

Economies of affect and traumatic knowledge: lessons on violence, witnessing and resistance in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this paper is to outline the current dynamics of the economies of affect and traumatic knowledge concerning the politics of memory and witnessing to trauma in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It also refers to some specific instances of cultural and knowledge production and grassroots activism in war and post-war contexts outlining the deadlocks faced, as well as some promising trajectories of antinationalist, left, and feminist activism seeking political and social justice. For those who experienced various forms of wartime and postwar violence in the countries that composed the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and who oppose and traverse the dominant logic of victimisation and commodification, this is a multidirectional, affective and collective effort of reconstituting memory for the purposes of hopeful politics.

Keywords: politics of memory, trauma, witnessing, feminism, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Former Yugoslavia, knowledge and cultural production.

How can the bodily experience of war traumas be *translated* into a form of knowledge is a touchstone for the memory studies today as it has been through the whole of modern times, considering that the very act of remembering is also an act of translation, intending for the reconstruction of the past in the present context, a transition from life through death into life. One should approach this challenge underlying discursive/material economies that encircle the material rupture of trauma across and between human experiences (collective, individual, historical, ontological, and so on) as the very traumatic knot of constituting and communicating experience through various modalities of representation, politically, ethically, and aesthetically. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, rampant commodification of trauma has entered into its third decade. This paper discusses how the normalisation of violence and deepening social inequalities have affected the position of “victims/survivors” who experienced various forms of wartime and afterwar violence and exploitation. The resistance or revolt against the twin logics of victimisation and commodification that produce traumatically alienated forms of life, thought, and labour, with dissolved capacity for political subjectivisation,

solidarity, and transformative action, proves to be strongest in the domains of cultural and knowledge production, as well as grassroots activism dominated by women.

It is difficult to chart the way through complex affective politics, hidden economies of violence and oppression in the dominant politics of memory, and the normalisation of terror through the governance of life, without intimate engagement with promising public efforts and critical interventions in the field of social activism, knowledge, and cultural production pertaining to women's experience of violence, witnessing, and resistance in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There is very little scholarship in "non-local" languages containing empirical details of these processes, but their lessons are universal ones. When it comes to resisting the "securitisation of life" and its gendered dynamics of oppression, feminist lessons are of particular importance if we are to think in-common and materialise affective solidarity by investing hope and labour in the politics of equality, and against the governing terror (also embodied in the dominant politics of memory and trauma), which increasingly deepens and cements the ultimate precarity of women's bodies and labour, life, and thought.

Therefore, there are several starting theses this paper develops on:

- i. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the (inter)national governance of life through the ethnonationalist and neoliberal ideological apparatuses is perpetuating the same matrices of wartime and postwar sexual/gender and other forms of violence and exploitation.
- ii. The management of affect encircling the terror of the post-atrocity order operates through various biopolitical strategies masked in the "therapeutic" paradigm of "transitional justice".
- iii. Their most decisive sovereign inscriptions and ruptures have happened precisely across women's bodies and lives, caught in the material/affective vortex of perpetual violence that shapes the totality of war and postwar experiences of sociality and politicality in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- iv. In this sense, feminist, materialist and psychoanalytic lessons on violence, trauma, witnessing, and resistance are of key importance for understanding the pitfalls and the potentials of the affective economies and traumatic knowledge engendered by this experience.

Economies of affect in Bosnia and Herzegovina: few notes on transitional justice and management of trauma

In order to offer several remarks on the strategies/mechanisms/institutions of transitional justice tackling the problem of wartime crimes of sexual violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, I will draw on two illustrative stories

“from the field” that are by no means an exception, but a rule the examples of which saturate all spaces of publicity. These points of reference should hopefully serve as a way to open up a space for the discussion of critically important challenges having to do with the speedily collapsing “public outreach” mission of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the last few years. It is particularly important to focus our attention on what is happening with the voices and bodies of those who survive(d) political violence in the form of wartime rape and crimes of sexual violence because of the alarming disparity between the experience (of perpetual and normalized violence in everyday life for the “survivors of wartime atrocities” in Bosnia and Herzegovina) and its representation/interpretation in legal and scientific discourse framing the transitional justice field. It is the experience of those who, as the subjects of international law awaiting justice, are framed and silenced as “victims”, and whose “participation” in the process of delivering justice is reduced to a very complex set of strategies of governance, all of which result in an ongoing traumatic commodification of lives, their exploitation and alienation.

Story 1 (March-April 2012): Between the “Triumph” and the Absence of Justice

The whole year of 2012 was marked by a series 20th anniversaries of the events happening in 1992 when the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina broke out, invoking personal and collective accountings for what happened. In March and April 2012, the outreach division of the Hague Tribunal released a documentary in their production entitled *The End of Impunity: Sexual Violence and the Triumph of Justice*. In their own description it “depicts the Tribunal’s historic role in the prosecution and adjudication of wartime sexual violence. It includes testimonies from witnesses and survivors of sexual violence, who bravely gave evidence at trials, and interviews with former and current ICTY professionals who worked on these cases.” (UN ICTY, 2015) The words – the end of impunity and the triumph of justice – sound cynical from the perspective of everyday experiences of those who demand justice within and outside the given position of victims. The documentary was released and promoted in the same weeks as the Amnesty International’s report *Old Crimes, Same Suffering: No justice for survivors of wartime rape in north-east Bosnia and Herzegovina*, which,

Focuses on the current situation of the women survivors of wartime rape living in Tuzla Canton in the north-eastern part of the country (and) illustrates the problems survivors face in accessing their rights at local level. Survivors living in Tuzla told Amnesty International of the serious physical and psychological problems they continue to suffer, including post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, sexually transmitted diseases, diabetes, hypertension and insomnia. Very few have health insurance adequate to address their specific medical conditions, which limits their

access to the health services they desperately need, and most are unable to pay for all the medication they require. None of the direct perpetrators of the crimes against the survivors interviewed during the research has been brought to justice. Out of tens of thousands of documented cases of crimes of sexual violence committed during the war, fewer than 40 have been prosecuted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague or by Bosnian domestic courts. The briefing highlights the fact that the complex, multi-layered and under-resourced Bosnian judicial system obstructs the progress of criminal trials, denying survivors their right to justice. (Amnesty International, 2012)

Obviously, we have here two clashing representations by two institutions in the domain of human rights – in Amnesty’s report there is no triumph over the old crimes, and no end to the same suffering. The documentary about the Hague legacy as the triumph of justice when it comes to wartime crimes of sexual violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina and internationally had been introduced to the audiences through a coordinated PR campaign on local level, announcing on media portals the one-off screenings of film at special public events with debates and roundtables hosted by the selected team of local-international TJ actors in various places in Bosnia and Herzegovina. University professors and students were invited. Yet, for my research students dealing with wartime violence it was difficult to find out the actual schedule and the dates for particular towns, except for the Sarajevo event, and this required calling up the outreach office in Sarajevo for days. In any case, local research students who attended the Tuzla event on the 19th of April 2012 remarked on the way the event was structured as to minimize the level of interaction with the audience who might ask any questions. More importantly, any kind of question pointing at the problems today and the inexistence of justice at local level was encountered with the usual reprimand: “we/you should be grateful for the Hague...,” it is now about “locals taking responsibility,” or taking the mantle of *transitional justice*. Presumably, the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina has been groomed internationally to take over the Hague legacy and continue with the triumph of justice and the end of impunity for sexual violence. But, there was no public discussion of the actual work of the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the sector of wartime crimes of sexual violence at these roundtables and debates. And yet, alarming things were and are happening there, precisely at the same time, which leads to my second illustrative story about localising international law in the public outreach strategies of the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and its blind spots.

Story 2 (March 2013): In the Abyss of “Justice Anonymous”

Speaking to a colleague who has been following the trials for crimes of sexual violence at the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina as part of her PhD research, I have learnt several important things that are not publicised in the media or are part of any public debate; i.e., are part of the knowledge of inner circles. Yet, they totally implode the very meaningfulness of public outreach by this Court

for the crimes of wartime rape and sexual violence. The turmoil of governments in the past two years has meant that at the moment, no information is available on how many wartime sexual violence cases are being investigated or brought to trial. That is the least of the troubles for a member of the public interested in their work, let alone the “victims of these crimes.” In 2012, though it only became clear to the interested parties outside of the bounds of the Court in 2013, a set of special procedures was installed for the prosecution and trials for wartime rape and sexual violence, whereby any public and media access to these trials (court sessions, court materials including indictments, transcripts of witness statements, etc.) was denied. The only thing anyone in the public was able to get is the actual verdict (without the preceding indictment). Also, each verdict was to be anonymized (names of people and places) and the public would only know the initials of the perpetrator too.

It seems as though this marked yet another new brand emerging from the Bosnian and Herzegovinian laboratory of transitional justice global industry: *justice anonymous*. Whose claims for justice and recognition does this enact? Somehow, amongst all those costly institutions, mechanisms, and regimes of transitional justice around Bosnia and Herzegovina, we are coming closer to the limit: the erasure of experience, the exemption of legal evidence from the public domain, whilst still holding onto superficial calls for the participation of those who are wounded by the crimes tried: overspent people who survive the same kind of political violence for more than two decades. It is important to note that BIRN media network had sued the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina for denying media access to the trials for wartime rape and sexual violence, and complained to BiH Ombudsmen Office who could not reach a consensus and failed to decide anything on the matter. (Justice Report, 2015) Recent practices of both the Hague and the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina have had a huge public impact - prolonging a sense of injury, rather than delivering any promise of justice, truth, reparation, reconciliation. How can we think of the public outreach of institutions once they get more and more compromised before our very eyes? This is only a snippet of the affective terror that the witnesses to the war crimes undergo in the local courts, before, during and after the actual act of appearing in the court of law.

Managing trauma, governing life: some questions for knowledge production

A gaze from the particular form of ghettoized political community such as Bosnia and Herzegovina reveals how everyday experiences are saturated with “terror as usual,” (Taussig, 1984; 1992) with the material abject rupturing sociality and politicality in “irregular rhythms of numbing and shock.” Material remnants of genocide in mass graves are the abject upon which the trades in the politics of memory unfold, fortifying the very same projects that produced deadened and ghettoised lives. What is evident in the political economy of remembrance and

witnessing, loss, and affect in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its region, is the penetration of metaracism, fascism and violence in a myriad of collective and individual instantiations of abject (Kristeva, 1982) that encircle the experience of both *ghetto* and *mass grave*, the two material spaces of terror or governance of life through biopolitics as *thanatopolitics*, where life and death are governed (sovereign biopolitics as thanatopolitics). If we understand ghettoization as a process constitutive of the “waste-disposal mechanisms” that operate over the bodies and lives of those who are no longer useful (to state, to capital, to nation...), as elaborated by Bauman (2001) and Wacquant (1993), *ghetto* can also be understood as the metaphor for human life governed as *waste*, produced by spatialized structural violence, alienation and politics of inequality. It is a continuation of the politics of atrocity that left primary, secondary, and tertiary mass graves, those metaphors for human waste produced, displaced, relocated, exterminated by political violence and genocide.

The twin faces of trauma and destitution as the common grounds for the perpetuation of ideologically construed threats behind ethnonationalist/neoliberal politics through (non)inscription into the “normal” order (nation/market) and “natural” territory (local/global). The trauma of sovereignty and governmentality normalized on the level of everyday life through various techniques and strategies is the key mechanism for producing the citizen and its remnants: everyday life emerges as a materialised ideology of the sovereign fantasies to render society and life governable, through bare life as labour power violated into human slum (Husanović, 2011). In my previous research (Husanović, 2011; 2009a; 2009b; 2007) I have criticised various technologies of codifying and governing trauma (specifically those they relate to as “mapping a genocide” and “telling the story of a mass grave”), which in terms of its internal political economy operate as a peculiar management of affect. The paradigm of *managing affect* and indexing its abject results like mass graves is based on a sort of an illusionary belief in “magic legalism” around the notion of “the end of impunity,” and also in the scientific or bureaucratic administration of projects whose common denominators are terms like “transitional justice”, “peace building”, “social reconciliation”, often emptied out of their political substance and performed in techno-managerial style.

The main strategy of this paradigm of managing affect is decontextualisation, evident in various jurisprudential (inter)national practices concerning mass atrocity in the former Yugoslavia (the greater the affect, the more distance one needs to administer). Categories of transitional and restorative justice based on the model of therapeutic governance of trauma, have been exposed to a great deal of justified criticism from feminist and postcolonial scholarship and politics, as well as from the field of art and cultural production. This is because they often teem with problematic, anachronistic and colonial narratives, resulting in a “demoralized subject of human rights” (Pupavac, 2005) which constitutes victim into a commodity on the trauma market. The whole story of atrocity, affect, and abject, of the political origins of violence appears disconnected from the sphere

of the political by being reduced to the language of law, science, institutional administration, religion, by being culturalised into ethnic registers. The effect of this is further fossilization of ethnic differences and duplication of ethnonationalist logic by another means.

The challenge to constitute and communicate the public language of grief out of the heavily ideologized coordinates set by national or international institutions experimenting in the BiH laboratory of governing life, is an ethico-political imperative for many activist groups in the field of art, theory, and education. It problematises, resists, and transforms the dominant technologies whereby what remains in the zone of political visibility is mere scientific and judicial data cleansed of everything, with science and law made to stand in for one's experience, as the only possible representation of trauma and the only possible language to politically articulate your claims for and attachments to justice. Science, law, and religion do provide the most effective management tools for trauma and experience, but such tools erase human experiences and memories or commodify them, thus furthering alienating position where one is given only the opportunity to express, subjectivise, and represent experience in their own terms. How to speak out of these registers, because they are not about the triumph of justice or the end of impunity, but rather about a dissolution of subjects' political capacities, harnessed towards the normalisation of violence in everyday life (which is perpetuated by the institutions of justice too)? What languages are available to us to speak publicly against the (inter)nationalised ghetto as the nexus of poverty, banality, and corruption?

It is in the field of cultural production, arts, and activism that these questions are once again productively posed; in these spaces, we have a future-oriented critique of new inequitable relations of truth, power and capital which infuses social experiences (Husanović, 2015; 2011; 2007). An affirmative politics of witnessing to trauma does offer ways of identification and participation that are an authentic challenge to the ethnopopulist mobilisation of affect and passion on the one hand, and the aseptic liberal management of affect in white gloves and in the name of human rights, on the other. The issue of justice as something that is to be embodied in a political community which lives (with) realities of mass atrocity and trauma (past, present, future) is a challenge for all concerned with emancipatory normative and political frameworks in international law and politics. Academic engagement needs to follow non-institutionalised and/or non-state spaces of publicity (fields of cultural and knowledge production, art and activism) which are nesting new solidarities and subjectivities beyond the closures of institutional politics. These are the sites of promising transformations when it comes to witnessing to trauma, through thinking and acting upon political violence, radical contingencies of the world around us, and our radical relationality, which atrocity/trauma brings to the fore, both betraying and revealing it, in all its potential to be done otherwise, towards justice.

Witnessing and resistance – hopeful politics of memory, or intervening into the public language of grief

There are very few attempts to map out the affective economies that besiege and envelope the action and production concerning the politics of memory and witnessing by feminist activists, artists, and theorists in Bosnia and Herzegovina, such as Šejla Šehabović, Tanja Miletić-Oručević, Ferida Duraković, Adisa Bašić, Danijela Majstorović, Gorana Mlinarević, Jasmila Žbanić, groups like “Crvena” and “Naš glas” and so forth. Being one of them, and engaging with their work as an activist and a theoretician, I have tried at least to address this lacunae by my own writing, however insufficient or small (Husanović 2014; 2011; 2007). Attempting to translate the experiences of trauma, terror and abject into the public political memory in the aftermath of genocide is an affective corporeal activity and an ethical practice – producing a shareable story that makes that kind of sense or political meaning which brings us in common. Therefore, enacting a modality of witnessing to trauma in cultural production is an embodied experience which creates anew shattered webs and coordinates of humanity, sociality, and politicality. Cultural production and grassroots activism has a critical public pedagogic function (Giroux, 2010) within the resisting spaces of public education, thought and action in Bosnia and Herzegovina, continuing to play a key part in the ongoing struggles against violent and exploitative political imaginaries (Husanović, 2014).

The search for this kind of solidarity and commonality in shared collective spaces, whilst engaging with the traumatic contents of everyday life and politics in the post-SFRY region, is also evident in a series of interventions by the public classrooms of the Cooperative Front Slobode in Tuzla on cultures of memory and emancipatory politics, as well as by Grupa Spomenik, on the issue of missing persons. The Cooperative Front is a Tuzla-based informal platform with open-ended and issue-based membership structure, consisting of individuals and organisations in the fields of knowledge production, cultural production and arts, and social activism, from Bosnia and Herzegovina and the post-SFRY region, who share Front Slobode principles with regards to the issues of the culture of memory and emancipatory interventions with the focus on the politics of equality and solidarity. Since 2007 they have produced a number of public classrooms throughout the region using various formats (multimedia events, publications, social and political actions) and under a host of temporary institutional umbrellas. Grupa Spomenik or the Monument Group, is currently based in Belgrade and Tuzla, its members being artists, theorists, and activists who have been critical of the memorial politics in the region in the two decades through the medium of art and public education. Similar to Front Slobode, it grew out of the productive interventions concerning the memorialisation of the 1990s wars in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Kosovo. Since 2008 has been particularly concerned with the problems of codifying, institutionalising, and narrativising genocide, as well as the resistances to the dominant politics in art and education.

Together, these two groups, apart from sharing some members, have collaborated since 2008 on the development of the Yugoslav studies platform, that has materialised in reality, if not in name, over the course of last seven years, through various public interventions in the social fabric combining the tools of art, theory, and school/classroom in order to furnish the prospects for a different kind of sociality and politicality – “community as academia” (Husanović and Arsenijević, 2011). Indeed, their struggles to find words conducive for affirmative political gesture in a terrain framed by two questions – “telling the story of a mass grave” and “mapping a genocide” (Husanović, 2011), has characterized the last three decades of artistic, cultural and knowledge production in this region. Many interventions and collaborations of artists, scholars, students and activists in this period have fought the inability to think and talk about the wars and the (post)-war collectivities, struggling to do so within the framework of emancipatory politics.

The Grupa Spomenik’s intention in the “Mathemes of Re-association” public production was to navigate politically through the terrain of post-genocide culture as a culture of lies, a culture of denial, and a culture of amnesia. This culturalised terror of governance, produced and practiced by a range of local, regional, and international actors, is understood to mask the ongoing exploitation and enclavisation of governed life, as bare life (Agamben, 1998), or as labour power (Sylvester, 2006). It is also testament to the inability of various forms of authority to find properly *political* rather than *managerial* solutions to the crises of “transitional societies”. In opposition to this, “Mathemes of Re-association” production and public events in Belgrade, Zagreb, Novi Sad, and Banja Luka, critically explored the genocide industry constitutive of Srebrenica today that holds the potential to reveal the ethno-nationalist politics in all its bankruptcy and that testifies to the limits of multiculturalist identity politics. In Srebrenica we are witnessing the current stalemate in the form of ethnicized apartheid involving post-genocide collectivities, including the relations existing between refugees, survivors (women, men, children), international scientific community, the local government, civil society initiatives, NGOs but also the destroyed houses and newly built ones, identified and non-identified human remains, buried and non-buried individuals, identified and non-identified mass graves, and so on. The ideology of reconciliation has left a political wasteland in Srebrenica today quilting it as a society of the symbiosis of dead and living, perpetrators and victims, functioning through apartheid where traumatic injustices endure. However, the paradigm of reconciliation has its distinct technologies and economies, a coalition of science, administration and religion encircling the management of remains of those killed in genocide. How is it possible to think and enact new collectivities, communalities, and solidarities in the face of the material object that permeates the everyday of the post-genocide society?

Through lectures, readings, and exhibitions with theorists, artists, and activists, as well as with the staff of International Commission for Missing Persons (ICMP), the “Mathemes of Re-association” explored how genocide in Srebrenica is construed as an object of science, law and international administration in the work of ICMP.

This process consists of a set of forensic doctrines and bioinformatic technologies (the forensic DNA analysis and database management designed to identify the remnants of the victims of genocide found in mass graves and other sites, or to “help find the missing through the means of science,” as was repeatedly expressed by the ICMP staff members, during many field visits to their facilities), as well as a set of legal-administrative mechanisms that purport to produce a “story of a mass grave” and a “map of genocide” in the service of “transitional justice,” reconciliation, and civil society development (Husanović, 2011). The “Bosnian technology” as it is called by Wagner (2008), can be summed up as follows: through the process of reassociation of bodily remains of those killed in mass atrocity, it construes a *matheme* which is a description of the place and method of killing the victim, and through which, after the DNA analysis, the bodily remain retroactively acquires identity. In other words, through a hyper-expert discourse, “the missing” become “*mathemes*” or mere bar-codes, before identity is reassociated and ethical/political visibility is restored to them.

Through a series of debates, texts, exhibits, and performances, “*Mathemes of Re-association*” transformed into a public classroom on the knowledge-technology complex behind the governance of the missing, where DNA identification technology was politically analysed in order to shed new insights into the relationship between states and their citizens in moments of crisis and disorder, mass atrocity, and its aftermath (Wagner 2009, 249). By fixing identity to nameless remains through a public gift of identification (granted not only to families, but also to ethnonationalist orders that reinsert them back into their projects), sovereign power reasserts itself through “a mechanism for tabulating losses and indexing postdisaster/postconflict political will” (Wagner, 2008: 255). The process of identifying nameless remains thus feeds directly into modes of commemoration; the “extra-legal” is occupied by the ethnonationalist mobilisation of affect through mythologisation or denial, still as profitable as ever. This completes the circle, since modern science and religion identify their object, thereby repeating the procedures of the politics of atrocity. After Srebrenica we do not have silence. On the contrary, in its name speaks a mute coalition of science and religion; science which construes identity and religion that gives it “dignity” and meaning, at the price of repeating and reiterating the procedures of the politics of terror/atrocity by other means. In contrast to this knowledge-technology complex, “*Mathemes of Re-association*” remained faithful to an uncomfortable surplus, a remainder of the process of identification/culturalisation, that is to say, those bodily remains which cannot be identified by modern science. What remains, in other words, are bones without identity. It is not possible to construe its identity, nor count it, nor render it dignified and deserving of the religious burial and morning rituals. This abject remainder opens up the space of politics, of a specific type of subjectivisation that is not based on identity or counting, but opens up the process of remembering, whose task it is to break up “parallel convergence” of contemporary construction of identity and the culturalised politics of terror.

In this way, “Mathemes of Re-association” interventions engendered promising public spaces and a new form of solidarity in thinking genocide, where each participant may position her or himself politically in relation to genocide, through a new language that critically engages with the ideological mechanisms perpetuating the politics of genocide for two decades. This new public language rejects those dominant public languages of biopolitical statecraft that go hand in hand with “administrative” demands from a new Leviathan – internationalised forms of governance framed as a therapeutic management of affect, and yet preoccupied with the politics of security and freedom through internationalised practices of ghettoizing life (Husanović, 2011: 502-503). Instead, the “Mathemes of Re-association” platform insisted on producing and practicing a new politics of hope beyond both ethnic and multicultural discourses of nation and religion, law and science. It collaborated outside of the dominant protocols of civil society in the post-SFRY region (involving international organisations, cultural policies, inter-state cooperation programmes) and against the current paradigm of reducing everyday life in a post-genocidal society to the management of cultural and ethnic differences through hyper-scientific and (extra-) legal practices of governance. The Monument Group’s interventions gathered people across the divisive terrain induced by the politics of affect concerning genocide, in a proclaimed effort to enact emancipatory gestures in the fields of arts and theory and to impact productively on everyday lives against the identitarian culture and politics of terror. Their gesture was that of a resistance to the paradigm of culturalised identitarianisms in “transitional justice,” seeking that which stands against the culturalisation of politics, which exploits the capital of the living/dead through new and old forms of (inter)national political authority.

The public engagement around the “Mathemes of Re-association” project affected various new paths and interventions towards affirmative and universal politics of the new subject, through the public language of political humanity and equality, whose “poetry does not stem from the past but only from the future” (Marx, 1852). When witnessing the legacies of atrocity, ethical and social relationships must be forged anew, based on the critical reflection on the origins and methods of violence, where mass atrocity is only the culmination of everyday biopolitical control over life and death. An affirmative politics of witnessing to trauma and thinking genocide does offer a space for a new public language of grief and hope, and ways of subjectivisation which are an authentic challenge to both the ethnocratic mobilisation of affect and the aseptic liberal management of affect. The question of how to embody justice in a political community that lives (with) the realities of mass atrocity and post-genocide order poses a challenge where academic engagement needs to follow non-institutionalised and/or non-state spaces of publicity (fields of cultural production, art, and activism). Spaces and public voices created by new solidarities and subjectivities beyond the closures of institutional politics are the promising site for social and political transformation. “The Mathemes of Re-association” thus operated as an “emancipated community” (Ranciére, 2007) where the participants acted as “storytellers and translators,” engendering a different public

language of witnessing to trauma, repoliticising affect, thinking political violence, and acting upon radical contingencies of the world around us. It has been a process of producing a form of radical relationality in a way that strikes back through emancipatory politics, its centre being the political subject, where genocide was.

In lieu of conclusion

In the context of this special issue that searches for global connections between traumatic memories and the arguments posed in this paper, I would like to propose a few concluding remarks. Considering the global turmoils of the last decades, and in particular the erosion of the so-called “post-national European project” in the last few years, it should be noted that what Timothy Snyder (2013) calls the “comfortable controversy which paralyses the study of traumatic events in Europe,” which is framed through „discourse, language, terminology, and representation”, is particularly acute in the case of the successor states of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina with its landscape of massgraves caused by genocide “on European soil” at the end of the 20th century. The positions between the East and the West, however constituted or however problematic this dichotomy is, are further complicated by the peculiar position of Yugoslav exception in the Cold War and post-Cold War paradigms.

In any case, the „commemorative causality“ in synthetic histories, as elaborated by Snyder, when applied to these parts of the world has been contaminating all attempts to theorise the knots between historical events and traumatic memories, to the effect of reducing them to „a reflection of contemporary emotions“ (2013: 1), and producing a traumatic knowledge instead. This traumatic knowledge is embedded in and generates from the blind-spots of both local and international elites and regimes of governance, including the academic field, with their colonial/colonised epistemic pertaining to the war and afterwar events in Bosnia and Herzegovina, based on the tensions between narratives and power, mental geographies and real people, causal mechanisms and narratological problems, creating a particular implosion of sense in texts and a „zone of textlessness“ (Snyder, 2013: 4-5). In a way, the Eurocentric powers that have been intimately engaged in the political, social, cultural, and economic context of people’s lives in Bosnia and Herzegovina, hallucinate their own stories, whether civilizing or nationalizing.

The commemorations in Srebrenica every 11th July in the past decade, which these elites and political regimes actively frame, make and partake in, are a blatant illustration of how commemoration becomes „the siren song of signification, appealing to emotions fatal for thought“ (Snyder, 2013: 8). Moreover, Srebrenica elucidates how profitable the forging of „commemorative communities“ is in the current political economies of new empires, with its categories of memorialization firmly belonging to the desires of the „unsustainable present“ (Snyder, 2013: 13-14) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as its region. It is therefore essential

for the critical knowledge induced by trauma to unmask and criticize such memory-making technologies and competing victimhoods, towards such politics of witnessing to trauma that communifies us through affective bonds with the eyes set on the collective future(s) of shared/shareable humanity. Here it is worth remembering/reading/going with Walter Benjamin (1932) in this sense:

Language has unmistakably made plain that memory is not an instrument for exploring the past, but rather a medium. It is the medium of that which is experienced, just as the earth is the medium in which ancient cities lie buried. He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging. Above all, he must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter; to scatter it as one scatters earth, to turn it over as one turns over soil. For the "matter itself" is no more than the strata which yield their long-sought secrets only to the most meticulous investigation. That is to say, they yield those images that, severed from all earlier associations, reside as treasures in the sober rooms of our later insights - like torsos in a collector's gallery. It is undoubtedly useful to plan excavations methodically. Yet no less indispensable is the cautious probing of the spade in the dark loam. And the man who merely makes an inventory of his findings, while failing to establish the exact location of where in today's ground the ancient treasures have been stored up, cheats himself of his richest prize. In this sense, for authentic memories, it is far less important that the investigator report on them than that he mark, quite precisely, the site where he gained possession of them. Epic and rhapsodic in the strictest sense, genuine memory must therefore yield an image of the person who remembers, in the same way a good archaeological report not only informs us about the strata from which its findings originate, but also gives an account of the strata which first had to be broken through.

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Afektų ekonomikos ir trauminis žinojimas: prievartos, liudijimo ir pasipriešinimo pamokos Bosnijoje ir Hercegovinoje

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SANTRAUKA: Šio straipsnio tikslas – aptarti dabartinę afektų ekonomikos ir trauminio žinojimo dinamiką, susietą su atminties politika ir traumos liudijimu Bosnijoje ir Hercegovinoje. Straipsnyje apžvelgiami keli specifiniai kultūros ir žinojimo kūrimo pavyzdžiai bei aklavietės, su kuriomis susidūrė visuomeninės iniciatyvos karo ir pokario kontekste, taip pat nurodomos kelios daug žadančios antinacionalistinio, kairiųjų ir feministinio judėjimo trajektorijos ieškant politinio ir socialinio teisingumo. Tiems, kurie patyrė įvairias karo ir pokario prievartos formas buvusios Jugoslavijos Socialistinės Federacinės Respublikos šalyse, ir tiems, kurie priešinosi ir siekia peržengti dominuojančią viktimizacijos ir komodifikacijos (suprekinimo) logiką, tai yra daugiakryptė emocinė ir kolektyvinė pastanga performuoti atmintį, kad būtų galima kurti viltį teikiančią politiką.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: atminties politika, trauma, liudijimas, feminizmas, Bosnija ir Hercegovina, buvusi Jugoslavija, žinojimo ir kultūros kūrimas.