

Introduction

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A Personal Beginning

In the spring of 2010, I went no fewer than three times to see Marina Abramović's performance piece and retrospective show *The Artist Is Present* at the New York City MoMA. The first time I went with a friend and knew that I had to return; the second time I went alone, to study the fifth-floor retrospective of her work; and finally I went back very briefly near the end of her atrium performance, part superstitiously and part protectively, to check that she was still all there.

Her performance—and the entire exhibit—was intended to provoke strong reactions. In a piece for the *New York Times*, Arthur Danto described the experience of sitting with Abramović as akin to witnessing a shamanistic trance. Danto, who has sat across from Abramović in more sociable environments, was quick to mention her wit and her charming “kind of Balkan humor” outside of the performance space. But more striking is his rhetorical leap from Abramović's fairly abstract, conceptual piece of performance art to his own connections with socialist Yugoslav history. He writes:

I had put three months into the catalog essay for the MoMA show, reading about her performances and about her life. I had spent some time in Yugoslavia in the 1970s teaching philosophical seminars as a Fulbright professor at the Inter-University Center of Postgraduate Studies in Dubrovnik. It was around then that Marina was doing her first performances in Belgrade. I recalled that, years before she was born, I had, as a young soldier in Italy, sailed one dark night to the Dalmatian coast with some partisans

I had fallen in with, to bring some of their wounded comrades back to Bari for treatment. One's experience of art draws on one's total experience in life.¹

I am struck by Danto's sudden reference to World War II because this mental backsliding mirrors my own. Our reactions are justified by the intellectual content of Abramović's work: the child of two partisan war heroes, Abramović has played with Yugoslav World War II iconography throughout her oeuvre, from the flaming five-pointed communist star that nearly killed her in the 1974 performance *Rhythm 5*, to the white horse-and-flag tribute to her father in *The Hero* (2001).

But for me, the stronger personal association has to do with the particular physicality of Abramović's art, and with the wounded female body. I too was raised in the cult and culture of World War II heroism, and my grandmothers, both partisans, were fairly spectacularly riddled with lead: one had been machine-gunned through the knees, and the other carried a rifle bullet lodged near her ninety-something shoulder until the very end, May 2012. I had some very odd ideas about the female body as a child: the bodies I knew best were scarred but evidently unstoppable by bullets, and seemed made from a different substance than fragile men. Theirs are the older, scarred figures that I continue to see, glimmering indistinctly behind Abramović's body of work.

But what I have just described is only one of so many possible memories, intellectual approaches, and rhetorical roads leading into the lingering ghostly outlines of the former Yugoslavia. Twenty years after disintegration, all of the contributors to *After Yugoslavia: The Cultural Spaces of a Vanished Land* find themselves looking back to move forward. They are united here in an unprecedented attempt to address and reshape the effects of what Andrea Zlatar-Viočić, quoting the French phenomenologist Paul Ricoeur, calls "too much memory in one place, too much forgetting in the other."

The overwhelming majority of the contributing authors (I believe, all but two) has lived in, however briefly, and draws roots from the former Yugoslavia. Sixteen contribute scholarly articles; three offer personal essays; and on occasion the distinctions prove porous. For one of the central binaries interrogated throughout this volume is that of individual versus collective memory. What of this post-Yugoslavia is mine alone, and what is ours? And, perhaps as fundamental as the same question posed in the first-person singular, who are/were *we*? How do we reconcile, or comprehend contradicting memories and national narratives? How is post-Yugoslav

collective memory, or rather memories, being shaped by contemporary culture and external influences? Who would we like to become? Hyphenated diaspora? Europeans?

The burning question of all the chapters in this collection remains: how do we make sense of the diverse, yet clearly interconnected post-Yugoslav cultural spaces? What combination of admittedly contradictory tools and methodologies will shed genuine light on the story of the Western Balkans, Central Europe, Southeast Europe, the former Yugoslavia, or any of these transitional spaces with contested names? The attempts offered here range from the meditative personal history, to historical inquiry, to linguistic research, to theoretically charged interventions, and even to close readings that bracket recent political history in pursuit of other categories of knowledge. In place of a dominant metanarrative, the contributors to *After Yugoslavia* attempt a polylogue, a multiplicity of communicating voices.

However, certain names and terms recur with frequency, suggesting some common ground and shared assumptions underlying the discussion. Unsurprisingly, a recurring motif involves the mapping of cultural capital. Pascale Casanova offers one model: following in the footsteps of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, she imagines a combative “world republic of letters,” where national canons compete for prestige and cultural capital. She writes of literary frontiers “independent of political boundaries, dividing up a world that is secret and yet perceptible by all (especially its most dispossessed members); . . . a world that has its own capital, its own provinces and borders, in which languages become instruments of power.”² Franco Moretti’s *Atlas of the European Novel* and Dudley Andrew’s “Atlas of World Cinema” serve comparable purposes.³ Clearly there are centers and peripheries when it comes to the distribution of cultural capital, and evidently the experience of marginality or marginalization (Dubravka Ugrešić calls it provincialization) is painfully relevant to the post-Yugoslav cultural experience.

Likewise, hardly a single article fails to mention Sigmund Freud or to use Freudian terminology, whether quoting his famous phrase on the “narcissism of minor differences,” often applied to intra-Balkan tensions, or borrowing more general notions such as trauma, melancholy, repetition compulsion, and the return of the repressed. This language appears unavoidable in descriptions of literature and film after the wars of secession; moreover, the “return of the Yugoslav repressed” emerges as one of the crucial concepts of the book. Sometimes the revenant-repressed is what lurked below the forced-idyll of the former Yugoslavia and brought about

its ruin; and sometimes it resembles the borders of the country that no longer exists but that all of the contributors to this volume can redraw by heart. In either case the “living dead,” as in Maria Todorova’s essay, will return to haunt you.

There are many other telling areas of overlap, as I will discuss below in more depth. George Steiner’s *After Babel* informs or complicates arguments over translation and language identity. Mikhail Bakhtin’s works on heteroglossia and polyphony provide a link between the experiences of reading texts on the page and encountering the cultural texts of marginal, border spaces. The Bakhtinian notion of the “carnavalesque” is used with more ambivalence to describe literary and film industries prone to self-exoticism, or as Tomislav Longinović has put it, “self-Balkanization.” Finally, the Frankfurt school and its heirs provide the infrastructure to cultural-studies approaches: the words of Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Fredric Jameson, and Walter Benjamin are coded into recurring critiques of the “free market” and of globalization as the new colonialism.

This volume of essays about a region that “dare not speak its name,” aims both to report and to build on shared culture. The pieces repeat the experience of so many individuals and communities: the human mind cannot but quest for models to explain, rationalize, simplify, or conceptualize what are potentially infinitely complex phenomena. Several of our authors also number among the more pertinent writers contributing to these new or revised literary traditions. But direct involvement by no means cancels out the need for continual sense-making—through memoirs, scholarly articles, literary works, or films. All of these are efforts to “map” Yugoslavia, its wars, and its cultures in transition.

It remains to ask the naïve-sounding question: to what exactly are these nations transitioning? Presumably, to membership in the European Union, but in 2011 the writers collected in this anthology express far more skepticism toward this new idyll than unproblematic unionism. Part of their reserve comes from bitter experience: we have already tried brotherhood and unity, cry the insulted and the injured. Europe might do well to skip the condescension and instead take a long hard look at the rise and fall of the South Slavic confederation: the EU has lessons to learn from YU.

Finally, for all the “progress” of transitioning to democracy and capitalism from socialism, presumably inevitable after the fall of the Communist Party and the Soviet Union, the free market does not seem so free to scholars of post-Yugoslav culture. The five chapters included in the part on

national literatures after 1991, as well as the pieces on cinema and on the history of a “common culture,” all speak with varying degrees of pessimism about print runs for fiction of no more than five hundred copies, the drastic decline of cinemas, and the failure of local products to compete with translated international bestsellers. The argument is familiar but remains troubling; as Tatjana Rosić puts it, cheesecake always wins over homemade local pastries.

The idea for this volume came from the conference “*Ex Uno Plures: Post-Yugoslav Cultural Spaces and Europe*,” organized by Radmila Gorup at Columbia University in March 2010. The event itself was a lesson in polyphony, bringing together specialists from the regional cultural capitals, academics from the diaspora, and Western Slavists and regional studies scholars. Despite the phrase “and Europe” in the title, New York was the physical space mediating the conference, and stands in metonymically for the largely American academic culture that continues to “mediate” in this volume, conceived, compiled, and intended for publication in the United States. Several of the pieces nod to this other cultural presence, whether as further evidence of trends that they describe, or to suggest alternative transnational communities. This anthology emerged as an attempt to reflect that complexity, to encourage the counterpoint of multiple perspectives, and to avoid the semantic violence of one totalizing master narrative. Narratives and stances certainly do emerge, but one hopes that they do so out of a creative and collaborative “struggle for mutual freedom”—to conclude somewhat archly with a phrase that Stanley Cavell has used to describe the relations between men and women.

An Overview

After Yugoslavia opens with “My Yugoslavia: Personal Essays,” two short chapters by Maria Todorova and Vesna Goldsworthy. The volume closes in the same vein, with a personal essay by Dubravka Ugrešić, bringing together three remarkable writers never before published under the same cover. Addressing the tension between individual and collective memory, these framing essays foreground personal, subjective experiences of the region, moving east to west from the Balkans to the republic of “Kakania,” counter to the flow of the Danube.

Todorova, best known for her work on Balkan Orientalism in *Imagining the Balkans* (1997), offers “My Yugoslavia,” the keynote address at the

2010 *Ex Uno Plures* conference. Todorova remembers Yugoslavia from the perspective of an initially disinterested neighbor: “In my Balkan map,” she writes, “Turkey was western (because of a handful of fascinating intellectuals), and Yugoslavia was eastern.” She traces the rise of regional comparativist studies, such as the 1934 founding of the Balkan Institute in Belgrade, in the then Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The institute’s first “Balkanological” manifesto identified “two immanent trends—unification and particularism,” that determined the historical evolution of the region. Today and in the wake of disintegration, Todorova suggests an approach based on the study of legacy. The region abounds with legacies: from the long shadows of the Ottoman and Hapsburg empires emerges what Todorova calls the 1990s “continued unmixings,” the last throes “on the road to homogenized Europeanization.” Likewise Yugo-nostalgia is but a peculiar subgenre of the postcommunist nostalgia stretching from Europe to Central Asia, China, and beyond. For one or two generations and diasporic communities, Yugoslavia will survive in memory like the “living dead.”

In “Yugoslavia: A Defeated Argument?” Goldsworthy brings old documents and artifacts to ekphrastic life: her album, postcards, passport, and identity card. She speaks of the return of the Yugoslav repressed: “The familiar shape of the Socialist Federal Republic remains visible on maps of Europe, in the way that old outlines bleed through layers of new paint.” An alternative space/time, the Yugoslav chronotope includes an entire ghostly calendar of nonholidays. Goldsworthy calls herself “much better versed in writing about the idyll” of Tito’s Yugoslavia, although her firsthand memories have been partly supplanted by the violent “newsreel” Yugoslavia of the 1990s mediascapes. Admitting freely to her own possessive nostalgia, Goldsworthy notes the irritation we feel at others’ memories, which always seem to falsify our own. Western academic industries with “professional Serbs, Croats, Albanians, or Yugoslavs” provoke extra suspicion, for “such experts love their subject fervently if only to kill it for most other people.” Finally, Goldsworthy turns to the dimmed appeal of the European Union, whose byzantine bureaucracy looks suspiciously familiar to post-Yugoslavs: both “confederations” derive from the afterlife of Austria-Hungary. Perhaps more positive cultural continuity will take place online, or in the works of transnational writers like Aleksandar Hemon and Téa Obreht.

The second part, “Histories and Common Culture,” includes chapters by Dejan Djokić, Zoran Milutinović, and Vladimir Zorić. In “The Past as Future: Post-Yugoslav Space in the Early Twenty-First Century,”

Djokić attempts a concise overview of Yugoslav history, and a rebuttal of the nationalist “para-histories” of the 1990s. Opening with Stojan Novaković’s futuristic 1911 essay, “After One Hundred Years,” Djokić charts the rise and perhaps temporary fall of the Yugoslav idea, which preceded Tito’s Yugoslavia by one hundred years. Djokić compares Yugoslav nation building and language standardization to those of Germany and Italy, and finds Yugoslavia to have been something between a nation-state, with 80 percent of the population South Slavs, and a multinational state with a complex counterpoint of individual nationalisms. Ultimately the collapse of the Party and of international relevance spelled doom for socialist Yugoslavia—but why was disintegration so incomprehensibly violent? There is still no good, book-length study of the Wars of Yugoslav Secession, Djokić notes. He ends with the warning that “Europe should closely watch,” for the attempt “to build a viable multinational state in the twentieth century, and their ultimate failure, could provide valuable lessons for the EU project,” and with a nod to Tim Judah’s concept of a “Yugosphere.” Paradoxically, some form of “Yugoslavism” might continue to flourish outside of the confines of a common state.

Milutinović picks up from there with “What Common Yugoslav Culture Was, and How Everybody Benefited from It.” Warning that a clear picture cannot emerge from nationalist, anticommunist agendas or from Yugo-nostalgia, he calls for a rational assessment of the benefits of a common South Slavic culture. He agrees with Pascale Casanova that “minor” cultures are poor in resources, and posits that, unlike the Hapsburg or Ottoman empires, Yugoslavia managed to create a successful supraculture in only seventy years. The Slovene Bartholomus Jernej Kopitar, the Serb Vuk Karadžić, and the Croat Ljudevit Gaj once dreamed of a common “Illyrian” culture; at the turn of the twentieth century, “many ‘Illyrians’ felt at home everywhere between Austria and Bulgaria, and treated it as a single cultural space.” From partisan films to Ljubiša Ristić’s KPGT theater troupe,⁴ Milutinović runs through a list of “self-consciously supranational” Yugoslav phenomena. A shared culture was fostered through state funding, mandatory education, and translations—for culture mattered in socialist Yugoslavia. Where, he asks, are the great writers and artists today? The European Union makes no comparable effort to protect small languages and cultures: ironically, only Slavoj Žižek survives in the free market. The Yugosphere can only ever be the “pale shadow” of a once-vibrant Yugoslav culture. Milutinović demands how it is possible for a people to lose so much,

to gain so little, and yet to look forward to voluntary colonization and disenfranchisement reminiscent of that under the Austro-Hungarian empire.

Zorić in turn interrogates the once powerful Central European model in "*Discordia Concors: Central Europe in Post-Yugoslav Discourses.*" This semiotic concept and imagined space was born of Milan Kundera's 1986 essay "The Tragedy of Central Europe," which cast Soviets as "an anti-European totalitarian force which captured the geographical center of the continent." More appealing was Danilo Kiš's "Variations on Central European Themes," which proposed a utopian republic without center or borders. Zorić analyzes the works of Dragan Velikić, László Végel, and Drago Jančar, writers who treat Kiš as a spiritual guide. Velikić calls Serbia a temporally frozen "country on the other side of the mirror," and maps Central Europe by tracing the Danube River upstream to the West. Végel, a Vojvodina Hungarian playwright, casts the region as a Bakhtinian hybrid cultural space: "The great paradigm of Central-Eastern Europe is precisely this feeling of periphery, a traumatic meeting of cultures . . . and despite all that, an extremely volatile space of hope." Jančar focuses on the Slovenians: a Euro-skeptic, he fears that Slovenia has lost what it so recently gained, and that EU accession will "redraw the map of Europe and, for the first time, consign Slovenia to the East." Zorić suggests Trieste, a city that even James Joyce called home, as a hybrid border-city and ideal Central European capital. Zorić joins his authors in mapping Central Europe as a literary "versatile trope of pluralistic space," a metaphor rather than a political union.

Looked at as a group, these chapters map out a territory similar to the personal essays that open and close the volume, drifting west from Yugoslavia to Central Europe. Djokić suggests that Yugoslav culture will not entirely vanish; Milutinović argues that it will and that this is a tragedy; and Zorić interrogates Central Europe as an alternative utopia. All three texts are fascinated with shared culture, cultures in dialogue, and cultures as dialogic; all turn with interest to marginal, borderline, or virtual spaces such as the Yugoslosphere. Zorić's study offers fascinating parallels to the final essay by Ugrešić, examining the Central European alternative as a republic of letters. The Danube River runs through the literature, suggesting continuity and flow in both space and time, a powerful image of the cultural/phenomenological experience of Central Europe.⁵

The third part, "Legacies of Yugoslavia: Cultural Returns," is comprised of chapters by Mitja Velikonja, Gordana P. Crnković, and Marijeta Božović, focusing on what cultural traces remain or rise again in the post-

Yugoslav spaces. All three texts step back in time in order to move forward. Not coincidentally, all three chapters deal with culture more broadly: Yugo-music, posters, journals and avant-garde design, or the film career of Rade Šerbedžija. Nonliterary arts, or projects that include other media as well as language, have an easier time crossing and blurring borders. These chapters turn to the Frankfurt school and Western Marxist thinkers for the tools to explore leftist subversions of capitalist/neocapitalist culture. Crnković finds a great local inspiration in Krleža, the “Croatian Sartre,” and Božović in the journal *Zenit*, an attempt to spark an internationally relevant Balkan avant-garde. Both chapters wonder at these radical subversions of Yugoslavia before state socialism, and at their lessons for transitional spaces in a globalized world.

In “Something Has Survived . . .”: Ambivalence in the Discourse About Socialist Yugoslavia in Present-Day Slovenia,” Velikonja takes inspiration from a 2009 billboard advertising a popular radio station with the silhouette of Yugoslavia and the promise to play more “yugo” music than other stations. The silhouette is seductive; exotic “Balkan parties” are already popular with the Slovenians. Velikonja critiques the new “EUrocentrism” and Balkanophobia, and analyzes the 2003 film *Kajmak i marmelada* (*Cheese and Jam*, in the unfortunate English translation) as typical of dominant national discourses. The pretty blonde Slovenian heroine leaves her criminally macho Bosnian boyfriend: they tried, but they are just “too different”—the message is clear. And yet, iconic images borrowed from socialist Yugoslavia serve as inspiration to diverse “anti-establishment leftist groups like alterglobalists, pacifists, punks, anarchists, left-oriented students, and others who are fighting for a more just world.” A 2009 survey showed Slovenians more likely to identify terms like *welfare*, *justice*, and *freedom* with socialism than with capitalism. Velikonja notes that even the current Slovenian ruling elite were once members of the League of Communists, a past that haunts them in the “typical Freudian situation.” The old times are subversive, inspire love and hate, selective amnesia or selective nostalgia. But as we know, nostalgia always longs for a lost time more than for a lost space: a true return is impossible.

Crnković structures her “Vibrant Commonalities and the Yugoslav Legacy” in two parts: first she looks to Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav film industries for examples of an enduring common culture. Despite the efforts of the dominant political establishments, she argues that “works of art shape the fluidity of space and time.” Individuals transcend national

borders: the paradigmatic Rade Šerbedžija is one such voice for reason and unity, initially as a member of the KPGT theater group and now quietly reuniting Yugoslavia through his numerous local and Western films. Filmmakers still rely on collaborations across post-Yugoslav spaces. Crnković turns to the same film as Velikonja, *Kajmak i marmelada*, as an example of continued collaboration: the Slovenian film is written, directed by, and stars the Bosnian Branko Đurić. Crnković then moves back in time to Miroslav Krleža: she echoes Ugrešić that the rest of Croatian literature *should* be a footnote to Krleža, whose great interwar texts were “not about a socialist society, but about a capitalist one of control.” Imitating Europe blindly never ends well. She finds hope in recent publications and reprinted works, for reappropriating Krleža “may show a way of reactivating and revitalizing other vibrant commonalities.” In one moving quote, Krleža defines socialism simply as “the fight against earthly evils by earthly means.” Meanwhile, recent Bosnian films betray profound anxieties over the new “rational ways of doing business,” an automatized drive for profit that finds its logical conclusion in the drug trade and trafficking in women.

“*Zenit* Rising: Return to a Balkan Avant-Garde” follows a similar logic but in reverse order. I begin with the recent revival of interest in *Zenit*, an interwar journal centered around a core group of Serbs but originally printed in Zagreb, in two alphabets and usually at least five languages, including Esperanto as well as the “language” of images and visual design. The ambitious if tiny group aimed to reverse the fall of Babel, and consciously strove to evolve a radical, collective, and ephemeral new form of art. This Balkan avant-garde drew on Russian and German models, but sought to turn its double marginalization into an advantage. The *Zenit* circle, with Ljubomir Micić serving as the André Breton of the group, invented a new hero in the Balkan Barbarogenius, a near relative of Aleksandr Blok’s Scythian and Nietzsche’s *übermensch*. I study this movement in relation to other European avant-gardes, and to theoretical writing on the possibilities of new media and of new incarnations of print culture from the interwar period. This deeply self-conscious avant-garde practice evolved radical notions of “marginal art,” anticipating debates in the Frankfurt school and ongoing today. Finally, I suggest that the ideas of *Zenit* move beyond the historical avant-garde, and interrogate the paradoxical idea of an avant-garde tradition (as Marjorie Perloff has suggested of Anglo-American poetry). I end with the suggestion that the most internationally renowned

avant-garde practice stemming from the Balkans today, the performance art of Marina Abramović, is perhaps the true heir to little *Zenit*.

The fourth part, “The Story of a Language,” consists of chapters by Tomislav Longinović and by the linguists Ranko Bugarski and Milorad Pupovac. All three question the demise of Serbo-Croatian, which may well prove to have a life beyond the grave. These chapters consider questions of translation, intelligibility, and the complex interpenetration of language and identity. George Steiner’s broad-ranging study *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (1975) considers all human communication to be a form of translation, and the extreme plurality of human languages to stem from a desire for difference. Steiner famously interrogates the myth of Babel, common to so many languages: one might conclude that there can be—and in some sense, are—as many languages as there are models for mapping human experience. But Longinović, Bugarski, and Pupovac look closely at one particular and politicized mini-Babel, striving to understand why only certain Romantic efforts at language-standardization and nation building took root and became autoregulating (e.g., Germany, Italy).

Longinović analyzes the fate of Serbo-Croatian in “Post-Yugoslav Emergence and the Creation of Difference,” merging his own experience as “a person trying to come to terms with the linguistic divisions imposed as a result of Yugoslavia’s violent dismemberment” with his “scholarly interest in understanding translation as a cultural practice promoting communication and understanding.” He begins with the surreal screening of the Serbian film *Wounds* (*Rane*, 1998) with added Croatian subtitles in Zagreb after the end of the war. The “translation” was nearly identical to the original, with occasional attempts to find synonymous alternatives. The already comical situation provoked audience hysteria when it came down to the “shared arsenal of obscenities.” What is less humorous is that translation, supposedly a bridge between cultures, became a tool to enforce difference. Longinović recalls the collaborative efforts of Vuk and Gaj in the nineteenth century, and argues that the failure of Yugoslavia marks the end of “the Romantic notion of the nation-state, imagined as a territory based on common linguistic heritage and a shared folklore,” to be replaced with “historically residual cultural formation based on religious affiliation and identification with the former imperial master.” Invoking Freud’s “narcissism of minor differences,” Longinović critiques the Orientalization of Serbs “as genocidal *guslars*.” He ends by predicting the “soft return of the hyphen in Serbo-Croatian,” should cultural bonds prove stronger than political agendas.

Bugarski asks “What Happened to Serbo-Croatian?” and offers several valid but mutually contradictory answers. Linguistically, he writes, not much has happened and Serbo-Croatian is alive and well. Politically, very much has happened: the language no longer exists. Finally, “something” has happened, referring to the psychological experiences of the speakers. Outlining the history of the language, he finds that the compound term was first put into use as early as 1824 by foreign scholars. He too recalls the Pan-Slavic Illyrian movement led by Ljudevit Gaj and Vuk Karadžić: from the vantage point of 2010, the term *Serbo-Croatian* has been around for 186 years, the idea of a common literary language for 160 years, and the standard language of that name was “codified about 110 years ago.” Despite the shift in politics, Bugarski concludes that there is “no inherent necessity” for the language to simply disappear with the end of Yugoslavia. He runs through the various extreme claims that have been put forward about the language/languages, and argues that linguistic considerations should take precedence over political or psychological reactions on the part of speakers. As a “native speaker of a dead language,” he notices the growing use of ambiguous but telling terms such as *our language* and *the region* more or less coinciding with Serbo-Croatian and the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

In “Language Imprisoned by Identities; or, Why Language Should Be Defended,” Pupovac uses the term *identitization* to describe the process by which language is used primarily as a vehicle for the standardization of identity. Language should be defended both from itself and from us, Pupovac claims. He compares identitized language with secret languages and the metalanguage of researchers and specialists: none of these languages are dialogical, whereas in practice “languages survive because they meet and combine with each other,” just as do individual identities. Pupovac traces the “vernacular revolution” of the European languages and the foundations for modern linguistics put forward by Herder, von Humboldt, and others. He finds a particularly rich history of research into the language and folklores of the South Slavs, and contrasts such cumulative efforts with language policies in the 1990s that erased history and meaning through the forceful elimination of synonyms and “foreign” vocabulary. Through a “lack of continuity in language policy,” the language/languages of the region failed to arrive at the stage of autoregulation. Pupovac is especially critical of the recently standardized Montenegrin, with its insistence on a language layer that “belongs to all *autochthonous* Montenegrin citizens” and on minute differences such as the phonemes *ś* and *ž*. For a

welcome and practical alternative, Pupovac offers a traditional recipe for stuffed turkey from a Bosnian cookbook, a text “polyphonic through and through,” which combines regional synonyms, substandard usages, neologisms, and calques—all with the goal of maximum communication with the greatest number.

The fifth part, “Post–Film,” consists of two chapters. As the most internationally accessible cultural medium, Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav film has consistently met with the most, and often most favorable, critical coverage.⁶ On the one hand, Balkan film often stands apart from literature and other forms of art in the public eye. On the other hand, as evidenced already in this book, no larger discussion of post-Yugoslav culture would be complete without an overview of recent films, recontextualized by the discussions of other media that earlier articles have aimed to provide. Andrew Horton and Meta Mazaj provide two very different overviews in a section that in its own way encapsulates many of the recurring motifs of *Ex Uno Plures*.

In “The Vibrant Cinemas in the Post-Yugoslav Space,” Horton agrees with Crnković that newly international collaborations are alive and well. Despite market pressures, “the drastic decline of cinemas everywhere,” and the “rise in video/DVD viewing, partly on illegal bootleg copies,” film industries appear to be coping. “Until the very end of its existence,” he writes, “Yugoslavia often had four or five films in the top ten [list at the box office], a phenomenon that continues today in Serbia and some of the other former Yugoslav republics.” He grimly lists the local predicaments: “high unemployment, often over 50 percent; the continuous departure of young people to other countries; lack of political security; and a huge illegal trade of goods, drugs, and women, often controlled by local ‘mafia.’” The movies reflect this reality, as well as the imperative to make sense of life after war—which gives contemporary projects an odd sense of continuity with the very first local industry of partisan films. Horton revisits the FAMU group of the 1960s and 1970s (Rajko Grlić, Goran Paskaljević, Emir Kusturica), then turns to a younger generation. Arsen Anton Ostojić’s *A Wonderful Night in Split* (*Ta divna splitska noć*, 2003) and Srđan Vuletić’s *Summer in the Golden Valley* (*Ljeto u zlatnoj dolini*, 2003) echo with familiar themes: trafficking in women, drug wars and crime culture, the neo-noir of a lost generation. He closes with the somewhat more life-affirming or at least self-ironizing comedies, and Miroslav Momčilović’s *Seven and a Half* (*Sedam i po*, 2006). In the finale, which sounds suspiciously like the

Soviet musical comedy *The Circus* (*Tsirk*, 1936), a multi-ethnic cast of characters sings a lullaby to a newborn Bosnian baby in a Belgrade hospital.

If Horton reflects the most prevalent themes in post-Yugoslav cinema, Meta Mazaj stages an intervention with “Marking the Trail: Balkan Women Filmmakers and the Transnational Imaginary.” Balkan film has undergone a sea-change since 2000. The films of the 1990s that brought Balkan cinema international attention, Mazaj writes, were not only all by male directors but “presented, without a slight hint of ambiguity, a hyper-masculine and patriarchal image . . . that appealed to international audiences, in no small amount because it affirmed the stereotypical image of the Balkans.” Balkan carnivalesque caters dangerously to the worst kind of voyeurism.⁷ Mazaj counters with the “transnational imaginary” of collaborative efforts run by female directors, such as Maja Weiss’s *Guardian of the Frontier* (*Varuh meje*, 2002), Jasmila Žbanić’s *Grbavica* (2006), and Aida Begić’s *Snow* (*Snijeg*, 2006). Most of these films are international co-productions, often with Austria, Germany, and France, and with Iran in the case of *Snow*. The intervention of women’s cinema ends the Balkan decade and the “cinema of self-Balkanization.” These new female filmmakers explore a poetics of normalization, putting traditional markers of realist aesthetics to uses that simultaneously engage with and reject the expectations of “world cinema” and the “palatable foreignness” of quasi-documentary and ethnographic film. *Grbavica* deals with the institutionalized mass rapes that gendered the Bosnian War and prompted the UN International Criminal Tribunal to define rape as a war crime in 1996. *Guardian of the Frontier* uses an innocent canoe trip down the Kolpa, a border river between Slovenia and Croatia, to explore internal and external borders—“landscape and mindscape”—and preoccupations with national purity. *Snow* finds a strangely idyllic and self-sufficient female world in a Bosnian village whose men have all disappeared in the war.

In the sixth part, “The New National Literatures,” Davor Beganović, Andrea Zlatar-Violić, Tatjana Rosić, Alojzija Zupan Sosič, and Venko Andonovski sketch out five different flightmaps of contemporary literary developments in Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, and Macedonia. Perhaps due to the very nature of the topic, all five chapters turn inward to look at cultural developments in their respective nations. The experiences of war-torn Bosnia have been very different from those of Slovenia: there can be no equivalent to the subgenre of Sarajevo siege stories in Ljubljana. One expects less antagonism toward American intervention in

Zagreb than in Belgrade after bombardment; and even for purely literary-historical reasons, different practices to emerge in the newest national literature, Macedonian. However, the literatures explored by these chapters seem more similar than divergent. The novels are preoccupied with trauma and with the noir of urban subcultures; they combine the tricks and stylistic “reveals” of postmodernism with more traditional realistic narratives.⁸ The essays in turn enact as well as depict a sense of isolation; all of the pieces either critique or betray powerful anxieties over the new market for local literature, or the lack thereof. Yet, regardless of the relative pessimism or optimism of their introductory remarks, all five contributors still find much new national literature to discuss.

Beganović opens “Traumatic Experiences: War Literature in Bosnia and Herzegovina Since the 1990s” with Freud’s famous essays “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” (1917) and “Mourning and Melancholy” (1920). From these he borrows the language that he and the other post-Yugoslav literary critics so inevitably use: these terms include *trauma*, *melancholy*, *repetition compulsion*, and *the return of the repressed*. Beganović notes that trauma has gone from meaning a physical wound to psychological damage in popular usage. Beganović draws a direct parallel between post-World War I Europe and Bosnia after the wars of succession: literature dealing with the Bosnian wars repeats the “classic modernism created in the aftermath of World War I.” In turn, contemporary Bosnian letters veer toward either realist or modernist techniques. Essentially, the two styles come down to the competing schools of Ivo Andrić and Krleža. The former foregrounds a poetics of melancholy, claustrophobic internal spaces, and suspended time: such are the novels of Sarajevo under siege. The latter is marked by “warrior’s prose,” grotesque and charged with images of violence and the front, and by external spaces. In these works everything changes, including the topography: the familiar becomes unfamiliar just as bodies are disfigured beyond recognition. There are psychological risks involved in war writing, which may give the reader voyeuristic pleasure: black humor offers some release, but the challenge is to avoid self-exoticizing and the “Balkan carnivalesque” for which Emir Kusturica and other filmmakers have been so often criticized.

In “Culture of Memory or Cultural Amnesia: The Uses of the Past in the Contemporary Croatian Novel,” Zlatar-Viočić remarks that Croatian poetry has faded away as a viable literary form, in favor of the more readily marketable and consumable novel. In a free-market competition,

bestsellers win by definition, and their lists are “invariably topped by translations of international hits, on the whole Anglo-American.” The new Croatian literary market and publishing industry are not yet self-sustaining: Zlatar-Violać describes a “failure to restore the distribution network” after the 1990s. However, a relatively stable reading public continues to grow. She finds several categories and subspecies of contemporary Croatian fiction, such as women’s writing, war stories, and various testimonials. Writers active before secession, such as Slavenka Drakulić, a pioneer of Croatian feminism, and Dubravka Ugrešić, from abroad, continue to produce. New voices like Maša Kolanović conjure Novi Zagreb as a complex cultural city-text with the capacity to remember. Characters are veterans of one kind or another, suffering from posttraumatic stress syndrome and experiences that cannot be represented directly. One recurring tendency in contemporary Croatian letters is to “deconstruct the existing stereotypes and to dismantle the key collective images which have dominated our fiction, nonfiction, and the media scene.” Zlatar-Violać ends with a meditation on memory and amnesia. The peculiar power of the individual speech act, “I recall,” is particularly evident when writers in exile defend their memories against dominant national narratives. She repeats the words of Paul Ricoeur, “Too much memory in one place, too much forgetting in the other,” a summary with melancholy overtones of the irremediable human condition.

In “Cheesecakes and Bestsellers: Contemporary Serbian Literature and the Scandal of Transition,” Rosić emphasizes the agonies of market pressure. More pessimistic than either Beganović or Zlatar-Violać, Rosić considers the “transitional” literary market to be neocolonial and to have “fatally impacted” Serbian literature. Gone is the highbrow “pleasure of the text,” as she uses Roland Barthes’ phrase, to be replaced with mass entertainment of the sort that Adorno and Horkheimer considered the end of resistance. Summarizing what remains, Rosić turns to *Cake Parlor Stories*, a collection edited by David Albahari and Vladan Mijatović Živojinović. Rather than a locale for self-indulgent nostalgia (baklava, tulumbe, chestnut purée, wheat with whipped cream—and ashtrays!) the cake parlor turns out to be the “arena for gory transition conflicts,” such as abductions, mafia extortions, terrorist conspiracies, and grotesque *gastarbeiter* one-upmanship, as well as a “venue possessed since time immemorial by foreign, demonic, and colonial” forces. Rosić also notices a surge in women’s writing, but marked by a tendency to trade on sex appeal. She veers tantalizingly into metacriticism with a discussion of the criti-

cal publication *Beton* and its attempts to “build a dam” of intelligent and sustained critique.⁹ Most compellingly, after remarking on the fascination with the “culture and aesthetics of urban subcultural communities,” she draws attention to the virtual soundtrack running through new Serbian literature. A post-1968 “spirit of freedom, individualism, and social resistance” finds its best tools of subversion in music: Rosić even suggests that these soundtracks function as a kind of symbolic unconscious, one way of struggling against the “reality” presented by the media.

Sosič opens the modestly titled “Slovene Literature Since 1990” with relative optimism: while sharing many concerns with the other contributors to this part, Sosič considers Slovenian literature to be blossoming. The bad news is that the “restructuring of capital within the global neoliberal system effectively destroyed the Slovene economy and negatively impacted the development of all genres of noncommercial literature.” Print runs of local literature have dropped to five hundred from the state-supported ten thousand, while market conditions favor the fast turnover likely to come from cookbooks, travel guides, and “various New Age guides to personal growth.” (Arguably, these same contradictions hold across the globe: statistically speaking, people are reading more than ever, but there is a sense that high culture is under siege.) However, Sosič emphasizes Slovenia’s relatively peaceful secession from the former Yugoslavia and its cultural consequences. Working from different premises and without the direct experience of trauma, she divorces her study from post-Yugoslav or regional contexts. She writes that “it is often tempting to rely on the umbrella category ‘transition literature’ to understand Slovene works in the last two decades”; but her own stance is that “Slovene literature is better understood outside the confines of political demarcations.” Sosič believes that high-quality novels are emerging (poetry remains nonviable) around “small themes” and personal topics such as romantic disappointment and the inability to communicate, rather than “great themes” like national identity. Sosič divides the new literary phenomena into “literary eclecticism,” “new emotionality,” and “transrealism.” Many of these post-postmodern works rely on traditional literary formulae and approaches, modified in subtle ways. The category of “transrealism” sounds especially tempting. The Russian-American theorist Mikhail Epstein coined the term *transculture* to describe traditions that cross and challenge national borders. Sosič seems to use transrealism to suggest the crossing of temporal rather than spatial boundaries—but perhaps this too is something that will evolve in time.

Finally in this part of the book, Andonovski turns to Macedonian literature in “The Palimpsests of Nostalgia.” Macedonian literature as such was founded in 1945; the end of Yugoslavia in 1991 marked its second critical hour. In between, literary currents have swept from socialist realism to “truth as construct,” a phrase Andonovski borrows from the philosopher Richard Rorty. Beginning with the late 1960s, exposure to new literary theory, such as the works of Bakhtin, immediately sparked or coincided with experiments in the novel. Macedonian literature has gone on to produce highly polyphonic novels that portray history as subjective experience. Complex allegories borrow from the Bible, and a certain species of neo-neo-Romantic irony and palimpsestic structures are prevalent. Andonovski insists that these are not just postmodernist games “revealing the codes” of literature, but stylistic tricks with ethical and political implications. Just as an early modernist novel drew allegorically on the subversive religious practices of the Bogomils (Georgi Abadjiev’s *Desert*, 1961), now stories of false prophets prevail, such as in *The Prophet of Diskantriya* (*Pustina and prorokot od diskantriya*, 2001; *diskantriya* = “this country,” Slavicized), by leading Macedonian postmodernist Dragi Mihajlovski. Andonovski suggests that contemporary Macedonian literature seeks to deconstruct the binary of local and global settings, in awareness of the “‘cursed’ Balkan area as a geopolitical projection of Western political discourses.” Finally, he insists that today’s identity is only temporary for Macedonia, caught post-YU and pre-EU. If nostalgia is ever the key word, in the Macedonian case it seems to extend forward as well as back.

Lastly, *After Yugoslavia* ends as it began, with a personal essay. In “The Spirit of the Kakanian Province,” Dubravka Ugrešić muses that the Austro-Hungarian empire “stamped a watermark on the souls of its subjects, an internal landscape, the coordinates of periphery and center.” Her thumbnail sketches of Kakanian novels uncover a requisite melancholy male protagonist, a local Werther or Byronic hero who returns to the provinces after an education in the West. Deprived of either context or audience, this country cousin to the superfluous men of Russian letters inevitably goes mad or commits suicide. The reader, Ugrešić quips, might conclude that Croats “used the sea for nothing but drowning,” but in reality sea tourism was already booming. The subgenre of the tragic return culminates in Krleža: “In an ideal literary republic, all other Croatian writers . . . would be nothing but a footnote to—Miroslav Krleža.” Herself a kind of female incarnation of the Kakanian exile, the Amsterdam-based Ugrešić

mourns for the brief deprovincialization of socialist Yugoslavia. We had passports, she writes, and now we have the philosophy of the *palanka* and a cult of death. “Foreign media exercise their almost knee-jerk colonialism”; the crowds follows false prophets; “the five-hundred-year-old Gutenberg galaxy is dying while the new, young, omnipresent Digital galaxy is ascendant.” Culture has become a brand: culture is the “ideological Euro.” Unfortunately, the “Kakanian” republic of letters is too utopian a project to attract many citizens.

. . .

This volume hardly presents the final word on the cultures of the former Yugoslavia and the post-Yugoslav spaces, but it strives to create an alternative space for discussion, one that might not have been possible at the turn of the new century. These essays, inquiries, articles, and interventions seek both to describe and to shape possibilities for extended regional communication. I find it beautifully fitting that the book begins and ends with the work of female writers: in fact, the entire structure of *After Yugoslavia* has something in common with the argument presented by Mazaj’s chapter. Ultimately and partly through fortuitous accident, the project is framed by a chorus of women’s voices; by collaboration and the promise of a sea-change in the discourse on post-Yugoslavia. Perhaps in criticism as well as in film, the era of self-Balkanization is fading: the increasing presence of female voices seems to me a very good sign.