We dedicate this issue to Christopher Skrable, Associate Director for Community-Based Research and Experiential Learning at the University of Chicago
EDITORS’ NOTE

We present here another modest collection of students’ writings on a variety of topics and from a number of courses taught on Balkan languages, literatures, anthropology, and cultures. There are essays on various topics, book and film reviews, as well as excerpts from a B.A. thesis and PhD dissertation—all born on paper during the 2015-2016 academic year. The pieces have not been embellished: we let those timid be timid, the eager remain eager, the concise or discursive stay concise or discursive.

This issue is dedicated to Christopher Skrable in recognition of his passion for connecting students to the world at large by fostering community engagement and experiential learning. Christopher has been an indispensable support to our students and faculty, and has helped breathe life into our classes by taking us from campus into the greater Chicago metropolitan area—a mission well aligned with the work that we do here at Leptir mašna: connecting our readers to the exciting world of the Balkans.

Join us by signing up for courses offered by the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, and the College. You can find the list and course description for 2016/17 academic year on pages 89-91.

Sincerely,

The Editors

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Now I return to this young fellow. And the
communication I have got to make is this, that he has
Great Expectations.¹

(1855–1922) debuted at the Paris Salon with two
canvases: Portrait de Mme la comtesse de C. and
Épisode de la guerre du Monténégro (fig. I.1).²
The first, depicting the bust of a “good–natured”
woman, foretells the interest in and exceptional
talent for portraiture that would mark Bukovac’s
artistic career.³ It is, however, the second, more
ambitious painting that concerns us here. Refer-
cencing current events and depicting a Monte-
negrin woman in distress, the Episode from the
War of Montenegro—a work located explicitly
within the genre of Orientalist South Slavic im-
agery upon which Czech artist Jaroslav Čermák
(1831–1878) built a successful career in Paris—was
Bukovac’s first, and perhaps most earnest, contri-
bution to a self–consciously nascent Croatian art.

A beautiful dark–haired woman waits un-
easily on the surface of Bukovac’s canvas, dag-
ger in hand. Like a specimen caught between
two pieces of glass, an angry praying mantis,
the woman is trapped in the shallow illusionis-
tic space of Episode from the War of Montenegro.
She is pushed right up to the imaginary screen
that separates the foreground of the painting
from the space of the viewer by a large boulder
against which she has recoiled in an awkward
contrapposto. Behind her, a steep wall of forest
effectively closes off the background. The impos-
sibility of free movement, of running, of escape,
is amplified visually by the woman’s footlessness
and the long skirts she wears, which merge the
legs into a single mass, anchored to the ground.
This anchoring is further emphasized by the
weighty triangle created by the lines dividing
shadow from light on the boulders, moving in-
wards diagonally from the bottom corners of the
painting and culminating in the upturned peak
of her belt. The minimal twists of her rigid body
can but protest in vain against the heavy triangu-
lar base and law of upright lines that govern this
painted scene of expectancy. A vertical figure in
a vertical frame, the woman is locked firmly into
place at the center of the composition by the sen-
tinels of her heavy arms, and the lines of spheri-
cal buttons decorating the inner hem of her long
vest. Frozen by dread, and illuminated before the
dark background of the forest, the woman waits.

She waits and she listens.⁴ We imagine
that she waits to spring upon someone or some-
thing not seen within the borders of the painting,
someone or something she suspects will come
from her right, the direction in which her wide
eyes and weapon are pointed, someone or some-
thing she fears as a woman. The pose—a chore-
ography in potentia—tells us this as well. All the
woman’s weight is concentrated uncomfortably
in her slightly bent left arm, in the palm of her
left hand pressing down onto the large boulder
behind her. When she pushes off, her arm will
straighten, the pent–up energy will be released
and she will pivot backwards on her straight right
leg. The dagger hitherto protecting her soft belly
will follow this turning movement, as her stiff
right arm swings backwards from the fulcrum of
her shoulder to slash at something as yet unseen.

She waits and she listens, ready to strike.
The Episode from the War of Montenegro depicts
an extremely pregnant moment, but one that
hardly can be said to follow Gotthold Ephraim
Lessing’s (1729–1781) dictum to choose the “most
suggestive [moment] and from which the pre-
ceding and succeeding actions are most easily
comprehensible.”⁵ Characteristic of later nine-
teenth–century painting, the work is certainly
“suggestive,” but offers more “blanks” than clues
as to what has led up to this moment of waiting
and what will transpire afterwards.⁶ The viewer
is tasked with imagining both the past and the
future of the scene. About the past, the viewer
can only guess. Was the woman waiting for her
sweetheart when she sensed another presence?
Did she flee? Or is she watching with frustra-
tion as a male relative delivers the blow she had pre-
pared herself to strike? Visual cues within the
Episode—the knife, the pose, the expression of
the face—move the scene primarily forward in time, in anticipation of the future. We understand the woman is prepared to use her weapon. Who or what will she attempt to strike? Will she deliver a successful blow? What will happen to her? An infinite number of scenarios are possible.

With its almost total lack of visual information about the “preceding and succeeding actions,” Bukovac’s *Episode from the War of Montenegro* pushes the limits of the pregnant moment. It likewise pushes the limits of the first term in its title, “episode,” which implies action or a story. The seventh edition of the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, published in the same year Bukovac’s painting was exhibited at the Paris Salon, in 1878, defines an “épisode” as the “incidental action linked to the main action of a poem, of a novel. ... in painting, any action or secondary scene adjoined to that which comprises the principal subject of a picture.”\(^\text{78}\) Neither the “action” of the secondary scene nor the principal subject to which the *Episode* is adjoined, the *War of Montenegro*, have any existence outside the imagination. Only external knowledge about that war, gathered perhaps from a newspaper, illustrated journal or travelogue, can complete the missing past and future of the painted moment. What we see on the surface of the canvas hardly seems to be an *Episode* at all, but rather the prelude to an *Episode*, its anticipation. It is solely in the mind that the Episode may be transformed into a true Episode and not simply the image of a terrified woman alone in a forest, waiting—waiting, to be invested with meaning.

I suggest that it is within a framework of anticipation that the *Episode from the War of Montenegro* can be most fruitfully read, using concepts of the “nascent,” “potential,” “emergent,” “anticipatory” or “expectant” as the interpretive keys to Bukovac’s debut canvas. Indeed, I employ these terms in an effort to shed light not only on the work at hand, but on the fundamental character of Croatian art discourse in the period during which the *Episode* was made. Later nineteenth-century Croatian art discourse was a discourse of desire, desire for an art whose realization was not, as in, for example, France, weighed down by the burden of a brilliant past, but rather by the burden of a brilliant future.\(^\text{9}\) Intellectuals of the time were certainly engaged in writing a glorified history of Croatian art, but it was not against the brilliance of history that contemporary art was measured.\(^\text{10}\) Art was held less to the standard of its past self, than to its imagined future self. The unrealized future could tantalizingly be dreamed of as more perfect than any version of the past.

Art, in Croatian discourse, was an ever-moving target, one whose mastery promised to bring the nation international recognition of a high level of civilization, a goal at whose extreme stood a desire for political autonomy.\(^\text{11}\) An always present, always watching, outside world was a crucial actor in the story of national art being written in Croatia. As Maria Todorova, has rightly noted: “all Balkan nations are intensely conscious of their outside image.”\(^\text{12}\) The outside world was a witness whose opinion more often than not had more weight than that of locals. The witness’s approval was imagined to hold the keys to civilized nationhood, in whose eyes Croatia’s transformation into a modern–day “Athens” could be legitimized.\(^\text{13}\)

It would be going too far to claim that Bukovac, with his *Episode from the War of Montenegro*, intended to make a painting about the anticipation of painting. And yet, the young Dalmatian artist was keenly aware of the anticipatory hopes that hung on his career. There is plenty of evidence that he internalized or at least played to the stakes with which his supporters invested his hopes—for success. In early letters from 1877 and 1878 to his first Croatian patron, the Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer (1815–1905), for example, he adopts the standard motif of achieving fame as a means to serving the nation: “if I should ever gain renown (ako dođem do kakvog glasa) in that art to which I have dedicated my life” or “with your [monetary] aid, I could become famous and be of honor to my people.”\(^\text{14}\)

That the main figure of the *Episode* waits in anticipation was almost certainly not a deliberate reflection by Bukovac on the state of affairs in Croatian art discourse of the day, and no critic read the composition of the *Episode* explicitly as a direct allegory of Croatian art itself on the verge of becoming. Still, I believe that drawing a connection between the formal qualities and reception of the *Episode from the War of Montenegro*—emblematic of the reception of countless works of art by native sons—in the Croatian presses is
warranted. Just as the woman in the *Episode* waits on the threshold of some action, so critics of art saw Bukovac’s debut canvas as poised on the threshold of a national art. Just as the visual drama of the *Episode* requires a substantial imaginative outlay from the viewer to complete it, so the reception of the painting in Croatia cast the net even wider, imagining what the painting foretold of the artist’s future fame and, by extension, the fame of the nation.

Critics of art waited and listened. For decades, they had been listening for voices in foreign newspapers, hoping that some native artist would deliver a well–calculated blow. But the impossibly steep list of ambitious desires pegged to art saw to it that like the woman in Bukovac’s *Episode*, commentators on art too were frozen stiff by their expectations. Each new work was seen as a step toward some great work—a great history painting—in *potentia*. For the next two decades, until his perceived triumph at the Croatian Pavilion of Art at the Millennial Exposition in Budapest in 1896, Bukovac would be cast as “young” in the Croatian presses, each work one in a series of halting first steps. Such a fate was not particular to Bukovac. In nineteenth–century Croatian art discourse, one finds more often than not that every step by a native artist is cast as a youthful first step. Commentators tended to describe artists in their potentiality, moving towards, but never arriving at, a state of illustriousness requiring foreign confirmation. Croatian art discourse held artists in a state of suspended, promising youth, and was most comfortable when recognizing the first glimmers of talent in an artist, when that artist’s future career, because it had not yet begun, could be freely imagined and aggrandized.

Notes:
1. Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* ([1861]; repr. New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1907), 128 (Mr. Jaggers). This passage from G.K. Chesterton’s introduction to the 1907 edition of Dickens’s novel by (page ix) illuminates my appropriation of the title, *Great Expectations*, in this study: All his [Dickens’s] books are full of an airy and yet ardent expectation of everything; of the next person who shall happen to speak, of the next chimney that shall happen to smoke, of the next event, of the next ecstasy; of the next fulfillment of any eager human fancy. All these books might be called ‘Great Expectations.’ But the only book to which he gave the name ‘Great Expectations’ was the only book in which the expectation was never realized.


3. Vlaho Bukovac, *Episode from the War of Montenegro* [in Croatian literature Montenegrin Woman on the Defense (Crnogorka na obrani)], oil on canvas, 170 x 110 cm. Whereabouts unknown. No tombstone information for the portrait is known, and I have been unable to find any photographic reproduction. As noted by Kružić–Uchytil in her *Vlaho Bukovac: Život i djelo* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2005), 22, the only description, from which the “good–natured” quote is taken, of the *Portrait de Mme la comtesse de C.* seems to be found in Th[éodore] Véron, *Dictionnaire–Véron: Ou Mémorial de l’art et des artistes de mon temps: le Salon de 1878 et l’Exposition Universelle*, vol. 1 (Paris: M. Bazin, 1878), 99.

4. Although I do not do so in the present text, it would be interesting to think about the auditory aspects of the *Episode* from the War of Montenegro. See, for example: Anne Leonard and Martha Ward, eds., *Looking and Listening in Nineteenth–Century France* (Chicago: Smart Museum of Art, 2007), an exhibition catalogue.


7. I would like to thank Dr. Darby English for suggesting this possible reading of the painting.

8. The entry in its entirety reads: “Incidental action linked to the main action (*l’action principale*) of a poem, of a novel. Also, a story introduced in a didactic poem to give it more variety, more interest. Also, in painting, any action or secondary scene (*de Toute [sic] action ou scène secon- daire*) adjoined to that which comprises the principal subject of a picture. Also, figuratively, certain facts or incidents, seemingly isolated, but more or less connected some larger event.” *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française, septième édition*, tome 1 (Paris: Librairie de Firmin–Didot et Cie, 1878), 661, s.v. “épisode.” “Épisode” in Old Greek Tragedy was: “the interlocutory parts between two choric songs, because these were originally interpolations.” (Oxford English Dictionary, second edition, 1989) s.v. “episode.”

9. Cf., for example, Albert Boime, *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971); Elisabeth A. Fraser, *Delacroix, Art and


11. I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Martha Ward, for coming up with the wonderfully precise phrase of “ever-moving target.”


13. One of the main conclusions drawn from the 2009 conference organized by Matthew Rampley, “Art History in Central Europe: The Vienna School and its Legacy” (the British Academy, London), was that art historians in the minority states of Austria–Hungary, such as Croatia, often sought validation from scholars elsewhere in Europe as a means by which feelings of marginality or backwardness could be overcome.

14. The first quote is from a letter from March 7, 1877, the second from October 8, 1878, in: Šišić, “Prve slike,” 380 and 384.

Figure I.1: Vlaho Bukovac, Episode from the War of Montenegro (Épisode de la guerre du Monténégro), 1878, oil on canvas, 170 x 110 cm. Whereabouts unknown. Documented in an albumen print, 1878, 18.6 x 12.9 cm. Vlaho Bukovac House Museum. Cavtat.
During Belgrade Design Week in 2013, Zaha Hadia presented her most updated version of her “Beko Masterplan,” sparking both admiration and admonishment across Belgrade and the globe. In this paper, I seek to delve into these polarized responses—why were some in awe of her plan, and what flaws do others see in it? In order to do so, I will structure my paper guided by three distinct but interrelated questions. They are as follows:

1. What does the city have?
2. What does the city want?
3. What does the city need?

Throughout, I will be asking what answers, if any, the Beko Masterplan provides for these questions. In doing so, I will visit topics such as displacement, top down gentrification, and mindful development practices. I structure this paper by beginning with an overview of Zaha Hadid’s legacy and from there moving into a brief discussion of the history of Belgrade and how it looks towards the future. In the body of the paper, I will discuss the politics of funding for this project and then discuss generally some theories of urban space and regeneration. I will end with a case study comparison of the Beko Masterplan and the Mill City Museum and finally discuss the realities that will accompany the implementation of a project of this sort.

ZAHA HADID’S LEGACY

Accompanying the passing of Hadid in the spring of 2016, much has been written about her lasting legacy in the field of architecture and as an Iraqi woman. At the time of her passing, Hadid’s firm, Zaha Hadid Architects, employed more than 400 architects, signaling that Hadid had made an enduring name for herself. Additionally, she was the first ever woman awarded the Pritzker Architecture Prize. Her work is described as audacious, immersive, experiential, and experimental (Giovannini, 2006). However, her work is also described as unbelievably arrogant and oppressive (Moore, 2013).

Architecture critic Rowan Moore explains that Hadid inherited a world at the turn of the 21st century where “spectacular architecture was believed to work regenerative miracles for the cities and companies that bought it” (Moore, 2013). Hadid was just the person to inherit this world, as her designs inspire awe and are almost always classified as iconic. Moore posits that the social, political, and cultural milieu that she inhabited also gave way to many of her projects taking place in “cities insecure about their urban dynamism” (Moore, 2013).

Further, her work, the Galaxy Soho development, has been said to contribute to the destruction of Beijing’s old town, in part due to the forced eviction of homeowners that accompanied the development and in part because of its asynchronous interaction with its surroundings (Moore, 2013). While some have proclaimed that Hadid’s work breathes democratic urban energy into the spaces it inhabits, Moore argues that some of her plans are exercises in isolated magnificence (Moore, 2013).

As we delve into the body of this paper, let us keep in mind the following question: are we to criticize Hadid, or the architectural, political, social world she inherited? Most likely, our answer will be the latter. However, Hadid, here, and elsewhere, sometimes must act as a proxy for these other forces.

BELGRADE’S LASTING ARCHITECTURAL CULTURAL LEGACY

Many of the articles published about the Beko masterplan cite Belgrade’s rich history of modernism as an explanation of why implementation of Zaha Hadid’s designs is congruent with the history of the city. In the well-named chapter “Shift” in the text “Modernism in Serbia,” Ljiljana Blagojević explains that in fin de siècle Belgrade, the turn towards modernism was accompanied...
by an attraction to the new, and self-referential architectural forms that it offered (Blagojević, 7). In the 1920’s, those returning to Belgrade from war efforts in France stressed the importance of architecture as a means to look towards the future and break from the past. In 1929, Milan Zloković built the first modern house in Belgrade, ushering the shift in Belgrade from a polis to a metropolis (Blagojević, 27). Zloković’s new conception of what the “house” could be created a new identity of the surrounding space (architectuul.com).

Flipping through the pages of modernist architecture in Belgrade in the first half of the 20th century, one does not get the feeling that Hadid’s proposal will be a seamless transition from the modernism that Belgrade once knew. Where the architecture of the mid 1900’s boats straight lines, Hadid’s undulating architecture does not seem to fit.

In addition to its architectural incongruence, critics fear that the Beko masterplan and other proposed developments (like “City on Water”) will interfere with the vibrant sector of social life that exists on the shores of the rivers that run through Belgrade (Petkovic). Splatovci dot the Sava and the Danube and are host to many nightclubs, cafes, bars, restaurants, and hostels. They offer spaces for recreation, relaxation, and escape to those who inhabit Belgrade. It is likely then that new developments that threaten displacement of local establishments and also disrupt the landscape will have a detrimental effect on the river-front culture of Belgrade.

**GRADUAL/ CATACLYSMIC MONEY**

In her seminal text, “The Life and Death of Great American Cities”, Jane Jacobs spends a significant amount of time discussing funding for city regeneration. It was relevant at publication over 50 years ago and remains relevant today. She names three different sources of funding streams:
1) conventional, nongovernmental lending institutions,
2) generous government subsidies,
3) “shadowy” money lent at usurious rates

She notes that most of the money invested into cities goes towards cataclysmic change, and very little of it is used to create gradual and lasting change—the type of change that she lobbies for.

**MILL CITY MUSEUM: A CASE STUDY**

I draw the parallel between Beko and Mill City, between Belgrade and Minneapolis because both represent the re-visioning of the spaces that once were home to industries that have been made all but obsolete by technological advances. Both the flour and textile mills have fallen into disrepair as time has taken its toll, but in two different cities across the globe from one another, separate architecture firms have endeavored to repurpose the space. Second, both derelict mills sit on major rivers that traverse their cities.

As you can see from the image provided below, the Mill City Museum, located in the heart of Minneapolis, Minnesota, is a successful pairing of the old and the new. Modern design and lighting seems to rise from the ruins of an abandoned flourmill. As the American Architects Jury proclaimed at their National Honor Awards, “[The Mill City Museum Design is] a creative adaptive reuse of an extant shell of a mill building, with contrasting insertion of contemporary materials, weaving the old and the new into a seamless whole. . . . It is museum as a verb” (msrdesign.com) Inside the museum is housed memories of flour milling, water power, grain trading and farming alongside stories of the people, laborers, and immigrants who gave the mill life. Additionally, the museum, given its unique spatial loca-
tion, can once again act as a “porous link between downtown Minneapolis and the river” (msrdesign.com).

Zaha Hadid’s design, on the other hand, makes no real attempt at sealing the marriage of the old with the new, and instead jarringly juxtaposes the two, creating a seemingly anachronistic city plan. In the image to the right, a rendering of the new Beko Masterplan interrupts the view from old citadel in Kalemegdan Park to the confluence of the River Danube and the River Sava.

Let us ponder:
What could/would/should Beko look like in actuality? How many jobs will be created? How many people will be displaced? Will there be affordable housing available?

Works Cited:
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Zivkovic, Milica, et al. “Postojece strategije urbanske i arhitektoniske konverzije kao rezultat povećane potražnje za stambenim prostorom” [“Current strategies of urban and architectural conversion as a result of increased housing demands”]. Tehnicki vjesnik (Technical Gazette) 23.2 (2016): 561-68. Print.
In Moral Vision and Impaired Insight, Hayden aims to destabilize the Western portrayal of Bosnia as a supremely multicultural and tolerant state. Drawing on census data and voting patterns, Hayden compellingly argues that Bosnia actually has consisted and still consists of three different ethnic populations that have, for the most part, little to no desire to form a unified, diverse nation; rather, their voting record indicates that the primary interest of each group is nationalistic. Using a distinction from the history of philosophy, I will classify the kind of tolerance Hayden sees as descriptive of much of Bosnia (and the former Yugoslavia) as coexistence tolerance. I will attempt to complicate Hayden’s picture by presenting former-Yugoslavian cultural movements and events in which a stronger, more substantial kind of tolerance—respect tolerance—was exhibited.

Hayden critiques anthropological research about the former Yugoslavia as improperly foisting the authors’ ethical and political—in this case, anti-nationalistic—ideals on the subject. Put differently, Hayden takes issue with these anthropologists’ conflation of the descriptive work of anthropology with the normative claims of ethics; namely, their confusion features a “disregard for the ways in which local parties do think and act in favor of the ways that they should (sometimes phrased as ‘must’)” (Hayden 113). This conflation results in a misleading conception of the region: “the understandable, even morally required, urge to condemn ethnic nationalism in the former Yugoslavia has led anthropologists (and others) to foster an illusion about the nature of events there” (106). It conceals the actual way the Bosnian people conceive their nation, a way that Hayden contends is substantially different from the way the West conceives it (106).

The West’s ethical-political imposition concerns Bosnia’s tolerance and multiculturalism. Wherein the West interprets (and is trying to fashion) Bosnia as an earnestly diverse and tolerant country, Hayden claims that this is not actually the case: “the insistence of the international officials who rule Bosnia on its ‘tradition’ of tolerance and supposed manifestations of multiculturalism is not a reflection of more or less verifiable accounts of Bosnia’s past or present but an unreal reading of life as other Europeans do not want it” (107). Hayden argues that Bosnians do not want their country to be multicultural, “the international imagining of a single Bosnian community despite the efforts of large, nonrandom segments of the population to reject it actually delegitimizes the beliefs of many of ‘the natives’ themselves” (108). The tolerance and multiculturalism of the West is simply a “tolerance that many Bosnians themselves do not acknowledge” (107–8).

Hayden’s argument is primarily based on his analysis of “the expressions of choice that people themselves make...[i.e.] voting or forming opposing groups in a civil war” (107). The censuses and elections throughout the twentieth century in the former Yugoslavia, and in Bosnia in particular, have revealed the same patterns: “most Muslims voted for a Muslim party, most Serbs for a Serb party, and most Croats for a Croatian party, even when non-nationalist parties were available options” (107). Moreover, these voting decisions came at the expense of other ethnic groups, “each party [was] committed to advancing the welfare of its own ethnic group as opposed (literally) to the others;” in particular, “in the 1990 elections, given the option to vote for a party promising a civil society of equal citizens, fewer than 10% of the voters did so” (112). Thus, Hayden presents a picture in which Bosnians were given a real choice between a multicultural, tolerant society and a more homogenous, nationalistic one and they chose the latter; given this choice, it seems clear that Bosnians actively rejected a liberal, tolerant, multicultural nation in favor of a more ethnically pure, nationally oriented one.

Beyond their political choices, Hayden claims this sentiment was also present in the Bosnian people’s very lifestyle, which featured a great deal of cultural and social separation between ethnic groups. Hayden quotes Lockwood in describing the relation between ethnic groups in Bosnia: “members of each larger ethnic group
live[d] in semi-isolated circumstances with relations with members of other groups... in spite of habitual contact with members of other groups, ingroup feelings and ethnocentrism remain[ed]s high” (111). One specific manifestation of this separation was the lack of intermarriage: “in many places in rural Bosnia these communities lived intermixed but not intermingled ...In the late 1980s in central Bosnia, intermarriage was still almost unheard of...the social boundaries between members of these groups, even when living as neighbors, were strong” (111). Therefore, the Bosnian people not only expressed their ethnocentric desires politically through voting patterns; this attitude was also expressed in their everyday dealings with proximate members of other ethnicities.

Given this sentiment, it is clear why civil war erupted in Bosnia: the Bosnian people waged war against each other for the purpose of pursuing these nationalistic visions. Hayden writes, “many normal, ordinary people were willing to kill and some even to die in order to create ethnocratic nation-states out of the heterogeneous territory of the former Yugoslavia, and they were also willing to vote for leaders who brought about these processes” (111). Hayden presents the civil war as a means Bosnians used to achieve their goals of ethnically homogenous countries, goals contrary to the pluralistic, multiculturalism of the West: “the whole enterprise of the international community in postwar Bosnia may be seen as an attempt to create a single society in a setting in which a large portion of the natives successfully fought a war to prevent just that result” (108, cf. 113).

This conception of Bosnia possesses two important features. First, the mutual tolerance of the various ethnicities was possible only insofar as their separate interests overlapped at some points, e.g. so long as each ethnicity held peace as an interest. That is, the different ethnicities, though nominally sharing a country, did not have a unified interest that represented one nation; the Bosnian peoples’ “coexistence did not mean that [they] considered themselves to be one nation, a collective body with common interests” (113). However, their coexistence, their tolerance of one another, was sustained by overlaps in their separate interests. These overlaps allowed them to fruitfully and peacefully interact and coexist, so long as each helped the others fulfill their own interests. Put simply, the three ethnic groups within Bosnia did not constitute one socio-political body that held a single set of interests common to all its members; rather, these ethnic groups had separate interests that happened to overlap in certain ways, e.g. a mutual interest in peace, leading to non-violent coexistence and inter-ethnic interaction.

The second feature entailed by this view is that the tolerance and multiculturalism begotten from this state of affairs are only means, not ends in themselves. They exist and are pursued only insofar as they support and make more expedient the aims, projects, and interests of each ethnic group. As soon as they do not meet (some or all of) the ethnic groups’ interests, they can be dispensed with. The Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s then, occurred when tolerance and multiculturalism no longer met the interests of the ethnic groups. Thus, Bosnian tolerance, as presented by Hayden, is a weak tolerance that allows for coexistence on practical, ethnocentric grounds, but entails no sincere appreciation of difference, no embrace of multiculturalism as intrinsically valuable.

This tolerance can be classified as “coexistence tolerance”, tolerance in which subjects “prefer peaceful coexistence to conflict and agree to a reciprocal compromise, to a certain modus vivendi” (SEP). In other words, coexistence tolerance presupposes a mutual interest in peace between two groups that otherwise have largely divergent sets of interests. And the peaceful living entailed in coexistence tolerance is seen as “the best means toward ending or avoiding conflict and toward pursuing [each group’s] own goals” (SEP, my emphasis). Thus, the diversity and multicultural tolerance understood in coexistence tolerance are not ends in themselves; they are only pursued insofar as they contribute to the mostly separate interests of the different groups they apply to.

All this data and analysis is compelling and illuminating, but other major aspects of Bosnian and Yugoslavian society seem to evidence the existence of a higher, more sophisticated tolerance. One such element of Yugoslavian society was the rock and youth culture of the 1980s-1990s that challenged nationalism with ardent pan-Yugoslav and anti-nationalist messages and ideals. Spaskovska characterizes the youth and rock movements as anti-system but not anti-Yugoslav. Despite superficial similarities, e.g. critiques of the
socialist government, with the nationalistic move-
ment’s messages, the youth and rock movement
“wanted a different Yugoslavia, but a Yugoslav
nevertheless” (Spaskovska 366); they wanted to
retain Yugoslavia as a unitary, multi-ethnic state,
but to engender certain socio-political changes.
Spaskovska writes, “an emerging Yugoslav iden-
tification, a supraethnic or even anational self-
perception was progressively being spread and
accepted among the youth” (358) and “among the
few things which were in essence pan-Yugoslav, the
music (pop/rock/punk) scene remained the most
prominent one” (357). Thus, both the rock and
youth cultures, though critical of the former Yu-
goslav government and its policies, also want-
ed to maintain a unified, multiethnic Yugoslavia.

In fact, per Spaskovska, the youth and rock
movements engaged in some of the most pointed
criticism against nationalism and ethnocentrism.
She writes, “Yugoslav rock generally stood for crit-
tical thinking, cosmopolitanism, openness, and
personal autonomy—everything which the later
nationalists, war profiteers, and criminal milieus
which indulged in kitsch and neo- and turbo-folk
despised and undermined” (357). Likewise, the
youth (and city folk in general) exhibited a simi-
lar anti-nationalistic persuasion: “a general trend
e specially among the urban, educated youth
was...[a] supra-ethnic, antinationalist attitude”
(362, cf. 361). Thus, Spaskovska’s article compli-
cates the Hayden’s picture by presenting substan-
tial cultural and political movements within the
former Yugoslavia that actively campaigned for a
diverse and tolerant Yugoslavian state. Though,
from Hayden’s picture, we may have thought na-
tionalism and ethnocentrism to be monolithic,
through Spaskovska’a analysis we see that there
were important and significant fissures that coun-
tered the majority’s push towards nationalism.

This revelation also alters the kind of tol-
erance we see as applicable to the region—the for-
mer Yugoslavia and Bosnia can no longer be seen
as monolithically coexistence tolerant; a more
sophisticated kind of tolerance was exhibited
through the rock and youth movements. For one,
these movements viewed the Yugoslavian people
as unified by one common interest represent-
ing one multicultural, pluralistic nation. In their
picture, there were no multiple separate ethnici-
ties primarily pursuing their own interests: there
was one common Yugoslav interest, the content
of which citizens may have disagreed about, but
which nonetheless represented one people: “a
collective body with common interests” (Hayden
113). Similarly, these movements saw multicultur-
ality not primarily as a practical consideration;
for them it was an ideal, an end in itself, a goal
without reference to fundamental, ethnocentric
interests. This ideal was seen as intrinsically
valuable, as worthy of defense in and of itself.

Thus, the prominent nationalistic senti-
ments as presented in Hayden’s paper were pro-
vided with a substantial opponent in the anti-
nationalist, pan-Yugoslav ideals of the youth and
rock movements. However, Hayden also notes that
though many Bosnians and Yugoslavs may have
presented themselves as tolerant, their actions —
as exhibited through their voting patterns —
demonstrated otherwise and, at the very least, compi-
cated their purported ideological commitments.
He writes, “[Bosnians] may well talk differently
from the ways that they act...most Sarajevans ‘re-
ject nationalist exclusivity in principle, yet they
have repeatedly opted to put nationalist political
leaders in office.’ In such circumstances, data on
what people do is critical for trying to make sense
of what they say” (107). Fair enough. What we
need then is a specific demonstration of this kind
of pan-Yugoslavism and active tolerance in prac-
tice. We can find such an example in an event that
occurred during the Sarajevo Winter Olympics.

By capturing the silver medal in the giant
slalom event, Slovenian Jure Franko won Yugo-
slavia’s only medal during the 1984 Games and
the nation’s first medal in a Winter Olympics
ever (Vuic 8-9). Franko recounted the mania sur-
rounding his victory, “people had climbed the
lift towers, and they were yelling and reaching to
touch me as I rode by. There were thousands on
the hill and at the finish. When I won my medal,
people began jumping on me, kissing me, prac-
tically tearing me apart, and all I did was laugh
and laugh’” (9). The public, presumably predomi-
nantly Bosnian, did not see his accomplishment
as foreign; they genuinely felt his victory as their
own—they took personal pride in his achieve-
ments. Their primary identification of Franko
was nationality-based, as Yugoslav, rather than
ethnically-based, as Slovenian. Franko himself
highlights the principality of Yugoslav identifica-
tion, “because of my medal, a medal for Yugosla-
via, it suddenly all made sense that the country
had pulled together to put on these Games. It
made sense then that we feeling such harmony,
such peace, such brotherhood as Yugoslavians” (9).
The centrality of Yugoslav identification, in
turn, was indicative of the centrality of unified,
collective Yugoslav interests over ethnic interests.

The degree of Sarajevan enthusiasm for
Franko’s victory was further displayed “the next
day [when] there were signs and posters through-
out Sarajevo that read, ‘We Love Jurek More than
Burek!’” (9). Anyone who knows anything about
Bosnia knows what it means to say that an adora-
tion of someone surpasses one’s love of (arguably)
the nation’s dearest dish. This occurrence not only
bolsters the above considerations, but it also more
firmly situates this cross-ethnic support in Saraje-
vo and Bosnia, the very region in regards to which
Hayden presents his contrary account. Moreover,
this esteem was reciprocal, with Franko praising
the diversity of Sarajevo: “having the Olympics in
Sarajevo gave them special significance, because
Sarajevo was the heart of Yugoslavia. Sarajevo was
where the mix of all ethnic groups and nationali-
ties had lived together through history” (OLM).
Notably absent from Franko’s statement is any
reference to multiethnic coexistence as practi-
cially necessary for fulfilling more fundamental
ethnocentric considerations. Instead, by char-
acterizing Sarajevo’s multiculturalism as reflect-
ive of the essential character of Yugoslavia as a
whole, Franko exhibited the pride with which he
esteemed the city’s pluralism: he saw it as an
intrinsically worthwhile virtue that captured the
character of the entire ethnically diverse country.

From these two cultural phenomena, we
get a rather different picture of Bosnian and Yu-
goslavian tolerance than we do from the Hayden
article. In these cases, tolerance is not reducible
to a means for achieving an overlapping inter-
est in peace. Rather, it is an end in itself that is,
as we have seen with the youth and rock move-
m ents, pursued—and with Franko, esteemed—
for its own sake, as something intrinsically valu-
able. Also, entailed is a conception of Yugoslavia
as one nation with common interests that apply
irrespective of ethnicity. Thus, we can see that
coeexistence tolerance is inadequate for describ-
ing the character of these kinds of phenomena.

Instead, the kind of tolerance exhibited here
is “respect tolerance”, wherein “even though [the
tolerating parties] differ fundamentally in their
ethical beliefs about the good true way of life and
in their cultural practices, citizens recognize one
another as moral-political equals in the sense that
their common framework of social life should...
be guided by norms that all parties can equally
accept and that do not favor one specific ethical
or cultural community” (SEP). In other words, in
this conception, tolerance is endorsed as intrin-
sically valuable, an end in itself, an ideal—not a
mere means for pursuing one’s private interests.
These interests themselves are also now broad-
ened so that they are not ethnocentric, but ones
“that all parties can equally accept and that do not
favor one specific ethical or cultural community.”

Though Hayden provides an enlightening
picture regarding the predominance of coexis-
tence tolerance in Bosnia and Yugoslavia, we also
see that there are substantial instances of a more
sophisticated kind of tolerance: respect tolerance.
This is not to discredit or undermine Hayden’s
findings; indeed, his research reveals an impor-
tant truth about the ideological commitments of
many people in the region. However, we make a
mistake if we look at his data and conclusions as
definitive and universal—they are merely a part
of the picture. To see them as comprehensive and
absolute would be to ignore large swaths of other
phenomena—empirical data—that are reflective
of different socio-political aspects of the region.
Therefore, I have merely argued that there is an
important strain of stronger, respect tolerance that
needs to be taken seriously in any comprehensive
analysis of the region. Anything less is an over-
simplification and is not per Hayden’s own stan-
dards, descriptively faithful—it is to ignore actual,
substantial ways people have thought and acted.

Notes:
1. In his paper, Hayden is primarily concerned with
Bosnia, the most ethnically heterogeneous republic of the
former Yugoslavia. However, what he says is applicable to
the other, more ethnically homogenous republics as well.
For example, Hayden writes, “candidates supporting a civil
society of equal citizens ran in every republic and, apart
from a very few local-level victories, lost everywhere to
those supporting ethno-nationalism: Slovenia for Slo-
venes, Croatia for Croats, Serbia for Serbs” (106). Thus, in
my paper, I will allude to Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia
interchangeably and draw on phenomena present in both
since both are, per Hayden, subject to the same tradition of nationalism and thereby same kind of tolerance.

2. It is important to note that Hayden’s article is broad in its temporal scope. Hayden wants to claim that this is the way Bosnia has been throughout the 20th century and the way it is now. I merely want to claim that a different kind of tolerance has been exhibited in Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia at some point in their recent history. I do not want to claim that they have been respect tolerant for the entirety of the 20th century or that Bosnia exhibits the same kind of tolerance now. This modest project, I think, is enough to complicate his picture.

3. If one responds that the international community expresses the views of Bosnians that are opponents of nationalism, Hayden can answer that the international community thereby violates its own standards of democratic political expression in attempting to impose foreign values on a majority that has nationalistic desires. Hayden says as much when he writes, “that the international representatives support some Bosnians does not alter the fact that they oppose others, whose objection to being included in a unitary Bosnia is based on their rejection of co-nationality with those supported by the internationals” (108) and “a state that does not have the consent of about half of those supposedly governed by it can hardly be considered democratic” (113).

4. There are two things to note in Hayden’s statements. First, he describes this phenomenon as occurring in “central” and “rural” Bosnia. While it is true that the prevalence of intermarriage was low in rural Bosnia, it should also be noted that it was a somewhat regular occurrence in cities. Thus, as a whole, intermarriage was not all that uncommon in the former Yugoslavia; in fact, many of the most famous cultural figures from the Balkans were either children of mixed marriages or married someone from a different ethnicity themselves (or both), e.g. Novak Đoković, Zlatan Ibrahimić, Goran Bregović, Ivan Ljubičić, just to name a few. Second, while Hayden’s basic point still stands with this qualification being brought to view, it is not clear how this is at all noteworthy: a greater prevalence of marriage along ethno-racial-religious lines in rural locales is the case in most countries in world, even those touted for their tolerance and multiculturalism, e.g. the United States.

5. In a similar quote, Hayden writes, “intermarriage was in principle prohibited and in practice almost unknown in rural Bosnia” (111). It is not clear what he means here by “in principle prohibited.” If he means legally prohibited, he would need to provide evidence for this. If he means that it was prohibited more on a cultural level, e.g. on a family-level, this would seem to amount to disapproval rather than prohibition and again, would seem to not be unique to Balkan rural locales.

6. Spaskovska writes, “most [rock bands] both emotionally and pragmatically advocated for the peace and preservation of Yugoslavia and initiated or supported with their performances many anti-war and anti-nationalist concerts and initiatives” (370). The practical interests of the rock bands she mentions lie in the financial gains they stood accrue from a larger audience afforded by a unified Yugoslavia. This fact is not damaging to my basic point here because Spaskovska argues that this practical interest was only part of their support of the pan-Yugoslav ideal—they also had an “emotional” attachment to the ideal. (Ascribing anything but a secondary role to this “pragmatic advocacy” would be, to my eyes, an overly cynical reading of events.) This “emotional advocacy” was what grounded the treatment of a unified, multicultural Yugoslavia as an end in itself.

Works Cited:
The Roses of Sarajevo mark sites of intention. These are where Serb soldiers chose to aim and fire mortar shells, leaving behind a scattered, abstract pattern. One could call them rose petals. After the siege, some of these wounds in the city were filled in with red resin, literalizing the rose interpretation. They have come to be read as a memorial - a monument to the violence, destruction, and terror of the Siege of Sarajevo. It is the field of this memorial which concerns me. Many monuments to trauma occupy a small, contained space - they are a point at which memory coalesces, congeals, and is contained; within Sarajevo, the Roses are not contained. Although they exist individually, as points in a field, their spread forces them to be read differently than the statues, obelisks, and plaques which normally mark memorials to war. The field of the Roses and the field of Sarajevo are one and the same - daily practice intersects with the memory of war. This dual-geography creates a different relationship between memory and daily life than exists in other cities - places where memorials to war are out of the city boundaries, or hidden in a park in the city center, or crowded by other statues and monuments. The duality means the onus for memory relies on the collective power of Sarajevo’s citizens, and that war tourists can complicate this by responding to the fields in different ways. In this essay, I seek to clarify the nature of the dual-geography through comparison with a Peter Eisenman memorial, explore the relationship between daily practice and memory, and discuss how these different fields are interacted with in different ways, resulting in a complex picture of Sarajevo.

Examining other memorials that attempt to confront geography allows us to clarify some of the nature of the Roses. In Peter Eisenman’s Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, for example, two topographies are merged to create the undulating landscape, although the constituent pieces of the work are perhaps evocative of tombstones or caskets in their form and regularity. The upper topography is visible both inside and outside of the Memorial, but the irregularity of the bottom layer is only legible once inside the field. By requiring entrance to notice the full scope of the monument, Eisenman creates a spatial locality - in this small site in Berlin, the ground rises and falls with memory. Both topographies were created without concern for the pre-existing ground; two separate wavy sheets were layered atop one another and a grid imposed upon them; the connections are what constitute the work. The field of the work - the locality - is thus distinct from the city of Berlin itself, creating a new space through the creation of memorial. Because entrance offers a memorial to the Jews of Europe, not just Berlin, it is a space that is not just German, transcending the nation in which it exists, a liminal place where memorial and remembrance are the most powerful forces.

The Roses are different. Eisenmann’s field, though substantial and permeable, has clear borders. One leaves the world of the city - of daily life, action, and daily practice - and enters the field of memory - which is not enacted daily, and has some quality of ritual about it. Because the Roses are placed throughout the field of the city, the entire city becomes a field of memory. The only borders are the boundaries of the city, and thus the entry points to Sarajevo are the permeable spots of the memorial space. The field of memory is superimposed onto the topology of the city, and the person in Sarajevo occupies and experiences two geographies. Life in Sarajevo thus becomes the constant act of breaching the boundaries between memory and daily life. The Roses mark the city for the resident, operating as way-finding markers as much as a shop or a cafe or a street sign can be. Following the war came the re-emergence of conscious daily practice. It was this practice that helped to create an illusion and recollection of a pre-war Sarajevo; the act of going to cafes, of re-enacting life from before the war, and to some extent the carrying-on of pre-war actions such as listening to a walkman while walking to work that some citizens undertook helped return the space of the city under siege to a city again. The un-noticed (or under-noticed)
Rose complicates this by constantly subjecting the space of the city to the realm of memory. Buried in acts of daily life, the Sarajevo Roses - as monument - constantly makes conscious the dual-geography of the city, while the citizens work to make the practice of “un-seeing” and thus under-experiencing the city closer to the norm.

Roses in war memory are complicated and multi-faceted. Some focus on them as sites where we can remember the innocent victims of the war, while some specific roses are connected with individual people and individual deaths. As memorial spaces, they serve as constant reminders in a shared space of the trauma of the city. The memory here is collective - many people interacting with and interpreting the Roses in different ways - and formed collectively - these different interpretations coalescing into an understanding of the Roses as significant, but without an artist or authority dictating certain aspects of its representation. Where most monuments and sculptures have an artist or a selection committee deciding important characteristics of the memorial - such as location, style, or scale - the Roses do not. Formed from the intentions of Serbian snipers and transformed, as the city transformed after the Siege, the Roses became an anonymous, insidious, and unavoidable kind of monument. They are absent from the ego of their creation and elevated by the citizens. The interactions with daily life means that the forces responsible for the preservation and relevance of the sites are shared among the citizens and risk being forgotten. As many as 100 Roses were painted red in the immediate post-war years, but subsequent and necessary postwar development destroyed a lot of them, leaving 12 intact.

This act of memorial - filling in the shell patterns - runs counter to a traditional idea of monuments using a single representative site or event. It also does not apply some kind of narrative to the history of the trauma; the Roses merely mark sites where a particular kind of traumatic act occurred. The field expands as a result of this marking; were a single Rose chosen, or a single Rose remained, all memory of what these represent would condense onto the single spot of the Rose, and it would then contain all trauma and the whole city. There would, in that case, be a site one could visit to participate in the ritual of memory. By memorializing these sites of trauma, the Roses also transform sites of Serbian caused damage into a field of Sarajevo’s trauma. Although these sites were selected by the Serbian military, the Roses become sites of Bosnian memory and memorial by filling in only a small subset of the mortar wound. Serbians appear insofar as they have caused trauma, but Sarajevans talk about these memorials in terms of the people - their family and friends and locals - who died. The Roses, in their silence, allow the residents of the city to re-brand particular instances of the siege through their conversation around these sites. Unfortunately, the lack of a narrative history also allows tourists - and those who cater to tourists, a la the war tours - to do the same.

The nature of these Roses - that they exist on a horizontal plane at the street level - allows them to occupy a space that may become a blind spot in daily life. Although some people may use the Roses for way-finding, because of the circumstances of the siege they are in trafficked areas. The regularly movement through and around them connects the fields of daily life and trauma via the active practice of living. People who continually walk these paths are either not surprised when one appears or they do not notice it - it can become such a normal part of the daily routine that it becomes invisible. Tourism - and the war tourist topography - intersects daily life and makes the act of forgetting more difficult. Tourism is not a daily action, but random interventions into the lives of everyday residents by individuals from different walks of life with a fascination for trauma and those things which render the space they are visiting distinct. These visitors do not seek reminders of daily life; war tourists seek a brutal escapism and experience of a trauma they did not undergo, allowing them to un-see the machinery of the city and see instead those memories of the war - here, the Roses. To a certain extent, the ritual kind of memory Eisenmann’s memorial has and perpetuates may be found by understanding the war tourist’s relationship between the fields of the Roses and of the city. For this kind of tourist, the city is not just the cafes and shops and cultural institutions recovering from the siege; pertinent sites become areas where the remnants of the Siege are still strong-
ly felt, where destroyed buildings were or once were. The war landscape also contains the Roses precisely because they mark tragedy. As the city recedes, the field of memory is pulled to the front of the mind, becoming the only thing noticed. It is a conscious act of ignorance, of removing from the tourist mind all things that relate Sarajevo to other cities, focusing instead on the most unique and noticeable reminders of a recent history.

Although each Rose is an individual site, they are in conversation with one another because they, together, constitute a very specific layer of trauma. One rarely speaks of individual Roses unless discussing a particular death - it is the repetition and scale of this project which grants its interesting status. In the repetition - the use of non-art, alienating sites, in this case the mortar shell craters - there is something akin to minimalism, although it is a different sort of material (carrying the anxiety of trauma rather than that of industry) being repurposed. Instead of repetition which seeks to confront the nature and use of objects, the Roses - and their number - confront memory and city. There is a strong similarity to the way people place flowers and toys and signs at the site of a death in order to commemorate the dead, but these kinds of remembrances are ephemeral unless continually acted upon. The Roses were filled in with red resin a single time; there is not a continuous act of refilling, and the impetus for the filling did not come from each individual affecting by the particular deaths at the site. They were elevated beyond a mortar shell pattern through the intervention of some citizen, and thus show an intention to tie the memories of the Siege to the physical destruction of the city.

Following the siege, art - defined by these Roses - re-emerged as a deliberate act of remembrance. Anticipating a return to the city of daily practice, as opposed to the war city, the Roses were set down to provoke a conscious - or subconscious - recollection. It was a pre-emptive act against forgetting, against the inevitable post-war reconstruction. The city’s wounds would not be aligned with potholes and other normal signs of infrastructure wear and tear. Memory of the siege would not be contained within books and memory, but physically present in the city. The shelling - those acts of war time intervention which made the ability to carry on with daily life difficult, and had such a traumatic effect on the psyche - would retain a subtle presence in post-war daily life. During the siege, art occurred and recalled acts of daily practice - Susan Sontag staged a production of Waiting for Godot which was well received, but she does discuss the difficulties in staging the production, in the exhaustion of the actors, the impossibility of getting certain props, the risk of large groups of people assembling. This particular work allowed actors to do their trade, leave their homes and go to work and recall a life that was normal. It was, just as the Roses are, an act which sought to reject the acceptance of a static understanding of the city - Sarajevo is not solely a city under siege, nor is it an untouched city. Sarajevo is a city where history is constantly being called into question. The dual-geography - the fields defined by the city’s boundaries and the presence of the Roses, have formed a contemporary city where residents and visitors can pick and chose what kind of experiences they can call to the forefront of their lives. By what they see and call attention to, they create an image of Sarajevo in their minds that does not necessarily reflect the full scope of the city and its history. One can walk through the city and purposefully ignore all signs of the Siege, or ride on a bus through its streets and see the remnants of the Olympics, the scars, and let the cafes and shops and citizens recede. One can also do neither of these things, and create a mix of the two, living in between and along the boundaries between memory and life, knowledgeable about the past but also aware of the importance, and beauty, in living and working and breathing safely in a city where, years before, the mark of a Rose could have represented the end of that.

Notes:
2. Ibid. 244
4. Ibid.


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Godfrey, Mark. Abstraction and the Holocaust. Yale University Press, 2007. 244


Postmodernism was a cultural tendency and era during the second half of the twentieth century, a shift from modernism that came with a rapidly changing world—historical events such as the second World War and the atomic bomb, but also cultural factors, such as the proliferation of gender identities and the continuing breakdown of master narratives. While modernism seemed to focus on the epistemological, privileging questions of perception and knowing, postmodernism seemed to privilege instead the ontological and questions of world-making and modes of being—“Who knows what, how do they know it, and how reliably?” shifting to “Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?” Postmodern fiction “did not take the world for granted as a backdrop against which the adventures of a consciousness could be played out but rather foregrounded the world itself as an object of reflection and contestation through the use of a range of devices and strategies.” Postmodernism included the rise of such genres and modes as magical realism and meta-fiction, and proposed “the notion of a decentered reality in which a multiplicity of truths collide in unhierarchal existence.” The postmodern is preoccupied with language as a deficient tool “unable to reflect a reality which is itself only partially and unreliably accessible.”

Postmodern fiction had to grapple then with presenting many truths at the same time, expressing the world as an object for reflection and questioning rather than one that could be simply accepted. As such, it led to a more complicated reader-writer relationship and a questioning of the way that the text should be conceptualized as expressing reality and connecting the reader and writer. Roland Barthes’s famous 1967 essay “The Death of the Author” describes writing as “the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin.” He describes literature as “tyrannically centered” on the author, saying that the explanation or meaning in his contemporary criticism was always focused on the author “confiding” in us—evoking similar language to Borges’s confession or reader-writer connection. Barthes identifies the death of the author as a shift to thinking about the text in relation to the reader: “a text’s unity lies not in its origin but in its destination.” He argues against the idea of “theological meaning” to a text—the idea that the author is some of God and that the goal as reader or critic is to search out the “message” of that God—calling writing that does not claim an ultimate meaning—“anti-theological” and truly “revolutionary.” Barthes instead writes that the author is absent at all levels of the text: the death of the author is the moment in which the writer transfers their text into language, thus disconnecting it from themselves irreparably. He seems to see some of crisis in the text, finishing his essay, “we know that to give writing its future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author.”

The development of Borges’s ficción and Pavić’s new kind of novel and their unique and experimental reader-writer relationships can be closely paralleled particularly through the lens of the reader response theory that emerged through postmodernism. While both were inspired to create their new forms through some sort of “crisis” of literature, Borges seemed to see his new writings as an acknowledgment and exploration of the current dilemmas in the ability of language to convey reality, while Pavić believed that in embracing and expanding on ideas of reading as experience, he could achieve the salvation of the novel. Both depended on the use of magical realism in order to inspire discomfort in the reader and cause the reader to experience the text in a new, active, and mistrustful way—as a sort of co-creator, recreating and creating anew as she reads. In this paper, I will draw attention to the ways that the projects of the two authors can be paralleled through their use of destabilizing forms that play with the reader-writer relationship. I will go on to show through primarily close reading that both authors’ texts describe a correct way to create and also to read.

Borges pioneered a new kind of literature:
his ficciones were a new form and style, vastly different from the short story and novel alike. Edwin Williamson, a Borges biographer and scholar, describes his ficciones as “short stories or prose texts whose brevity condensed mental play into reverberating images and situations,” in which Borges rejected “the constraints of psychological or social realism” and “encouraged writers to accept fiction as a self-conscious artifact, susceptible to fantasy and to overly intellectual, and even philosophical, concerns.” Borges’s choice to use the word Ficciones to title his first collection of these works marked them immediately as distinct from other short story collections of the time, most of which would have used relatos or cuentos, or less commonly, the words novela or narrativa were used. Scholars have posited many reasons what Borges might have decided on the word ficción—that he was familiar with it through its use in library cataloguing at the time, for example. Whatever his reason was, it was a new and unrecognized form that blended genres, bringing book reviews, scholarly essays, and footnotes into fiction. He moved away from what at the time Williamson calls “the supremacy of the novel in the hierarchy of modern literature” by being more interested and inspired by older modes of storytelling, such as the fable, folk tale, parable, and epic. Borges even observed rather famously that metaphysics, theology, and mathematics could all “be regarded as branches of the literature of fantasy,” and his essays on philosophy, identity, temporality, mathematics and more indeed take on a dimension of the fantastic. He set out to solve the problem of the failure of language to represent reality by mixing genres to create something that was perhaps truer than realism. The relationship between fiction and reality, and how much can be expressed from author to reader, is what is at stake in Borges’s Ficciones.

Pavić wanted to create a new novel all together. He believed that the book—by which he meant the novel—was in crisis because we are “at the end of one manner of reading.” The way he wanted to solve this was to morph the manner of reading itself “by increasing the role and responsibility of the reader in the process of creating a novel.” In an article about The Dictionary of the Khazars, Pavić writes that the reader makes the decisions “about choice of plot and the development of the situations in the novel: where the reading will begin, and where it will end; the decision about the destiny of the main characters.” I would argue that the reader is a creator in Pavić’s novel: they and not the author must make the decisions about what is happening in his novel. To make this possible, Pavić too claimed that he had to change his form of creation: “to change the way of reading, I had to change the way of writing.” Reading and writing as forms of creation must both change for Pavić’s plan to succeed.

Pavić advocates the end of considering the book as object in preference for the text living on its own, between physical text and the reader. We will consider later how reader-response theory had established that the book was no longer solely a physical object—Pavić wanted to expand this and use the format of the book itself to help this process become even less grounded in the physical codex. He wanted to make the novel, which he considers a non-reversible art (another example is music, as a song is played from beginning to end and the feeling its notes evoke is dependent on their sequential order) into a reversible one (an example is a painting, for which your eyes can begin anywhere and end anywhere they like). The Dictionary of the Khazars, for example, has no classical ending: because entries are alphabetized, the dictionary ends in a different place and on a different entry and word depending on what language it is in. In addition, the “Preliminary Notes” of the text inform us that the text can be read “in an infinite number of ways,” listing many of them—from the first to the last page, at random, beginning with whatever page the Dictionary falls open to, or “diagonally” in sets of triples corresponding to the three sections of the novel. It can also be cross-referenced across sections, which can lead to both corroborating and conflicting information. Pavić did this precisely to help make the novel reversible and so lessen its dependence on its physicality as a codex. He believed that the novel was in crisis because it was once a one-way road, but that now the ends of a novel were like “a delta”—they “fork at the mouth into the sea of reading, where the novel and the river lose their names. That delta... in the postmodernist novel behaves like a many-way road.”

The Magical Realism of Pavić and Borges
It is important to take a few paragraphs to situate Borges and Pavić within the tradition of magical realism, particularly as Borges’s place in it has been often contested, and Pavić’s little addressed. I think that establishing how Pavić and Borges utilize the magical realist mode will be helpful in considering the destabilizing effect of their texts on the reader. First, as there are few texts considering whether or not Pavić is a magical realist author, I will take a moment to establish Borges’s influence on Pavić and how we can consider discussion of Borges’s style as also applicable to that of Pavić. Pavić was heavily inspired by Borges. Multiple reviewers and critics have compared him to Borges and connected them in a tradition of magical realism and the baroque. Pavić himself often referenced him in his own writings as someone used as inspiration. In an interview, Pavić said that these days there were more talented readers than talented critics or authors, and that “the best and most talented reader in our century was Borges.” When the interviewer later asked him, “If Borges were here, what would you like to find out about him? What would you ask him?,” Pavić responded, “Nothing. I would prefer to listen to him.” Pavić makes the claim in particular that he must use baroque poetic principles because realism is in crisis. (We will return to the idea that realism is in crisis in our section on Borges.) The baroque is often considered integral to a description of Borges’s style, and it is vital point of connection between the two authors. Alejo Carpentier defines the baroque as a “horror of the vacuum,” and a “human constant” that is not defined in one architectural or aesthetic moment but is a style that has flourished in all ages. He attributes it in particular to America, saying that it arises where there is transformation, mutation, or innovation, and stating that America is a continent of symbiosis, mutations, and mixing of cultures and natural. He describes the baroque as a style in both architecture and literature that is made up of small units and details that proliferate until they fill the space entirely, leaving the reader or viewer with the sense that given more space they would fill it infinitely. It is a style of ornamentation, of the absurd, the complex, and the detailed, almost always attributed to and in some papers (incorrectly) credited to Borges, and one that Pavić said he took from his influence. It rebels against a style of stark realism, and in fact Carpentier cites it as the basis for the marvellous real, defying realism in order to try and capture contemporary events of violence and war shocking Latin America, for which this new genre was a language that could account for the strangeness that existed within our reality itself.

The placement of Borges in the tradition of magical realism has been hotly contested among scholars. Maggie Ann Bowers, in her book Magic(al) Realism, an attempt to tie down a definition of the elusive term and genre, calls Borges a precursor to magical realism, and states that he is “only considered to be a true magical realist” by the scholar Angel Flores. She later makes an argument for why she does not consider Borges to fit within her definitions, claiming that while he is known for his meta-fictional narratives challenging the reader’s perception of what an author and a book are, for his baroque style, and for his magical realist elements, “the fact that the reader knows that the extracts are deceptive as they are not by the author to which they are ascribed diminishes the realist element of the tales upon which the magical realist relies.” I think this claim is lacking for many reasons. All literature provides the reader with some sort of narrator who may but is often not the author directly, and so the claim that the reader “knowing” that the intermediary author of Borges’s meta-fictional narratives is not real and so dismisses the realist tone of the text is simplistic and fails to take into account all the reader would supposedly “know” is not real while reading a text that is a mixture of realism and the fantastic.

It is true that magical realism is a nebulous term. I will be using the term magical realism to describe a style that rejects the ability of realism to portray the ‘real’ world and turns to the fantastic or the marvellous in content or form in order to better encapsulate certain aspects of reality. Carpentier and Roh were both theorists who wrote about what precisely this genre consisted of before and around the time that Borges was writing. Alejo Carpentier wrote essays about what he called the “marvellous real” that was at once what Franz Roh had called “magical realism” in painting but was also intrinsic to the baroque style and nature of Latin America and its writers. He writes
that the marvellously real begins to be so when it both arises from an “unexpected alteration” of reality and causes a “privileged revelation” of reality, an unexpected richness or “amplification of the scale and categories of reality,” all based in the faith of the reader in the text. He defines the marvellous as something extraordinary, which needs neither to be beautiful nor ugly but just strange. Building on his ideas, Angel Flores—in the same essay in which he declares Borges the first magical realist—states that the genre emerged when artists and writers alike found “in photographic realism a blind alley.” The rejection of realism as an accurate way to describe the strangeness of the real world is something that both Borges and Pavić share.

The definitions that I find most satisfying are those of Wendy B. Faris, in her essay “Scheherazade’s Children: Magical Realism and Postmodern Fiction.” I accept Faris’s definitions due to her willingness to define magical realism by what it is even if that means painting the genre with broad strokes. Rather than try and define magical realism by the genres that it is not (surrealism, realism, the fantastic) as many scholars, including Davis, have done, Faris is not afraid to make decisions about what it may or may not include, thus better incorporated the wide range of narratives, cultures, and authors that are included in its scope. In her essay, she suggests five primary characteristics of magical realist fiction. The first is that the text contains an element that we can either not explain according to the laws of the universe as we know them or that disrupt the laws of logical cause and effect. The second is that realistic descriptions exist in the text that ground us in details that despite being freed from a traditionally mimetic role, still create a world that resembles the one we live in: “the material world is present in all its detailed and concrete variety as it is in realism—but with several differences, one of them being that objects may take on lives of their own and become magical in that way.” Third, the reader might experience the fantastic as defined by Todorov, a hesitation between contradictory understandings of events whether between two descriptions in the text or between the world as it is in the text and the real world, causing unsettling doubts. Fourth, boundaries seem to be fluid in some way, or two realms or worlds seem to converge—for example, fluid boundaries between the world of the living and the dead, or literary boundaries between fact as we know it from historical accounts and fiction. Finally, these texts question standard ideas about time, space, and identity. Thanks to all of these aspects, the magic seems to grow naturally from the real in the text, which creates the genre of magical realism.

When we explore magical realism in this light, Borges and Pavić can be included within the magical realist narrative mode. The new forms that they both attempt to create—the fiction and Pavić’s new novel—share the goal of rejecting realism as an effective way to describe the world. We will see over the course of this paper many magical elements in Borges’s stories and Pavić’s novel that we can not explain using the rules of our world, and yet both authors frame their tales in authoritative, realistic forms, such as the dictionary or the academic article, that we feel we can recognize. Borges’s ficciones are often framed in a manner that would seem to give them an authority in our world—an academic paper by a scholar, for example—and many of them incorporate the use of bibliographical lists or dictionary entries as part of the content of the tale. By providing the reader with a source of information that is meant to be and usually is in our world reliable, and then having it provide instead something fantastic, our sense of stability is disturbed. Similarly, Pavić writes in a world that is historically ours: the Khazars were a real people, and some of the characters that he has record the Khazar polemic or participate in it were real, historical scholars. The form of the Dictionary is that of an encyclopedia or lexicon, a form that we feel we should be able to trust due to its authoritative academic nature in our world as a text of fact, accuracy, and clarity. The Dictionary however contradicts itself, while presenting us with fantastic elements that cause us to doubt the historical facts that follow them, destabilizing our trust in the realistic as well, blurring the boundary lines between fiction and reality. Borges and Pavić exist in a shared tradition of the baroque and the magical realist. We set this up in order to situate them in a shared tradition of influence, but also so that we can discuss later how they use these moments of the fantastic and these destabilizing forms to change the way the reader experiences the text: changing the
way that they write in order to change the way the reader will recreate the text.

The question then becomes whether the other italicized sections of the novel, which are similar in form to these two emphasized passages, are united by something more and can tell us something similar about how to read the dictionary. Throughout the novel, there are 20 other passages (defined by being at least a full paragraph) that are italicized and that share a semi-mystic, riddle-like, poetic tone. When all are considered together, it seems that our analysis should begin with Ateh, as 11 of the sections are spoken directly by or attributed to her. It is important to note that there are instances in which Ateh speaks in non-italicized dialogue; and so these sections are not explained simply by saying that they are the way Ateh speak. In the Jewish book’s section on Ateh, it is said that she was the first to compile the dictionary of the Khazars, and that “composed as a cycle of poems arranged in alphabetical order, it even described the polemic at the court of the Khazar ruler in poetic form.” The Green Book also corroborates that Ateh’s “poems” were preserved, and in particular that there were many of them that were spoken and used as arguments in the Khazar Polemic which are now scholars’ main concern and interest; the descriptions of the Polemic are also where we see most of Ateh’s poems in our Dictionary (6 of the 11). When Ateh was condemned to forget all of her poems and language, she taught her poems to parrots: each parrot was taught one entry from the dictionary and memorized it, and then they were released into the world. Nikolsky, the man who according to the section on Daubmannus provided most of the information for the current edition of the dictionary, listens to a parrot reciting what he says is one of Ateh’s poems, and the dialogue of what the parrot recites is in italics. This associates the italicized sections both as Ateh’s poems and as the dreams that made up the original dictionary of the Khazars. Later, a section reads that “very little of that original dictionary has reached the present one,” implying that some of that dictionary has. It seems that Ateh’s poems were the original source for the dictionary; that Ateh’s poems are provided in italics even when she herself is not speaking them aloud, as proved by the parrot; and that some or perhaps many of Ateh’s poems (for it says in this and in an earlier section that Avram Brankovitch had several of these parrots) made it into the source material for the edition of the dictionary modern-day readers would have.

This means that these italicized sections are representative of the dreams that would make up the body of Adam Cadmon, for they would have been what made up the dictionary. Here what Nikolsky remembers of the source material from the original Khazar dictionary becomes particularly important for he describes in detail what Khazars mean in particular by “dreams,” which brings together the connection between the italicized poems of Ateh and the dreams of the Khazars. If this is true—if Ateh’s poems make up the original dictionary, and that dictionary could reconstruct the body of Adam Cadmon—then the reader of the Dictionary, and the scholars of the dictionary, have access to that text—but what should they do with it? Is Nikolsky truly a good reader for memorizing the text when the Khazar parrots actually have memorized only original dictionary sections? Bringing together Adam’s body, Nikolsky tells us, requires bringing together particular moments: “They believe that in the life of every man there are knot points, small parts of time like keys...states of clear consciousness or moments of the sublime fulfillment of life.”

Here, what Nikolsky remembers of the Khazar Dictionary becomes particularly important, for he describes what Khazars mean by “dreams,” and his description provides our connection between the italicized poems of Princess Ateh and the dreams of the Khazars. Bringing together Adam’s body requires uniting these moments: “They believe that in the life of every man there are knot points, small parts of time like keys...states of clear consciousness or moments of the sublime fulfillment of life.”

Princess Ateh and Professor Suk, a 21st century Khazar scholar (the third of a trio—the other two 21st century scholars are the ones interacting in the original two italicized passages we analyzed) are connected by one of these knot points. In The Green Book, the description says that once punished, Ateh devoted herself to the dream hunters, priests creating a dictionary to compose Adam, because she could only love and have language in her dreams. It describes one
case where she places the key of her bedchamber in her mouth “and waited until she heard music and the frail voice of a young maiden uttering the following words...As the words were spoken, the key disappeared from the princess's mouth, and she knew...the words had come to Princess Ateh in replacement of the key.” In the chapter on Suk, he awakens with a key from ancient history in his mouth; later at a party, the seven-year-old Gelsomina says those same words to him, but he thinks later about how he did not hear her because he was deaf to her voice. Ateh is seeking something in her dream that she gains only by stealing this small part of time like a key—even exchanging a literal key for the moment—from Suk in the future.

What Ateh is seeking by stealing Suk's words is love. Ateh's punishment was not just that she would forget language and so her poems, but that this knowledge was intrinsically connected to love as well. The Yellow Book says that Ateh was saved from her punishment by the banishment instead of her lover but "this did not spare the princess from punishment"; the same book says that in another story, forgetting her language and all her poems meant that "she even forgot the name of her lover"; and the Green Book says that once she forgot her poems, she could only have love in her dreams, and that that was the reason for focusing on the Dream Hunters and for her exchange of the key for the dialogue. According to both the Green and Yellow books, the Princess Ateh even sent him the key of her bedchamber before he was banished, the same key cited as the one she sent Suk. In Nikolsky’s passage, he writes: “To the Khazars, therefore, a dream was not just the day of our nights; it could also be the mysterious starry night of our days.” In the italicized passage where a character (in another person's dream) dies three full deaths, as well, the dream ends with the words “For your dreams are the days in the nights.” In a poem of Ateh's to El-Safer in the Yellow Book, she writes: “As I await you in my lone and eternal night, the days snow upon me...I put them together and read out your loving words letter by letter. But I read only the little I can, because an unknown handwriting sometimes appears...somebody else's day and letter interferes with my night.” According to some of the dictionary's sources, this letter may refer to El-Safer and Adam Cadmon. If we take this to be true, then Ateh seems to be claiming that one of these men is interfering with her path to reach the other; either way, she is referring to letters of love as moments of day in the night, associating the moments of clear consciousness and sublime fulfillment from before with either Adam Cadmon himself or with love letters from El-Safer. Although these poems and their interpretations is complicated and ambiguous, love seems to be the day in the night and the night in the day here, associating it with Nikolsky’s description of the dreams of the Khazars.

If love is associated with the moments that will help to put together Adam's body, the question is now how this reflects on our italicized moments of Ateh's poems. Ateh's poems themselves seem to be representative of the moments of the dreams of the Khazars; and so the italicized moments are now associated with the pieces of the attempt to unite Adam. If we take this to be true, it implies that the moments of clear consciousness and sublime fulfillment that can be added up to reach Adam are moments of love. More than half of the italicized moments are about or part of the communication between lovers. Returning to Ateh's poems, the Green Book claims that all of Ateh's poems, even the poems chronicling the Khazar polemic, were originally love poems that were only later used by Ateh as arguments. In the very beginning of the book, preserved fragments from the 1691 edition of the Dictionary advise readers to read it only if he has to, and if he does, only the way he catches the illness that "skips over every other day and strikes only on feminine days of the week.” The difference that we discerned earlier between our feminine and masculine passages was that in the feminine version, Doctor Schultz does not read the pages and in fact gets more out of the touching of her thumb to Masudi’s than if she had read them. It seems that the 1691 Introduction is telling the reader to read the Dictionary only on those days in which he acknowledges that not reading the pages is more valuable than reading them.

Bringing our argument back those passages, we are reminded of the emphasis of the importance of love over knowledge: we decided earlier that these passages are telling us that the way to reach Adam better seems to be to touch
masculine and feminine thumbs together in love and put the Dictionary itself aside. Shortly after she looks at these pages, Doctor Schultz writes, “suddenly the various lines of thought in my mind came together like lightning. If you forget the direction time follows, there’s always love as a compass.”

Love is the main connection between Ateh’s poems, the italicized sections, and the moments of clearest consciousness that are referenced as the dreams of the Khazars. As we see later, it is also more important than the Dictionary, “worth more than any reading.”

In Nikolsky’s section, he writes: “If only for a moment in his life, every man becomes a part of Adam...It only takes the prophetic touch of the fingers, the masculine and feminine.”

Ateh’s poems, which recorded the dreams of the Khazars, are telling us that the goal is not to understand the Dictionary entirely, but to use it to unite the masculine and feminine and for a moment, at least, through that touching of the thumbs, experience one of those moments.

How then, can we bring this back to the way we should read the dictionary? This analysis implies that the text—this novel—is not meant to be read too deeply, but to be put aside and discussed. The Khazars settled for the touching of Adam Cadmon’s thumbs rather than embark on a complicated and perhaps impossible task of constructing his entire body. Ateh’s love poems, the dreams of the dictionary, advise us to experience the feelings of the text rather than to absorb it all. Ateh, however, was punished. Despite having come seemingly the closest of any dream hunters to Adam Cadmon through her love poems, she was cursed to lose her Khazar language and the rememberance of any of them. She was also turned sexless, divesting her of her ability to gain the communication that is cited in her own poems as the path to Adam Cadmon.

In addition, the sharing of the dictionary and communication between sources is cited by the dictionary itself as an inherently dangerous endeavor. Even those who go about finding the dictionary correctly seem to be in danger—but are they closer to the right way to read the text?

Notes:
1. As an example, Pavic, Dictinary, feminine edition, 206.
26. Dict p 207
27. Dict p 139

Dictionary of the Khazars (the book cover)
Georgi Gospodinov’s Natural Novel is at once both scattered and cohesive: each chapter is its own mini-story, while the author ties them all together to create several commentaries on life in post-communist Bulgaria. One of the most interesting commentaries in the novel is the one it makes on gender. Vesna Nikolic-Ristanovic’s Social Change, Gender and Violence: Post-Communist and War Affected Societies provides a useful historical framework for the novel, allowing for an analysis of how gender is constructed in the novel in its historical and cultural contexts. Gender in Natural Novel follows Nikolic-Ristanovic’s model of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity. Masculinity in the novel has two central characteristics, its interchangeability and its dullness, which comment on the marginalization the male characters feel as a result of both their personal circumstances and their post-communist environment. These male characters map their feelings of marginalization onto the female characters, viewing women as dangerous, powerful, and seductive, and they feel threatened by them.

In order to understand gender construction in Natural Novel, which is set sometime after 1997 (Gospodinov 3), it is crucial to first have an understanding of how notions of gender in the former USSR evolved after socialism dissolved. In her book, Nikolic-Ristanovic uses R.W. Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity/emphasized femininity and James Messerschmidt’s structured action theory to explore changes in gender structure. According to Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity are the dominant forms of gender to which other types of masculinity and femininity are subordinated or opposed, not eliminated, and each provides the primary basis for relationships among men and women” (Nikolic-Ristanovic 52). Nikolic-Ristanovic notes that hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity vary from society to society and change over time, and that they are “culturally honored and extolled at the symbolic level (e.g. mass media)” (52).

She first looks at the dominant forms of masculinity and femininity under communism. As we discussed in class, women under communism faced a “double burden,” where they were expected not only to be a shared wage-earner in the family, gaining equality in the public sphere, but also to be a housewife and mother in the private sphere, creating two conflicting images of women: the “New (Amazon) Woman…and the traditional image of woman as housewife and mother” (53). They were held up as “national heroines” and were expected to “sacrifice their own interests to the ‘higher’ interests of the state and nation” (54). Nikolic-Ristanovic cites Peggy Watson in noting that women gained self-esteem under communism: “It is the family, the domain of women,’ says Watson, ‘which becomes of crucial political and economic importance,” to which Nikolic-Ristanovic adds that women’s loss of economic independence during and after the transition from socialism to capitalism was connected to their loss of this self-esteem (54).

As for men under communism, they only had one role – paid work – in contrast to women’s two or three roles, and Watson notes that men were “neutered” in the public domain, while Nikolic-Ristanovic cites Blagojevic in saying that the male role became “emptied” while “male domination, unless it was based on physical strength or violence, got caricatured” (53). Nikolic-Ristanovic adds, though, that the patriarchy, “which was already strongly embedded into the culture,” never disappeared, and that, to use Connell’s terminology, during communism traditional masculinity and femininity were merely subordinated to socialist masculinity and femininity and not destroyed (54). This subordination, Nikolic-Ristanovic argues, allowed for the restoration of male dominance in the public discourse after communism (54).

After the fall of communism, gender roles were shaped by, on the one hand, new influences from the West and a new market-based economy,
and on the other, re-traditionalization and a re-emergence of hegemonic pre-communism masculinity. These two influences are summed up in Tatyana Kotzeva’s two discourses of re-traditionalization in Bulgaria: “‘return to the home’ and/or ‘motherhood’ discourse and ‘westernisation’ and ‘normalization’ discourse,” both of which were consequences of a market economy and liberal democracy (54). For women, these discourses meant a change in public presentation of gender and a return to pre-communist conceptions of the women’s role: “Since traditional gender roles and power relations were accepted as ‘given’ and ‘natural’, whereas women’s equality was identified as ‘forced’ and ‘unnatural’, re-traditionalisation and ‘renaturalization’ of gender roles is something which started to be largely publicized as desirable” (54). For men, the hegemonic masculinity that had been subordinated during communism re-emerged as a consequence of the development of a market economy and privatization. Nikolic-Ristanovic quotes Maria Adamik in saying that “This kind of very clear ideology supported the idea that men have to be strong, that they have to have power and be dominant” (54-55); she adds that masculine domination/hegemonic masculinity was expressed as “pressure on men to be ‘a good provider, to win, to succeed, to dominate’” (55).

This hegemonic masculinity was embodied in the rich and new political elite, while the corresponding emphasized femininity – which stressed 1. women’s return to the traditional domestic role and 2. embracing Western ideals of sexuality (that “beauty is the most valuable female ‘asset’” and that “every woman should try to make herself sexually attractive to men and to become a source of men’s pleasure” [59]), which were newly available through a proliferation of pornography and beauty and fashion magazines – was embodied in the women whose partners belonged to the “small segment of rich men” (64). (Nikolic-Ristanovic notes, however, that this second component of emphasized femininity – sexuality – was more widespread, “especially among young women who tend to achieve the new cultural image of woman as a doll, i.e. sexual object” [64]). These formed the dominant models of masculinity and femininity in post-communist countries.

It is important to note, though, that this hegemonic masculinity/emphasized femininity division is too simplistic to encompass all people; according to Connell’s terminology, if there is a dominant masculinity, there must be subordinated or marginalized masculinities (and marginalized femininities subordinated to the emphasized femininity) as well, and it is these marginalized masculinities that are important to consider in an analysis of Natural Novel. Nikolic-Ristanovic notes that, “as Connell stressed, the number of men rigorously practicing the hegemonic pattern in its entirety may be quite small, but the majority of men gain from its hegemony, since they benefit from patriarchal dividend, ‘the advantage men in general gain from overall subordination of women’ (Connell, 1987:156 and 1995:79)” (61). What this means for the Natural Novel is that the men are exposed to, and benefit from, macho, hegemonic masculinity, but are also subordinated and marginalized by it. In seeing women through men’s eyes in the novel, we see how men view women as the causes of their marginalization and emasculation. Nikolic-Ristanovic writes that, in one particular type of marginalization (of both masculinity and femininity), traditional gender roles are reversed: the woman becomes the sole breadwinner. She adds that this kind of marginalization has consequences: 1. Men feel frustrated that “they cannot achieve at least the ideal socialist male identity”; 2. The woman becomes more associated with the public sphere than the man; 3. The wife’s role as sole breadwinner increases the husband’s powerlessness and he attempts to compensate, often by violence (69). This dynamic of emasculation is mirrored in Natural Novel, although in different circumstances, and with one key difference: in Nikolic-Ristanovic’s book, powerlessness leads to violence; in Natural Novel, it leads to dullness.

In Natural Novel, none of the male characters fits the hegemonic masculinity prototype; they are all marginalized. When the meta-author (the man married to Emma, who writes the manuscript; I will refer to the editor of the manuscript as the narrator) relates the night Emma told him she was pregnant, he writes that he doesn’t fit into either typical response in films and books: he is neither the happy, loving husband - surprised but happy, tenderly hugging his wife, whose ma-
ternal instinct has already kicked in – nor is he the dastardly, unpleasant husband who does not want the child (Gospodinov 32). This incident is a good representation for the marginalization the meta-author – and, by extension, the other main male characters in the novel (which I will discuss later) – feels. While this instance does not have anything to do with wage-earning, it mirrors the unstable dynamic that arises from fitting into neither the old socialist model of masculinity nor the new hegemonic one: “The crisis of masculinity within the socialist wage system is connected to men’s failure to fit either traditional or socialist male identity, depending on the cultural model he associates himself with” (Nikolic-Ristanovic 66). The meta-author does not appear to associate himself with either model, creating a complete marginalization.

The meta-author recognizes the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity, but also recognizes his failure to fit these characteristics. The first of these characteristics is, as mentioned above, “the idea that men have to be strong, that they have to have power and be dominant, that they have to cope with their enemies and have to defeat them [emphasis mine]” (Nikolic-Ristanovic 54). He makes this failure explicitly clear at the beginning of the novel, after the apartment is robbed: “I sat in the rocking chair, caressed my two cats that were scared by the mess (where were they hiding when the thieves came?) and smoked a cigarette over the ruins of whatever was left of my male dignity. I was unable to protect even Emma and the cats” (Gospodinov 4). His emasculation is compounded by the fact that it is Emma who takes action to try to recover their belongings by calling the police when she comes home, and by the fact that Emma was at another man’s apartment that night (presumably – the meta-author mentions that he “spent the whole night in the chair” [4], implying that Emma came back in the morning). What is especially interesting in this chapter is the story he writes after this incident recounting another robbery. The reader would expect that this story would portray the meta-author asserting his dominance and defeating his enemies – that is, enacting hegemonic masculinity. However, instead he imagines a scenario in which he is not even present, but instead the robbery is resolved, and nothing is taken, when the two robbers rape the wife in exchange for leaving behind the TV, which is playing a soap opera and to which the wife is greatly attached (4-5).

This story has nothing to do with the meta-author’s desire to enact hegemonic masculinity and everything to do with the way he feels women have pushed him into a subordinated, or marginalized, position of masculinity. The woman in this story fits the main characteristic of the new emphasized femininity: she is at home alone watching a soap opera, and since soap operas air during the day, it is safe to assume that she is a housewife while her husband is out acting as the sole wage-earner. This housewife is able to use her sexuality to protect her most cherished belongings in a way the meta-author cannot. Meanwhile, the one object the meta-author truly cares about, because it represents his role as wage-earner – the rocking chair (he says he spent half his paycheck on it [3]) – is left not because he was able to actively protect it, but because, he theorizes, the thieves couldn’t get it through the door. Another, more emasculating theory is that the thieves didn’t even consider the chair worth taking, translating into a slight on the meta-author’s masculinity: the symbol of his role as wage-earner is not even worth taking. He feels emasculated because Emma spends the night with another man, and instead of trying to recover the conditions of dominant masculinity, he takes out his feelings on an imagined woman.

The meta-author also falls short of images of masculinity he internalizes from Western media, and these images are bound up with another signifier of hegemonic masculinity, one unique to the novel: writing. Nikolic-Ristanovic, while discussing shifting views of sexuality, writes that “Similarly as discourse about the gender division of labor, this discourse is also largely influenced by imitation of Western images of sexuality” and quotes Messerschmidt in saying that “Normative heterosexuality is...a major structural feature for understanding gender” (Nikolic-Ristanovic 61). The meta-author absorbs signifiers of heterosexuality from Western media, but fails to achieve them. He writes that he always wondered, as a child, how it was that no one ever went to the toilet in movies: “All those Indians, cowboys, entire Roman legions, and no one took a shit or peed. While I ran to the john after only two hours in the
theater, those guys from the movie never went there in their entire life. See, I told myself, real men don’t squat with their warm asses...That’s when I started not believing in movies. There was something wrong about them, something... unrealistic” (Gospodinov 22). While it seems that he has consciously rejected Western images of masculinity, it appears later that, despite this effort, he has internalized the images – specifically, those of the toilet – and fails to live up to them. The toilet still clearly remains an image of masculinity for him – when he and his male friends are together they have a graphic discussion about toilets; when he and Emma lived with Emma’s parents, the toilet was a point of contention between him and Emma’s father specifically (39) – and he connects it with writing: “Why does the toilet induce the urge to write?” (25).

Writing as a signifier of hegemonic masculinity is one of the most important motifs in gender construction in Natural Novel. The meta-author makes an explicit connection between masculinity and writing, and his failure at both, when he writes, about Emma’s pregnancy, that “I wasn’t the author of her pregnancy” (23). As he was emasculated in the robbery because Emma was spending the night with another man, here he is emasculated to an even greater degree because this other man has supplanted him in the role that is part of the “re-traditionalization” Nikolic-Ristanovic discusses. Part of “re-traditionalization” is the restoration of the role of mother as the ultimate goal of women; therefore, the role of father must be part of this re-traditionalization and restoration of hegemonic masculinity, and Emma has, in the meta-author’s view, granted this role to someone else.

The act of writing is equated with the act of insemination, and even when the writing is literal and not figurative, women still hold the power to emasculate the meta-author. For example, when the narrator is describing “the story of this story,” he says that “A certain man was trying to talk about his failed marriage and the novel (I don’t know exactly why I decided it was a novel) was based on the impossibility of relating this failure” (7). This statement works on several levels. First, by calling writing the writing an “impossibility,” the narrator – and meta-author – are explicitly acknowledging the meta-author’s failure to write about his failed marriage, and since writing corresponds to masculinity, a failure in writing means a failure in masculinity. Second, the fact that the meta-author is failing to write about a divorce is another example of how Emma is emasculating him. Nikolic-Ristanovic writes that “Similarly as in Western society...the ‘familiar’ accusation that the high divorce rate, juvenile delinquency and alcoholism can be directly attributed to women’s absence from the family, is used in post-communist society as well” (Nikolic-Ristanovic 55). The meta-author writes near the end of the novel about a newspaper article he read claiming that “the fin-de-millennium tendency pushed men further and further away from the family. Women preferred raising their children alone and the future belonged to families of two (excluding the father)” (Gospodinov 113). It is easy to see the connection between Nikolic-Ristanovic’s comment and the meta-author’s statement: the meta-author blames Emma, at least in part, for their divorce, and so in his failure to write about the divorce, he is being defeated by a woman’s actions.

Another example of the connection between women, emasculation, and writing occurs when Emma relates her husband’s story to the narrator: “By fits and starts she told me that her husband was once a very decent man who wrote at odd times and even published a few short stories. Admittedly she never read them” (7). The inclusion of “even” implies that it was a difficult task for her husband to get his stories published, and he should have been praised for his masculine feat; by never reading them, she emasculated and marginalized him.

Writing is related to interchangeability, which is one of the major aspects of masculinity in this novel. The question is, is interchangeability a sign of hegemonic masculinity, or marginalized masculinity? I would argue that it’s neither, but is instead a commentary on the very concept of masculinity itself. I quoted Nikolic-Ristanovic earlier in saying that “The number of men rigorously practicing the hegemonic pattern in its entirety may be quite small, but the majority of men gain from its hegemony, since they benefit from the patriarchal dividend, ‘the advantage men in general gain from overall subordination of women’” (Nikolic-Ristanovic 61). On the one hand,
the interchangeability in this novel allows the narrator and the meta-author to gain from other men’s hegemonic masculinity. For example, the narrator benefits from the meta-author’s successful manuscript by signing his – or, rather, their – name to the publishing contract. Similarly, the meta-author’s attempt at a “novel of beginnings” entails putting together writings from successful novelists. He seems to be hoping that these authors’ masculinity will transfer to him if he uses their stories to put together his own novel.

On the other hand, the interchangeability of the men in the story – the narrator and meta-author who share the same name, and the naturalist who writes that “despite our happy marriage, my wife got suddenly pregnant by another man” (100) – leads to dullness. The naturalist says, of his circumstances with his wife, “And then, just then I had the strange feeling that I’ve already read that somewhere. What was happening to me was coming right out of some bad novel, a novel I had already read. I rummaged through my library, I rummaged my friends libraries and I found it. Everything coincided, page by page, sentence by sentence, word by word” (100). These shared circumstances are coming out of a bad novel – failed hegemonic masculinity. Near the end of the novel, the connection between interchangeability, dullness, and failed hegemonic masculinity is cemented with Emma’s description of the meta-author as “A drone, he’s just a drone, although he’s not a bad man” (112) and the meta-author’s description of what a drone is and what he does in the hive (112-113). In a way, the drone is an extension of the meta-author, the narrator and the naturalist (or, they are all extensions of the drone). The beekeeping guide tells the meta-author that “The purpose of drones is to fertilize the bees in their wedding flights” (112), similar to the husband’s role of father to the woman’s role as housewife and mother. However, the guide notes that, after a certain point, “drones become superfluous” (112), just as the meta-author and naturalist (and, although it is never confirmed that his divorce was caused by his wife getting pregnant by another man, probably the narrator as well) are rendered superfluous by the other men in their wives’ lives. The other men exert their hegemonic masculinity by impregnating their wives, while the story’s male characters are marginal-
ized.

The story of the drones is also another example of marginalization of men at the hands of women. The guide says that “Drones are born from unfertilized eggs; therefore they have no fathers. They have the genetic characteristics of their mother and of the drone that fertilized their grandmother” (112). In other words, drones, despite being male, are matrilineal – a subversion of the order of the patriarchy. Additionally, while the men are marginalized by their wives’ impregnation by other men, the marginalization of drones is even more explicitly caused by women (the female bee): “The bees isolate them from the honey and, starving them, expel them through the entrance of the hive” (112). The female bees literally make the drones die. Perhaps, if bees had a concept of masculinity, the drones would empathize with the meta-author.

Men see women in Natural Novel, then, as dangerous characters with the capacity to undermine and marginalize their masculinity – the ability to “break something” in men (61). The men see this danger as arising from women’s sexuality, a fact shown by the way they attempt to regain power over the women. This is strikingly shown in two particular scenes. The first scene is when the meta-author is eavesdropping on the two women at the café and one woman tells the other that her husband only has sex with her when she is on her period because she wasn’t a virgin when they married: “I couldn’t be your first, he said, but now every time will be like the first time” (85). The husband, threatened by his wife’s sexuality and perceived promiscuity, attempts to literally reclaim her sexuality by “re-virginizing” her; as she says, it felt “Like I was losing my virginity all over again” (85). This dynamic can be put in context by Nikolic-Ristanovic’s explanation of sexuality post-communism: “It seems that the presentation of sexuality shifted from images of women and men as asexual or partly sexual beings (in communism) to images of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity associated with traditional opposition between men’s (uncontrollable) sexual needs and women as passive sexual objects” (Nikolic-Ristanovic 61). The woman in the café’s perceived promiscuity upsets her place in emphasized femininity as “passive sexual object,” in turn upsetting her husband’s
complementary role in hegemonic masculinity, and he feels the need to subordinate her sexuality to his.

The second scene – the meta-author’s reaction to the woman on the train (Gospodinov 103-104) – is less disturbing, but shows how quickly men associate women’s worth with her attractiveness and how they have internalized the message that “beauty is the most valuable female ‘asset’ and that every woman should try to make herself sexually attractive to men and to become a source of men’s pleasure” (59). When the meta-author sees the woman on the train, he becomes angry at the fact that he is attracted to her but that she shows no interest in him – she is a source of pleasure for him, but because she shows no interest, he is not available. He immediately shifts into attempting to destroy this power she has over him by undermining what he sees as her “most valuable asset”: her beauty. He tries “a vile technique of slander and abasement,” imagining her as unattractive and sexually unappealing as possible: “with rotting teeth,” “sagging” breasts, sitting on a toilet (the toilet returns: a symbol of masculinity used to desexualize a woman) (104). The meta-author claims that he has “mastered this technique and I can swear it works almost every time,” but that it doesn’t work on this woman and that, “what’s more, she turned my technique against me” (104). She emasculates him not once, but twice: once when she is sexually unavailable to him, and again when his technique to destroy what makes her dangerous to him fails.

Curiously, the other major representation of femininity in the novel is a decidedly unsexualized one: woman as fly. In this representation, femininity has a different kind of power, but masculinity still seeks a way to destroy this power. The meta-author writes that “The fly is the only creature God has allowed to haunt dreams. She alone is admitted by the Creator into the realm of the sleeper. She alone can cross the impermeable membrane between the two worlds. In that she is a tiny likeness of Charon – if we assume that sleep is a little death. It’s hard to gauge how the fly deserved this faculty. Oh Lord, what if she is Thy Angel in disguise, so when we shoo it away in disgust or, Heaven forbid, squash it between the palms of our hands, we are committing a moral sin?” (47). He later calls the fly “the mediator of the world, the angel and the devil in one” (80), a reflection of the way men view women as both objects for their pleasure – the angel – and creatures with the power to destroy them – the devil. Even if the fly has this unique ability to haunt dreams, though, the meta-author still undermines her, writing that flies “dwell in a man’s house, around his excrement, on landfills, etc. We can thus assume that the typical synanthropic flies we know today have been involuntarily created by man. Or by his waste activities...once Man came onstage, flies readily recognized him as their host and importunately entered his home” (77). In other words, men can reclaim the female fly’s power over them by claiming that they created the fly, and they undermine her further by saying they created her with their waste.

The power dynamic struggle between man and fly is summarized in the chapter in which the meta-author has a conversation with F. the fly. She tells him that “The author has no status anymore” (125). Of course, since writing is associated with hegemonic masculinity, by saying this the fly destroys the meta-author’s masculinity in one stroke. He retaliates with his reaction to F.’s angry statement that “nobody remembers the flies of the sixties...Nobody remembers them. There were swarms of flies in 1968” (128). He replies by saying that his book will be about “The big flies of the sixties that came to nothing. Nothing at all” (128). F. erased the meta-author’s masculinity, so he erases her entire species.

At one point, the meta-author records a piece of men’s bathroom graffiti: “I don’t trust anything that bleeds every month and doesn’t die” (117). This quote perfectly sums up the distrust and fear men demonstrate towards women in Natural Novel. Unable to conform to the new standards of hegemonic masculinity, they blame women for their marginalization. The men in Natural Novel are drones, interchangeable in their circumstances, their impotence, and their view of women. While they blame women for their predicament, though, the true culprit is the shifting construction of gender in the wake of communism. The men in the novel fit into Nikolic-Ristanovic’s model of marginalized masculinity, paralyzed by changing gender roles and unable to assume a position of hegemonic masculinity, even as they benefit from it.
Works Cited:
The Trap is a relatively new Serbian production that was rated as one of the best films at the film festival in Berlin. I think that this is the best movie that we have seen this academic quarter. I immediately had a good feeling about the so-nography, directorship, and photography; and it did call our attention to unusual details on the screen. For example in the first seen, we can see the protagonist Mladen walking towards the apartment of Jelena while the camera is focused on the stairwell rather than on Mladen. In this way, the director achesieves an emotional distance between the viewer and the protagonist--we do not only think about the characters and their feelings but rather about the moral problems raised in the movie and their implications they have for the society.

The film’s story is fairly serious but there are also some very moving moments as well as black humor. The relationship between the father and the son is beautifully described. Although such scences are rare in the movie, they are the happiest points in it. When Mladen and Nemanja drive to school, they sing together; when the wife Marija leaves Mladen, their son escapes from the hospital to comfort his father to promise that he would help his mom overcome her anger. Watching these scences helped me to understand their connection and the greatness of their love for eachother and Mladen’s decision to kill Peter. It is important to concentrate on the relationship among the protagonists and to feel the empathy that they feel for eachother. Subtle black humor is present throughout the film. The story takes place in Belgrade right after the war of the 90’s and the population is impoverished. The only ones who are successful and know how to make money are theives and gang members. Money, however, is important for people who had medical needs. However, hose who have it, including the banks, lack humanity. All together, the movie is a very fierce critique of the society after Milošević regime.
History through the Screen Film is a powerful medium through which one can better understand the world around them. Both in its products and the industry as a whole, film can provide insight into the political happenings of the time and they can locate a place in time. This paper seeks to focus in on one location, Serbia and its capital city Belgrade, and offer up a survey of the way film has interacted with the country at various points in time, and through those interactions, has produced knowledge of the place that allows external audiences to connect with the place.

In the years immediately following World War II, film in Yugoslavia took off in a way it never had before. Under Tito's leadership, the film industry flourished, growing into the new Hollywood of the East. Mila Turajlic's 2010 documentary, Cinema Komunisto, walks through the time of Tito's Hollywood, interviewing various film industry workers from the time, including Tito's very own film screener, extol the way that Tito really made a name for Yugoslavia through film, bringing in large-scale productions and high-profile movie stars to film in Yugoslavia. Specifically, the documentary focuses on the Avala film studio, headquartered in Belgrade, Serbia – the first studio founded in the post-war years, boasting the production of over 600 films during its time. The film studio made a name for itself, and for Yugoslavia, within the international community through the co-production of international epic films, such as Genghis Khan (1965). Tito's love for film shone through in the success of the business, but his involvement in the industry also led to the production of films that celebrated a national Yugoslav history and brand it as an ideal of brotherhood and unity, as it did with the release of the film March on the Drina (1964), which celebrated the defeat of Austro-Hungarian troops by the Serbian army during the first World War. The 1973 film The Battle of Sutjeska – made for the 30th anniversary of the battle – was a particular pet project for Tito as the film depicts his own heroic role in the war. Tito himself chose Hollywood star Richard Burton to portray him, and the movie was “the most expensive movie in the history of Yugoslav cinema”. Tito shaped the film industry so that the people of Yugoslavia and around the world would come to believe in this new Yugoslavia, branded as the pinnacle of what a successful country should look like – the casting of Richard Burton as Tito then served to place Yugoslavia within an international community. It should come as no surprise though that Tito had such a large say in the film industry, and it certainly speaks to the politics of the time; upon Tito's rise to power in the 1940s, the Film Enterprise of the Federation of People's Republic of Yugoslavia was established as an arm of the department of propaganda, so it is no wonder that many of the domestic films contained partisan messages. The Battle of Sutjeska (1973) was actually largely in response to films that tried to break out of the party mold, reinforcing pro-Yugoslav, and pro-Tito, sentiment in a three hour epic. Even the national Pula Film Festival was controlled by Tito, as explained in Cinema Komunisto – no one won unless they were Tito's choice for winner. Perhaps most telling to the socio-political climate at the time is the way that the interviewed people in Cinema Komunisto (2010) talk about how Tito used film to create an illusion of Yugoslavia was at the time. The massive film industry that was created under Tito's rule gave off the illusion that Yugoslavia was an economically and internationally burgeoning country, when in reality the country was running on fumes. Money was being poured into government programs and into massive film productions at a rate that was not sustainable, and the illusion Tito created was quickly dismantled after his death as the country plunged into economic crisis. Over the course of the 1980s the economy took a drastic hit, the government resigned, and by 1993 inflation had skyrocketed to 200% per month. This sense of disillusionment and ultimate betrayal by Tito is reflected in the 1995 film by Emir Kusturica, Underground. Following in the footsteps of older Serbian film, Underground (1995) clocks in at close to three hours and showcases the familiar extravagant produc-
tion style. The film follows the lives of two main characters, Blacky and Marko, through the duration of Yugoslavia's existence, from World War II to the then present day wars of the 1990s. The major plotline involves Marko keeping Blacky and a host of other “comrades” in a cellar underground under the pretense that World War II is still going on and it is their party duty to produce armaments for Tito and his fighters. In actuality, the war has been over for 20 years, and Marko is reaping the success of being high up in Tito's ranks and profiting on the black market with the cellar- made arms. In this way Kusturica's Underground and the way Marko deceives his best friend serves as a direct allegory to the way Tito – the leader for the everyday man – deceived his countrymen in creating an illusion of a Yugoslavia that would only crumble apart when it could no longer be supported. Important to note though, is that while Blacky feels great betrayal from Marko, at no point does he adopt any other viewpoint aside from that of a pro-Yugoslavia one. Even the extended title of the film – Underground: Once Upon a Time There Was One Country – hints at this sense of nostalgia for a country that is no longer, and further suggests a shared public sentiment that despite the betrayal from Tito, there is still a strong undercurrent of affection for having one nation in Yugoslavia and the good that came from it. The end of the film only emphasizes this point, as all of the characters reunite on an island that is breaking off from the war-torn dissolved country, and recount that they will one day tell their children that “once upon a time there was one country”.

Released when it was, though, in the midst of the violence in the 1990s, Underground (1995) faced much criticism in the time after its premiere, which serve to accentuate the tensions that were being felt across the Balkan region at the time. Kusturica, a man of mixed ethnic heritage, had been accused many times prior to the movie's release “with Bosnians who thought he wasn’t Bosnian enough, with Serbian nationalists who thought he was too Bosnian,” and many of the criticisms that followed the film fell in the same vein; despite its strong message in favor of one singular Yugoslavia, many critics read the film as giving preferential treatment to Serbia – an accusation which was not helped by the fact that the film rented Yugoslav Army equipment and received some funding from Milosević's government. One review of the film even went so far as to say that “if [Kusturica] is to have any place among humanity, it should be at the War Crime Tribunal in The Hague, not at the Cannes Film Festival”. There was in fact so much backlash to the film that Kusturica announced that he would no longer make films. This decision, of course, did not last.

In 2004 Kusturica came out with a new film, Life is a Miracle, that acts as the opposite of Underground in many ways. What one could perhaps even interpret as an apology to the issues people had with Underground, Life is a Miracle is shot above ground in light-filled spaces, much in contrast to the dingy cellar of Underground, and tells the story of a love that transcends ethnic divisions, with representations of both good and bad in the Bosnian and Serbian characters. Again, the title is important as it speaks to a recovering region on the preciousness of life after a decade of so much violence and hurt. It also stands in contrast to the 2001 Bosnian film by Danis Tanović, No Man's Land, which, like the cellar from Underground, is shot almost exclusively in the war trenches, and asks why the region must go through so much violence for hatreds that are not even necessarily felt on a personal level. By having the characters stuck in the trenches, Tanović points to the senselessness of war and being stuck in a cycle of violence that has been externally and politically constructed. Even before the 1990s, though, film in Serbia has echoed its reality. In 1989, on the eve of war when nationalist sentiments were in full force across the different republics of Yugoslavia, the Serbian film Battle of Kosovo was released. With the Battle of Kosovo being at the crux of Serbia’s mythic nationalism, this movie celebrated and encouraged the nationalist fervor, and additionally played into the Milosević government agenda, which had been bringing Serbian nationalist literary figures, like Vuk Stefanovic Karadzic and his collection of songs on the battle of Kosovo, back to the forefront. Although, Battle of Kosovo fed into militant nationalism, it is also important to note that it is representative of an attempt to rebrand the country as Yugoslavia crumbled, according to Serbian history that had been pushed aside to be
presents the Serbian capital as an arena of film in Serbia has shifted focus on rebranding itself in post-war years. In light of a rather negative public opinion from many, Serbian film certainly has its work cut out for them in terms of rebranding. Proving the films of the 1990s right in the assessment that all Serbians do not share Milošević’s ideals, student protests against the Milošević regime erupted in 1996 as people marched through the city of Belgrade in order to take back the city, enacting what Michel de Certeau would define as a pedestrian speech act in that it spatially connects the people and their cause to location. Various documentaries have also used footage of these Belgrade marches, which is powerful, as well, because it carries these pedestrian speech acts further than the location within which they actually occur, but with the weight of having happened in the capital. People across the world, but more importantly across Serbia, can feel apart of the marches and feel the importance of these marches happening in the capital city, and thus latch on to the cause, as well. In engaging with the physical space of their home to be free of Milošević, the people of Serbia can really focus on remaking their country as they wish it to be known to the world. The desire to move beyond the events of the 1990s is clear in their film – whether that takes the form of reconciliatory pieces or pieces that give an idea as to what Serbia is becoming. Accompanying Kusturica’s film, Life is a Miracle, other films are following suit in presenting stories in which the ethnic/national boundaries that were central to the wars of the 1990s are overcome. Among these is Village Without Women (2010), in which Serbian men cross the Albanian border and overcome religious, national and ethnic tensions in the pursuit of a wife. Another is the more recent 2013 film, Circle, which portrays the positive moments in war, inspired by the true story of a Bosnian Serb soldier who saved the life of a Bosniak. These types of films present a stark contrast to the virulent strains of nationalism that were strong during the wars, that allowed little opportunity to reach across battle lines, and instead suggest that the Serbian collective is looking for peace.

In addition to the films that argue for cross-Balkan peace, the Serbian film industry has also been putting out films that focus on the how the Serbian people would like to be seen. The 2012 Michaela Kezel film, My Beautiful Country, falls under both of the above categories of new wave Serbian film. On the one hand, it is a celebration of Serbia as a beloved home by the title alone; however, it also demonstrates the breakdown of hatred through love, as a Serbian woman falls in love with an injured Albanian soldier in search of safety. The 2011 film, Practical Guide to Belgrade with Singing and Dancing presents the Serbian capital as a city of love, as couples from all over the world experience “big love” in Belgrade, and the 2003 film Loving Glances presents the city in a similar fashion, where couples find love regardless of background. Finally, it would be remiss to not mention Boris Malagurski’s 2013 documentary, Belgrade, perhaps the pinnacle of rebranding the city looks like. Where Tito used film to brand Yugoslavia as the ideal of what a nation looks like, Malagurski uses his documentary to rebrand Bel-

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19 Pretty Village, Pretty Flame (1996)
20 The Wounds (1998)
21 The Wounds (2013)
22 Village Without Women (2010)
23 Circle (2013)
24 My Beautiful Country (2012)
26 Loving Glances (2003)
27 Belgrade (2013)
grade into the ideal of what a city looks like, waxing on about the rich culture and history that Belgrade has to offer. He walks his audience through the entire city, pointing out something unique and special about every stop on the way with a pride that is infectious. The care that Malagurski puts into this film to share his love for his homeland and to make it a place other people love to is perhaps best representative of the indomitable spirit of the Serbian people that no matter how many times their beloved capital is razed to the ground, whether they are bombed.

As Harvey states, “it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city,” and the people of Serbia have certainly taken hold of that ideal as they change their country and their capital to be the place they want it to be. In less than a century they have already gone through so much change. Once upon a time they were one country, and Tito branded that country as the ideal of unity through film, even though it was illusion. And when that country began to fall apart, it was through film that Serbia, and the other republics, brought its own national history back into the public. When violence erupted across the region, the people of Serbia used film to cope with it – to acknowledge their part, to question the need for violence, to understand their own hurt, and finally to heal. Through all that they have gone through, the Serbian people have emerged on the other side now, determined to show the world, through film, why they never stopped loving their homeland for it is a land teeming with passion, culture, and history.

Notes:
1. Mila Turajlić et al., Cinema Komunisto, DVD, NTSC; PAL; no region; widescreen (16:9); stereo. (UK: E2 Films, 2012).
5. Turajlić et al., Cinema Komunisto.
7. Ibid.
8. Turajlić et al., Cinema Komunisto.
11. Ibid
13. Ibid.
15. Halpern, “The (Mis)Directions of Emir Kusturica.”
17. Danis. Tanović et al., Nikogarsnja zemlja No man’s land, DVD; Dolby digital 5.1 surround. (Santa Monica, CA: MGM DVD, 2002).
27. Boris Malagurski, Belgrade with Boris Malagurski, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNWKTzuJi6g. in a world war or after the war of the 90s, they will continue to rally around the place they love to make it the best it can be.

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mance, War, 2013.

A touching still from the film Underground
The Dictionary of the Khazars is a novel—perhaps better termed an enigma—concerned with language, with legacy, and with life. It is a Rubik’s Cube stretched into a millennia-long Moebius strip, and defies most attempts to find truth within its many covers. Nevertheless, that is what we will herein attempt to do: to ascertain the true nature of Adam-the-precursor through an analysis of poetry and prayer in the Dictionary, with an eye towards explaining the motivations of the devils and the true cause of the Polemic. And, in the spirit of the Dictionary (i.e. that the writer will compose the work before dinner to ensure a sufficient length for the reader to comfortably finish after dinner), we will now dispense with any other introductory formalities and begin our quest.

Poetry and prayer throughout the dictionary are often forces of change, enabling many of the events that occur. The two concepts are brought up in the very first entry of the first book—that of Ateh, a personage in whom poetry and prayer often intermingle. In the Red Book, her prayers are mentioned but not her poetry: “Two of Princess Ateh’s prayers were preserved in their Greek translation, and although they were never canonized, Daubmannus cites them as her “Our Father” and “Hail Mary!” Her prayers are what remain of her in the Christian tradition, preserving her memory. While they have not been canonized, the fact that her non-canonical prayer is preserved speaks to the impact it must have had—a liturgy as strict as the medieval Christian liturgy was not very poetic, and Ateh’s implied ability to flout religious convention and yet remain a high-profile member of the religion speak to her ability to effect change. There are no other prayers of hers recorded, but her poems appear in her next entry, in the Green Book: “Ateh was a poetess, but the only lines of hers to have been preserved are: “The differences between two yeses can be greater than the difference between affirming a religion and rejecting it. While this piece of poetry is not directly linked to her role in the Khazar polemic, other pieces of her work are described as influential in the Khazar polemic, such as when her love poems were “used as arguments in the polemic.” That Ateh’s love poems were used as arguments in a debate that would change the course of her peoples’ lives shows that Ateh was able to effect enormous change through her language, specifically when it came to poetry and prayer. Ateh is therefore fundamentally linked to both poetry and prayer, a connection that appears in other entries in the dictionary unrelated to the Polemic. The Green Book attributes an argument relating to poetry to Ateh, in which she explains making a choice between a painter and a poet, and choosing the poet “because he doesn’t need a translator.” Here, Ateh places poetry over painting in a manner that seems illogical—typically, one would consider painting the art form that required no translation, as it simply requires a functioning pair of eyes to view and comprehend the image. Ateh, however, considers poetry the fundamentally understandable art, implying that it can be (if not literally, then figuratively or emotionally) understood by others regardless of the language they speak. This elevates poetry to a level above painting—poetry is irreducible to simple meaning, but it effects excessively, beyond meaning (an ability of prayer as well, although it is suggested that prayer experiences problems in translation that poetry avoids).

A figure more associated with prayer than poetry is Mokadassa al Safer, Ateh’s lover. Al Safer is an important figure in the dictionary; the most accomplished dream hunter who was reputed “to have shaped one of Adam Ruhani’s strands of hair.” Described as a priest of the cult of dream hunters, “his manner of prayer... led him to impregnate ten thousand virgin nuns,” which caused him to die ten thousand deaths. His prayer does not seem to be linked to language, which occurs in other descriptions of Khazar prayer: “the Khazars pray by weeping, for tears are a part of God...
sometimes women take a handkerchief and fold it until it can be folded no more; that is a prayer.”

This separates Khazar prayer (at least, all Khazar prayer save Princess Ateh’s) from Abrahamic prayer, as Abrahamic prayer requires language. Whether these prayers bereft of language are an evolution or devolution of spoken prayer remains to be seen, as we are not given enough examples to draw a strong conclusion.

We therefore have two strong examples, one of poetry and one of prayer in the era of the Khazars. There is another occurrence of poetry or prayer- or perhaps a mix between the two- that we would be remiss not to mention, which does not come from any of the other poets or priests, but from Samuel Cohen. He twice makes public declarations to Ephrosinia: during the maskerata and the Judiata performed in public in Dubrovnik. They are termed as “words/declarations of love,” while they are really more similar to poetry—a resemblance which is eventually acknowledged in a description of the second poem. They are composed of rhyming couplets, informing Ephrosinia of Cohen’s love for her in odd, opaque phrases. The first poem leads Ephrosinia to take Cohen as her lover, and the second results in his expulsion from Dubrovnik and his eventual placement in the Pasha’s army, wherein he meets his fate. Thus, both poems can be considered agents of change, bringing Cohen that which he desires as well as leading him towards his destiny.

In the Khazar Dictionary in its purest form, poetry and prayer share an intention- to grasp at the divine- and (for the most part) a form—that of language. Language is presented as an avenue to God: as Saint Cyril says, “God created man midway between angel and animal—separating him by speech and reason from animals, and by anger and lust from angels, and whichever of these parts he nears, he comes closer to those above or those below.”

Speech, facilitated through language, is what allows humans to transcend their more bestial nature and come into touch with the divine. A similar sentiment is presented when Samuel Cohen’s room is searched by the rabbis: they find a plate upon which is inscribed “to become fully awake it suffices to write out any word whatsoever, for writing is in itself a supranatural and godly, not human, act.”

Language- specifically the writing down of language- is connected to the divine; therefore, that of which poetry and prayer are made is what differentiates and elevates humanity. Poetry, specifically, is perhaps an evolution of prayer, enabling the individual to craft a unique message to the heavens that is not constrained to institutionalized Abrahamic communications. Poetry as an evolution of a type of prayer now begins to become visible as a constant undercurrent throughout the Dictionary of the Khazars. Poetry frees one to reach towards the divine in new, perhaps better ways. Ateh and Cohen’s poetry imagine. They often mix and mingle with each other, and serve the same purpose: to bring one closer to God. Prayer’s purpose to reach the divine is self-evident, but poetry’s is not so much. Its intent does not become truly clear until far into the dictionary, when the original Khazar Dictionary is described as “a cycle of poems” by Princess Ateh, which provided “extensive information about their history, religion, and dream hunters.”

Add to this that the purpose of dream hunters is to “plunge into other people’s dreams and sleep and from them extract little pieces of Adam-the-precursor’s being, composing them into a whole... with the aim of [incarnating] on earth the enormous body of Adam Ruhani,” which in its turn is done for us to “follow our angel precursor when he is ascending the heavenly ladder, [to] approach God Himself,” enables us to ultimately conclude that we strive towards this in order to be closer to God. In the Khazar Dictionary in its purest form, poetry and prayer share an intention- to grasp at the divine- and (for the most part) a form—that of language. Language is presented as an avenue to God: as Saint Cyril says, “God created man midway between angel and animal—separating him by speech and reason from animals, and by anger and lust from angels, and whichever of these parts he nears, he comes closer to those above or those below.”

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is heard, preserved, and effects change. Like the turtles upon which Ateh and al Safer carved their messages, poetry is able to come into being and remain there, reaching others of whom that the writer had not even conceived. However, while poetry and prayer are similar (a point upon which the majority of this essay so far has concentrated) they are not and cannot be synonymous. There must necessarily be a difference between them—poetry can act as prayer, and vice versa, but poetry is not always prayer and prayer is not always poetry. Poetry contains one very important difference: a poem is a waking dream. A poem is the written substance within which we can find the letters that bring Adam-the-precursor to life. Within poems we are able to achieve a linguistic freedom, a freedom of action (an existence that can be described solely in verbs, if we so wish) that is only ever otherwise achievable in our dreams. Poetry brings us closer to Adam-the-precursor—but it is, admittedly, not the only method.

Poetry, prayer, and dream hunting are all means to get closer to God—in the Dictionary, a quest that centers on the attempts to assemble Adam-the-precursor. However, these attempts are necessarily troubled; there are disagreements on the most fundamental level of the nature of Adam-the-precursor. When he is first mentioned by the old man who Masudi encounters, his being seems to be spatial: “if all human dreams could be assembled together, they would form a huge man, a human being the size of a continent.” Later, however, Nikolsky describes his form as temporal; “Adam immediately began to age, because his soul was a migratory bird, dividing itself between and migrating to different times. At first Adam was made of only two times—the masculine and the feminine in him. Then of four... but later the particles of time enclosed in the human form steadily multiplied, and Adam's body multiplied.” This description is problematized by the inference that dream hunters and scholars should be able to form him, as this is what the devils fight against: “at most you will form his fingertip or the mole on his hip. And we are here to stop his fingertip or the mole on his hip from being shaped. Other devils handle people who try to assemble other extremities.” The the devils strive to stop even the smallest bit of Adam-the-precursor from being assembled, indicating that logically there must be some way to accomplish that gargantuan task.

The answer to this quandary can perhaps be ascertained by examining the only other beings that could truly be considered to be ‘assembled’ in the Dictionary: Brankovich’s son Petkutin and the imitation kaghan. Petkutin was not born, but “Brankovich created him out of mud and read him the Fortieth Psalm to awaken and breathe life into him.” This assembled being is made of earth, a clear reference to the human Adam, and is brought to life by language—specifically prayer. The other assembled being is the imitation kaghan. In the Red Book’s entry on the kaghan, a tale is related in which the kaghan experiences a succession crisis, leading a “Jew from the palace retinue” to search across the kingdom for people who have various body parts identical to the kaghan in order to assemble the parts into a kaghan clone. Once the parts were brought together, “the Jew inscribed some words on the brow of the new creation, and the young kaghan, the kaghan’s heir, sat up on the kaghan’s bed.” This creation is made of flesh and brought to life through language as well, although this language is not specified as prayer. Here we see two successful instances of assembling a being, but the ambiguity of Adam-the-precursor’s creation remains as puzzling as his true form. Adam-the-precursor cannot be made from mud or Frankensteined into existence; we do not even know if he has a physical form. We cannot bring Adam-the-precursor to life as men were brought to life because he is not a man—he cannot be ‘brought’ to life because he already is life.

Adam exists exclusively in neither space nor time, because he is the precise balance of the two; the intersection at which space and time combine to make life. People and objects are able to slip through the both of them throughout the dictionary (Ateh’s key, Suk’s book, Petkutin, Akshany) because they are traveling throughout the system of Adam’s body, able to go from century to century, continent to continent, as easily as a blood cell traverses the arteries and veins of the body. Adam is made of human life, because he is essentially “the state of nature.” While Nikolsky only saw a part of the story, imagining that Adam existed solely in time, he unwittingly provides evidence to the contrary:
Not only does Adam’s soul migrate to all later generations (for the migration of the soul is always the migration of only one single soul, Adam’s), but all the deaths of Adam’s descendants migrate and return to Adam’s death, like particles forming a huge death commensurate in size to Adam’s body and life. Imagine white birds migrating and black birds returning from migration. When his last descendant dies, Adam himself will die, for in him are repeated the deaths of all his children. And then, as in the fable of the crow and the feather, earth, stone, water, dew, wind, cloud, and angel will come, and all will take from Adam what is theirs and empty him out.

Adam is composed of life; of lives, not just human, but all of what God created on and above the earth. When certain fragments of his soul, those who continue to meet in their past and future incarnations, are alive at the same time, they are able to collaborate, to unwittingly form Adam’s fingertip or the mole on his hip, by recording their efforts in language; in poetry or prayer or dictionary entries. By leaving a record of their searches, they manage to preserve a part of Adam outside of his constant flux; they cage a migrating bird. When this is accomplished, it alters the fundamental state of Adam—it effectively boosts him up or down the divine ladder, depending whether the language is interpreted and used correctly, and affects life itself. This is what happened with the Khazars; this is why they disappeared. They got too close. The efforts of the dream hunters set off a chain reaction; “time began to pass too slowly... And they knew that, when night fell again, it would be the last they would see of this generation. The letters inscribed by the dream hunters became bigger and bigger; the tips of the letters were hard to reach; books were no longer tall enough, and so the dream hunters began writing on hill slopes; rivers flowed on and on to the great sea...” Their language became such that it could not be contained with typical human methods; it had to be destroyed to prevent their discovery of the true form of Adam-the-precursor, and their subsequent enlightenment. This is the true history of the Khazars; a momentous, incredible almost-discovery ripped up and relegated to hints within the pages of an uncompromising, uncompromising book that barely survived.

However, in the nature of all investigations, once one question is answered, another rises in its place. The nature of Adam-the-precursor has been teased out, but the true motives of the devils and the reason behind the Polemic are still opaque—but, perhaps, can be found by continuing on this path.

Perhaps the Khazars were destroyed—perhaps they had to be destroyed—in their search for enlightenment by the same beings who battle against the formation of the Dictionary—the devils. Realizing the true nature of Adam-the-precursor was conceivably an enlightenment the devils could not allow humans to achieve, so they initiated the Khazar polemic to split up and disperse the Khazars once they got close. After all, the polemic was instigated by a dream of the kaghan’s, in which an angel said to him: “The Creator is pleased with your intentions but not with your deeds” (the sentence is rephrased in each book, but the meaning remains the same). In the Red Book, we are told that the kaghan “immediately summoned one of the most prominent Khazar priests from the sect of dream hunters and asked him to explain what the dream meant. The dream hunter laughed and told the kaghan: “God knows nothing of you; he sees not your intentions, or your thoughts, or your deeds.” If this was the case, and the kaghan had listened to the priest (presumably Mokadassa al Safer), his people might not have been destroyed—but instead, it seems like the scenario presented in the Green Book is what occurred. The kaghan related his dream to the participants of the polemic, and the Muslim participant “asked the Kaghan: ‘In your dream, was it an angel of recognition or an angel of revelation? Did it appear in the form of an apple tree or something else?’” The kaghan replied that it was neither, to which Kora proclaimed that it must have been Adam Ruhani—a fatal mistake for the Khazars, for as Akshany later tells Masudi, “the words in the poems are not the real words. The real word is always like an apple with a snake wrapped around the tree, its roots in the earth and crest in the sky.” An apple tree would have been the truth; it would have been
a harsh truth, an expulsion from Eden, but it would have been the real words. Instead, both the kaghan and Kora were fooled by the words in the poems, deluded by grandeur into believing that the kaghan had been contacted directly by Adam Ruhani, by a force closer to God than had been reached before, when al Safer knew enough to scoff that God’s (and Adam’s) attention was fixed elsewhere. Perhaps the devils constructed this dream, instigated the polemic, to lure the Khazars into the same trap that Akshany later warns Brankovich against: “Have nothing to do with things that involve the three worlds of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism here on earth, so that we may have nothing to do with their underworlds.” By converting the Khazars, the devils were then able to lay claim to them, to keep those who get too close to Adam-the-precursor as far away from him as possible, down in their respective hells.

For once the Khazars- once anyone, for that matter- reached enlightenment, they would realize the true unity of life within Adam-the-precursor; they would no longer feel the need to try on religions in futile attempts to get a rung or two closer to the divine truth. The cycle that had existed since the beginning of time would be broken in a fundamental manner; humanity would coalesce and die its last death within Adam, and so would all else as humanity knows it. And once there is no humanity, there is no use for any hell. Whether the devils were therefore acting with the balance of existence in mind or whether they were mainly concerned with their job security will, in the spirit of the Dictionary, be left for the reader to draw a conclusion about on their own. The writer has a hot dinner waiting.

Notes:
1. Red Book, “Ateh,” p. 22. Different prayers and/or poems are recorded in the three different books, but unfortunately, we must forgo an exploration of the connections between the religions and what was preserved for now—a topic for another time. It suffices to say that the changes in content between religion have been noted, and regretfully passed by.
5. “They washed their feet without taking off their shoes, spat into their food before meals, and added their barbarian masculine and feminine names to every word in the

“Our Father,” so that the “Our Father” rose like bread and simultaneously disappeared, and every three days it had to be cleaned of the chaff and could be neither heard nor seen for all the wild names that swallowed it.” (Red Book, “Cyril,” p. 66) In Cyril’s description of the people of Moravia, we see the inferiority of canonized prayer presented: while Ateh’s poem-like “Our Father” and “Hail Mary” are presented with their integrity preserved, ostensibly unravaged by other translations, the canonized “Our Father” is brutalized in a repetitive, almost Promethian cycle, unable to ascend in the way it was intended. Poetry and poetic prayer are able to transcend, while canonized prayer must descend into a constant contamination.
9. “He died in ten thousand ways at once; he had a ten-thousand-fold death. He died once for each of his children. They did not have to bury him. His deaths tore him into such shreds that nothing was left of him except this story.” (Green Book, “Yusuf Masudi,” p. 181) It must be acknowledged that such a death might have been his goal (as we by no means pretend to clairvoyance) thereby rendering his prayer a success, but that is a very unlikely possibility.”
13. “After spending the night with her, Cohen decided to convert to her Christian faith. He spoke about it in open rapture, and the story spread, but nothing happened.” (Yellow Book, “Samuel Cohen,” p. 217) Cohen openly speaks about his desire to convert in order for his relationship with Ephrosinia to be more socially acceptable (Dubrovnik is portrayed as extremely religiously segregated). He uses public speech acts in an attempt to ask for or induce change—somewhat close to the purpose of many prayers, except that his are directed at the populace and not towards heaven.
14. Yellow Book, “Ateh,” p. 206. Ateh is, in all incarnations, linked to the formation of the Khazar Dictionary, but this is the only time it is so explicit.
16. Here we must remember the silent methods of Khazar praying—which are significant, but troubling to our argument. Perhaps they pray without language because they recognize the inherent separation of language from God and thus avoid it, or perhaps their non-spoken prayer is less effective than spoken prayer. The only example we are given of a major character conducting non-spoken prayer is al Safer, whose method of prayer directly leads to his death. Unfortunately, we are not given enough information to make an assertion about effectiveness.
18. One interesting assertion about human language is brought up by the Hebrew participant in the Khazar polemic: “He believed that the differences between languages lay in the following: all languages except God’s are the languages of suffering, the dictionaries of pain.” (Yellow
Language is necessarily what separates us from the divine as well (which is why poetry and prayer function so well; because they are excessive and go beyond it). A point could also perhaps be made in a different essay regarding the necessary pain of human language—we do not hear the music of the heavenly spheres, but only speak the languages God has given us, and language serves both as a reminder of that separation and a consolation that we are at least above the animals.

23. Red Book, “Avram Brankovich,” p. 33. It is interesting, although not terribly pertinent, that Brankovich’s Christian name is ‘Avram,’ the Hebrew name of Abraham before his conversion to Judaism.
27. Their souls (at least, those of Brankovich, Masudi, and Cohen, being the only examples we are specifically given) are recycled within Adam-the-precursor in the same manner time is recycled within him, as described in an astute observation made by Muawia. “Watching them, he thought how the material used for every second of his time and theirs was a tattered second from past centuries; the past was built into this present time, and the present was made up of the past, because that was the only material there was.” (Green Book, “Dr. Abu Kabir Muawia,” p. 193) Ateh seems to exist outside of this cycle, but again, that is a topic for another time.
28. “Just as each letter of the earth’s alphabet corresponds with a part of the human body, so each letter of the heavenly alphabet corresponds with a part of the body of Adam Cadmon.” (Yellow Book, “Samuel Cohen,” p. 226) Humans are the flawed, earthly, miniaturized mirror of Adam-the-precursor.
32. We must now remember that earlier, it was shown that many descriptions of Khazar prayer require no language whatsoever—a puzzling method for a people supposedly so close to the divine through their language. We must therefore make a distinction between language and use of language: the language of the Khazars is no different than any other human tongue, it is a language of suffering and separation. How the Khazars used their language, however, through poetry and the Dictionary, is what led them closer to Adam-the-precursor.
37. Which, it must be noted, are demonic poems instead of human poems, serving the opposite purpose— to bring one further away from God instead of closer.
FREDDY BENDEKGEY

Woman carries the burden of self-sacrifice for the creation of man’s society. Without her, nothing that grows will last. Only she is capable of permanence, through the destruction of her self. This is the lesson of The Building of Skadar, a grim Serbian poem of a king’s wife who is immured in a building so that it will survive the elements. While the modern reader may look on the story with horror, women of the pre-modern regions of the Balkans found some comfort in this story. Sacrificing oneself for men to build is their reality. There is a form of pride in it— they know that for every building, every family, there is a woman underneath it. This pride shows through in the protagonist of Blaga Dimitrova’s novel Journey to Oneself. Raina falls in love with Vlad, and finds pride in the fact that she made him into the architect and builder that he becomes. However, the feminine ideal of self-sacrifice that Raina projects onto her work hides facets of her individuality. Raina turns the Skadar myth of Woman into a medium through which she channels her individual drives. In this way, Dimitrova subverts the woman of myth into a bridge between a woman’s individuality and the social world. This causes femininity to fragment into different masks, both pre-traditional and post-socialism.

The mythical woman in The Building of Skadar is characterized by suffering. However, the pre-modern Balkan woman, and even the socialist Balkan woman, has different views on suffering from the postmodern western feminist. The poem may disturb the latter with the horrifying image of the wife who “pleads and pleads, but all to no avail” as the builders bury her until “their work is done; they’ve closed her in the tower” (Songs of the Serbian People, 85-6). Her husband forces her into its foundation, where she finds seemingly no retribution. However, for the pre-modern Balkan woman, self-sacrifice for men and the family is natural. It is particularly striking how forcefully Gojko’s wife begs for her life— as “all her shame, her modesty” goes away in the face of death, she pleads, “Go find Mother, my dear, aged mother./ She is quite rich; she has great stores of gold,/ and she will buy a slave girl for this space,/ to be buried here in Skadar’s tower” (85)! Her desperate begging, ranging from appealing to their morals to bribery, casts her in a sympathetic light and makes her death all the more tragic. Still, only once a “faithful woman” of a king is buried will “the groundwork… retain all its strength,/ and the fortress can rise up with its walls” (81). It isn’t fair, but it is the only way to make anything last.

Pre-modern Balkan women are very accustomed with the metaphor of death. Becoming a wife is a symbolic death for women: Mandel claims, “in the Balkans and throughout Europe the themes of death and marriage have many parallels… death is often referred to in marriage metaphors and vice versa” (The Walled-Up Wife; A Casebook, 161). In Dance and the Body Politic in Northern Greece, Jane K. Cowan points out that in Greece a “woman’s moral and practical occupation with her house and family… can create a sense of isolation, while the incessant and repetitive nature of her daily tasks can perpetuate a sense of monotony” (Cowan, 192). The feeling of slowly wasting away in isolation resembles the wasting away of Gojka’s wife. The buried wife does not die immediately: only “after a week they hear no more of her voice” (Songs of the Serbian People, 86), presumably after seven days of slowly dying of hunger and thirst. This form of death is familiar to pre-modern Balkan wives and mothers, and in the story their suffering creates something that withstands the elements.

This becomes a point of pride for women: behind anything that lasts, even a man himself, there is a woman. When the kings try to build Skadar, “They are at work each day for three long years./ For these three years three hundred masons work,/ but they cannot even lay foundations,/ much less can raise the fortress walls themselves” (79). One faithful wife can manage what three kings, three hundred masons, and three years of work cannot. The man’s design can only come to fruition if a faithful woman sacrifices herself for him. What’s more, in this telling of the story the wife performs a miracle. She begs the master mason, “Leave a small space, a window for my breasts,/ …so when my son, my little Jovo comes,/ when he comes here he still can nurse from them” (85). Her breasts continue to give milk after
The milk still flows; today as it did then./ That milk is charmed; it works miraculous
cures/ for all women who have no milk to nurse” (86). She continues to suckle her baby as well as oth-
ers, performing one of her expected maternal duties. She helps to create her son as well as the tower be-
ond her death.

The wife who dies is also not simply a wom-
an, but the mythic woman liminal to nature. In Ruth
Mandel’s study of a similar story with the same
premise, The Bridge at Arta, she places women at
the center of the paradigm of man against nature: In
order to overpower nature and erect the bridge, “first,
by conquering the river in the form of a bridge and,
second, by the ultimate act of destruction of wom-
an-as-nature— there is a cost that must be paid. That
cost is the tragic loss of the social woman— the wife,
the mother” (Mandel, 164-5). Here, Mandel brings
up two main concepts of woman, woman-as-nature
and the social woman. Woman-as-nature refers to the
Ortnier’s explanation for the worldwide subjugation
of women across cultures. Sherry B. Ortner argues
that the universal subjugation of women in societies
worldwide stems from the fact that “women are seen
as closer to nature than men, men being seen as more
unequivocally occupying the high ground of culture”
(Woman, Culture, and Society, 83-4). The liminal
status of women between nature and culture stems
from men’s perception of their reproductive abilities.
Men, lacking the biologically creative capabilities of
the female body, were “free to, or forced to, create ar-
tificially, that is, through cultural means, and in such
a way as to sustain culture” (77). Seeing themselves
as agents of larger societal culture, men subjugated
women to domestic roles associated with childbirth,
just as culture subjugates nature for its own benefits.
Though Ortner’s claim of the universal subjugation
of woman-as nature attempts to be all-encompassing
on an identity with different complex historical back-
grounds across the world, the liminality of women to
nature prevails in Balkan folk tales and songs such as
these. This makes Mandel’s woman-as-nature into a
façade for women’s identities and subjugation.

“The social woman,” as Mandel puts it, is
also a form of façade— specifically, the persona of
the pre-modern Balkan woman in family and in the
world. The buried woman cannot simply be a “faith-
ful woman,” but a faithful woman to one of the
kings. It is the social role of the woman-as-wife who
must be sacrificed, to whom the individual herself
is tragically attached. In both Skadar and Arta, the
women sacrificed become ideals as the individuals
themselves are literally— and figuratively— buried.

The protagonist of Dimitrova’s book, Raina,
uses the self-sacrificial mythic woman ideal when
evaluating her own femininity. Raina often uses
phrases like “an atavistic feminine instinct” (Dimi-
tra, 71) when describing her relationship with her
love interest, Vlad, and her relationship with other
women around her. She declares, “Everything is pain
for a woman. To be young, to fall in love, to become
a woman, to become a mother, all these hurt. But the
worst agony of all is to have none of these pains”
(89). Pain and self-sacrifice becomes a method of
fulfillment for Raina’s identity as a social woman. It
connects her to the mythic ideal of the woman buried
at Skadar.

This becomes a form of pride for Raina. When
she first meets Vlad, he needs one of the wom-
en to iron his shirt, “Clearly confident of an enthusi-
astic response, a mad rush for the privilege of iron-
ing his virile shirt” (11). Still, Raina volunteers, and
when she asks if he washed it himself, Vlad retorts,
“No, do I look as though I’d be capable of that”
(12)? Raina has an ability associated with domestic
life that Vlad does not. In fact, judging by his appear-
ance, he should not have this talent. Thanks to Raina,
Vlad looks dapper to see another woman. However,
any woman would know that the handiwork of his
shirt is clearly not his own. Any woman, including
the “glamorous brunette” (14) with whom Vlad is
supposedly meeting, would recognize that behind
Vlad’s nicely creased shirt there is a woman who im-
proved his appearance. Raina continues this train of
thought when she feels possessive of Vlad’s jacket,
which he wears to visit her in the cold and snow.
When the other women she lives with hang up and
clean Vlad’s coat, she thinks, “I resented their touch-
ing that jacket— my jacket” (112). When Vlad first
met Raina, he was wearing no sleeves despite the
cold. Now she takes pride in giving him something
sensible to keep him warm. She wants recognition
for this indirect form of protection, and resents the
other women for their attempts to aid him further by
cleaning the jacket. Doing so would be taking partial
credit for Raina’s protection.

Raina’s pride stretches to Vlad’s literal build-
ing plans, and even to making Vlad into the man that
he becomes. Raina argues against Vlad when he re-
fuses to fight the blueprints for the Cultural Centre.
in Sofia, even though it is a poor building design. She travels to Sofia to argue her case, and believes that fighting Vlad on this is making her into a better person. She thinks, “I felt that I was becoming through him the opposite of what I had been” (104). This pushes Vlad to create his own new designs for the Cultural Centre. Raina claims that having shared Vlad’s “first creative thrill,” she has “obtained a place in his life that no other woman could take away” from her: “In that evening he became a real man” (106). Raina takes part in the creation of both Vlad’s building plans and his identity as a man, knowing that she will always be the woman behind his transformation.

Raina, however, operates under her assumptions of womanhood from a socialist perspective, which is very different from the pre-modern Balkan woman’s perspective. The *Building of Skadar* places great emphasis on the woman’s body and her reproductive abilities that make her liminal to nature. The poem pays great attention to the wife’s breasts:

“‘Brother in God, Master Rade, hear me! Leave a small space, a window for my breasts, And draw them both out, draw my white breasts both out…’
Like a brother, Rade now grants her plea. He leaves a space, a window for her breasts. He draws her breasts, her white breasts, to the light…”

(*Songs of the Serbian People*, 85)

In comparison, the narrator only devotes one line to the wife when she asks for “a window for her eyes,” (86). Her breasts become the miracle of the tower; the wife’s body adds to her identity as woman-as-nature. In contrast, Raina’s body plays little role in her femininity, especially not her breasts. The two body parts that Raina mentions most often are her “sheared” hair and her “gipsy neck” (16, 12). Both aspects originate with Vlad. He insulted her haircut during their first meeting, making her self-conscious about it. Raina first prescribed the term “gipsy neck” to Vlad, but then attributes it to herself through the imagined words of the peasant woman Raffina: “you look too gipsyish with all the sunburn. A woman should protect her skin from her earliest childhood, because unless it’s as white as virgin snow she can’t call herself a woman at all” (188). Her hair and neck are two gender-ambiguous body parts that can be manipulated to embody either masculinity or femininity.

By and large, what Raina uses to make Vlad a successful man– and successful at being a man– is not her body, but her mind and her skill. Raina pushes Vlad to become an architect by arguing against the plans from Sofia. She also wants to survey the Rhodopean peasant women to “help them to make the right decision in a matter they knew nothing about” (108). Vlad disagrees, and his plans win over the people of Rhodope without any previous work. Raina admits defeat, admitting, “he had said all along that they would accept the plan at sight, while I had believed it necessary to prepare the ground, and he had been right” (109). Raina phrases the sentence in a striking way: she wanted to “prepare the ground” by preparing the women beforehand to appreciate Vlad’s plans. This is similar to the mythic Skadar woman, buried in the foundations, and the social woman-as-wife who lays the foundations for her husband to become a man. However, in *The Building of Skadar* it is a vila who knocks away anything that the men build every night. The *vila*, or female nature spirit, warns them, “give up, stop your suffering” (79). In this case, Vlad wins over the peasant-women, who here take on the role of the vila, without the use of a woman laying the foundations. He even calls Raina’s strategy “traditional brainwashing” and compares it to “the alchemists of the middle ages” (108). Vlad directly links Raina’s method to archaic rituals, such as burying a woman within the walls. While Raina rejects the use of her body for the foundation, Vlad rejects the foundation altogether.

Raina places great importance on buildings, even anthropomorphizing them in a way that superficially resembles the pre-modern poem. However, her view is a socialist one, rather than that of a king in folklore. When Marin Grozev looks on at the bricks he has laid, Raina narrates, “he saw in [the sun’s] dying rays the wall he had built with his own hands– a pleasure comparable only to the pain when you see your wall crumbling to ruins” (78). The pride in creating something lasting seems to carry over from the traditional folk poem. Still, Raina looks at the wall and the building as a socialist, modernizing force that will bring lasting, modern structures to pre-modern towns. Raina watches the buildings grow overnight as “parents superintended the growth of a creative child” (92). The comparison of a building’s body to a human body appears strikingly similar to the story of Skadar, but in this case the human body is not traded
for the body of the building. In fact, it is quite the opposite—the building gains a life of its own as a member of the socialist modernizing force that has come to Rhodope. The wall becomes something living in and of itself, without the sacrifice of human life.

When Raina actually encounters the peasant woman Raffina, her romanticized view of femininity comes into conflict with Raffina’s more traditional understanding. When Raffina first speaks with Raina, she criticizes Raina for working just like the men; she prods, “And you being treated just like all the men… why should an attractive girl like you cut off all her hair and slouch around in trousers?” Raina feels that Raffina has implied, “I suppose you’ve come here to find yourself a husband” (188), which could not be further from the truth. Raina came to Rhodope and cut her hair to escape from her father’s legacy as a police officer in the old regime. She did not come here for suitors, even if she may have found one. When Raffina reads Raina’s future in beans, she focuses on the complex love triangles in her life, which have some level of accuracy regarding Vlad, Lalyo, and Dimana. Raina “smiled at her version of [Raina’s] love life,” but feels “more prepared to believe in her nonsense than in the actual events of the past day” (197). On some level, she finds Raffina’s traditional romance-centered view of her life appealing, but she also sees it as “nonsense.” In other words, Raina’s romanticized views of womanhood has links to that of the traditional pre-modern Balkan woman, but when Raina is confronted with the pre-modern view, she mostly finds it silly.

Raina’s perception of the mythic woman is warped by the socialist culture in which she lives, but also through her individual needs and desires. The first line of the book reveals her most important priority: “I hope nobody saw me” (1) sets the mood of the book of a woman desperate to escape her past. Raina wants to escape her identity as the daughter of a police officer from the old regime, and drawing attention to herself puts herself in danger. When Raina first draws attention to herself, it is to improve the organization of the building workforce, but her ideas “always met with stiff, atavistic masculine opposition from the boys on the site.” She realizes that this is beyond even sexism, but a problem coming from the “law of the collective,” that a single person cannot oppose the inertia of the group. (83) The men insult her, tell her “You want to become famous at our expense,” and even her mentor figure calls her idea a “naïve whim” (84). By directly trying to alter the workers’ method of construction, Raina becomes a target of scorn for trying to alter the flow of time in the work force. She rejects her place, as both a woman and an individual in socialist Bulgaria.

Raina then realizes that it is just as bad for her once they do implement her ideas. Goran receives the credit for Raina’s plan, and it pains her to see her “idea plagiarized and given substance by someone else.” Krum tells her that they call it the “Raina Method” in an attempt to cheer her up, but Raina feels that the name “stung” her. (91) Raina does not receive full credit for her own work, but she also has the entire workforce using her name to describe the new productivity measure. She is simultaneously more exposed and denied the full value of her work.

It makes sense, then, why the mythic woman’s importance appeals to her. Raffina validates Raina’s lack of recognition when she says, “A man needs to feel a woman driving him on; he can never take the initiative himself” (199). If she cannot create the plan, she can create the man who creates the plan. After the men reject her idea, Raina puts Vlad to sleep, and realizes, “In that instant I at last scaled the heights, knew what it was to be a woman. I had summoned up the flood-tide of a man’s strength, drained it, tamed it. I had created man, and changed him into a sleeping child” (89). As a woman, she tames one of the men who she could not control when she introduced ideas as a socialist individual. She helps Vlad’s plans for the Cultural Centre, and makes him into a man who brings about architectural change in Rhodope. Vlad, with Raina’s help, does not meet nearly the same criticism as Raina. This is likely the combination of the facts that Vlad is a man and that changing the architectural plans doesn’t necessarily change the habits of the work force. This inverts the problem that Raina faced when proposing her own idea: Raina gets credit as a woman who helped to bring about change through a man, and she remains inconspicuous as Vlad is the one to implement these plans. This form of femininity best meets her individual needs in conflict with her socialist masculine environment.

Raina’s form of femininity differs drastically from that of the women in her living quarters. When they help her dress up for her date with Vlad, Raina notes, “The girls in the hut were falling over one another to offer me the loan of their latest clothes, as if each of them felt that by lending me her dress she

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could somehow take part in what I was about to do” (241). Here Raina sees a different form of femininity through the creation of a person— in this case, the women create Raina through making her appear more feminine in a modern sense. One of them gives Raina the backhanded compliment, “It’s fantastic— no one would ever recognize you” (242). Beyond simply improving Raina’s appearance, the women transform her into an entirely different persona. What’s more, this persona draws attention to her, rather than making her more inconspicuous.

That is not to say that this appearance is completely separate from Raina. She does notice that this version of herself takes advantage of the two things that she has felt ashamed for— her neck and shoulders. She remembers, “For the first time, I noticed that I could look all right with my cropped hair— it showed off my neck and shoulders better” (241-2). These attributes that contradict pre-modern traditional femininity— short hair and tan shoulders— become a part of her feminine charm.

Still, this appearance does not entirely sit well with Raina. She protests against the lipstick, which she feels “threatened to sever my head just above the chin.” She has to walk “delicately” because of her heels, “someone else’s shoes,” one of which gets stuck between boulders. When she finally takes them off, she feels relieved; “now I could move freely again, my skirt swinging and the shoes dangling from one hand” (242). Some of this femininity does not feel comfortable for her.

Through her roommates, Raina is recognizing separate fragments of concepts of femininity. Raina feels like her roommates “were so insistent in their rivalry that in the end I felt I had to please anybody.” Afterwards she comments, “As I went out through the door, I felt that there were four of me” (242). She feels persona fragmenting not simply into the mythic woman, but into multiple ideals of woman. Much like the lipstick severs her chin from her nose, the different attributes of the different women slice Raina’s appearance into a handful of feminine ideals.

This brings to light an intentional hypocrisy to Raina’s perception: she claims to know “what it was to be a woman,” but there is no one “atavistic” femininity linking women to the mythic woman-as-nature or social woman. These are simply personas through which Raina compromises her individuality with the social needs and expectations of socialist Bulgaria. She calls upon the natural woman from traditional beliefs of femininity, but comes into conflict with the more traditional woman when she confronts it in Raffina. Raina’s version of the mythic woman persona allows her to find fulfillment through Vlad without putting herself at risk. She employs suffering and self-sacrifice through the methods known to her as an individual, and in doing so she creates for herself a unique persona of a socialist pre-modern-nostalgic mythic woman. For Raina, consciously or subconsciously, the immured wife of Skadar is a tool through which she may live in Rhodope.

The juxtaposition of Dimitrova’s novel and the Serbian poem shows that icons of womanhood do not exist in a vacuum, but rather take new forms as individuals use them to interact with different cultures and time periods. Raina succeeds at fulfilling her individual needs and desires by using the iconic mythic woman. In doing so, she acts both as a woman, as defined by the traditional beliefs of womanhood, and as an individual. Anthropologists cannot view the ideal Woman throughout its entire existence as holding the same meanings. The ideal from which the Skadar wife emerges has a different relationship with Raina than it did with the peasant women who told the Serbian poem. The ideal of the mythic woman takes on different forms in socialist Bulgaria as women try to navigate the new socialist society and the double standards of gender that it entails. The mythic woman becomes a tool, at once universal, cultural, and individual.
It all depends on who you knew, or rather who knew of you, that determines history; which circle self-conscious wanted to commit to paper its existence and mark a common grave.

The shock of not finding his name is always the same. Unused to his anonymity, I close the books angry that his body was not discovered and his remains buried in an unmarked grave.

- Irena Klepfisz, “Searching for My Father’s Body” from A Few Words in the Mother Tongue

What is the meaning of “six million dead” (!) if you don't see an individual face or body—if you don't hear an individual story?

-Danilo Kiš, Homo Poeticus

Eduard Kiš was born Eduard Mendel Kohn in 1889 in Kerkabarabás, Hungary. In 1924, Aleksandar Tišma was born in Horgoš, Serbia to a Serbian Christian Orthodox father and a Hungarian Jewish mother. In 1932, Rea Rajs Živković was born in Sarajevo to two Jewish parents. Danilo Kiš was born in Subotica in 1935 to Eduard and his Montenegrin wife Milica; in 1939, he was baptized into the Orthodox Church. (Thompson, 1) The Nazis invaded Yugoslavia two years later. In 1942, Eduard wrote a letter to his sister Olga; two years later, he “disappeared”—Kiš used that word intentionally—to Auschwitz. (Thompson 11) Rea’s father was killed by the Ustaše in Jasenovac on April 21, 1945 as the Partisans approached; the surviving prisoners staged a famous uprising the following day. (Almuli 342) Three years later, in 1948, David Albahari was born in Peć, Yugoslavia to Sephardic Jewish parents. Sometime in the following decade Danilo returned to Yugoslavia from Hungary and found the letter his father had written along; he lost it again as a student in Belgrade. (Lemon 1) In 1965, he published the first of three novels he would write about his father's life and death. Between then and the 1972 publication of the series’ final installment, Hourglass, he found his father’s letter and used it as the basis for Hourglass. (Lemon 1) Rea was interviewed in Belgrade in 1991, and her interview was published along with 29 others in a volume called They Stayed Alive in 2013.

Danilo Kiš was deeply concerned with the relationships among history, document, testimony, witness, art, and truth. To create distinctions among these, he felt, was impossible. Everything he wrote was true, and documentation lay at the center of it, whether a “real” historical document like Karlo Štajner’s Seven Thousand Days in Siberia or an “invented” historical document like many of those referenced in his collections of short stories The Encyclopedia of the Dead and A Tomb for Boris Davidovich. Literature was the only way he knew how to confront the site of what he considered the “true history of infamy:” the camps, both Nazi and Soviet.

Kiš, Tišma, Albahari, and the editors of They Stayed Alive were all concerned with a set of question to which there is no one answer: what is the relationship of a document to history? What kind of understanding does reading a document produce? And, perhaps most fundamentally, what is the relationship among individual suffering, history, and literature? Thanks to a series of interviews and essays collected in 1990, after his death, we have voluminous evidence of Kiš’s own views on the subject. In this essay, I will explicate Kiš’s writings on the importance of documentation and literature and discuss their application to our readings of his own Hourglass and Encyclopedia of the Dead, Albahari’s Bait, Tišma’s The Use of Man, and They Stayed Alive. In each of these texts, a document is central: a diary, a letter, an oral testimony, a tape. Each of the novels depict various characters interacting with and interpreting these texts, while in They Stayed Alive, the reader alone is left to interpret them. Taken together, these texts suggest that it is not simply the act of recording or preserving a document itself, but the act of witnessing, that transmits meaning and allows us to, as Kiš suggests, see “the meaning of six million dead” by “seeing an individual face […and] hearing an individual story. If
the document does not find a suitable witness, its power as a document is compromised to sometimes devastating effect.

**Part 1: Kiš on Documents and (Personal) History**

Danilo Kiš’s was a writer keenly interested in documents. I will discuss later in the essay how documents played an outsize role in his personal life—as a child, his life was saved by documents certifying that he was not a Jew; as a student, he read his father’s personal papers—but reading documents was also an essential part of his writing process. He was interested, fundamentally, in how literature could allow the reader access to historical truth by combining “real” documentation with imagined. This is a trait he claims to have inherited from his mother: “From my mother I inherited a propensity for telling tales with a mixture of fact and legend; from my father—pathos and irony.” (Thompson 1) It was the combination of these elements that made his writing so successful. He was interested in documents of many kinds, and of transforming their purposes and meanings through literature. Writes Mark Thompson in Birth Certificate: The Story of Danilo Kiš:

Kiš believed that documents are imbued with invisible, unsuspected literary power. When a writer uses or imitates a document, its original (official) purpose merges into a new meaning. His writing thrives on the ironies and energies that find release when documents or documentary forms are freed from their function. This power is more abundant in documents such as certificates of birth, marriage, and death, which are universal and singular, marking the contours of a unique life. (Thompson 3-4)

A document did not just have one meaning, even a document that was intended for only one official purpose, such as a marriage license. When a writer incorporates it into their work, then, the document’s meaning becomes multi-layered, and the new literary meaning and the original official meaning create a new life and purpose for that document. In basing his novels on documents, then, Kiš accepted a heavy responsibility for making sure the documents he used, sometimes the only written evidence of an individual’s life, was used in such a way that harnessed its full literary potential.

Kiš was a famously voracious reader whose work was influenced by writers from across Central Europe, Western Europe, and beyond—he cites James Joyce, Bruno Schultz, Vladimir Nabokov, Miroslav Krleža, and a great many others. Jorge Luis Borges was perhaps his most famous influence, and Kiš was even accused of plagiarizing Borges’ A Universal History of Infamy following the publication of A Tomb for Boris Davidovich in 1976. In fact, as Kiš wrote in Anatomy Lesson and explained in subsequent interviews, Boris Davidovich was actually written in dialogue with Infamy, and intended as a polemic because “the true history of infamy lies not in the petty murderers and brigands [Borges] described but in the camps.” (Homo Poeticus 220) He describes his research process here:

I want to stress that the stories are based on absolutely authentic facts taken from books and documents. I wouldn’t have dared invent such things [...] My prime source was Karlo Štajner’s Seven Thousand Days in Siberia. [...] Obviously the documents are incomplete, because the reality of the concentration camps, especially for Solzhenitsyn, struck Western readers as unreal, not to say fantastic. In my case the writing had to be reversed, and I had to find a fantastic way of writing realistically. (HP 219)

In other words, although many of the situations described in Boris are fantastic, names are made up, and places are changed, all contain an essential kernel of truth. Kiš’s challenge was to find a way to transform Štajner’s experiences as described in Seven Thousand Days in Siberia into “fictional” literature and to do that, he needed to “find a fantastic way of writing realistically.” It was
a difficult balance to strike because he needed the documents he used to have the proper effect on his reader. He said:

Of course, it may be useful to use reality as a starting point by introducing historical documents into the plot of a book as proof, so to speak, of the authenticity of its content. On the other hand, a historical document can also serve to obfuscate: it can be used to suggest authenticity, it can lead readers to believe that everything they read is authentic, whereas the author has something quite different in mind. That’s why good writers will want to mix their ideas, invent a historical document without inventing history, forge a document, if you like, and thereby re-identify historical reality through the imagination. (271)

Concerns of this type explain why, rather than writing about the horrors of the Gulag explicitly, in those words, he wrote allegorically. This also explains why he was often unspecific in describing locations, rarely naming Hungary or Yugoslavia outright. Instead, he “forged a document” through his writing while preserving the truth of the testimony he had read. In doing so, he created a literary document that expressed the horrors of the camp in a way that was less straightforward than a typical historical account, but no less authentic.

What he found remarkable about Štajner’s work was its testimonial character. He was explicit in his belief in the power of an eyewitness testimony: “An eyewitness report is the best witness. For its naked power, for what it says, and, even more, for what it fails to say, the spaces between words and sentences.” (HP 206) Although he generally did not care for the distinction between “real” and “fake” documents in literature, he made an exception for eyewitness testimonials like Štajner’s:

I see no value whatsoever in authentic documents [...] unless they are testimonies, such as those of Sol-

In his view, then, “authentic” documents are only more “authentic” than his invented literary document if their content is an eyewitness account. In the case of an eyewitness account of something like the camps, their power is clear: they allow Kiš to conceive of a reality so monstrous that without eyewitness accounts, human beings would not be able to imagine such a thing. Based on his impression of these eyewitness testimonials, he creates a “false” document that, through the writing process, becomes “real” while also achieving “literary authenticity.” He doesn’t say so explicitly, but it seems that if this is true, then reading the literary works he creates based on these real/fake documents should have a similar effect on a reader to reading an eyewitness testimony such as Štajner’s or one of the Holocaust testimonials I will discuss later in the essay. Reading documents or this sort of literature that is based in document renders the reader a witness. That is, the reader acts as a witness by accessing historical truth through the literary document Kiš creates, and in doing so, they provide the eyes to “see an individual face or body” and the ears to “hear an individual’s story,” as Kiš outlines in his “What is the meaning of six million dead?” question that I quoted at the beginning of this essay.

Those six million people were at the center of why he valued the work of creating art based on historical documents. He believed in a radically democratic view of history in which all hu-
manity shared a destiny and everyone’s life was equally important (this idea will be especially apparent in his short story “Encyclopedia of the Dead”). He cared deeply about individual suffering, and not only his own, although his own did impact his work immensely. When asked about the role documentation played in his work, he replied:

I believe that literature must correct History. History is general, literature concrete; History is manifold, literature individual. History shows no concern for passion, crime, or numbers. What is the meaning of “six million dead” (!) if you don’t see an individual face or body—if you don’t hear an individual story? Literature corrects the indifference of historical data by replacing History’s lack of specificity with a specific individual. And how can I correct History through literature, how can I make up for History’s indifference if not by using authentic documents, letters, and objects bearing the traces of real beings. Literature is the concretization of abstract History. Documents are indispensible because if we rely exclusively on the imagination we run the risk of slipping back into abstraction. (HP 206)

History is indifferent, literature specific. It is through literature, Kiš suggests, that we can find meaning in the tragedies that occur on such a colossal scale that they are impossible to imagine. The six million dead were not abstract—as they appear to be in history books, or in our imagination in the absence of documents—but were real people like Kiš’s father.

**Part 2: Document and the Father in Hourglass**

Danilo Kiš’s “family cycle” comprises three novels: Early Sorrows (1969), Garden, Ashes (1965), and Hourglass (1972). In the author’s own words, the three novels represent “three different views of the same subject: the vanishing world of Hungarian Jews.” (Lemon 1) They are semi-autobiographical, with an increasing focus on the narrator’s father (variously named Eduard Schwam and E.S.) who, like Kiš’s own father, dies in Auschwitz. Asked in an interview about this fixation with the father, Kiš replied:

The father became more idealized because I knew him so little; he was often away. My own father died at Auschwitz in 1944. He became mythical to me when I realized that he had an exceptional destiny and that my own destiny was marked by his Jewishness. (Lemon 1)

The unnatural and exceptional circumstances of his father’s death no doubt contributed to the mythical quality Kiš describes. Although fathers dying before sons is a normal part of the life cycle, this particular death represents a cruel and abrupt intrusion of history into daily life (a theme we see throughout They Stayed Alive as well). Kiš’s idea that his father had “exceptional destiny,” and one that is specifically Jewish (as well as one that is shared by his son) has implications on my reading of his other stories as well, particularly “Encyclopedia of the Dead,” which I will discuss later.

What does it mean that Kiš’s own destiny was marked by his father’s Jewishness? First, it is literally true: in mixed marriages, sons were thought to belong to the religion of their father, and daughters to the religion of their mother (this is why Kiš needed to be baptized at the age of 5, while his sister already had been). Another answer may be that the elder Kiš was frequently unwell during Danilo’s childhood and drank quite heavily. After Danilo published the play Night and Fog, whose main character was searching for a character based on the father, a woman recognized Eduard Kiš in the figure of the father and wrote to Danilo. He said:

Since I was working on Hourglass at the time, I looked upon any information about my father as a godsend. He was like a historical figure whose life was little known. [She told me] “Your dear father told me and my late
husband that as part of his treatment he wrote the story of his life for the doctor.” Which for me was the equivalent of Columbus’ diary or the notes of Didacus Spirus! [...] The hospital director’s young assistant came back with a file that was obviously my father’s—the name and birthplace were right—but [...] the rest of his records had been lost during the war, and there was no biography in the patient’s hand. (HP 248)

Although he was disappointed not to find his father’s writing at the hospital, the visit was not a complete waste. While there, he learned that his father had suffered from anxiety neurosis, a congenital condition which Danilo, in what he called a “revelation,” realized accounted for much of his childhood suffering, and which he learned “had long been thought an endemic condition of the Jewish intelligentsia of Central Europe.” (HP 248) As a child, he had not known the reason for his father’s absences, his habit of drinking, or young Danilo’s own anxiety. This diagnosis helped him understand further how his own destiny was linked to his father’s condition, which was a particularly Central European Jewish one.

Kiš’s belief that his own destiny was marked by his father’s Jewishness is also interesting in light of the fact that under Jewish law, Judaism is passed through the mother, not the father (although as I have indicated, this rule did not match up perfectly with Vojvodina ethnic laws at the time.) Asked whether he felt that having a Jewish father was different than having a Jewish mother, or if he was less Jewish than someone with a Jewish mother, Kiš replied:

That is a matter of philosophy, religion, and ethnography. The only thing that mattered at that time was that most if not all of my suffering came from my Jewish background. A child faced with the devastating reality of war couldn’t possibly have thought of being Jewish as a scholastic problem. I had no idea why such awful things were happening to me, and people told me it was because I was Jewish. [...] (HP 217)

Kiš’s experience of Jewishness came not from any religious practices (his parents were both fairly secular) but from the feeling that being Jewish was responsible for all the persecution he suffered. Jewishness was a quality that was imposed, not inherent. The same, he said, was true of his father, perhaps providing further indication of what he meant by his comment about destiny:

Like most Jews in that part of the world, especially Hungarian Jews, my father was an “unauthentic Jew,” a Jew only insofar as others saw him as such, by the will of others, as Sartre put it. They were regarded as Jews, however, and therefore unable to integrate. E.S., not to say my father, did not really become a Jew until forced to, until made to wear the Star of David. (HP 217)

It was historical forces that constituted his father as a Jewish figure, not his own beliefs. Being regarded as a Jew was ultimately the cause of his death, but Kiš shows that Jewish identity was not necessarily a stable category to be taken for granted. Instead, he viewed being Jewish as a matter of chance:

In my works being Jewish is a matter of chance, of destiny. Living as a child in Hungary during the war, I was obsessed with sin because I was persecuted by the children around me. I lived in fear and trembling. This is my only biography, the only world I know. What makes it attractive to literature is the fact that it has vanished, retreated into time. That and nothing else. (HP 216)

He used this same language of “fear and trembling” to describe the episodes he suffered as a result of the anxiety neuroses he inherited from his father; he also dedicates part of Hourglass to describing the phenomenon. Being Jewish is the cause of his persecution and his mental illness; it is also, though, the only way of living that Kiš
The reason for this is the fact that the way of being Jewish that he experienced before and during the war no longer exists, so it is only through literature that we may come to understand it. He elaborates further:

I refuse to be categorized as a Jewish writer [...] I maintain that the Jewish problem in my work is not an intellectual issue; it is the only content of my life that can be called literary. It gives me everything I need: victim, executioner, distance in time. Because East European Jewry is no more. Jews in Eastern Europe today live completely different lives. It is a story of a lost fantastic realism, dealing as it does with real things that no longer exist and are therefore enveloped in a kind of unreal mist, yet maintain their reality. (HP 216)

It is being Jewish, then, that is responsible for Kiš’s remarkable work as a writer, giving “literary content” to his own life and the life and death of his father. It also allows his work to be an eyewitness account, like he describes Štajner’s work as being, of the Eastern European Jewry who have been exterminated or whose lives have been altered beyond recognition.

Of the three novels that comprise the trilogy, Hourglass is the least narratively straightforward, but it is based on a letter that Kiš’s late father actually wrote. The majority of the novel is in the style of catechism, while the final portion is in the form of a long letter from E.S. to his sister, Olga. The chapter containing the letter, which is 10 pages long in my edition, is entitled “Letter, Or, Table of Context,” indicating the way Kiš used the letter to organize the rest of the novel. The letter is dated April 5, 1942 and was written in Kerkabarabás, a village in Hungary. In the letter, E.S. describes a conflict between him and several members of his family in great detail. Although family conflicts are universal, this particular conflict is particular to the wartime conditions: the letter describes the elder Kiš traveling throughout the region, trying to navigate to safety and preserve scarce resources, and clashing with family when they all must stay together in a small, ill-heated house. The letter concludes with a postscript that reads, in its entirety, “It is better to be among the persecuted than among the persecutors.” According to Kiš, this sentence comes from the Talmud.

Although almost all of the criticism around the book highlights the fact that E.S.’ letter was written by Kiš’s actual father, the text itself never mentions the provenance of the letter or otherwise distinguishes it from the rest of the book’s content. In other words, though we know from Kiš’s interviews and other sources that the letter in the book was written by Kiš’s actual father, the average reader may not know. This must be intentional on Kiš’s part, in keeping with his desire to erode the literary hierarchy that separates “real” and “false” documents.

The documents that Kiš used to write Hourglass, especially the letter to Olga, allowed him to know his father in a way that he was not able to in life. Incredibly, he would not have them if he had heeded his mother’s dying wish: she died of cancer when he was 16 (Thompson 5) and requested in her will that he destroy his documents. Kiš said, however, that doing so would have made no difference: “Even if I’d obeyed my mother—who in the will of sorts she made before she died insisted I burn all documents connected with my father—I wouldn’t have escaped my fate: becoming a writer.” (HP 205)

Despite his mother’s wishes, Kiš did keep his father’s papers, and in his retelling of his writing process, he suggests that he always knew that the papers would come in handy:

I kept my father’s documents during the war with an idea—a very clear idea, I would say now—that one day these documents and these letters would become part of my literature. The long letter which is reproduced at the end of Hourglass showed me that my father was something of a writer manqué. I knew my father so vaguely that I was able to use certain facts to transform an ordinary Central-European man into a mythical character; I could assign him certain of my own ideas. (Lemon 1)
From this letter detailing his father's disagreement with a family member (which does show a certain amount of wit and literary flair) Kiš concludes that his father was a “writer manqué”—already an example of Kiš’s tendency to “assign him certain of [his] own ideas.” The way that Kiš projects ideas backwards onto his own father represents an inversion of the typical hereditary relationship between father and son, as well as of the relationship that Kiš himself points to when he refers to his own destiny as marked by his father’s Jewishness. Perhaps it is the unnatural conditions of war and that camps that produces this inversion, or perhaps the writing process itself does this. By “the writing process,” I do not just mean the process of actually writing the novel, but the reading of the father’s letters that preceded it. Rather, I am also referring to the act of reading and interpreting as one that potentially inverts, or at least complicates, this relationship. Later in the interview, Kiš makes himself even clearer: “In Hourglass I wanted to be the god myself, to substitute myself for my father.”

The narrative itself also represents an inversion or reversal of what might seem like the natural or logical order of a story. The writer explains:

I reversed the normal order because I wanted to unveil the subject very slowly throughout the novel. I saw the relationship between the novel and the letter in the following manner: as the story opens, a man enters a small, badly lit room late at night and begins to write a letter. I wanted the reader to travel bit by bit from that darkened room towards a final “illumination”: the novel would be a mosaic of images that finally became clear for those with a little patience. The following morning the father would have gained his letter, the writer his novel, and the reader his revelation. Everything in Hourglass can be found in embryo in the father’s letter. (Lemon 1)

Kiš’s interest in documents is more than just the basis for much of his writing: his existence literally depended on them. Although he said that his destiny was marked by his father’s Jewishness, it was his mother’s Christian Orthodox background that made it possible him to survive the war by using fake documents to pose as a non-Jew. The documents he used were false, but allowed him to survive long enough to become a writer whose work questions the nature of truth and documentation itself. His baptism did not erase his identity as a Jew or a Jewish writer, but it did allow him to survive the war, unlike his father, whose Jewish ancestry on both sides sealed his fate.

We were saved thanks to documents like the ones the father (called E. S. in the novel) is looking for in Hourglass. [...] With a little cleverness it was sometimes possible in Hungary, in a family of mixed religious heritage—my mother was Christian Orthodox, my father Jewish—to use documents to prove that you were not Jewish, something that didn’t work in Germany. I was baptized into the Orthodox Church when I was five years old. That was in 1938, and my parents were already aware of the threat to our safety in the region. (Lemon 1)
Part 3: Eyewitness Testimony in They Stayed Alive

Kiš believed that the eyewitness testimony was the most powerful type of document, able to convey through the sheer force of their authenticity what has been lost. This is certainly the case with the powerful collection of oral histories They Stayed Alive (published in Belgrade as Ostali su živi). The volume collects oral testimonies of Holocaust survivors from all over the former Yugoslavia. The group is diverse: one survivor was a Rabbi in Belgrade when the war began, another an eight-year-old schoolgirl in Sarajevo. If we can identify a common thread that runs throughout the 30 narratives in the collection, it is that the war, when it reached the families whose stories are collected here, came as a surprise. The deportations, the murders, the arrests happened in other places, not in the places our witnesses and their families lived in happiness and relative prosperity. At the same time, many of the stories open with a sense of foreboding and a fear that history may, indeed, come to repeat itself. Take, for instance, the opening lines of the testimony from Rea Rajs Živković, whose name may be familiar: her son, Marko Živković, is a Chicago-trained anthropologist who now teaches at Alberta. Writes Rea, who was a young girl in Sarajevo when the war began (all translation my own):

We anticipated the war with a great deal of fear because my mother, a Czech, knew the fate of her own parents and family in Czechoslovakia when the Germans annexed it. They died in the camps two years before the war began in Yugoslavia. We knew what awaited us and a large part of our close family left Sarajevo in the hopes that they would be safe in Split, under the Italians, which did happen in the end. My father had the assurance of his friends that nothing would happen to him, being an expert, that neither the Germans nor the Ustaše would arrest him and take him to a camp, that he could remain in Sarajevo in peace and continue his work. My father also brought home a document to this effect, probably certified by some government. The sense that we were protected gave us some optimism even as terrible things were happening around us. In many cities, all the Jews had been taken to the camps. (Almuli 334-335)

This introduction is sobering on its own, and all the more so as Rea’s narrative continues and we learn that the Ustaše comes for her family twice before she is even ten years old. Her father, though he survived the first incident by hiding at a friend’s, is eventually taken to the notorious Jasenovac camp, where his fate is all but sealed. Even his status within the community as a respected craftsman does not protect him, nor does the ambiguous “document, probably certified by some government.” This nebulous “document” is reminiscent of Kiš’s recollection that in Hungary, “documents” could be used to prove that somebody was not a Jew and, in doing so, save their life. The difference, of course, is that documents truly did save Kiš’s life, but could not save Rea’s father’s.

After she and her mother escape the Ustaše for a second time—in this case, because the camp they are taken to is full—they seek refuge in a town in Slavonia, near Osijek. There, the Jewish community has organized a program that places children who were in the camps with Jewish families in the region. A friend of Rea’s mother convinces her that the child will be safest in this program, so she sends her child to live with the family of a prominent doctor in the area. The Shmuklers become Rea’s adopted family, as is another common theme among the testimonials: as families are separated into camps, other Jews step in to serve as surrogate family members.

Reading Rea’s testimony, I asked myself what the editors’ purpose had been in compiling this testimony and putting it alongside the 30 or so others that comprise the collection. What is the effect of reading a story like this, and then reading a second, and a third, each with more or less the same events, some in a different order (the family only went to the camp once rather than twice, or the mother died before the father)? The answer can be found in Kiš’s question, “What
is the meaning of six million dead (!) if you don’t [...] hear an individual story?” Each individual testimony included in the book, similar as it may be to the one before it, is nevertheless specific and particular enough that it allows the reader to, as Kiš puts it, “see an individual face or body” rather than just a number. While history can tell us (or attempt to tell us—disputes are inevitable) the exact number who were deported to Jasenovac, can it help us imagine the effect this deportation had on the daily lives of those affected? The stories in They Stayed Alive do just that. For example, Rea says:

But one day in the Fall of 1941, a man with a fez came to my school to take me home. The Ustaša, the Croatian Fascist Organization, had come to take me and my family to a concentration camp. [...] They took us to a nearby barracks. My father wasn’t with us, he was hidden at his friends’, so it was just my mother and me. I was less than 9 years old then, in my third year of elementary school, a schoolgirl in ballet school, music school, my mother taught me two languages, I drew beautifully. All this was interrupted by my departure to the camp. (Almuli 335)

At this point in Rea’s narrative, her parents are still alive and her father, in particular, is safe. But the life that her family had built for her is altered, or “interrupted.” The narrative goes on to discuss the murder of her father in Jasenovac on the eve of the camps liberation—a history book could not capture the pain, heartbreak, and irony of such a death. Only an eyewitness testimonial—and, Kiš would argue, any “fictional” literature this testimonial inspires—can even begin the work of expressing the tragedy of Rea’s father’s death, in an example of literature correcting history.

**Part 4: Encyclopedia of the Dead as an Alternate History of the Holocaust**

Kiš’s suggestion that “literature must correct history” has a number of possible interpretations. One that I will explore in the context of his short story “Encyclopedia of the Dead (A Whole Life)” is that literature can be a means of creating and exploring an alternate history; that is, through literature we can ask, “what if it had been different?” Although “Encyclopedia of the Dead (A Whole Life)” is, unlike the stories in the family triptych, not explicitly a Holocaust tale, in my reading it represents Kiš’s attempt to write an alternate version of his father’s death in Auschwitz. The story proceeds matter-of-factly from a premise that briefly appears plausible but almost immediately reveals itself as fantastic: the narrator, traveling abroad to conduct research only a few months after the death of her beloved father, finds herself in a library that she quickly realizes contains the “celebrated” (Encyclopedia 40) Encyclopedia of the Dead. The encyclopedia’s radical project is to provide a complete account of the life of every person who has died—provided that person is not famous and does not, therefore, appear in any other encyclopedia. Just as they believe that all human beings, not just those who achieved fame in their lifetimes, deserve to have their lives chronicled, the anonymous compilers of this encyclopedia also believe that “there is nothing insignificant in a human life, no hierarchy of events,” (Encyclopedia 56) the narrator tells us.

Here, again, we see the echoes of Kiš’s assertion that literature should correct history, and it becomes here a profoundly democratic ideal, one in which each life is equally deserving of inclusion in the annals of history, and actually is included in them. The Encyclopedia is also an example of one of Kiš’s invented historical documents. In this case, its real-life double was the Mormon genealogical archives, of which Kiš claimed never to have heard. Creet writes that “For Kiš, the very existence of the Mormon Archive, of which he claimed no prior knowledge, confirmed the truth of his story—a story which relies, as most of his writing does, on the historical document as a crossover artifact between truth and fantasy.” (Creet 2) From this encyclopedia, the narrator gains insight into every aspect of her father’s biography, from his upbringing to his early jobs to his funeral. The narrator wakes up, drenched in sweat, and it is only then that the reader is sure the story depicts a dream. The story ends with an uncanny, poetic image: the floral patterns that
the narrator's father began doodling in the period leading up to his death were an exact match for the sarcoma that were growing in his intestines and would eventually kill him.

The resemblance to Kiš's own autobiography is impossible to miss, but the story told in "Encyclopedia," however, diverges from the true story of Kiš and his father in several important ways that render the story as much a fantasy as it is a meditation on the nature of truth and documentation. First, the gender of the narrator has been flipped. By Kiš's own account (as cited by Creet in “The Archive and the Uncanny” [9]) this choice was made as part of “a quest for change, for a new psychological register and a new voice.” The choice also, however, situates the work within a tradition of women as survivors (which we see in They Stayed Alive, The Use of Man, and Bait) and—therefore, almost by default—record-keepers. From the moment she begins reading the encyclopedia, the narrator, a mother herself, is concerned about transmitting the information she reads to her mother:

When I saw that I might go on reading until dawn and be left without any concrete trace of what I had read for either me or my mother, I decided to copy out several of the most important passages and make a kind of summary of my father’s life. The facts I have recorded here, in this notebook, are ordinary, encyclopedic facts, unimportant to anyone but my mother and me: names, places, dates. They were all I managed to jot down, in haste, at dawn. (Encyclopedia 41-42)

In this way, Kiš creates a sort of multi-layered form of record-keeping in which the original record (which is, in this case, already a “copy” and not an original because it so accurately and closely manages to reproduce the individual’s life so as to become a copy of the original record that is the life itself) is then copied by the narrator in order that it may be read later by her mother and herself. The reader, too, is implicated in this process, as the narrator’s reference to “this notebook” renders the story itself a further copy of this record with which the reader is now charged. Kiš is, by writing the short story, participating in this same process, but the gendering of the narrator as female creates a distinction between Kiš and the narrator that further complicates Kiš’s role within the story.

Another distinction—and one which pushes the story further into the realm of fantasy (and, perhaps, a utopian fantasy at that)—is that the narrator’s father’s death is due cancer, a natural cause in contrast to Kiš’s father’s presumably violent and premature death at Auschwitz. However, the revelation that the narrator’s father’s floral paintings, which she had previously lauded as a “sudden explosion of artistic talent [which] came as a surprise,” (Encyclopedia, 61) were actually images of the cancer that would eventually kill him lends a graver valence to the story. Now, the father, too, is a participant in the record-keeping that the encyclopedia’s authors and his daughter will later engage in. Whether he is a witting or unwitting participant in this record-keeping is not clear from the story, although it is implied that he knew about the tumor in his intestines before the narrator did (Encyclopedia 63). In recording the details of his disease, the father becomes somewhat like a concentration camp prisoner who, while in captivity, is forced to photograph Nazi activities. Reinforcing this comparison is the following passage:

The fact that, while working at the Milišić refinery as a day laborer my dad brought home molasses under his coat, at great risk, has the same significance for the Encyclopedia of the Dead as the raid on the eye clinic in our immediate vicinity or the exploits of my Uncle Cveja Karakašević, a native of Ruma, who would filch what he could from the German Officers’ Club at 7 French Street, where he was employed as a “purveyor.” (Encyclopedia 55)

The depiction of the narrator’s father as a smuggler during the period of 1943-4 (a year after Serbia was declared judenfrei, the first territory to be so named, and the same year that Kiš’s own father was murdered) may be analogous to Kiš’s own fa-
ther, who sent letters to family members and safeguarded his papers before being killed in the war.

Although the narrator’s father is plainly not Jewish himself—a fact we can presume, if nothing else, from the fact that he survived the war—one passage in particular puts his life and death into a Jewish context:

The curious fact that he died on his first grandson’s twelfth birthday did not escape the compilers’ attention. Nor did they fail to note his resistance to naming his last grandson after him. [...] I could see in his eyes a glimmer of terror that would flash behind his glasses a year later when the certainty of the end suddenly dawned on him. The succession of the quick and the dead, the universal myth of the chain of generations, the vain solace man invents to make the thought of dying more acceptable—in that instant my father experienced them all as an insult; it was as though by the magical act of bestowing his name upon a newborn child, no matter how much his flesh and blood, we were “pushing him into the grave.” (Encyclopedia 62-63)

In the Ashkenazi Jewish custom, children are to be given the same first initial as a family member who has died. It is very much contrary to tradition, furthermore, to give a child the same name as a living family member: this would, just as the narrator’s father suggests, be considered bad luck. In this way, the narrator’s father is depicted as—if not Jewish himself—having Jewish concerns surrounding his death and legacy.

If we consider this story as an alternate history of Kiš’s own father’s life and death, then the paintings that the narrator’s father made in the years leading up to his death are this story’s counterpart to the elder Kiš’s letters (or, perhaps, to the diary, never found, from the hospital). Although his eventual death from cancer lies at the core of the father’s sudden artistic activity, the message of the story is not necessarily a pessimistic one. Rather, this is another example of Kiš’s assertion that art can give meaning to death, in this case by externalizing it (literally, in the sense of taking the tumor out of the body and putting it to paper) and interpreting it as art and new life (a flower) rather than death.

Notes
1. Ostali su Živi are my own.

2. In the original Serbian: Rат смо дочекали с великим страхом јер је моја мама, Чехиња, знала судбину својих родитеља а родбине у Чехословачкој, када су је Немци узели под своје. Они су завршили у логорима две године пре него што је почeo рат у Југославији. Знали смо шта нас чека и велики део наших близких рођака отпутовао је из Сарајева у ради да се спасти у Сплиту, под Италијом, као што се на крају и догодило. Мој отац је имао уверавања својих пријатеља да њему као стручњаку неће моћи ништа да се деси, да га ни Немци ни усташе неће ухватити и одвести у логор, те да може мирно да остане у Сарајеву и да ради и даље свој посао. Отац је донео кућу и један документ у том смислу, вероватно потврђен од неких власти. Осећање да смо безбедни давало нам је мало оптимизма и поред тога што су се око нас дешавале страшне стvari. У многим градовима сви Јевреји су били одведени у логоре.

3. In the original Serbian: Међутим, једнога дана у јесен 1941, у моју школу је дошао човек са фесом да ме одведе кући. Дошло су усташе, хрватске фашистичке формације, да мене и моје родитељи одведу у концентрациони логор. [...] Одвели су нас у оближњу касарну. Тата није био са нама, био је скривен код својих пријатеља, тако да смо биле само мама и ја. Тада сам имала непуних 9 година, била сам у трећем разреду основне школе, ученица балетске школе, музичке школе, мама не учила два језика, лепо сам цртала. Све је то прекинуто одласком у логор.

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Palavestra, Predrag. Jewish Writers in Serbian Literature. Translated by George Nikolic

Pejović, Vesko. Sjećanje na Danila Kiša, Posted on 08. Dec, 2010 by in Iz kulture, Cetinje-mojgrad.org


In more than just a single way, the rhetoric used to describe association football mirror those used to talk about the Balkans, highly suggestive of how the two complex histories parallel each other conceptually. There is a tradition of resentment present in both the sport and the region. Football fans across the globe and residents of the Balkan regions are similarly divided into factions, and the diehard fans of the sport treat their affiliation to their club the same way that residents of the Balkan treat their attachment to their specific ethnic group: as an inviolable concrete kinship that is responsible, in varying degrees and intensities, for their social identity. One could be a father, a doctor, but somewhere down the list composing one's social identity is also the feeling of being a support of, say, Arsenal or Barcelona F.C., or here in the Balkans, of the Red Stars or the Partizans. Likewise, one might be a schoolteacher and a veteran, but underneath all that is also the feeling of being a Croat, or a Serb.

With regards to the particular region, one does not need to look very hard to draw a connection between the Balkans and football either. While popular sport media in the West may overlook the rich history of football in the Balkans, diehard lovers of the game will instantly recognize the legends that have originated from the area. Vladimir Beara, a Serbian born in modern day Croatia who led Yugoslavia to the silver medal at the 1952 Olympics in Helsinki, is commonly regarded as one of if not the single greatest goalkeeper of all time. According to one sport writer's counterfactual hypothetical, in an alternate universe where Yugoslavia remained in tact would have produced a start-studded lineup of top-level footballers playing for clubs around Europe for the 2014 FIFA World Cup.

All that being said, it is important to recognize that football has played a vital role in the history of the Balkans, and any thorough survey of the region ought not to miss this fact. In this paper, I shall examine the role of football in the Balkans in a multiplicity of forms. Specifically, by consulting a variety of academic and popular sources, I shall illuminate football's part in the broader ethnic and specific political antagonisms of the region. Above all, the purpose of this paper is to demonstrate what I deem the symbolic centrality of football for the region: that is to say, I hope to establish the sport as a microcosm for the greater political and ethnic struggles of the region altogether.

As Balkan scholars have pointed out, the rhetoric used in describing the relationships between Balkan nations is one of contempt mixed with confusion. As Goldsworthy illuminates, ‘A mechanistic and timeless notion of perpetual fault lines tends to go hand in hand with the recourse to equally timeless ancient hatreds as the preferred explanation for every Balkan conflict.’ There is, regarding the region, a mythology of hatred: in an attempt to formulate a concrete theory in order to account for the instability and violence in the region, many thinkers are forced to rely to mythic explanations that are plagued with theoretical and factual gaps. Readers of course are probably already familiar with the notion of the Balkans as a ‘powder-keg’. Underneath the fabled fantasy of violence in the region, however, lay complex religio-politico-socioeconomic complications responsible. While it maybe impossible to ascertain the definitive origins of such a long-lasting historical antagonism in the region, there are many promising explanations available for us to entertain.

One promising answer as theorized by Slovenian sociologist Sergej Flere is that Yugoslavia has, specifically in the 20th century, never been able to substantially integrate despite the tight-knit nature of the socialist republic. According to Flere, while the populace embraced the Yugoslav identity, the collective identity (i.e. being ‘Yugoslav’) remained subordinate to other identities still. As Flere puts it, although there was a normatively uniform system throughout the nation, regional systems were responsible for cultural and ethnic traditions, which in turn served as segmented identities throughout. That is to say, although being Yugoslav was by all means
a collective identity that permeated throughout society, it remained merely a political collective identity and not an ethnic or cultural one. While the nation of Yugoslavia under Tito was embraced as a motherland of sorts, that was all, Flere says, it truly was. While it was true that the majority of the state under Tito considered themselves Yugoslav, the Yugoslav identity was not constituted as an ethnic identity, that most fundamental and basic backbone of one's social individuality.

As Flere writes, the reason for this incapability of constituting the Yugoslav identity as beyond a national one was because ‘Egalitarianism [was] not evenly distributed among the regions and ethnic groups in Yugoslavia’ (191). Logically, without a uniform egalitarianism across the board, the process of modernization necessary rewards groups throughout differently, leaving room for ethnic traditionalism to withstand.

While no one story is able to unilaterally account for the antagonism between the ethnic identities of the Balkans, our popular conception of the region seems to devolve into the belief of a deep-seated hatred between ethnic groups in the multiethnic geographical location. Nevertheless, as recent serious scholars of Balkans have noted, the archaic ancient hatred theory seems to crumble in the face of theoretical scrutiny. As Hayden illuminates, ‘If these peoples had always hated each other, they would not have been living so intermingled that “ethnic cleansing” was necessary to forcibly homogenize territories in 1941 and 1991’ (113). It seems then, that while we cannot account for the antagonisms of the region in a perspective so black and white, we can at least comment that: first, the populations of the Balkan is deeply heterogeneous and remained especially so under the formation of a Yugoslav nation, with ethnic identities deeply rooted within geographic areas; and second, that even under the amalgamated nature of the Yugoslav state, each ethnic traditions were maintained and thus the ethnic identity of particular groups was preserved. The task at hand is of course not to retrace history in order to create some hypothetical myth that accounts for the antagonism of the region – that would require years of research and much longer than the space available to me right now. Consequently, it merely suffices to recognize the existence of ethnic identities in order to understand why the nations of Yugoslavia so quickly descend into chaos after the death of Tito, who served as the anchor of the turbulent region.

A so-called Western reader who treats her multiethnic and ‘harmonious’ motherland as the paradigmatic case of the sovereign state will of course face difficulties understanding the antagonisms of the region. As Klaus Roth, in response to Hayden, points out ‘The Western vision of Bosnian “peaceful multiculturalism” and “religious tolerance” is, Hayden contends, based on romantic ideas that have little to do with Bosnia and its history but a lot to do with Western ideologies and political wishful thinking’ (124). Integration into a nation-state according to Western ideologies means the embracing of the identity of the state, and an elevation of citizenship beyond religious or ethnic identity.

Perhaps looking back at the root of this Western ideology in the works of social contract theory can shed light on why we cannot fathom the retention of an ethnic identity for thousands of years even in face of a unified political identity. As Rousseau, a chief figure in shaping our Western notion of sovereignty exclaims: ‘This act of association instantly replaces the individual person status of each contracting party by a moral and collective body, composed of as many members as the assembly has voices; and receiving from this act its unity, its common identity, its life and its will’ (6). In our Western conception, individuals enter the state willingly and thus out of their free will abides by the sovereignty. In our Western understanding of citizenship, entering a state means completely imbuing ourselves with the common identity of the state. Of course, from this naive perspective, the problem of ethnic identities in the Balkans will continue to baffle us to this day.

For these reasons, I suggest that football is able to offer us insight into the antagonism of the region by serving as a microcosm of antagonism. The exemplary case is of course the intense rivalry between the two Belgrade teams: the Red Stars and the Partizans. Much like the antagonism of the region, this rivalry, dubbed ‘the Eternal Derby’, is rooted in a historical foundation. As popular football media Four Four Two points out, ‘Red Star was founded at the end of World War II by the Communists, ostensibly as the team of Bel-
grade University. This swiftly became the team of the people, for which read poor. In Barthes’ semiotics, objects serve as signs, which in turn signify some secondary meaning. In the philosophy of language, names bear not only a denotation, which is what they refer to, but a connotation as well – that which is signified. In this semiotic analysis, it is clear that the Red Stars, while denoting a team that plays at the Marakana, it connotes an ideal of Serbian nationalism and autonomy of the people. This is contrasted of course with its fierce rival, the Partizans. Already in the name of the club, the connotations of the name manifest itself. As Four Four Two explains, ‘Tito, who ruled Yugoslavia until his death in 1980, was a Croat, and the army – and hence Partizan – was always staunchly federalist, in favor of a unified Yugoslavia.’

Here we witness effectively what has been happening in the Balkans for nearly a millennium. A concrete identity that has grown organically from history manifests itself in the practice of the collectives. From the initial formations of the teams, the clubs are imbued with an identity rooted in historicity. Once this identity is imbued, it becomes a component of the organization, much like how an ethnic identity becomes the identity of an individual. As time passes, this identity is retained through various events and tournaments, just as the ethnic identities of the Balkans is retained even when they subsist in the various empires that have come to control the area.

As Professor Hayden said in his lecture, these identities are not merely the social manufacturing of an identity grounded upon merely constructs. Perhaps one way to picture this theory in the concrete is through the analysis of football associations. One is not a Red Star fan merely because one decides on a whim to become one; likewise, one does not simply become a Partizan fan without any thought. Identities as fans are based on greater political identities rooted in historicity: if you are a federalist in favor of a united Yugoslavia, you align yourself with the Partizans; if you see yourself as a Serbian nationalist, you come to support the Red Stars. The violence of the Eternal Derby cannot be said to be merely the Balkan mentality of barbarism manifesting itself through sport rivalries, but is rather deeply rooted in a historical conflict dependent upon moral judgments and what is seen as ‘right’ and ‘just’. As Four Four Two recounts:

The day before the game Four Four Two asks Petja, one of the Delije’s chant-leaders, why he supports Red Star. “Because of the culture,” he says. “Red Star fans are normal people, students or people who go to work. Partizan fans are cattle or geese. For us the derby is huge. It is like Lazio against Roma: it’s important for all of Serbia, for all of us.”

This is not a meaningless sport rival: once the identity is set it becomes concrete and embedded within the ethos of the individual and cannot be changed. More than choosing which colored shirt to wear, it is a moral judgment grounded upon ones political perspective and worldview. As it is said, ‘the players are just like the fans: without exception, every player I speak to insists he has been a lifelong fan of the club for whom he now plays’; this is of course no different than the ethnic identities of the people in the Balkan region. When asked what they are, the reply may have been Yugoslavian for a period of time, but beyond that, they retained an identity of being a Serb, a Croat, and a Montenegrin. Similarly, when asked what Partizan and Red Stars fans are, they may have replied ‘a resident of Belgrade’, but beyond that they were Partizan or Red Star supporters per se.

While no one recount is able to explain all the antagonisms of the region, any good one must consider the historicity of the region. Western ideology and our European notion of sovereignty oftentimes cast a dark cloud on understanding the political situation of the Balkans, opting to ignore the unique historical situation of the region. Oddly enough, the sport of football can be read in a way as illuminating the situation. As I have explained, the identities of football supporters in some sense mirror the identity of the people in the region; the rebrand oneself on a whim seems to be an epistemic impossibility because identity as a team support, or even as an ethnic group, is rooted in so much more than the mere superficial membrane of one’s exterior. It is an interior proj-
ect that concerns political, social, as well as moral ambitions.

Notes:
4. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.

Works Cited:
What is nation branding? Prior to taking this class, Re-Branding the Balkan City, I had no in-depth knowledge about the Balkans, didn’t know what countries, areas and nationalities were defined by the term, and certainly didn’t know what “brand” they embodied, or why they were creating a new one. Obviously, as I now know, the Balkans have a long and storied history, and an even more interesting present. First entangled for centuries with the Ottoman empire, later forming into Yugoslavia and breaking up again, then enduring the Balkan Wars of the mid-90s, the “Balkans”—a term that loosely defines countries on the Balkan Peninsula, such as Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kosovo and Montenegro—are emerging now into a new world where they are desperately pushing for a new identity, trying to be seen through whatever lens they define for themselves, but still trapped by common portrayals of Western-leading academics, politicians and media that give the area a reputation of backwardness that is biased, and undeserved. However, while it seems like these countries have long been fighting that stereotype, what is interesting is the way in which modern, “commercial” business techniques are finding their way into the industry of nation-branding, treating culture and national identity as a product that can be curated and sold to the masses.

The history of the Balkans encompasses many stories of defeat, and rebuilding, which are essential to understanding why a newfound ability to control image and imaging of their culture and peoples would be so important. The Balkan states, which have many different histories and cultures between them, are situated both geographically and culturally in a niche that has fallen between established western and eastern powers, such as France, England and Russia respectively, that leaves them caught in the middle. During past invasions, such as their takeover by the Ottoman empire, and World War II, their cultures absorbed influences of others, taking on religions, cuisines and language foreign to their own, or were subject to takeover and governance by others, and even after regaining their freedom, were left in internal strife over what was authentically their own identity. After World War II the creation and formation of Yugoslavia gave cause to adhere to a national identity, but the death of Tito and later dissolution of Yugoslavia plunged formerly divided countries back into a struggle for individuality, bringing cultural and ethnic tensions back to the surface, and when those erupted in the 1990s it further ruined their global reputation when western media seized on the Balkan wars to prove that these foreign, damaged cultures produced barbarity in a world that had otherwise long become civilized. It would stand to reason that now, given the chance to control the message sent to the world, these peoples and nations are itching to create a brand that competes on a global level.

That being said, identity, nationality and nationhood are not new concepts. While the definitions change constantly, and it seems as if some field of study is always examining the definitions of “nationality”, “nationhood” and “nation-state”, the concept of grouping together peoples based on some similarity, be it geographical or cultural, has been present throughout history. It is also certain that peoples have always had a way to conceptualize their belonging to a group or place, and ways of explaining or conceptualizing it to others, but never has that conceptualization been brought to as public a field as nation branding is today. Nation branding, simply defined by Melissa Aroncyzk in her book Nation and Brand is “the creation and communication of national identity using tools, techniques and expertise from the world of corporate brand management.” (Aroncyzk, 15) Furthermore, “nation branding can be provisionally defined as the result of the interpenetration of commercial and public sector interests to communicate national priorities among domestic and international populations...in this capacity it can be used for both proactive and reactive purposes.” (Aroncyzk, 16) One important purpose that Aroncyzk later expands on, that is most relevant to our examination of the Balkans
and their regeneration of brand and identity, is the use of nation branding to “repair reputations damaged by political and economic legacies.” (Aronczyzk, 16) It is not that the Balkan states are suddenly discovering that they have an identity or national brand, that has always been present, but they are discovering that modern technology and media practice have created a culture in which they more than ever have agency over their own image, in a way that levels the playing field to compensate for times in which they held little power against bigger players who decided what their image and worth was on the larger political field.

Currently, the Balkan states have taken on nation branding in many different ways, the two most visible of which are physical efforts to change the architectural and structural makeup of their cities, and the creation of video advertisements that brand their country’s offerings to different types of visitors and audiences. In relation to the first point, physical efforts to restructure and therefore rebrand, their cities, the most well-known campaign was undertaken by Skopje, the capital city of the Republic of Macedonia, and involved demolishing and rebuilding their popular downtown area to give the previous minimalist, drab aesthetic, leftover from their socialist years, a facelift to a shiny, expensive baroque and neoclassical design. It was almost a total transformation, building in four short years “a new philharmonic hall, a new national theater, three new government buildings, a new business center, a new church, three new museums, two new hotels, a triumphal arch, two new bridges and over 20 new bronze and marble statues of national historical figures.” (Graan, 16) What is most interesting about this effort, other than the sheer size, is what it says about the aspirations of Macedonia, and what we can discover about the identity they are trying to create. Many of the buildings created are public, usable spaces—such as the government buildings, concert halls, sculpture that decorates the public squares and spaces, and museums and hotels that especially cater to the tourism they clearly hope to attract. It is large, and it is visible—and gives the impression that Skopje decided that to be different, or to attract different tourists, they had to look different. Other countries, when looking to make major changes, look inward to policy, governing structure or education: tactics that change how a country fundamentally operates and performs, but Macedonia looked outward. It is also an aesthetic that has been seen before—baroque and neoclassical architectures are decidedly “European”, and triumphal arches are reminiscent of Paris and Rome, showing that Macedonia, or at least Skopje, decided that to be successful or attractive to the current global tourism market, one has to be, or look like, the most popular European cities.

What are the ethical questions that should be asked when cities start to remake their image, and therefore their history, in a way that is so distinct and separate from their own individualistic, authentic identity? Here it is interesting to look at the arguments that David Harvey makes in his piece *The Right to the City*. *The Right to the City*, is decidedly populist, wanting to bring back involvement in shaping and reshaping cities to the people, with Harvey thinking that the top-down structure of governance and decision making favors capitalism and consumer culture and overlooks lives and existences of people who view the city as more of a home than a market. Therefore, it would seem that Harvey would staunchly disagree with the governments right to reshape the city according to its desire—an effort undoubtedly aimed at bringing in increased tourism, and therefore profit. However, Harvey also uses interesting examples, such as the redesigns of Paris and New York, to show that cities were overhauled for the best interests of inhabitants, overcoming problems such as unemployment by modernizing and creating jobs. He meant, I’m sure, to show that there are ways that governments can interact with cities that are responsible to their constituents, and they they have the responsibility to take those sorts of action that citizens are unable to accomplish on their own, but that would bring great benefit to them, but it also shows that intentions and consequences of grand scale government action can be interpreted in many different ways. How to interpret Skopje 2014? Did the government of Skopje and Macedonia have the right to remake the city? Could there have been a way to create a new Skopje while incorporating old history, or would any change have had to be drastic to be effective? Was change necessary? Was it effective? It will be difficult to judge the success or
failure of Skopje 2014 until further in the future, at least from a cultural and tourism perspective, but it is clear that it at least succeeded in bringing questions of national branding and identity, and how they are shaped, cemented, and dismantled, into the forefront of global thought.

Is there a better way to participate in nation branding that brings value to the Balkans, because they need it, without giving up so much dignity and integrity? Less controversial, and more widespread, is the practice of using and creating video advertisement to draw tourists and gain positive recognition for a country “brand”. Macedonia as a number of “Timeless” videos—highlighting different aspects of the culture, food, nature, and vacation activity options, all centered around the theme of Macedonia’s “timeless” history. They are a blend of postcard–perfect scenery mixed with overlaid cartoon imagery, seeming to imply that by eating Macedonian food, visiting monuments, or participating in cultural activities, you will experience Macedonia as it once was. Croatia similarly has a “Visit Croatia” stream of videos, similarly focusing on individual aspects of food, culture, nature and activity options, all narrated in English, and all showing the opportunities that abound if you “Visit Croatia”. Kosovo has an incredibly interesting video titled “The Young Europeans” that shows many young, European citizens coming together to put together a giant puzzle in a field. The puzzle is in the shape of Kosovo, and the tagline “the young Europeans” refers to the fact that Kosovo has the youngest average age, and the largest population of young people in Europe. Serbia has published a five-minute video, longer than the average advertising videos described above, that mostly run from 30 seconds to two minutes, titled “One Journey, Million Impressions” that is a general overview of the country and culture. Like other generic videos (not focusing on just one aspect of the culture or scenery) it intersperses shots of nature and happy, engaged citizens with dramatic music and other shots of culturally distinct monuments or activities. The message across all the new publicity creations seems to be similar: that they have activities worth doing and things worth seeing that are similar to other vacation offerings—mountains, waterfalls, eating ice cream in public squares, long walks on the beach, good food with family and friends etc.—and yet also an interesting history that you won’t find in generic Western Europe.

Are the Balkans working harder than traditional, popular tourist destinations, like Paris and Rome, to attract visitors? Probably. And yet, besides that, it is somewhat endearing that these countries have decided to play the game. They are truly engaging in nation branding in the way that Aronczyzk defines it, as a way to repair their reputations that had been previously damaged by their existing legacies. Looked at in a vacuum, similar to Skopje 2014, it would seem that these countries are compensating in ways that other countries may not have to, spending time and money that other countries don’t just to be considered equal, and yet as mentioned above, technology and trends regarding nation branding have made self-advocating media more of an even playing field than ever. Consumers these days are looking for unique, adventurous experiences, and for those audiences the Balkans have plenty to offer. Plane ticket prices are down, safety statistics are up, and people have more opportunity than ever to explore parts of the world previously not considered to be enjoyable for a frivolous, relaxing vacation. In addition, contributing to normalizing the idea of self-advocacy and advertisement, countries that you would not imagine to be needing the extra publicity boost are realizing that they can’t afford to not put in a plug for themselves. Canada now places advertisements in the New York Times (Visit Canada) and it is impossible to listen to the radio during a Chicago summer without falling victim to a “Pure Michigan” commercial that yes, are trying to convince people in Illinois to go to Michigan on vacation. Everyone has tapped into the idea that countries, or states, can be packaged and sold as experiences, and that anything—monuments, food, culture and history are up for grabs when you have thirty seconds to convince your target consumer.

There are clearly different ways that nation branding has been adopted and implemented in the Balkans, on behalf of their citizens and global reputations, but both the positive and negative implementations of these changes show a set of states that are more active and engaged in creating their identity than they have ever been. Skopje 2014 has yet to play out, and it is partially the
story of yet another government that made an overarching decision about collective resources and space for personal gain, but it is also the story of a country that was able to change its culture when it wanted to, instead of being victim to the whims of other overpowering governments. Video advertisements too may pander to tourists, focusing more on bringing in external revenue than fixing internal problems, but when I see a video of Croatia or Belgrade I also really want to visit. Sometimes these countries seem to be their own worst enemies, subjugating the rights of their citizens or the true integrity of their history to compete for painting the prettiest picture, but it is clear that technology and media have given these countries ways to participate in their own imagining in ways that had previously been impossible, because others spoke for or represented their interests, and I look forward to seeing what voices the Balkan states continue to claim for themselves on the global field when even more becomes possible.


Uživala sam u raznovrsnoj ukusnoj hrani u Parizu. Voljela sam ribu i sireve najviše. Riba je uvjek vrlo svježa. Pila sam i dosta vina—sviđa mi se bijelo vino ali mi se još više sviđa crno. Kada me je moj dečko Joey posjetio, išli smo u Las Du Falafel i jeli najbolje falafel!


Moja tri omiljena mjesta bila su palača Versaille, susjedstvo Marais, i crkva Saint-Sulpice. Pariz je nevjerojatan!

The fall quarter of the 2015-16 academic year I spent in Paris. I studied French history and the French language. I stayed in Paris three full months. Paris is a very beautiful, exciting and interesting city. I saw important places of interest, churches, castles, museums, bridges, parks. I saw Eiffel Tower and Arch of Triumph.

In Paris, I made many new friends among the students from our university and young people from Paris. We did sideseeing together within the city and its surroundings. At night, we spent time sitting on the banks of the Seine and talking. In the picture are my friends Quiterie, Maurice, Serena, and my French teacher. I visited the church Sacre Cours which is incredibly beautiful and large. The church is on the top of a hill and this is a view of the city from it.

I enjoyed in a variety of tasty food in Paris. I liked fish and chesse the most. The fish was always fresh. I also had a lot of wine. I preferred white but liked red as well. When my boyfriend Joey visited me, we went to Las du Falafel and had the best falafel.

My birthday was on the 10th of October. I turned twenty one. My friend Sarah took me to the French Disney Land. We had a fun time.

My favorite three places are Palace of Versailles, Marais neighborhood, and Saint-Sulpice church. Paris is incredible.
BAI GANYO AS A BELOVED SYMBOL: IDENTIFYING THE SOURCE OF GANYO’S POSITIVE APPEAL

Helen Sdvizhkov

Bai Ganyo, a symbol of Bulgarian national importance, has long since transcended the pages of Aleko Konstantinov’s feuilletons on which his character was brought to life. His appeal to the Bulgarian public is characteristically bipolar – on one hand, he “incorporates everything negative in ‘the Bulgarian,’” but on the other, though he invokes a sense of “embarrassment,” he is also “viewed with a mixture of pride [and] affection” (Daskalov, p. 532; Friedman, Introduction, p. 6). However, if Ganyo is in fact as rotten as critics make him seem, the source of this pride and affection became a mystery (Friedman, Introduction, p. 6). What, then, is Ganyo’s redeeming quality that allows his character to be lovable, even if ultimately deplorable? The answer is concealed within the Balkans’ perception of Western Europe as an ever-present yardstick against which to measure their inadequacy at being ‘European.’ In this light, Ganyo’s appeal derives from the character’s ability to maneuver and find success within the European scene and, at times, to even out-maneuver Europeans, despite his imputed barbaric nature. Ultimately, Bai Ganyo is an image of the underdog, or perhaps, the undermutt – not highly bred, but tenacious in the face of Western European elitism.

An initial survey of Bai Ganyo’s character is less than favorable. Todorova notes that Ganyo, a “primitive buffoon in the first part” of the book, eventually “becomes authentic and dangerous,” at which point “there is not a shred of decency or any other redeeming feature left in [him]” (Todorova, p. 39; Friedman, Violence, p. 54). This transformation is captured time and again, with Daskalov commenting on Ganyo’s metamorphosis from a “laughable though deceitful” fellow to “a brutal and repulsive character” (p. 531). Krtistev sees Bai Ganyo as the personification of every negative trait of the Bulgarian people (Daskalov, p. 532). And, in fact, be it in a shop, the opera, the train, or anywhere else, Ganyo is a source of frustration and face-hiding shame for his compatriots abroad (Konstantinov, p. 21, 22, 37, etc).

Some like Ralchev, may argue that Ganyo is a beloved symbol because he represents a “dramatic and even a tragic hero,” whose national pride has been slighted (Daskalov, p. 536). Stojanova echoes the thought by noting that Ganyo can be interpreted as a “symbol of misguided national pride” (p. 166). However, even this initially positive trait does not stand up to the test because Ganyo’s loud-and-proud nationalism is actually glorified arrogance. One must look no further than the famous chest-beating scene during which the buck-naked Ganyo proclaims himself a “Bulga-a-a-ar!” (Konstantinov, p. 27). Konstantinov himself characterizes this exclamation as a “self-recommendation,” meant to attract attention to Ganyo as “a prime Bulgarian specimen” that needs to be “look[ed] upon” (p. 27). Within Ganyo’s proclamation of ‘I am Bulgarian,’ the emphasis lies not on the last word, but on the first. Hence, to label Ganyo a nationalist is to ascribe to him a mindset that he does not exhibit. In the words of Orwell, a nationalist “recognize[s] no other duty than that of advancing [the] interests” of the nation or unit that one represents, but in Ganyo lies a self-promoting, conniving type, concerned only with his muskali-filled disagi and kelepir and with strategically using his Bulgarian identity to worm favors out of people (p. 1; Konstantinov, p. 26, 37, 39, 46, 51, 62, 66, 139, etc.). In part two of the book, Ganyo’s nationalism is disproved even further. When founding a newspaper, Ganyo simply decides to “run with the government” until it falls, after which he plans to “give them a shove and go with the new [one]” (Konstantinov, p. 128). In such a way, Ganyo is the exact opposite of a nationalist, for a “nationalist does not go on the principle of simply ganging up with the strongest side” (Orwell, p. 2).

This brief analysis only reasserts Bai Ganyo’s negative persona, leaving unexplained his rise to the status of a “beloved” “culture hero” with “arguably positive characteristics” (Daskalov, p. 548; Girvin, p. 1, 4). What is lacking in the critiques of Bai Ganyo is a more nuanced investigation of Ganyo’s relationship to the West. Stojanova believes that identifying with Ganyo is...
a means of “returning the gaze at the educated and refined,” but does not go into further detail about how Ganyo serves that purpose (p. 166). Similarly, Daskalov alludes to the bond between Ganyo and the West by defining Ganyo as “a vehicle for thinking about various problems of the... modern development of the Bulgarian nation” (p. 548). He sees Ganyo as a point of comparison of the periphery and “the more developed ‘core’ countries of Europe” and asserts that this positioning leads to Ganyo’s transformation into a national symbol (p. 536). However, these interpretations focus more on the uses of the symbol than on its appeal, which can perhaps be identified by questioning how the symbol comes to serve the purposes that it is ascribed by Stojanova and Daskalov. If the focus is to be on Bai Ganyo solely as the epitome of uncouth non-European-ness placed in stark contrast to European civility and poise, he would hardly make for an alluring symbol.

When Ganyo returns from Europe, his compatriots see him in a drastically different light from before. He is described as a “more imposing” man with “a sense of his own worth and his superiority over those around him” (Konstantinov, p. 92). At first blush, his attitude appears acidly paternalistic, but at the same time he is seen as carrying the dignity of a man who has been to Europe and back. In fact, Aurelius describes him as “know[ing] Europe,” which “has become old hat to him,” “like the back of his hand” (Konstantinov, p. 92). In a way, Bai Ganyo, necktie and all, had succeeded in conquering Western Europe, returning home a rich man. A distinct non-European, Ganyo still managed to enter into the European playing field and emerge victorious, putting into question the inadequacy of Bulgaria, and the Balkans in general, and giving the Bai Ganyo symbol a positive spin, worthy of being promoted.

This connotation of triumph, even if at the explicitly conceded expense of not achieving the classiness of Western Europeans, carries through into popular folk culture outside of Bai Ganyo, the novel. For instance, the Ganyo symbol is developed with jokes that compare Ganyo to members of other European countries. Even though “representatives of [these] nations appear at first to be stronger or better suited to emerge as the winner,” it is Ganyo, who ends up out-maneuvering them (Girvin, p. 15). Take, for instance, the joke about masculinity that features an American, a Frenchman, and Bai Ganyo (Bai Ganyo Jokes) (Appendix Item 1). Though within this joke Ganyo earns the dubious distinction of being the knucklehead, he nonetheless outcompetes the others in masculinity and raw power. Similarly, when a Turk, an Italian, an American, a Russian, and Bai Ganyo are boasting to each other, Bai Ganyo, without having a single unique thing to say, still manages to feature himself as the most accomplished of the group (Bai Ganyo Jokes) (Appendix Item 2). As a final example, when Bai Ganyo and a German attempt to determine who can build the best outhouse, it is Bai Ganyo’s shabby outhouse that wins the competition over the technically superior German one (Girvin, p. 14) (Appendix Item 3).

In all of these cases of folk development and reinterpretation of the original Bai Ganyo, the symbolic Bai Ganyo’s non-Europeanness is embraced and turned into the very feature that allows him to out-maneuver the rest of the Europeans. In this way, Bai Ganyo personifies the “cultural backlash against those who would have cast him as a creature of alterity” (Girvin, p. 20). He is made into a symbol that, with all its deficiencies, can still be loved.

Mission London, a Bulgarian film released in 2010, plays on the Bai Ganyo concept in a variety of different ways and mimics the Bai Ganyo jokes. Some of the film characters resemble Bai Ganyo in a direct sense. For instance, Stojanova labels Banicharov, Chavo and Mavrodiev as “an isolated last stand of Bai Ganyo-like Balkan machismo,” and she draws a parallel between Bai Ganyo and Dimitrov, the slick and scheming Bulgarian ambassador (Stojanova, p. 171, 172). However, the symbol of Bai Ganyo also plays a more indirect, overarching role. The theme of Bulgaria, or the Balkans in a more general sense, comparing itself to Western Europe and attempting to enter the European scene in order to compete along side other European countries pervades the entirety of the film. An evident example is the Bulgarian First Lady’s introduction of England and Bulgaria as belonging to a single unified Europe. In fact, as the driving force for organizing the show and dinner for the British Queen at the Bulgarian embassy, this theme is the foundation of the film in the same way that it provides a basis
for the Bai Ganyo jokes. Next, the comedic nature of the film, just like the humor of the jokes, allows for a light-hearted dismissal of Bulgarian inadequacy, in this case the embassy event, which is graced by the presence of a fake Queen, who is almost ignited by flames from the stage. But most importantly, regardless of the Bulgarian absurdity, the British, who are not spared “an equally sarcastic portrayal,” do not come out as the victors either (Stojanova, p. 172). Instead, they are represented by scheming PR agency presidents, a booze-guzzling faux-queen, and an inadequate British politician that gets Dimitrov involved with Famous Connections in the first place. Just like in the jokes, it is questionable who in fact gets the last laugh since Balkan ‘backwardness’ is deconstructed such that it is no longer a point of vast difference separating Bulgaria and England.

Across all media forms, the symbol of Bai Ganyo offers a comical, self-deprecating way of pondering the Balkans’ relationship to Western Europe and provides a caricatured interpretation of Bulgarian national failings (Friedman, Violence, p. 54). From this perspective, Bai Ganyo gives Bulgarians a chance to distance themselves from their own self-critiques by transposing undesirable traits to a fictional character. At the same time, as a man who was able to wrap Europe around his finger and reel in a hefty profit, Ganyo functions as a sign of success and perseverance within Europe. Despite his flaws, he enters the competition within the Western world, which from a Balkan perspective is often interpreted as a height towards which one may strive but of which one will always embarrassingly fall short. To Todorova, Konstantinov’s remark that “we are European but still not quite” is a sign of disapproval of Bulgarians’ non-Europeanness (Konstantinov, p. 132; Todorova, p. 41). But, Bai Ganyo, the symbol, allows for a folk re-interpretation of Konstantinov’s quote as an “admission of non-Europeanness” since Ganyo, the exaggerated non-European, still comes to embody the Western capitalistic ideal, but also the “crude, raw” Bulgarian who nonetheless gets the last laugh over the Europeans (Todorova, p. 41; Girvin, p. 15). Thus, the positive symbol of Bai Ganyo becomes a means of coping with the scathing, perhaps correct reading of Konstantinov that is suggested by Todorova.

Ultimately, Bai Ganyo transforms from a nameless individual with whom Konstantinov had a chance encounter, to a book character, to a significant symbol to the Bulgarian people (Friedman, Preface, p. 3). His continued presence in modern Bulgarian culture, more than a hundred years after his inception, reaffirms the extent to which this symbol is deeply rooted within the mentality of the Bulgarian people. The symbol becomes powerful specifically because it elicits feelings of “pride, affection, and embarrassment” simultaneously (Friedman, p. 6). It summarizes the struggle of measuring up to the West and the feeling of inadequacy that accompanies it, but at the same time, it provides a sense of Balkan self-worth, comic relief, and a reminder that Europe itself is far from perfect. It is this positive aspect of the Bai Ganyo symbol that has ensured its proliferation and has granted affection to the symbol’s namesake, who many critics too readily dismiss as nothing other than a lousy, no-good scoundrel.

Appendix:
1. There was a competition in masculinity held in three rounds. The participants in the competition were an American, a Frenchman, and Bai Ganyo. The first round would go to the hairiest, the second round to the man who subdued a bear and dislodged one of its teeth, and the third to the man who had sex with an Amazonian woman. The Frenchmen took off his clothes and displayed himself to the jury, but only had a few scattered hairs. The American stripped, but his body was completely shaved. Bai Ganyo stepped up before the jury and a member of the jury kindly asked him to disrobe, to which Bai Ganyo replied, “But I’m already naked.” Bai Ganyo won the first round. Then the Frenchmen went into the cave to wrestle the bear. After some time and a lot of screaming, the Frenchmen emerged bloodied, but without the bear tooth. The American emerged injured but without the tooth. Bai Ganyo went into the cave. There was huffing and puffing for about an hour. Finally, Bai Ganyo emerged, and said, “Where is the Amazon? I am ready to take her teeth out.”

2. A Turk, an Italian, an American, a Russian, and Bai Ganyo were hanging out together. At some point they each started boasting about the quali-
ties of their respective homelands.
The American: “The USA is the greatest power in the world.
The Italian: “We are the most precise in the world.”
The Turk: “We’ve got the best rugs in the world.”
The Russian: “We have the most beautiful women in the world.”
Bai Ganyo – being a simple person – had no idea what to brag about. But then all of a sudden - a revelation: “The Bulgarians give it to Russian women, on Turkish rugs, with Italian precision and American power.”

3. Bai Ganyo and the German had a competition for who could make a nicer outhouse. The German made a nice outhouse with furniture, and Bai Ganyo – a shabby little hut. Bai Ganyo went into the German’s outhouse, and the German into Bai Ganyo’s outhouse. In the German’s outhouse everything went without a problem, but in the outhouse of Bai Ganyo some stuff happened: The German started shitting, and after he finished up a little wind blew and a piece of toilet paper fell down.
- Automatic – the German said to himself.
After he went out a little wind blew and the door closed.
- Automatic – the German said to himself again.
He walked on for a bit, and a strong wind blew and, since it was shabby, the shed fell over.
The German said to himself: - Wow, this outhouse is even collapsible!

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Bai Ganyo Jokes. Translated by Maria Bankova.
Last April, I received a grant to study the Croatian language in Zagreb, Croatia for two months. I left Chicago on June 20th and arrived in Croatia on June 21st. I took classes for six hours each weekday. Our school had grammar classes, dictation classes, and lexical classes. There was also a cultural component of the language program. We took a few tours of Zagreb. During these tours, we saw museums, cathedrals, botanical gardens, and other beautiful landmarks. I made a lot of friends from all over the world. They were extremely kind and I consider them my best friends. On one day, we went to Plitvice Lakes National Park. The views were breathtaking, and I really want to return there. We took a boat ride through one of the lakes. Unfortunately, it was raining, but I still enjoyed it. We also went to a really big castle. There were a lot of old paintings and sculptures. It was the first time I have seen a castle, so it was a really nice experience for me. I am really glad that I got the opportunity to study in Zagreb. It was one of the best experiences in my entire life.
Moj utisak o filmu Walter Brani Sarajevo

Jamie Countryman

Walter Brani Sarajevo izgleda kao djelomično ratni film, djelomično triler-misterij. Iako se događa tijekom drugog svjetskog rata, nije epska drama bojišta kao, na primjer, Bitka na Neretvi.

Ovdje su protivstavljene sile nisu dvije armije, ali vojnička vlada okupatora i civilna populacija. Bitke se događaju na ulicama, u trgovinama i kućama Sarajeva, i kroz dnevni susreti njezinih državljanina. Boraci se sastojaju od tajne policije, podzemnih partizana, špijuna, informatora, i dvostrukih agenata. Tajnost, prijevara, i izdaja pokreta film.

Kroz film mi gledatelji nikada nismo sigurni kdo radi za koga, tko je u savezu s kojom grupom. Mnogi likovi na kraju nisu tko oni tvrde da bude. Mnogi zapravo rade za neprijatelj. Drugi, kao Nis, mi smo rečeni da su neprijateljski radnici, ali kasnije postoje opet heroji.


My impressions of the film Walter Defence Sarajevo,

Jamie Countryman

Walter Brani Sarajevo ("Walter Defends Sarajevo") presents itself as part war film, part thriller-mystery. Although it takes place during the Second World War, it is not an epic drama of the battle field like, for example, Battle on the Neretva.

Here the opposing forces are not two armies, but the military government of the Nazi occupation and the civilian population of Sarajevo. The battles happen in the streets, in the squares, and in the houses of Sarajevo, and through the daily encounters of her citizens. The fighters consist of secret police, underground partisans, spies, informants, and double agents. Secrecy, deception, and betrayal drive the film.

Throughout the film, we the viewers are never entirely sure who works for whom, who is tied to which group. Many characters are, in the end, not who they claim to be. Many in fact work for the enemy. Others, we are told, are enemy agents, but later turn out to be the true heroes of the story.

The greatest mystery is the question repeated constantly throughout the film: “Who is Walter?” No one seems entirely certain. In the penultimate scene, the character “Pilot” takes on this role, but is he the real Walter? It certainly seems equally possible that the watchmaker, killed in front of the Beg mosque midway through the film, was always the real Walter. Walter may not be a single person, but an idea. Everyone takes on the role of Walter at different times. As the German officer realizes in the final scene, “This city is Walter.”

As a film about the Second World War, it is particularly interesting to compare Walter Brani Sarajevo with Bitka Na Neretvi. It is clear from our readings and film viewings that the Second World War was a pivotal event in social memory of Yugoslavia, in which Yugoslav national identity was formed.
While Bitka celebrates the courage, determination, and selflessness of the partisans, Walter Brani Sarajevo depicts their cunning, craftiness, and strategic intelligence—able to outsmart the German agents at every turn. Like Bitka, the film emphasizes the spirit and power of the group as a whole. As suggested, there is no single Walter, but in fact “Walter” is everyone.
KATHERINE AANESEN is a recent graduate of the University of Chicago where she studied Geography, focusing primarily on the relationship between memory and the built environment. She loves music, studying Sitar and Ukulele in her spare time, and enjoys reading books and articles about contemporary urban spaces.

FRANCESCA BAIO is a rising senior at the University of Chicago majoring in Psychology. She was born in Chicago and is a long-standing member of the community, having attended the University of Chicago Lab School as well. Her interest in South Slavic languages and culture come from her Croatian background on her mother’s side.

FREDDY BENDEKGEY graduated in 2016 majoring in Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities. He has always been fascinated by how different forms of storytelling convey meaning and how they have evolved over time. He has also played a prominent role in the circus RSO on campus, Le Vorris & Vox Circus, and enjoys swinging on the trapeze in his free time.

MELANIE COHODES is a rising third-year in the college at the University of Chicago, double majoring in Russian and Eastern European Studies and Comparative Literature, with a minor in Astrophysics. She first became interested in Eastern European literature after a high school teacher’s off-handed comment along the lines of ‘why even bother being an author after Tolstoy?’ She likes big books, folk-punk, and her steadily growing biosphere of plants and pets.

JAMIE COUNTRYMEN is a fourth-year Ph.D. student in the Department of Anthropology. He studies environmental archaeology and medieval and early-modern archaeology of the Balkans and central Mediterranean. He is currently working as an archaeobotanical specialist with the Nadin-Gradina Archaeological Project, located near Zadar, Croatia. When not sifting through site reports or pouring over the antiquated writings of V. Gordon Childe, Jamie enjoys cooking, gardening, and admiring Chicago architecture.

NORA DOLLIVER graduated from the University of Chicago with a BA in Slavic Languages & Literatures. In addition to Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, which she began studying due to close family friends from the former Yugoslavia, she has studied Czech, Yiddish, and even Albanian grammar. Her interest in Slavic languages and her knowledge of Cyrillic lead to her first library job, and in the fall of 2016 she will begin an MA/MS program at the University of Michigan–Ann Arbor studying Library Science and Russian and East European Studies. In 2014 she was awarded a FLAS grant to study advanced Serbian in Novi Sad and Belgrade, and she hopes to return to the region soon.

DŽAN HARBA is a recent graduate of the University of Chicago with a degree in Philosophy. His primary philosophical interests are in Nietzsche, Heidegger, epistemology, and ethics and he wants to apply elements from these areas of philosophy to issues concerning the Balkans, a region from which his family originates. In particular, he is interested in examining issues of tolerance, justice, and cross-ethnic interaction in the former Yugoslavia, with an emphasis on Bosnia and Herzegovina. In his free time, he likes to read, play tennis, and watch movies.

EDWIN JIANG is a recent graduate of the University of Chicago with a degree in Philosophy. He is a native of Toronto, Ontario and has a passion for soccer.

KRISTIN MANLEY is a rising senior at the University of Chicago studying history, specializing in Modern Europe. She became interested in the Balkans because it was an area that she had never studied before, and through Nada Petkovic’s class became fascinated with the culture, history and people, and especially enjoyed getting a chance to explore how the rich Balkan history intersects with a world of modernization and globalization. In her free time she likes finding new coffee shops, running and taking road trips.
STEPHANIE MIKELASZEWSKI is a rising fourth year student at the University of Chicago, majoring in history with a minor in Slavic languages and literature. Her historical concentration is on the Balkans and the disintegration of Yugoslavia - a passion she has discovered through her classes at the University. In her free time, Stephanie enjoys discovering new films and baking cakes.

MIA RADOVANOVIĆ is a rising second-year in the undergraduate program at the University of Chicago, pursuing a degree in Psychology. She is a heritage speaker with family dispersed between Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia, exploring the cultural works of her home country in the classroom. Outside of Balkan studies, she enjoys running and yoga, participating in Model United Nations, and eating her way through Chicago.

RACHEL ROSSNER is recent doctoral graduate at the University of Chicago, specializing in nineteenth-century Art History with a focus on Southeastern Europe. Her dissertation “Great Expectations: The South Slavs in the Paris Salon Canvases of Vlaho Bukovac and Jaroslav Čermák” explores how the notion of anticipation, broadly considered, informed a host of discourses, practices and institutions related to visual production in nineteenth–century Croatia.

SHOMARY SANKARA is a 4th year undergraduate student of the University of Chicago. He is currently studying Biology with a specialization in Endocrinology. He decided to take Croatian because he thought the language would be an excellent opportunity to learn a relatively small language and explore a culture with a rich history. Over the past year, he learned a lot about Balkan language and culture. He hopes to study Croatian for at least another year, and hopes to eventually be proficient in the language. He enjoys nature, reading, and meeting new people.

HELEN SDVIZHKHOV entered the University of Chicago first majoring in linguistics and later in psychology. While she knew that her career would be oriented towards those two primary majors, she feared losing her connection to her Russian heritage and culture. She saw the amazing course listings in the U.Chicago department of Slavic Languages and Literatures as a great opportunity to expand her knowledge on the history and culture of Slavic countries. Eventually, she ended up taking enough classes to meet the major requirements for Russian Language and Literature studies and was thrilled to take classes about other Slavic countries and languages, as well. One of the most captivating classes she took at U.Chicago was a comparative literature course in which the history of the Balkans was traced. In this class, she incidentally read Bai Ganyo, which became the topic of a midterm paper. She graduated from U.Chicago in 2016 and will soon be starting full time as a Research Associate at the Advisory Board Company in Washington, D.C. She looks forward to starting her life in a new city, and while she can only assume it will be very busy, she still hopes to continue exploring Slavic languages, literature, culture, and history in her spare time.

MELANIE SNIDER graduated from the University of Chicago in 2016 with a degree in English. While at Chicago, she became interested in gender studies and gender in literature, focusing mainly on gender in Gothic and Victorian novels. Her interest in the Balkans came from a trip she took before college that included stays in Croatia, Bosnia, and Bulgaria. Melanie now resides in Boston. Her paper on Georgi Gospodinov’s Natural Novel examines how the novel reflects the precarious state of gender roles and identity after the fall of the Soviet Union.

MADELINE SOVIE is a recent graduate of the University of Chicago with a degree in the Biological Sciences with a specialization in Neuroscience. Her interest in the Balkans began after reading Jasmina Dervisevic-Cesic’s memoir and has since taken her to Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia, Albania, and into Nada Petkovic-Djordjevic’s classroom. She enjoys drinking coffee, playing rugby and ice hockey, and biking around Chicago.

LEAH RACHEL VON ESSEN is an editor and writer living in Chicago. She graduated with honors from the University of Chicago in June with a major in Comparative Literature and a minor in Religious Studies. Her Comparative Literature concentrations and areas of study included fairytale and folktales, magical realism, Slavic and Balkan literature, the work of Jorge Luis Borges, and forms of the novel.
STUDENTS! THIS WAY TO BCS!

FIRST-YEAR BOSNIAN/CROATIAN/SERBIAN (BCSN 10103)
SECOND-YEAR BOSNIAN/CROATIAN/SERBIAN (BCSN 20103)
ADVANCED BOSNIAN/CROATIAN/SERBIAN: LANGUAGE THROUGH FICTION (BCSN 21100)

Contact Nada Petkovic (petkovic@uchicago.edu) for more information.
First-Year Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian—Autumn, Winter, Spring 2016-17
BCSN 10103/10203/10303
In this three-quarter sequence introductory course in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian (BCS) languages and cultures, students are encouraged to concentrate on the language of their interest and choice. The major objective is to build a solid foundation in the grammatical patterns of written and spoken BCS, while introducing both the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets. This is achieved through a communicative situation-based approach, textbook dialogues, reinforcement by the instructor, screenings of film shorts, TV announcements, documentaries, commercials, and the like. The course includes a sociolinguistic component, an essential part of understanding the similarities and differences between the languages. Mandatory drill sessions are held twice per week, offering students ample opportunity to review and practice materials presented in class.

Second-Year Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian—Autumn, Winter, Spring 2016-17
BCSN 20103/20203/20303
The Second-Year course in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian languages and cultures is a continuation of First-Year BCS, therefore assumes one year of formal study of the target language(s) or equivalent coursework elsewhere. The course is focused on spoken and written modern BCS, emphasizing communicative practice in authentic cultural contexts. The language(s) are introduced through a series of dialogues gathered from a variety of textbooks published in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia, as well as newspaper articles, short biographies, poems, and song lyrics in both the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets. A vast archive of audiovisual materials, representing both high and popular culture, constitute an integral part of every unit. Simultaneously, aural comprehension, speaking, grammar, and vocabulary are reinforced and further developed throughout the year. Mandatory drill sessions are held twice a week, offering students ample opportunity to review and practice materials presented in class.

Advanced Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian: Language through Fiction—Autumn 2016
BCSN 21100/31103
Advanced BCS courses encompass both the 3rd and 4th years of language study, with the focus changed from language structure and grammar to issues in interdisciplinary content. The courses are not in sequence. Language through Fiction is designed to help students and instructors over one of the most difficult hurdles in language training—the transition from working through lessons in a textbook to reading unedited texts. Literature represents the greatest development of the expressive possibilities of a language and reveals the bounds within which language operates. The texts will immerse motivated language students in a complete language experience, as the passages and related exercises present the language’s structure on every page. Students will learn how to engage the natural, organic language of a literary text across a variety of styles and themes. The course assumes that students are familiar with basic grammar and vocabulary, as well as both Latin and Cyrillic alphabets. It is particularly appealing to students who are interested in literature, history, and anthropology of the region.
Angelina Ilieva’s course descriptions

Returning the Gaze: the West and the Rest—Autumn 2016
REES 2/39012, CMLT 2/33201, NEHC 2/30885
Aware of being observed. And judged. Inferior... Abject... Angry... Proud... This course provides insight into identity dynamics between the “West,” as the center of economic power and self-proclaimed normative humanity, and the “Rest,” as the poor, backward, volatile periphery. We investigate the relationship between South East European, Russian, Turkish self-representations and the imagined Western gaze. Inherent in
the act of looking at oneself through the eyes of another is the privileging of that other’s standard. We will contemplate the responses to this existential position of identifying symbolically with a normative site outside of oneself -- self-consciousness, defiance, arrogance, self-exoticization -- and consider how these responses have been incorporated in the texture of the national, gender, and social identities in the region. Orhan Pamuk, Ivo Andrić, Nikos Kazantzakis, Aleko Konstantinov, Emir Kusturica, Milcho Manchevski, Alexander Herzen, Fyodor Dostoevsky

Strangers to Ourselves: Twentieth Century Émigré Literature and Film from Russia and South Eastern Europe—Autumn 2016
REES 29010/39010, CMLT 26902/36902
“Being alienated from myself, as painful as that may be, provides me with that exquisite distance within which perverse pleasure begins, as well as the possibility of my imagining and thinking,” writes Julia Kristeva in Strangers to Ourselves, the book from which this course takes its title. The authors whose works we are going to examine often alternate between nostalgia and the exhilaration of being set free into the breathless possibilities of new lives. Leaving home does not simply mean movement in space. Separated from the sensory boundaries that defined their old selves, immigrants inhabit a warped, fragmentary, disjointed time. Immigrant writers struggle for breath—speech, language, voice, the very stuff of their craft resounds somewhere else. Join us as we explore the pain, the struggle, the failure and the triumph of emigration and exile. Vladimir Nabokov, Joseph Brodsky, Marina Tsvetaeva, Nina Berberova, Julia Kristeva, Alexander Hemon, Dubravka Ugrešić, Norman Manea, Miroslav Penkov, Ilija Trojanow, Tea Obreht

Advanced Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian: Language through Film—Winter 2017
BCSN 21200/31203
Advanced BCS courses encompass both the 3rd and 4th years of language study, with the focus changed from language structure and grammar to issues in interdisciplinary content. The courses are not in sequence. This course addresses the theme of Yugoslav and Post-Yugoslav identity through discussion and interpretation based on selected films, documentaries, images, and related texts—historical and literary, popular press, advertisements, screenplays, and literature on film. Emphasis is on interpersonal communication as well as the interpretation and production of language in written and oral forms. The course engages in systematic grammar review, along with introduction of some new linguistic topics, with constant practice in writing and vocabulary enrichment. The syllabus includes the screening of six films, each from a different director, region, and period, starting with Cinema Komunisto (2012), a documentary by Mila Turajlić. This film will be crucial for understanding how Yugoslav cinema was born and how, in its origins, it belongs to what a later cinephile, Fredric Jameson, has called a “geopolitical aesthetic.” We shall investigate the complex relationship between aesthetics and ideology in the Yugoslav and Post-Yugoslav cinema, and pay close attention to aesthetic conceptions and concrete formal properties, and more importantly, to language, narrative logic, and style.

Balkan Folklore—Winter 2017
REES 29009/39009, CMLT 23301/33301, NEHC 20568/30568, ANTH 25908/35908
Vampires, fire-breathing dragons, vengeful mountain nymphs. 7/8 and other uneven dance beats, heartrending laments and a living epic tradition. This course is an overview of Balkan folklore from historical, political and anthropological, perspectives. We seek to understand folk tradition as a dynamic process and consider the function of different folklore genres in the imagining and maintenance of community and the socialization of the individual. We also experience this living tradition first-hand through visits of a Chicago-based folk dance ensemble, “Balkan Dance.”

The Shadows of Living Things: The Writings of Mikhail Bulgakov—Winter 2017
REES 29021/39021
Open these books and step into a world of fanciful possibilities, magic, and creatures produced by scien-
scientific experiments. Contemplate the nature of evil and human responsibility in the face of dehumanizing fear, while at the same time rolling with laughter at Bulgakov’s irresistible seduction into the comedic. Laughter, as shadow and light, as subversive weapon but also as power’s whip, the capacity to be comedic, grounds human relation to both good and evil. The Master and Margarita, Diaboliada, Fatal Eggs, Heart of A Dog, Ivan Vasilievich.

(Re)Branding the Balkan City: Contemporary Belgrade, Sarajevo, Zagreb, also Advanced BCS—Spring 2017
BCSN 21300/31303, REES 21300/31303
The course will use an urban studies lens to explore the complex history, infrastructure, and transformations of these three cities, now capitals of Serbia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, and Croatia. Drawing on anthropological theory and ethnography of the city, we will consider processes of urban destruction and renewal, practices of branding spaces and identities, urban life as praxis, art and design movements, architectural histories and styles, metropolitan citizenship, and the broader politics of space. The course is complemented by cultural and historical media, guest speakers, and virtual tours. Classes are held in English. No knowledge of BCS is required. However, this module can fulfill a language requirement or simply further the study of BCS with additional weekly sections, materials, discussions, and presentations in the target language.

Burden of History: The Nation and Its Lost Paradise—Spring 2017
REES 29013/39013, CMLT 2/33401, NEHC 2/30573, HIST 2/34005
How and why do national identities provoke the deep emotional attachments that they do? In this course we try to understand these emotional attachments by examining the narrative of loss and redemption through which most nations in the Balkans retell their Ottoman past. We begin by considering the mythic temporality of the Romantic national narrative while focusing on specific national literary texts where the national past is retold through the formula of original wholeness, foreign invasion, Passion, and Salvation. We then proceed to unpack the structural role of the different elements of that narrative. With the help of Žižek’s theory of the subject as constituted by trauma, we think about the national fixation on the trauma of loss, and the role of trauma in the formation of national consciousness. Specific theme inquiries involve the figure of the Janissary as self and other, brotherhood and fratricide, and the writing of the national trauma on the individual physical body. Special attention is given to the general aesthetic of victimhood, the casting of the victimized national self as the object of the “other’s perverse desire.” With the help of Freud, Žižek and Kant we consider the transformation of national victimhood into the sublimity of the national self. The main primary texts include Petar Njegoš’ Mountain Wreath (Serbia and Montenegro), Ismail Kadare’s The Castle (Albania), Anton Donchev’s Time of Parting (Bulgaria).

Imaginary Worlds: The Fantastic and Magic Realism from Russia and Southeastern Europe—Spring 2017
REES 26018/36018; CMLT 27701/37701
In this course, we will ask what constitutes the fantastic and magic realism as literary genres while reading some of the most interesting writings to have come out of Russia and Southeastern Europe. While considering the stylistic and narrative specificities of this narrative mode, we also think about its political functions—from subversive to escapist, to supportive of a nationalist imaginary—in different contexts and at different historic moments in the two regions.