounted motivation for painting *The Scream* was his experience of anxiety at the witness of a sunset (Munch, in Holland 82). This description is frequently mentioned in conjunction with analysis of the painting's own visual representation of psychological distress as evidence for its central place in art that engages with and depicts traumatic experience. In addition, as theorists Jane Goodall and Christopher Lee note in their introduction to the volume *Trauma and Public Memory*, "reproductions [of *The Scream*] are often featured on websites about posttraumatic stress disorder, so that it has become an icon of the condition" (13).

Exactly a century after Munch first painted his iconic work, the TRIO graphic arts group would marshal the evocative power of *The Scream* to represent a particular social and individual set of traumas: the destruction of Sarajevo [FIGURE 5.5]. The central place of Munch's sunset – both biographically and visually – is replaced by TRIO's own "Sarajevo Summer" print (discussed in Chapter One). TRIO's composite image draws on the striking visual qualities and near universal power Munch's painting possesses to command the attention and emotional engagement of viewers in order to represent Sarajevo's trauma. Meanwhile, TRIO's use of Munch's *The Scream* removes it from an art historical context, in which its representation of trauma is general and even existential, and positions it in one that is acutely historical. Just as in the case of TRIO's reworking of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, Roy Lichtenstein's comic heroine, or Andy Warhol's *Campbell Soup Cans: Chicken Noodle Soup*, their *The Scream* takes a recognizably evocative artistic image and uses it as a mechanism for representing the particular way in which Sarajevo's trauma was felt to be a social and cultural, as well as psychological and individual, experience.

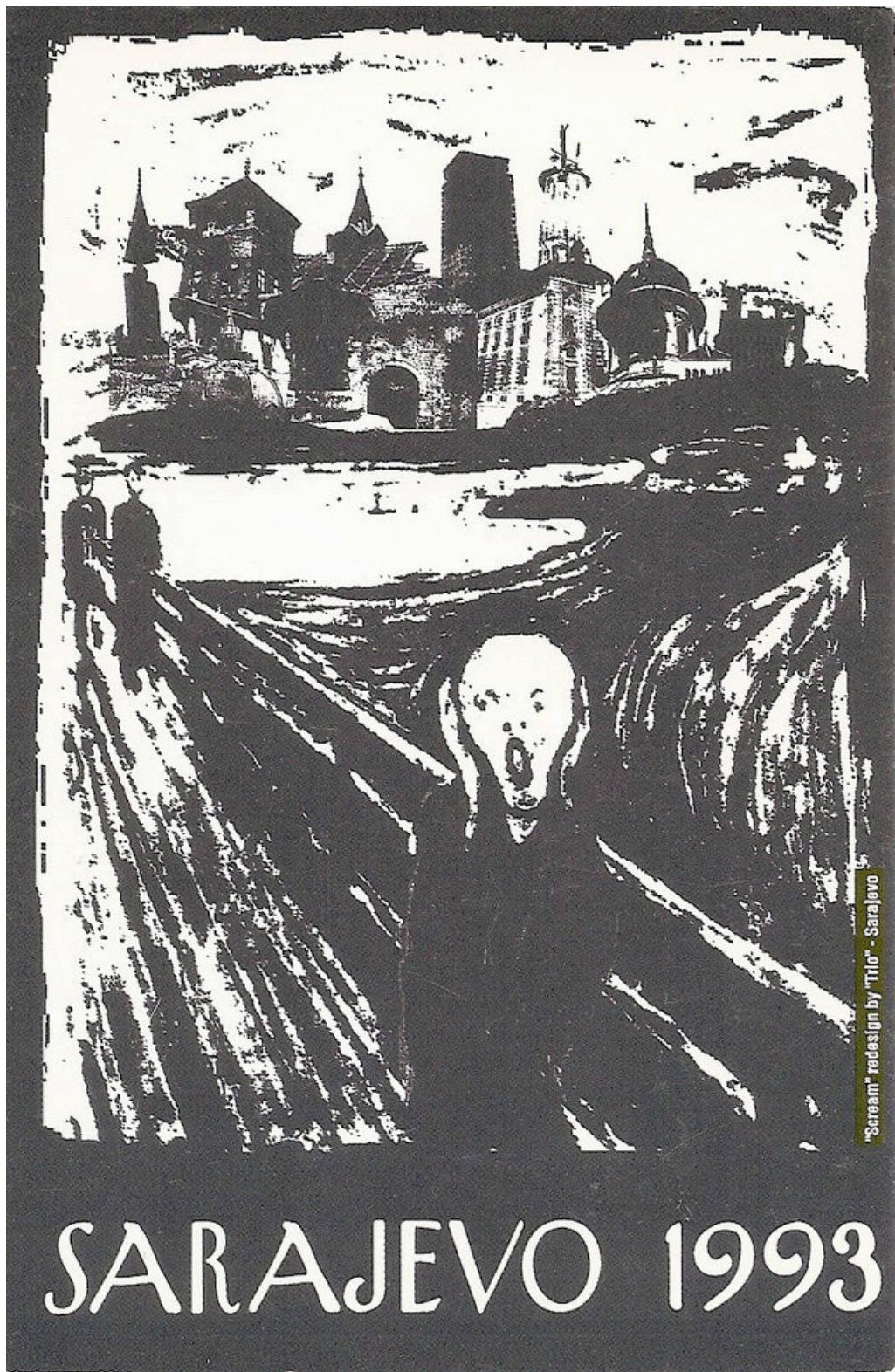


FIGURE 5.5: TRIO, *THE SCREAM* (1993)

Thus, Duraković's allusion to Munch's *The Scream* functions as a web of intertexts, rather than a single point of reference. And, significantly, "A Writer Regards Her Homeland" conspicuously reworks the original artistic text in order to establish a new poetic meaning. Instead of concluding with an exact reproduction of *The Scream*, in which the screaming figure holds his own head, the poem both transforms this figure into Edvard Munch himself and, in addition, places on his head the writer's hands, instead of his own. The writer, that "unreliable witness" accused of "making things up" configures both her own act of witnessing and her chosen representation of what she witnesses by inserting her own hands, quite literally, into the frame. Moreover, she does so by including in her own poetic testimony Munch, an artist who "invented everything, in vain" (34). In this way, the poem recoups the term with which the writer herself was condemned, *izmišljati* (perfective form, *izmislići*). It grounds ethical forms of both witnessing and representing trauma in this basic creative act.

Finally, I turn to Jasmila Žbanić's 2003 *Pictures from the Corner*, a work that, like Duraković's poem, is focused on ethical and unethical forms of representing trauma. *Pictures from the Corner* constitutes a cinematic meditation on both the nature of images of trauma and the way these images and their viewership impact both personal and social memories of trauma, as these exist within and contribute to wider practices of commodifying and marketing traumatic experience.

At its core, the film interrogates the construction and mediation of a specific memory from the war: the June 1992 wounding of one of Žbanić's own schoolmates, Biljana Vrhovac. As Žbanić, who also serves as the film's on- and off-screen narrator,

maintains in its first scene, Biljana was the first person from Žbanić’s “neighborhood”⁴¹ and her “generation”⁴² to be injured in the early shelling of Sarajevo. Both for Žbanić and for the other members of this “generation” that the filmmaker interviews for the making of the film, Biljana’s tragic wounding stands as the “most painful and most difficult image of the war.”⁴³ And images, both concrete and abstract, serve to structure and thematize the film as a whole. One central trauma (Biljana’s being hit by an 80mm grenade) and one central image (the bloodied Biljana lying on a Sarajevo street corner) are joined cinematically to form the thematic, rhetorical, visual, and mnemonic core of *Pictures from the Corner*. And, as the film makes clear, it is, in fact, the way that the trauma of Biljana’s being wounded is transformed into its particular image that constitutes the crux of what is experienced as traumatic for Žbanić and others who knew Biljana.

For, as *Pictures from the Corner* elaborates, not only was Biljana Vrhovac badly wounded in the shelling that killed both her father and her pet dog. Not only was she finally taken to a Sarajevo hospital, where her arm was amputated. Not only was Biljana eventually evacuated from Sarajevo, never to return. What stands as the major and

⁴¹ “Bilja je živjela u mom komšiluku.”

⁴² “Ona je prva osoba iz moje generacije koju je nastradao.” In BCS, *generacija* primarily connotes a group of individuals who are of the same age and, very often, have gone through school and related life experiences together. In addition, though, it conveys the sense of a “generation” that I discuss in Chapter Four. As Mannheim, Kansteiner, and Assmann use the term, it indicates a group that is established during and after a set of experiences that are believed, both from within and outside of the group, to have been shared. These experiences often hinge on an incisive social event, which is subsequently represented (in narrative and in media), solidified, and popularized. Forms of “memory activism” related to this event fundamentally ground the generation’s identity, as perceived both by members of the generation and others, in this central event.

⁴³ “Najbolnija i najteža slika rata.”

lasting trauma of Biljana's injury – at least for those in Žbanić's circle who continue to contemplate this event, and mark it as the moment when the war really started – is the fact that, immediately after the grenade struck Biljana, an award-winning French war photographer, Luc Delahaye, proceeded to shoot three rolls of film of the girl lying bloodied with a small dog in her arms.⁴⁴

Even at this early point in Sarajevo's war, a disturbing phenomenon of foreign journalists or photographers taking film of injured or dying Sarajevans instead of assisting the wounded was already becoming a commonplace occurrence, even a trope.⁴⁵ Foreign photographers would crouch for hours with their cameras pointed at the most dangerously exposed corners in Sarajevo, hoping to capture violence and death as they unfolded. As correspondent Roger Cohen bitterly wrote in a 1995 article about war photography in Sarajevo, "the chances are good that a few hours of patience by a cameraman will be rewarded with compelling images of a life being extinguished or incapacitated" (Cohen 12). And Delahaye published, to great acclaim, one particular photograph from these three rolls that he took of the wounded Biljana Vrhovac on Magribija Street.

Delahaye not only failed to ask permission to shoot the shot Biljana, but also, when Biljana herself confronted him, purportedly justified his own actions, claiming to

⁴⁴ Neither Žbanić nor any other character in *Pictures from the Corner* name Delahaye in the film. This constitutes an ethical as well as a stylistic choice, one that is related to the decision to not show Delahaye's photograph of Biljana in the film (a decision discussed later in this chapter).

⁴⁵ One is reminded here of the cliché, which came very much to the fore during the war in Bosnia, that "things don't happen *unless* a camera is there" (Keenan 2012, 24). Although, as it is important to remember, and as Keenan goes on to note, "of course, it takes not just a camera, but an entire network of editing, transmitting, distributing and viewing technologies – and agents – that extend out from the camera" (*ibid*).

have been “only doing [his] job.”⁴⁶ This context, in which the traumatic photographic scene and the photograph of trauma are rhetorically inserted into relationships of economic exchange, comes to organize Žbanić’s film. Like Mehmedinović who, at the very start of the war, called the actions of war photographers, “trafficking in death”⁴⁷ (64), *Pictures from the Corner* interrogates the ethics of spectatorship and the circulation of traumatic images.

The film is structured, both temporally and spatially, with the site of Biljana’s injury at its center. For Žbanić, who finds herself still “living in [the war] or with it,”⁴⁸ this site is foundational to representing or narrating the memory of personal and social trauma. In one of the film’s first scenes, Žbanić’s camera pans over the Sarajevo valley from Sedrenik hill, pausing momentarily at key landmarks before continuing to move towards Žbanić’s Marindvor neighborhood and, eventually, the Magribija corner where Biljana was wounded. Both in the scene’s narration and its point of view, the film makes an explicit link between pointing a camera and pointing a weapon: the place from which the film camera looks down at Magribija is, the film asserts, the very position from which the grenade that hit Biljana was launched. *Pictures from the Corner*, thus, problematizes from its very start the act of photographic witnessing, exposing its constant potential to function as a weapon.

From this point, both Žbanić as a narrator and the film that is traced out visually and narratively become highly focused on the physical site of Biljana’s wounding. Žbanić journeys there, filming the now quiet and peaceful corner from every angle. She

⁴⁶ “Samo sam radio svoj posao.”

⁴⁷ “... [O]d smrti naplaćuju svoje dolarske honorare.”

⁴⁸ “Rat je završio prije osam godina, ali ja još uvijek na neki način živim u njemu ili sa njim.”

interviews several residents of the house directly on the corner as well as passersby, collecting details about the event. Žbanić then proceeds to the hospital, interviewing a doctor who was among those who treated Biljana for her wounds. The filmmaker also interviews other members of the “generation” that were finishing school when the war started, using these interviews to triangulate and compile a composite narrative. This story, told from a variety of perspectives, has something in common with the technique employed in the collective and collected memory project, *May 2, 1992: It Was a Fair and Sunny Day...* (discussed at length in Chapter Four). Biljana’s wounding, like the unfolding of events on May 2, 1992, functions as a flashbulb memory for the members of Žbanić’s and Biljana’s generation – a generation that, in fact, comes into existence as a unified group in part because of their recollection of Biljana’s injury.

In addition to probing these various sources in an attempt to trace out a narrative of Biljana and, in particular, what took place on the Magribija corner, Žbanić also searches for mediated images of Biljana. She enlists the help of her friend Amer,⁴⁹ searching through his vast collection of television footage from the war for a clip of Biljana lying in the hospital. Not only does Žbanić not find this footage, she eventually turns away in horror from the screen, with its sequence of hospitals, shots of violence and damage, and scenes of Sarajevans leaving town. She asks Amer to fast forward, saying, “I just can’t watch this.”⁵⁰ In the next scene, she again returns with her own camera to the Magribija corner.

⁴⁹ Perhaps Amer Džihana, who would go on to be involved in Sarajevo’s Mediacentar.

⁵⁰ “Ja ne mogu da vidim, Amer.”

Žbanić has, meanwhile, found the Delahaye photograph of Biljana on the internet. With her film camera pointed towards the corner where Biljana once lay, Žbanić pointedly refuses to show the photographer's image in *Pictures from the Corner* and, likewise, never mentions Delahaye's name. Inserting Delahaye's image, Žbanić maintains, "would mean exposing Biljana to the eyes of strangers again, wounding her again."⁵¹ In the place of Delahaye's image, Žbanić inserts an idiosyncratic film image whose primary characteristics are not, however, visual. Returning to the Magribija corner, she herself shoots three rolls of film in quick succession. This photographic activity is audibly, but not visually, captured in *Pictures from the Corner*. By virtue of its being time-based media, made up of moving pictures, the film can actually depict the duration of these rolls of photographic film. Present in the form of continual clicks atop a medium-angle shot of the corner [FIGURE 5.6], this scene constitutes Žbanić's own representation of the trauma that emerges from Biljana's being wounded.

⁵¹ "Pokazati je značilo bi Bilja ponovo izložiti tuđim pogledima i ponovo povrijediti."



FIGURE 5.6: MAGRIBIJA STREET CORNER
FILM STILL FROM JASMINA ŽBANIĆ, *PICTURES FROM THE CORNER* (2003)

Žbanić's filmic representation differs significantly from Delahaye's photographic one, in artistic form, in ethical stance, and in commemorative thrust. By choosing to omit Biljana's wounded body from her representation entirely, Žbanić rejects the notion that trauma can only and must be shown literally. She does so on ethical grounds. Not only does Žbanić view the photographing of Biljana's body as a form of injury, as we have seen above, she also argues that disseminating this image constitutes an endless chain of re-injury, of re-traumatization. The representational ethics guiding Žbanić's

choice to represent trauma using simply the duration of Delahaye's photographing Biljana, rather than by reproducing his resulting image, go further than the notion that showing and sharing an image re-wounds. In addition, refusing to give Delahaye's photograph a new context and a new audience emerges out of a realization that photographs like his rely on standard tropes of suffering – blood, chaos, pained expressions – that are designed to elicit responses from viewers, themselves fascinated and drawn in by these features that promise to reveal the truth of trauma. Meanwhile, images of a wounded body fail to represent the lasting social trauma of Biljana's wounding. This is what Žbanić herself represents in her shot of the empty corner, punctuated by three rolls of film: the trauma of merciless voyeurism and the peddling of images taken without the permission or attribution.

Žbanić's *Pictures from the Corner* not only illustrates how representations of trauma in visual media exist within social and economic contexts, but also how these contexts shape representational tropes. Choosing not to reproduce Delahaye's photograph in her film becomes, for Žbanić, a way of rejecting one of these tropes, of refusing to condone a photographic practice that involves approaching suffering with a voyeuristic gaze. Thus, in addition to addressing the representational ethics of photographing traumatic scenes, *Pictures from the Corner* also comments on the way these photographs themselves become objects of a problematic form of spectatorship. Printed and reprinted in news media, posted on the internet, and decontextualized from their original place and time, photographs like Delahaye's join millions of others in a vast and global circulation of commodified trauma.

“The war goes to other places, to other people,” Žbanić intones in the concluding scene of *Pictures from the Corner*, and “with it go the cameras, the journalists, the photo reporters. They make their news and their new images of war. We stay here with ours.”⁵² In fact, all of the texts and contexts discussed in this chapter can be seen as echoing and refracting this conviction – that the global circulation of images of trauma continues on apace, even as the ethics of such representational choices and networks of circulation remain murky. Bašić’s and Duraković’s poems, Mehmedinović’s essay, and Žbanić’s film counter the characteristic stances, approaches to witnessing, and tropes of narration and representation prevalent in both dark tourism and the practices of spectatorship that buttress it. All of these works vitally draw attention to the problems of watching, filming, proclaiming, and consuming images of trauma in a social and media context in which images of suffering – viewed as transparent gatekeepers to trauma itself – have become commodities, valuable and worthless by turns and, above all, exchanged unceasingly.

⁵² “Rat ide na druga mjesta, drugim ljudima. S njim putuju kamere, novinari, fotoreporter. I prave nove i nove slike rata. Mi ostajemo ovdje s ovim naših.”

CONCLUSION

*I don't like carnivals.
I'm afraid of the dark.
Windowless rooms suffocate me.
I don't eat fast food.
Rarely do I put on red lipstick.
Today would be a nice day to die, wouldn't it?*

No matter what I say
they ask:
*Do you think
it's because of the war?*

(Adisa Bašić, "American Friends.")¹

BEYOND CONTESTED MEMORY

Almost a quarter century after Dayton, both scholarly and popular discussions of Bosnia almost unanimously append the adjective "postwar" to the country's name. In these discussions of postwar Bosnia, the mention of both trauma and conflicting memories of the wartime past has become almost obligatory. Indeed, the undeniably high incidence of PTSD and other symptoms in Bosnian civilians and soldiers makes it clear that individuals were and continue to be traumatized by brutal years of war and by new forms of violence and stress that manifested themselves in the postwar period.² The blue helmets may have gone home, but Bosnia remains unstable, divided, and, in many ways, a failed state. Open fighting may have ended, but both the causes and the consequences of the war's infamous ethnic cleansing have been institutionalized in

¹ *Ne volim karnevale./ Bojim se mraka./ Guše me sobe bez prozora./ Ne jedem fast-food./ Rijetko nosim crvene ruževe./ Bilo bi lijepo umrijeti danas, zar ne?/ Šta god da kažem/ oni pitaju:/ A šta misliš,/ je l' to zbog rata?"* See: Adisa Bašić, "Američki prijatelji," *Trauma-market* (Sarajevo: Omnibus, 2004), 30.

² Rita Rosner et al., "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Three Years After the Siege of Sarajevo" (*Journal of Clinical Psychology* 59:1, 2003), 41–55; Sabrina Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State-building and Legitimation, 1918-2005* (Washington DC, Bloomington: Wilson Center Press, Indiana University Press, 2006), 467-468.

post-Dayton politics and society.³ Moreover, the destruction of institutions of social welfare, local and global economic crises, and rampant political corruption in the postwar period have meant that Bosnian society, as a whole, has undergone a vast and continuing series of traumas.

Moreover, individual and social trauma in postwar Bosnia are, implicitly or explicitly, connected with official politics of memory that are often described as conflicting, competitive, contested, divided, or zero-sum interpretations of the wartime past. The trope of contested memories derives fundamentally from the fact that both official and colloquial accounts of the wartime past frequently employ strategies of denial, manipulation, competitive victimhood, and politicization along rigid ethno-religious lines.⁴ The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, for instance, continues to sentence or acquit accused war criminals in the Hague, while these same individuals are viewed as heroes by many members of their ethno-religious groups. Attempts to establish local truth and reconciliation commissions have failed.⁵ A

³ See, for example: Christophe Solioz, Tobias Vogel, and John Allcock (eds), *Dayton and Beyond* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2004), Florian Bieber and Džemal Sokolović (eds), *Reconstructing Multiethnic Societies* (Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate, 2001).

⁴ For further elaboration and contextualization of these strategies, see: Ilana Bet-El, "Unimagined Communities: The Power of Memory and the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia" and Monroe Price, "Memory, the Media and NATO: Information Intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina," in Jan-Werner Müller (ed), *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 206-222 and 137-155; Cornelia Sorabji, "Managing Memories in Post-War Sarajevo" (*The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 12:1, 2006); Xavier Bougarel, "Death and the Nationalist: Martyrdom, War Memory and Veteran Identity among Bosnian Muslims" and Stef Jansen, "Remembering with a Difference: Clashing Memories of Bosnian Conflict in Everyday Life," in Xavier Bougarel et al. (eds), *The New Bosnian Mosaic* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), 193-208 and 167-192.

⁵ These local initiatives and their subsequent failures have been well-documented. See: Jelena Subotić, *Hijacked Justice* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2009; Massimo Moratti and Amra Sabić-El-Rayess, "Transitional Justice and DDR: The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina" (International Center for Transitional Justice, June 2009); and Jasmina Tepić, "Do Memory

high degree of “information intervention” by political and religious leaders, mass media channels, international organizations, and citizens’ assemblies creates selective and conflicting narratives of heroes and victims for widespread consumption.

However, what remains conspicuously uncontested in the so-called contested memory model of thinking through the wartime past is precisely the way in which it brings together the concepts of “trauma” and “memory.” In this model, “memories” are taken to mean neither more nor less than “narrative accounts of the traumatic victimization of one’s own ethno-national group during the 1992-1995 wars.” Memories, thus, are held to be coherent, linear narratives with clear protagonists and antagonists. Moreover, these already-narrativized memories fundamentally uphold a notion that trauma is the unique property of the victim – one who is recognized by traumatic symptoms and is, crucially, a member of the ethno-national group by and for which this memory of war is articulated.

This understanding of memory as an official, narrated version of the traumatic past is problematic for a number of reasons, several of which this dissertation has sought to address. First, it rests on the unspoken assumption that the narrated memory of the past coincides perfectly with the experience of this past. This assumption is, itself, based on an unquestioning acceptance of the truth or accuracy of individual memory and the perfect capacity to recall and sequence detailed episodes from the experiential past – an understanding of autobiographical memory that has been seriously undermined, particularly by culturally-minded psychologists in the wake of the so-

Initiatives Have a Role in Addressing Cultures of Silence that Perpetuate Impunity in Bosnia and Herzegovina?” (*Impunity Watch*, 2012).

called “false memory” debates.⁶ Current understandings of the processes of autobiographical memory refute the idea that memory operates as in the Platonic legend of Mnemosyne’s wax tablet, in which sensory impressions are imprinted for later remembrance. And generations of metaphors about memory can only, simply, be metaphors – from St. Augustine’s storehouse of memory and the popular medieval notion of memory palaces (which would later be famously taken up by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in his *Sherlock Holmes*) to the photograph as a mnemonic snapshot.⁷

The metaphoric nature of these understandings of memory, however, is precisely where we should look in order to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of both the mechanics and the import of memory processes. Just as each of these metaphors prioritize techniques of placement, storage, perception, and representation, what is understood as memory is crucially bound up with how past experiences are narrated and framed, the spaces and times in which they are set, and the light, color, and sound that accompany and animate them. This is true even for processes of autobiographical memory: theories of storage and retrieval mechanisms no longer support the “reappearance hypothesis,” in which an earlier experience leaves an indelible mark on

⁶ See, for example: Daniel Schacter et al. (eds), *Memory Distortion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Martin Conway (ed), *Recovered Memories and False Memories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Daniel Schacter and Elaine Scarry (eds), *Memory, Brain, and Belief* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); and, perhaps most notably, Daniel Schacter, *The Seven Sins of Memory: How the Mind Forgets and Remembers* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001).

⁷ For detailed examinations of conceptions of memory across time, see: Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) and Douwe Draaisma, *Metaphors of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

the brain which later literally reappears in memory.⁸ As psychologist Ulric Neisser, who was central to overturning the “reappearance hypothesis” put it,

one does not see objects ‘simply because they are there,’ but after an elaborate process of construction.... Similarly, one does not recall objects or responses simply because traces of them exist in the mind, but after an elaborate process of reconstruction. (Neisser 285, italics in original)

If individual memory relies so heavily on constructive and reconstructive processes, the same is true – and even more clearly observable – when it comes to social and cultural forms of memory. Scholarly investigation of these two fields, in fact, is primarily devoted to uncovering the many and various techniques, contexts, and alterations used to shape narratives about the past and, moreover, to make these narratives both capable of being shared and seen by a community or group as worthy of holding in common.

In the case of so-called “contested memories” in postwar Bosnia, it is thus important to foreground the fact that, although these reigning narratives are framed as natural, or given phenomena, they indeed – like all individual and social memories – operate on the basis of techniques of construction. This is, of course, not to say that such memories have no indexical relationship to documented occurrences from the wartime past, or that historical, philosophical, and ethical understandings of truth cannot enter into discussions of social memory. It is merely to highlight the fact that treating socially shared memories from this period as wholesale and accurate recollections obscures and elides vital and ongoing processes of construction and reconstruction that are taking place, whether acknowledged or not. In addition, when these constructive processes are

⁸ For a discussion of developing notions of memory and recall, see: Endel Tulving (ed), *Memory, Consciousness, and the Brain* (Philadelphia: Taylor and Francis, 2000), especially ch. 6 and 11.

unacknowledged or actively denied, they prevent further reconstructive recursions and the creation of new memory narratives that attend to the same historical event.

This is not an idle philosophical or epistemological point, however, but one that relates directly to the emergence, function, and continued potency of three highly codified, mutually exclusive narratives about Bosnia's wartime past. In each of these dominant and officially sanctioned narratives, a truth value is ascribed to narrative memories of the war. And in each of these narratives, one ethno-national group is cast as innocent victim of another ethno-national group's violent crimes. It is both the fact that these ethno-nationally determined narratives constitute structurally similar cultural memories as well as the fact that they are upheld as singularly truthful recollections of the wartime past that brings them into conflict and contest with the others. As scholars of cultural memory, Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone claim in their introduction to the volume, *Memory, History, Nation: Contested Pasts*,

The idea of the contest in the literal sense is apparently a straightforward one: it evokes a struggle in the terrain of truth.... But to contest the past is also, of course, to pose questions about the present, and what the past means in the present. Our understanding of the past has strategic, political, and ethical consequences. Contests over the meaning of the past are also contests over the meaning of the present and over ways of taking the past forward. (Hodgkin and Radstone 1)

Not only do codified narratives of wartime victimhood that foreground the suffering and trauma of one's own ethno-national group and exclude mention of the trauma of others' reveal themselves as versions of the past that are highly useful in the postwar, post-Yugoslav, post-socialist present of contemporary Bosnia. The creation of powerful cultural memories that privilege the concept of victimhood and trauma do not only occur in the historical moment covered in this dissertation; indeed, the structural foundation of Bosnian postwar cultural memories share much in common with those

that took root during earlier periods on the territory that would later become, and cease to be, Yugoslavia.

Both in the 19th and 20th centuries, pre-Yugoslav and Yugoslav ideas of the nation focused on historically-inspired traumatic events, which were then interpreted as founding or originary traumas to be dealt with in political, social, historiographical and artistic ways. For example, the historical, literary, and mythic treatments of the Battle of Kosovo are central to tracing out trauma interpreted as the core of the national imagined community. Ivo Andrić's well-known classic, *The Bridge on the Drina* [Na Drini ćuprija], can also be seen as a work that takes up with this kind of activity, of tracing out in narrative form a type of individual and collective trauma that has implication for the idea of community both inside and outside the text. Andrić's novel was written during the Second World War in occupied Belgrade, as were several other thematically related works by Andrić (particularly *Travnik Chronicle* [Travnička hronika] and *The Lady* [Gospođa]). *The Bridge on the Drina* can be read as an engagement with the traumatic event of World War II in Yugoslavia and Europe, more broadly. In locating the titular bridge as the site of, among other things, trauma, the place where individual pain is translated into legend, where local and global histories are emplotted, and where collective life both comes together and falls apart, Andrić's novel does important work in thinking through, and substantiating in narrative form, the events, places and temporalities of trauma.

In the early years of the second Yugoslavia, authors engaged in various modes with the recent past and its traumas – mass and sometimes fratricidal violence, political upheaval, and social reorganization in a newly socialist country. See, for example, the vast Partisan novel-epic tradition in fiction and film, as well as more experimental

works such as Mihailo Lalić's *The Wailing Mountain* [*Lelejska gora*], an explicitly existential and defamiliarizing treatments of the events of World War II.

Later authors dealt with the traumatic imprisonment of suspected Soviet sympathizers in the late 1940s and early 1950s and the effects such state violence and, in many cases, wrongful abuse had on the idea(l) of (Yugoslav) community.⁹ The 1980s saw increasing artistic treatment of the harsh economic and social realities, the everyday traumas of the declining resources of the socialist state, Tito's death, and the emergence of a virulently nationalist political discourse with an increasing degree of popular support. Danilo Kiš's major works (*Hourglass* [*Peščanik*]; *Garden, Ashes* [*Bašta, pepeo*]; *A Tomb for Boris Davidovich* [*Grobnica za Borisa Davidovića*]; *Encyclopedia of the Dead* [*Enciklopedija mrtvih*]; and *Early Sorrows* [*Rani jadi*]) contain elements in which the historical and familial past, their large- and small-scale traumas, are synthesized poetically. Kiš had a huge influence on the next generation of writers, including Aleksandar Hemon, Dubravka Ugrešić, and Karim Zaimović (to name a few).

Particular strategies for artistically engaging with individual and social trauma that had been well established earlier were drawn on in narrating the wars of Yugoslav succession and integrating this period into cultural memory. At times, both Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav narratives of trauma have relied on repeated rhetorical strategies, themes, points of view, symbols, and moral messages that make sense of past traumas by inscribing these into formulaic schemas. Such schemas often rest on perfect oppositions between innocent victim and guilty perpetrator; Serb, Croat, and Bosniak; Orthodox, Catholic, and Muslim; foreign and local. Framing wartime pasts in these

⁹ See, for example: Dragoslav Mihailović, *Kad su cvetale tikve* [*When Pumpkins Blossomed*] (Beograd: Beogradski izdavačko-grafički zavod, 1968) and his five-volume work, *Goli otok* (Beograd: NIP Politika, 1990).

stereotypical ways have, as Hodgkin and Radstone put it, “strategic, political, and ethical consequences.” The consequences, in the case of Bosnia, primarily further both ethno-national particularist conceptions of belonging to a group and, moreover, strengthen ethno-national particularist holds on political power.¹⁰ It is commonplace both in Bosnia and internationally to locate the dysfunction of Bosnian civil society in the country’s intractable system of governance and in the vast political and economic resources concentrated in the hands of its politicians (incapable and prone to sleight as they are). The sway of ethno-national political parties and individual politicians, meanwhile, rests crucially on tightly circumscribed narratives about the 1992-1995 war and its traumatic legacy.

The instrumentalization of these dominant narratives has effects on how the past is officially memorialized in the present, and, more specifically, it governs whether this past can be narrated differently, whether its tropes and meanings are malleable and capable of being adapted to changed present circumstances. And, indeed, there are and continue to be narratives that operate socio-culturally as counter-memories, insofar as they shift the terms and structures of dominant memory narratives.¹¹ However, looking at Bosnia, it is difficult not to wonder, as theorist Jenny Edkins does, whether “political communities such as the modern state survive in part through the scripting of [violent past] events as emergencies, or even, indeed, as traumatic” (Edkins 5). This “scripting”

¹⁰ These narratives of group belonging are configured with recourse to trauma according to the following basic model: “our suffering at the hands of you, the enemy, has resulted in a trauma capable of unifying our group and vilifying yours.”

¹¹ There exist a number of (primarily ethnographic) investigations of sites and formulations of such counter-memories. See, for example: Tone Bringa, *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) and Torsten Kolind, *Post-war Identification: Everyday Muslim Counterdiscourse in Bosnia Herzegovina*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2008).

not only designates wartime events as traumatic, but also grounds the state's legitimacy in these past traumas.

The use of traumatic pasts in the service of identity politics has been discussed in the dissertation's introduction. Here, in the conclusion, it is necessary to elaborate how and why the use of fixed narratives of trauma in politically-bounded spheres of Bosnian public culture have not only fostered entrenched contests among these differing narratives, but have also created discursive conditions that route individual and social healing or recovery from trauma directly through the very political institutions that require narratives of trauma to remain unchanged, for victims to remain victims and perpetrators to stay perpetrators.

As I write this conclusion, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia has sentenced the war criminal Radovan Karadžić to forty years imprisonment.¹² This sentence comes after eight years of sifting through written and oral testimony (2009-2016) and after twelve years of searching for the fugitive Karadžić (1996-2008).¹³ The ICTY sentenced Karadžić, as erstwhile President of the Republika Srpska (1992-1996) and in command of its wartime military activities, for orchestrating genocide in and around Srebrenica; for planning and ordering population transfers, expulsions, persecutions, murders and other acts of ethnic cleansing on wide swaths of Bosnian territory; and for conducting the nearly four-year Siege of Sarajevo. Karadžić

¹² See the following ICTY press release from March 24, 2016:
<http://www.icty.org/en/press/tribunal-convicts-radovan-karadzic-for-crimes-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina> (Accessed 4/1/2016)

¹³ Karadžić was eventually apprehended in Belgrade, where he had, apparently, been hiding in plain sight. Only somewhat concealed behind a huge white beard, his long white hair gathered in a top-knot, Karadžić had taken both a new name, Dragan David Dabić, and a new profession as an alternative medicine doctor and self-styled spiritual healer.

was not charged for a second count of genocide in other municipalities of north, central, and eastern Bosnia (for example, in and around the cities of Prijedor and Foča). No one, it seems, is satisfied with this verdict.¹⁴ In the eyes of those who were displaced or injured by Karadžić's policies of ethnic cleansing or witnessed these crimes first- or second-hand, his acquittal of the second count of genocide is egregious, his forty-year (rather than life) sentence deemed too short.¹⁵ When seen as evidence that Karadžić is a victim of legal system biased against Serbs, his forty-year sentence (the longest handed down by the ICTY) is seen as too long.

Karadžić's sentencing, on the whole, does not serve to ameliorate individual and social traumas suffered during the war – even those suffered as a result of atrocities he personally committed. As scholar Eric Gordy rightly points out in his recent assessment of the Karadžić verdict:

the measure of success or failure of this verdict will not be in where Radovan Karadžić makes his residence between now and his death, or in what a gaggle of self-seeking politicians will do in the next week or month. It will be in whether, over the long term, facts that have been established by a combination of

¹⁴ The expectation that such a verdict can or should be “satisfactory” seems to miss important aspects of how the entire trial, and the crimes that motivated it, have and continue to be framed. Eric Gordy elaborates this point in a very helpful way in a recent blog post. He writes: “as to the concrete question of whether people should be satisfied, who am I to tell people what should satisfy them? Some people will be pleased or displeased with verdicts on particular counts or with the length or shortness of the sentence. Some people will be delighted that the Tribunal has finally brought a genuinely major trial to conclusion. Some people will see convictions on 10 of 11 counts as a partial victory, some will see a symbolic loss on the genocide question as a crushing defeat. Most people, sadly, at least in the short term, will see this or any other event as confirmation of what they have believed all along.” For Gordy’s full article, see: <https://eastethnia.wordpress.com/2016/03/26/q-and-a-on-the-karadzic-verdict/> (Accessed 4/1/2016)

¹⁵ Symbolically, if not practically: Karadžić is currently seventy years old and will likely die in prison even if the sentence is reduced by the eight years he has already sat in the Hague during his trial – and even if Karadžić is eligible for early release after having served two thirds of this sentence, as has been customary in the case of other war criminals tried before Karadžić in the ICTY (Hazim Delić, Dario Kordić, Momčilo Krajišnik, Momir Nikolić, Biljana Plavšić, Zoran Vuković, etc.).

investigation and argument enter into understanding and begin to provide a ground for discussion and mutual recognition among people who are aggressively taught by a phalanx of institutions that they need always to think of themselves as victims and of the people around them as their enemies. Whether this happens depends a lot less on anything the Tribunal does, and a lot more on the social and political environments in which people live. (Gordy 03/26/2016)

First, the conditions under which Karadžić has been tried and found guilty are so heavily inscribed into dominant narratives of trauma that his sentencing itself serves to buttress them: either the ethno-nationalist account of zero-sum victimhood or a narrative of painstakingly slow, ill-equipped, and haplessly negligent bureaucracy at work in institutions of transitional justice operating both locally and internationally. Second, in both of these narratives, trauma is conceived narrowly and prescriptively: it is the possession of an innocent victim and is intimately connected with, if not contingent upon, legal and political recognition.

When competing narratives of victimhood circumscribe the possibilities for remembering the past, when the mass-produced images of wartime atrocity that once flooded the televisions and newspapers of the world continue to be marshaled in support of one or another of these narratives of trauma, understandings of trauma and the boundaries for collective and individual memory in postwar Bosnia have not just been critically circumscribed. In fact and in addition, subordinating both what was traumatic about Bosnia's war and how it is remembered to oppositional and ethno-national narratives also has widespread effects on contemporary Bosnian society. Just as the mortal remains of victims are ritually reintegrated into communities through religious ceremonies and the (often retroactive) ascription of ethno-national identity, the traumas of a community's victims, both the dead and the living, are officially inscribed

into the community's own narrative of trauma – one that may or may not adequately represent the experiential quality of individual or social traumas on the ground.

Achieving justice and reconciliation requires reconsidering, critiquing, and moving beyond these fixed narratives – processes that involve both remembering episodes of the wartime past and recognizing traumas that do not fit neatly into these narratives. As Hodgkin and Radstone, quoted above, go on to claim,

Ideas of restitution and reparation, evoking both financial or political justice and more abstruse compensations such as recognition of wrongs done, or readiness to hear and acknowledge hidden stories, all draw on a sense that the present is obliged to accommodate the past in order to move on from it. (Hodgkin and Radstone 1)

Accommodating the traumatic past takes place first in the telling of new and hidden stories, in the use of metaphorical and visual modes of representation, and in the creation of and participation in alternative commemorative rituals. Fiction and memorial practice do not simply recapitulate the literal experience of having suffered massive violence, ethnic cleansing, genocide, rape, torture, loss, injury, and disenfranchisement. They also constitute intellectual and emotional interventions into and interpretations of the past and its relation to the present. It is precisely the nonlinear and metaphorical aspects of art, and the participatory, ritualistic, and extemporaneous nature of memorial practice, that allow these creative techniques to make the memory of traumatic experience coherent and endurable. Cultural production and memory initiatives both reflect and influence thinking about past trauma. Moreover, they crucially – and sometimes in a uniquely successful way – facilitate the difficult work of justice and peace. It is, thus, important to consider seriously all kinds of stories, those told in fiction and those in testimony, those that are so recognizable as to be emblematic and those that remain hidden. Stories and images are not always

capable of healing trauma. However, they can refigure it in ways that allow a better future to be imagined, claimed, and even constructed.

Jasmila Žbanić's 2006 film, *Grbavica*, is one of these hidden stories whose telling actually shifted both understandings of trauma as well as political and memorial landscapes in Bosnia. The Golden Bear-winning film masterfully portrays how the trauma of wartime rape alters the experience of the postwar present for Esma, a Bosnian woman, her daughter, Sara, and others in their Sarajevo community. So powerful was *Grbavica*'s impact that a debut screening at the 2006 Sarajevo Film Festival prompted the Bosnian parliament a few months later to designate survivors of rape as official civilian victims of war, eligible for compensation and social protections that they had been denied since the war ended. Not only did Žbanić's sensitive yet probingly critical work lead to fundamental changes in the way the Bosnian state views and treats raped women, *Grbavica* succeeded in this endeavor where a decade of activists, NGOs, and politicians had failed.

Žbanić's film goes beyond commonplace understandings of trauma and recovery, demonstrating both the paucity of therapeutic models that privilege confessional accounts of past suffering and, simultaneously, modeling alternative ways to both remember the traumatic past and integrate it into a meaningful narrative. Perhaps the most important aspect of *Grbavica*'s thoroughgoing intervention into dominant psychoanalytical conceptions of trauma is its rejection of the idea that trauma must have a single point of origin. Esma is traumatized not only because of her rape at the hands of Bosnian Serb soldiers (which itself, it must be said, constituted a repeated series of traumas rather than any single, identifiable trauma). She also experiences trauma because, in the postwar Sarajevo context in which she meagerly continues to

survive, the physical, social, and institutional landscape has been changed beyond recognition.¹⁶ Precarious economic realities, failures of therapeutic resources and institutions of social welfare, and pervasive senses of shame surrounding Esma and other survivors are portrayed as equally traumatic as the experiences of wartime rape, particularly because they compound, rather than ameliorate, the lasting trauma of rape. By facilitating different debates about the various legacies of wartime and postwar traumas in postwar Bosnia, *Grbavica* and its reception thus brought to the fore in a striking manner the particular capacity of art to set the terms for new and sustained political action in contemporary Bosnia – thinking and action that both challenge and move beyond bankrupt and imprecise models of “contested” memory.

GENESIS, PURPOSE, AND CONTRIBUTION

The texts and films considered in this dissertation have led me to hypothesize that rhetorical and visual analysis of texts and films, when combined with humanistic and social scientific investigation of sites of cultural memory in postwar Bosnia, can fruitfully offer insight into the variegated textures of traumatic memories. These

¹⁶ There is a longstanding controversy in trauma studies over whether traumatic events must be sudden (also termed “punctual”) or can be slow and ongoing (“insidious”). Psychoanalytical theorists, including Caruth, tend to adhere to the former. Scholars focused on the social implications and manifestations of historically- and culturally-specific traumas and their representations argue for an understanding of trauma that can include both kinds of etiologies. In particular, scholarship on the traumatic legacies of structural violence such as colonialism, slavery, racism, gender- and sex-based discrimination, and abuse has illuminated critical blind spots in earlier understandings of trauma, and charted new courses in accounting for both punctual and insidious traumas. See, for example: Irene Visser, “Trauma Theory and Postcolonial Literary Studies” (*Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 47:3, 2011), 270-282; Alan Gibbs, *Contemporary American Trauma Narratives* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 15-18; Michelle Balaev (ed), *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory* (Hounds-mills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan: 2014).

fictional texts, taken in their wider social context, also reveal both the strictures imposed on public and private remembrance as well as the overlooked possibilities for creative memorial activity that can and does exist in postwar Bosnian society. Throughout this dissertation, I have maintained that, in order to understand social trauma in Bosnia, it is necessary to delineate how trauma-inflected memories are articulated, managed, and reworked in the public sphere through narrative and symbolic processes. In both lived and representational contexts, trauma is fundamentally identified by the way memory, cognition, and points of view have been radically altered by and after the traumatizing experience. Trauma is thus intimately connected both to narrative practices and politics of memory.

Theorizing trauma using the tools of cultural studies, as this dissertation does, rather than through social scientific research involving traumatized individuals or groups, means paying close attention to the specific strategies employed by textual, visual, and ritual representations of trauma. In each of this dissertation's five chapters, I have attended to three major, if broadly organized, questions:

1. How do fictional and nonfictional narratives, visual art, film, and ritual memorial practices engage with, reflect, and refract traumatic experience? How do these representations establish key terms and parameters for discussing the past in other (Bosnian and international) contexts?
2. How are these wartime and postwar Bosnian representations of trauma similar to and different from those produced in other historical periods and

geographical locations? What challenges do their particular modes of representation pose to dominant theories of trauma and cultural memory?

3. To what extent can social forms of traumatic memory exist outside of and in opposition to the boundaries of circumscribed victimological narratives? In what institutional milieux, rhetorical modes, and patterns of sociability do such alternatives for collective memory inhere – both in the immediate Bosnian context and beyond?

While all of these questions inform each of the chapters that make up this dissertation, they are highlighted and stressed in different ways in each chapter's case study. Moreover, the varying emphases allows the dissertation to be divided into thematic and methodological sections in a number of ways. On a basic level, while each chapter discusses both the representation of trauma and its textual memorialization, Chapters Two, Three, and Five are primarily devoted to trauma, while Chapters One and Four deal with issues of cultural and social memory. Chapters Two and Three rely primarily on close textual analysis, while the remainder of the chapters use more interdisciplinary methods. Chapters One and Five constitute the dissertation's most forcefully polemical sections, propounding its most clearly articulated challenges to currently dominant notions of trauma's representation.

Chapter One focuses intently on the first two of the above stated research questions, analyzing both how a specific set of textual practices used in what the chapter terms "practical genres" memorialize traumatic war and, in addition, how these aesthetic choices set the chosen works up in contrast with other narratives of trauma

and, indeed, with Caruthian literary trauma theory itself. This chapter functions as an introduction to the field of study undertaken in the dissertation as a whole on several levels. First, it treats the very first texts produced under wartime conditions in Bosnia and delineates many of the major cultural actors in the period covered by the dissertation. As Chapter One maintains, and later chapters confirm, many works produced in the first years of war (such as Semezdin Mehmedinović's *Sarajevo Blues*, Ozren Kebo's *Sarajevo For Beginners*, documentaries produced by SaGA, and posters by the TRIO group) would become important cultural touchstones in remembering and narrating trauma, particularly that of Sarajevo's siege. Second, it makes the strong case that the manner in which these works narrate trauma and memorialize traumatic violence can be seen to contradict or critique understandings of trauma that insist on its inexpressibility, literality, and belatedness. The works discussed in later chapters further elaborate these specific points of criticism, and uncover others. Thus, Chapter One lays out in concise form one of this dissertation's major contributions: it argues that trauma and its representation should be theorized in more nuanced and culturally-specific ways and points to literature, film, and art produced in wartime Bosnia as an important case study for expanding scholarly understandings both of how trauma is represented and also how it is remembered by individuals and societies.

While the works analyzed in Chapter One belong firmly to wartime modes of cultural production and politics of memory, those treated in Chapter Two belong to a second generation of trauma narratives, which come after and build thematically and ideologically on those produced during the war period.¹⁷ Chapter Two rigorously

¹⁷ Because, as of this writing, it has only been twenty years since the end of the war, it is difficult to pinpoint specific generations of production. Nor is there a clearly defined break between

wartime and postwar production. For this reason, I have avoided strictly periodizing works treated in this dissertation. Nonetheless, it is possible to see the emergence of three somewhat distinct periods of cultural production since 1992: the war period (1992-1996), the immediate postwar period (1996-2002) between the Dayton accords and the first locally administered elections, and a second postwar period that continues to the present. These periods correlate with significant historical moments, insofar as fiction and film produced during them respond to social and political circumstances. Thus, the end of the war has an important impact both on the publishing and production conditions for literature and film, as well as their theatics and ongoing concerns. Finally, it is most likely clear, but should nonetheless be stated: because the works produced in these three periods are in no way reducible to the socio-political events that were taking place in Bosnia simultaneously to their creation, these categories are somewhat arbitrary and malleable in the extreme.

To speak in broad terms, the wartime period is characterized by art that sees itself as both an act of witness and an act of “cultural resistance” (as discussed extensively in Chapter One). Works produced during the war were viewed both as means of survival and of setting the terms of survival amidst hardship and danger. Moreover, the war years are characterized by intense artistic experimentation.

The first few years after the war are characterized, artistically, by a transition from the poetics of present trauma to those of grappling with losses suffered during the war and traumas of postwar peace. Texts produced in this period are less experimental, on the whole, but are extremely rich, deep, and polished. I consider the texts discussed in Chapter Two, as well as Faruk Šehić’s poetry and Ademir Kenović’s *Perfect Circle* (both discussed in Chapter Three) to be paradigmatic of this period. This period is historically bounded by Bosnia’s immediate postwar reconstruction, a process that had clearly stalled economically, politically, and socially by the first few years of the new millennium.

As noted above, 2002 marked Bosnia’s first locally-administered elections for politicians, who ran for four-year terms instead of the two-year terms of the OSCE-supervised government. This election, meanwhile, saw a resurgence of ethno-nationalist parties across Bosnia (notably, the Croat nationalist Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica [Croatian Democratic Union], the Bosniak nationalist Stranka Demokratske Akcije [Party of Democratic Action], and the Serb nationalist Srpska Demokratska Stranka [Serb Democratic Party]). This nationalist political trend has only continued and become further institutionalized in subsequent years. That same year, Paddy Ashdown succeeded Wolfgang Petritsch as High Representative (a position written into Annex 10 of the Dayton Accords to oversee the civilian implementation of the Accords and whose remit comprises, notably, vetting – and dismissing – local government officials and making unilateral decisions when local parties have reached an impasse and there seems to be little will to move beyond it). If the tenure of previous High Representatives had been accompanied by cautious optimism that the office would eventually be closed and Bosnia granted oversight of its own postwar political apparatus, Paddy Ashdown’s term, and the political landscape that accompanied it, merely further ingrained the High Representative in Bosnian politics and society.

Cultural production since 2002 has been more varied. There has been a turn away from what was held as an informal injunction that authors would write books and make films “about the war” in the wartime and immediate postwar periods. Many authors have explicitly refused to treat the war, some of them focusing heavily on other social traumas of Bosnia’s unhelpfully termed “transitional” period: economic stagnation, unemployment, corruption, and the varied realities diasporic living.

It must be stressed that, in this second postwar phase, film has taken on a central and dominant role. The genesis and development of the Bosnian film industry is a topic that calls for a more in-depth analysis than can be offered here (although I have begun researching it as part

engages with the first question in order to delineate how a cluster of postwar texts treat of time and space, conceived of together in a chronotopic manner, in a way that illuminates the experience of trauma in new ways. The bulk of the chapter is devoted to close readings of three texts (Aida Begić's *Snow*, Aleksandar Hemon's "A Coin," and Alma Lazarevska's "The Feast of the Rosary"). It thereby continues the work of rhetorical analysis carried out in Chapter One, amassing additional textual examples of how trauma has been variously framed and figured in Bosnian fiction. Chapter Two also addresses the second research question by identifying *Snow*'s prominent use of a magical realist mode. Magical realism and the fantastic have only recently and with some hesitation been recognized as genres or techniques used to represent traumatic pasts, particular in the so-called "Third World" and in the aftermath of colonialism. Thus, Chapter Two strengthens a growing counter-discourse in trauma studies. Meanwhile, because it explicitly sutures literary and cinematic works with commemorative rituals, demonstrating how texts and lived experience exist and buttress each other in a common memorial space, Chapter Two also addresses the third guiding question. It argues that social acts of commemoration and works of literature

of a larger project of detailing how Yugoslav institutions were both marshaled and co-opted in all of the newly-independent post-Yugoslav republics in the postwar period). It is crucial to note that while important films were certainly made in both the wartime and immediate postwar period (SaGA documentaries, *Perfect Circle*, etc.), post-Yugoslav Bosnian film matured and became a powerful artistic and social force only in this second postwar period. As a result of the differential but entangled developments of literature and film in wartime and postwar Bosnia, many of the concerns that I have identified as belonging to wartime and immediate postwar literature were taken up after 2002 in film. Thus, for example, the three works treated in Chapter Two belong to the same period, aesthetically and commemoratively, despite the fact that the film *Snow* (2008) was produced much later than Lazarevska's "Feast of the Rosary" (1997) or Hemon's "A Coin" (2000). One could date the prominence of postwar Bosnian film to Danis Tanović's *No Man's Land* [*Ničija zemlja*], which won an Oscar in 2002 – a fact that has certainly informed this attempt to sort postwar Bosnian cultural production into rough periods.

not only coexist and mutually impact each other but also both participate in and help to establish larger cultural memory practices and discourses.

Chapters Two and Three are methodologically and thematically linked. By focusing on both missing persons and the way loss and absence are represented in postwar texts and, in particular, burial practices, Chapter Three engages with one of the war in Bosnia's most deeply felt – and most prevalent – traumas. This chapter points to a common set of concerns held by a wide variety of trauma theorists: representations of traumatic absence and those of traumatically haunting presence. Poststructuralist literary trauma theory focuses special attention on the way absence structures both traumatic cognition and narrations of trauma. As Chapter Three indicates, however, it is primarily the intermingling and indeterminacy of the states of presence and absence that characterizes the trauma being represented both in texts like Ademir Kenović's *Perfect Circle*, Faruk Šehić's "There is This Story," and Danis Tanović's *Luggage* – and, likewise, in critiques of official mourning and memorial ceremonies at which Bosnia's "missing persons" are laid to rest. Thus, Chapter Three, like Chapter Two before it, engages each of the three main research questions of the dissertation in turn.

Both in its materials and in its approach, Chapter Four constitutes a significantly different involvement in Bosnian memory discourses than any of the dissertation's other chapters. Its central text (the collective memory project, *May 2, 1992: It Was a Fair and Sunny Day*) is a work of non-fiction, as established both by its implied relationship between author and reader and, more importantly, by its mnemonic approach – one which suggests that an "accurate" memory can, in fact, be triangulated by the collection of a large number of individual narratives. As has been discussed in Chapter One, the categories of fiction and non-fiction in wartime writing were consistently blurred,

combined, and ignored; one might also see the blending of fictional and non-fictional narrative stances in Faruk Šehić’s “There is This Story” (Chapter Three) and Jasmila Žbanić’s *Pictures From the Corner* (Chapter Five) – as well as Ademir Kenović’s creation of two “versions of the same story”: his non-fictional documentary, *Sarajevo: A Street Under Siege*, and his fictional feature, *Perfect Circle* (Chapter Three). Chapter Four investigates the specific texture and strategies of social memory that developed in response to the events of May 2, 1992 that many Sarajevans remember as marking the beginning of the war for the Bosnian capital. The constellation of narrative and visually mediated memories that make up the volume are illustrative for three main reasons. First, the recollections function as a flashbulb memory (a term coined in 1977 by Roger Brown and James Kulik), providing clear insight into this mnemonic process and its interplay of individual, social, and cultural mechanisms. Second, and related, the works contained in the volume demonstrate the degree to which notions of collective memory (Halbwachs 1952, J. Assmann 1995) and so-called “collected memory” (Young 1993, Olick 1999) are inseparable and, moreover, vitally and inextricably rest on acts of cultural mediation.

Finally, in addition to being guided by the first research question to focus on the volume’s rhetorical strategies, Chapter Four also meaningfully engages with the third, uncovering a thorny and uncomfortable issue at the core of the memory initiative’s *raison d’être*: to trace out “whether we remember and how we remember,” as volume editor Nihad Kreševljaković puts it. In investigating the frameworks used by *May 2, 1992: It Was a Fair and Sunny Day* to organize and narrate collectively-held memories of trauma, Chapter Four argues that acts of cultural memory that are, in fact, designed to oppose those enacted officially in contemporary Bosnia, with their focus on ethno-

nationally circumscribed victims and traumas, can themselves fall into new (and structurally similar) orthodoxies of memory.

If Chapter One posed the dissertation's most cogent challenge both to Caruthian theories of trauma and to rigid formal and generic restrictions on narratives of trauma, Chapter Five engages in a critical way with the socio-cultural legacy of these same powerful and persuasive theories. As detailed in the introduction, understanding trauma as inaccessible and inarticulable both emerged out of, and significantly furthered late 20th-century (particularly American) conceptions of political identity grounded in traumatic victimhood. The subsequent "memory boom," in which memories of trauma are given pride of place, facilitated both increased scholarly and popular attention being paid to trauma as well as a documented "memoir boom" – in which first-person narratives of trauma gained mass appeal to become the lucrative genre(s) they inhabit today. Chapter Five is firmly grounded in these wider global trends of trauma narratives' commodification and circulation. It uses existing circuits of dark tourism in Bosnia today as both an access point into and a lens through which to identify the problematic knot of effects of repulsion and fascination that sites of trauma have on spectators. When trauma is viewed as conferring a special (if not sacred) quality on victims, geographic sites, and features of narratives alike, representations of trauma – in text and space – can and do become marketable. Meanwhile, the same above mentioned unsettling coincidence of repulsion and fascination (which is, of course, not unique to representations of trauma) has been, and continues to be, bound up in an uncomfortable way with issues of spectatorship. Not only was the war in Bosnia, quite literally, photographed and televised for millions of viewers across the world, but this form of spectatorship – particularly because it was combined with a

global lack of will to end the war – constituted a major source of trauma and was represented as traumatic, both during the war and after it. Chapter Five explicitly connects issues of wartime spectatorship with those of trauma's postwar commodification, transmission, and transaction using, among other works, Adisa Bašić's "Trauma-market," Jasmila Žbanić's *Pictures From the Corner*, and returning to Semezdin Mehmedinović's *Sarajevo Blues* – the volume with which the dissertation opened.

This dissertation has brought together activity in spheres of Bosnian and global public culture that are often analyzed separately: the production and reception of literature and film; the creation and contestation of memorial sites; and participation in commemorative rituals that range from the religious to the touristic. It is built on research in four major areas: close textual and visual analysis of works of literature, art, and film; work with archival sources; participant observation at sites and commemorations; and visual and rhetorical analysis of sites and objects related to traumatic memory. This dissertation also contains significant translation work. With the exception of *Sarajevo Blues*, almost none of its other texts have been translated from Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian into English. Three works bear particular mention, because of the large percentage of their total text that was included in translated form in this dissertation: Ozren Kebo's *Sarajevo for Beginners*, Alma Lazarevska's "The Feast of the Rosary," and Nihad Kreševljaković's *May 2, 1992: It Was a Fair and Sunny Day*. Translating these texts here both makes them provisionally available to a wider audience and paves the way for my eventual publication of full translations of these and other works analyzed in this dissertation.

Taken together, the series of case studies that make up this dissertation advance an argument that understanding the long-term effects of war and postwar trauma in Bosnia is incomplete and attempts at successfully addressing these traumas are inadequate unless they involve deep and careful analysis of the wide variety of mechanisms that stitch past traumatic lived experience into present social fabrics.

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