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# *MAKE UP YOUR OWN MIND ABOUT GAVRILO!* On Remembering, Silence, and Doubts in Sarajevo

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**Drawing on recent scholarly critiques of dominant Balkanist understandings of memory work in post-war societies and focusing on individuals as active managers of transmitted memories, this article illustrates the dynamic nature of how the Sarajevo assassination and Gavrilo Princip are remembered in Sarajevo. It offers ethnographic insights into the everyday effects of power struggles between popular and official memories and responds to calls to explore affective states brought about by the politicization of the past in particular settings. Without denying the importance of memory in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina, it nevertheless points to the relevance of exploring uncertainty, doubts, disinterest, and silences for ethnographic research on memorialization processes in post-conflict societies and beyond.**

**Keywords: Sarajevo assassination, Gavrilo Princip, uncertainty, memory, silence, disinterest**

## Introduction

Widespread theoretical concepts such as "historical trauma," an "excess of memory," and the "burden of the past" led many to examine the close relationship between memory and identity in the Balkans. Especially where violent conflicts accompanied the dissolution of the Yugoslav state, scholarly analysis was mainly limited to the process of the politicization of memory, the "extreme emotionalization of history" (Schäuble 2014), and its role in creating/enhancing ethnic or national divisions. Despite the valuable insights into memory work that emerged, the narrow focus of this paradigm resulted in an image of the former Yugoslavia, and of Bosnia-Herzegovina (hereafter BH) in particular, as a region with a highly uncertain future and an extremely binding past. Yet, what recent ethnographies of the remembering process in post-war BH (Bartulović 2018; Beronja and Vervaet 2016; Halilovich 2013; Jansen 2002; Jansen, Brković and Čelebičić 2017; Kolind 2008; Sorabji 2006; Palmberger 2013, 2016, 2019) argue is that interpretations of the past cannot be reduced to the politicization of memories and narrow frameworks of "collective/national memory" (see Palmberger 2013: 16). Consequently, the process of managing the (transmit-

ted) memories that are associated with both the recent and more distant past is still a pressing issue in need of further exploration.

Inspired by the international political and scholarly interest in the centenary of the First World War, in this article, I focus on the different perceptions and attitudes of inhabitants of Sarajevo toward the event that "shook the world" on 28 June 1914 – the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo. By focusing on the different interpretations of this dramatic event, and in particular its lead protagonist Gavrilo Princip, this article reflects on the hidden dimensions of the remembering process in contemporary post-war BH.[1] The focus here is on neglected aspects of how individuals navigate official interpretations of the past and how such individuals struggle with the politicization of history in sensitive post-war settings.

In my previous research, to challenge simplified evaluations of the Sarajevo assassination, I examined several alternative engagements with the memory of this event, including the pervasive skepticism, anti-nationalistic, and anti-imperial attitudes of inhabitants of Sarajevo (Bartulović 2018). These findings do not undermine the fact that political and public discourses on the Sarajevo assassination and Princip have essentially changed in both the Federation of BH and the Republic of Srpska.[2] However, changes did not occur automatically in people's understandings of the event. In this article, I intend to bring into focus the silences, doubts, gaps, inconsistencies, and confusion that can be traced in the various narratives and everyday practices of Sarajevans. To achieve this, I will combine a discursive analysis of popular culture, which touches on Princip, the First World War, and the Sarajevo assassination, with insight gained from fieldwork and interviews conducted between 2014 and 2018 in Sarajevo. The semi-structured interviews and informal conversations were intentionally conducted with various people from different professional backgrounds (tourism employees, economists, artists, artisans, economists, historians, clerks, vendors, IT workers, students, etc.) and different generations. In the course of the fieldwork, I realized that tour guides are a particularly interesting group because, on the one hand, they deal professionally with BH's history; on the other hand, they turned out to be particularly aware of the fact that the construction of history is never entirely free of interests.

In addition, in May 2017, I rented a room above Sarajevo's famous corner, where I spent a week closely observing the daily practices of residents, tour guides, and tourists, often overhearing interesting conversations. Although the assassination site has been politically relevant throughout history, it had a different meaning to me as a former resident of the city. Like many children born in the SFR Yugoslavia, I was exposed to socialist interpretations that established Princip and Young Bosnia as free-

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2 Dayton Peace Agreement signed in 1995 divided country in two entities, the Federation BH and the Republic of Srpska, as well as the small district of Brčko.

dom fighters as a schoolgirl. However, this was not why Princip's footprints in the pavement on the spot where he fired the fatal shots aroused my interest. There were two other reasons: one, I believe, is shared by many – the fact that it was simply fun to engage with the inviting sign on the sidewalk. The second reason was somewhat more personal. The third plaque marking the place of the assassination was installed in 1953, directly above the footprints, on the walls of the building where the authorities opened the Museum of Young Bosnia. I remember vividly the modern bas-relief depicting Young Bosnia, displaying a group of young people holding hands and red letters inscribed on the rough stone. For me, the meaning of the text was irrelevant; what filled me with pride was that my father, as a young student at the Sarajevo Art School, was chosen by the famous painter Vojo Dimitrijević to help him with this vital project. Even in my early childhood, I observed the tourists who stepped into "Princip's shoes," but I interpreted the popularity of the corner as admiration for the work of my father and his colleagues; it was only much later that I became aware of the political significance of this place, like many other children who grew up in the city.

Therefore, this article aims to provide a more nuanced account of the power of politicized memories and to reveal the strong future-oriented attitudes of inhabitants of Sarajevo that demand constant self-reflection and dialogue with official (past and future) narratives. Thus, my ethnography explores not only "strategic silences" (Winter 2010: 5)[3] but also the evident presence of skepticism and "historical uncertainties" that have become tangible consequences of the alleged atmosphere of the "excess of history." In this setting, three nationalized histories (Bosniak, Serbian and Croatian) or nationalized "usable pasts" (Wertsch 2012) not only compete and collide with one another but also compete with individual counter-narratives and the "international community's"[4] political mantra of "dealing with the past." This post-war "affective atmosphere" (Brennan 2004; Anderson 2009), as well as the dominant trends and pitfalls in understanding memory in BH, are thus briefly explored and discussed in the first part, while the second part offers ethnographic materials and insights into popular culture, which redirects the focus toward the anthropology of uncertainty and explore confusion, silences, doubts, and disinterest in the past as essential strategies for coping with everyday realities in post-war BH.

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3 In Winter's typology of silences, a strategic silence is intended to "suspend or truncate open conflicts [...] The hope here is that the passage of time can lower the temperature" or even heal the war wounds (2010: 5). Strategic silence can and often is politically enforced.

4 Foreign supervision is one of the main features of Dayton BH. Office of High Representative, various NGOs, interventionist agencies, the UN, and the IMF contributed to creating a dysfunctional state. One of the main goals of the international community is "reconciliation" as a crucial part of post-war reconstruction, which should lead to a modern and peaceful state oriented towards Euro-Atlantic integration. Ideas about the necessity of "coming to terms with the past" are presented as one of the pillars of the desired reconciliation.

## Divided memories, hopeless futures? On remembering in post-war BH

The post-Yugoslav region has been presented as the most obvious example of the so-called "return of history." Many believe that collective memory in the West has been democratized and "desacralized," while those living in the East still face "a desperate need for founding myths" (Muller 2004: 9). In the Balkans, consistently characterized as a violent (post-)conflict area (Todorova 1997), memory also becomes perceived as violent (see Jansen 2002) and is transformed into a tool that cripples long-sought-after "stabilization." Prevailing (scholarly) views are particularly interested in war-related memories and the (authoritative) national collective memory. At the same time, individualized counter-narratives that oppose hegemonic versions of the past are often ignored or regarded as alternative lone and mostly powerless voices. As a result, except for Yugonostalgic narratives, they are still considerably downplayed in contemporary scholarship (see Palmberger 2013: 16).[5]

Moreover, in this perspective, memory is often associated with a specific ethnonational or religious group. It is necessarily linked to collective identities and hence also blamed for the country's unstable future. In her article *Managing Memories in Post-War Sarajevo: Individuals, Bad Memories and New Wars*, Cornelia Sorabji (2006) reveals the dominant trends present in texts on the role of memory in sustaining the hostility on the territory of former Yugoslavia. The first approach focuses on the power of personal (but also collective) memories of the Second World War,[6] which – according to scholars and a number of local residents – played a crucial role in fueling the war in the 1990s. However, as Stef Jansen adds, explanations that relate to the relevance of the revival of repressed and silenced memory should be examined with necessary caution (1999, 2002). These approaches take the power of silenced (personal) memories extremely seriously; they interpret them as binding and non-negotiable (Sorabji 2006: 2; Baskar 2009) and deny the capacity of individuals to actively question and reassess transmitted narratives (see, for example, Lovrenović 2002; Salecl 2020). As Sorabji argues, this approach, nurtured by some anthropologists (see Hayden 1994; Simić 2000), implies that historical conflicts are simply passed on to subsequent generations that accept the personal memories of trauma and violence as their own, presenting them as good targets for political manipulation.

The second, top-down approach focuses on "the politics of memory." It seeks to control, constrain, and shape personal memories in line with the hegemonic dis-

5 It should be noted, however, that over the last decades there has been renewed interest, especially among anthropologists and sociologists, in examining the complexity of diverse voices that characterize the dynamic of memory process in the post-Yugoslav region (see Beronja and Vervaet 2016; Bugarin 2014; Petrović 2013, 2017, 2020; Povrzanović-Frykman 1997; Velikonja 2008). Some works have also recognized the importance of affective intensities in theorizing post-Yugoslav memories (Hofman 2015; Alempijević and Potkonjak 2016).

6 These memories are often linked to "silenced memories" – traumatic experiences related to the Second World War and its bloody aftermath, which have been employed in nationalist rhetoric to rewrite Yugoslav history and invoke the notion of "ancient Balkan hatreds" (Jansen 2002: 77). Here, the power of "imposed" silences and suppressed memories is often exaggerated and manipulated to suit the needs of contemporary political goals.

courses of the ruling elite (Sorabji 2006: 12). However, as with the first, it assumes that "human minds are endlessly manipulable" (2006: 2). This perspective, as I have argued elsewhere (see Bartulović 2018), has also dominated interpretations of both the Sarajevo assassination and Princip. Yet, it cannot be denied that today the contested interpretations of Princip reflect simmering political struggles and Bosnian ethno-national divisions, as well as other less noticeable ones. For scholars, the public discourse is much more visible; therefore, they are understandably exposed more often to the authoritative official narratives of the two Bosnian entities. These narratives argue that Serbs portray Princip exclusively as a "national hero," while Bosniaks and Croats claim the exact opposite – that he was a brutal "terrorist." The more nuanced and less publicly exposed interpretations that move beyond exclusively nationalized readings are often ignored in the BH context, which is burdened by a sense of permanent insecurity, of failed reconstruction and reconciliation politics, and by the strong ideological pressure on historical narrations to offer appropriate guidelines for the future. This ignorance of alternative individualized perceptions of the past permits the rigid reproduction of notions of antagonistic ethnic identities, which are often analyzed as consequences of different repertoires of collective memory. Analyses of the memory of the Sarajevo assassination in this vein and the complete nationalization of memories of Princip are framed to fit the language of reconciliation discourse. Thus, remembering is interpreted as the major obstacle to BH reintegration, and the whole process is reduced to the logic of a "war of memories" that can trigger "a war of shells" (Muller 2004: 12).

But memories can function differently, even in the post-war context, where – as everywhere else – official and unofficial memories "constantly commingle" (Confino 1997: 1402). As Vervaet and Beronja (2016) argue, memory can help to inspire solidarity and dialogue, help people come to terms with difficult past episodes, and provoke productive discussions about the future. In addition, historical legacies and memories can also be mobilized to build a politics of hope. Therefore, reconceptualizing dominant approaches to memory work in post-conflict societies is crucial. Sorabji thus proposes a third option that seems the most fruitful in attempting to understand the nature of remembering, even when exploring transmitted memories of the distant past – and not just the most recent war at the beginning of the 1990s. Without denying the social construction of memory or the social and political influences on remembering and forgetting, she argues that we should focus on "memory management," that is, on the "individual's awareness of memory and his or her desire to control it for the perceived benefit of self and others" (Sorabji 2006: 3). What matters then is "not what is presented but how this representation has been interpreted and perceived" (Confino 1997: 1392). In this vein, the following section analyses alternative engagements with memory, revealing not only oppositional political uses of the Sarajevo assassination and specific interpretations of Princip but, more importantly, historical uncertainties that the "Dayton meantime" (Jansen 2015), which is marked by anxiety, skepticism, and mistrust, brings to memory dynamics.

## Demanding history? From imposed interest to political criticism

The centenary of the Sarajevo assassination was pompously commemorated in both entities in BH in 2013 and 2014. The plethora of various events resulted from an extensive international obsession with the anniversary of the beginning of the Great War. This was reflected in the fact that most of the events in the Federation of BH were initiated and financially supported by foreign actors from the EU (see Harrington 2014, 2015; Hasanbegović 2015; Donia 2014; Kamberović 2014).

The reactions toward the international preoccupation with the centenary varied widely among the inhabitants of Sarajevo, where the main celebration, entitled *A Century of Peace After the Century of Wars,* took place, hosted by the Austrian president, Heinz Fischer. Some supported the spectacle, which took place in front of the town hall that was built during the Austro-Hungarian occupation of BH, and some also considered the commemorative events as a good opportunity for Sarajevo – especially because they expected a higher number of tourists in the city and the confirmation of a Bosnian European identity. Nevertheless, many expressed complete disinterest or even objected – more or less loudly – to the celebrations. The most visible protest against what many viewed as neo-colonial celebrations took place during the official ceremony, where people wearing Princip masks expressed their resistance to the ethnicization of everyday life and memories, the demonization of Princip, and the erasure of his pro-Yugoslav attitudes. But most of all, they used the controversial figure to convey their dissatisfaction with the post-war Bosnian realities and the "neo-imperialism" of the international community. By highlighting social inequality and the irrationally high costs of the celebrations at a time when BH faced floods, people in Princip masks voiced their disagreement with the celebrations and the patronizing discourses of peace and cooperation that diverted attention away from the critical issues of everyday survival and toward those provoking conflict among Bosnian citizens (Bartulović 2018; Rexhepi 2018). They showed their discontent with poverty, unemployment, lack of safety, diminishing public space, the marginal position of Bosnia in Europe, social inequalities, emigration, etc. Constant struggles with conflicting interpretations of the past allowed – many interlocutors claimed – the political elite to hijack the country's future and hold it hostage. While joining the protesters, Spiro Rexhepi recorded the words of one of the activists:

> The protests are important because they defy the common sense of how our country is run [...], and even if we don't achieve any "real" political goals, the message to citizens gathered here is clear: this is a show and we don't want more shows, we want jobs, food, and schools. (2018: 7)

Despite the protest being relatively small, others who did not join in understood what was going on. One of my interlocutors, Mirza, supported protesters from afar. He stated that, in general, Sarajevans are neither fooled by the grand celebration

nor by the political rhetoric: "We know that they are just throwing sand in our eyes with these kinds of pompous events… but we are not blind, we see through them." Paradoxically, even the artists, who in their own way contributed to the centennial celebrations by producing songs, films, and literature, often felt the need to confront the tiresome "obsession with the past" and especially the inexhaustible debates over Princip's role. The renowned Bosnian film director Danis Tanović, who made the award-winning film *Death in Sarajevo* (2016), based on a play by French philosopher Bernard-Henri Levy, explained that what provoked him to direct the movie was his personal resentment toward the political debates on the past, while the present situation remains alarming:

> I really can't believe […] that the question of whether Gavrilo Princip is a terrorist or freedom fighter is more important than the question of what people will eat or… for example… where their children will end up. To me, that's a much more important issue. In fact, that's the most important issue… how we live… how my fellow citizens live. I'm fine, I live well… but once you get out on the street… On one side of Hotel Europe, I see the big cars parked in rows, and on the opposite side of the same Hotel Europe, a woman with two children has been sitting begging for years in order to survive![7]

In fact, the film juxtaposes the three worlds that coexist in today's BH, which collide in Sarajevo in a major hotel expecting to host a visit from high-ranking officials on the anniversary of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. On the one hand, there is the elite political sphere, marked by the hotel manager's preoccupation with offering a perfect – but deceptive – image of a well-organized and functioning hotel. On the other hand, workers are preparing for a strike because they have been working for months without being paid. Finally, there is the hotel's criminal underground – a strip club where lawbreakers extort the corrupt manager. And while on the rooftop, journalists are waiting for a renowned guest to give a speech and then to film a show discussing different perceptions of Princip in today's BH, the whole drama is taking place in the hotel or – if we take it as a metaphor – in post-war BH. Of course, the real everyday problems of survival never succeed in interesting the public or politicians, and these problems remain unscreened.[8] A similar artistic commentary can be gleaned from the song "Gavrilo," produced in 2014 on the album *Srce uzavrelo* by the pop-rock group Zoster.[9] The lead singer, Mario Knežević, commented that they simply wanted to tell a song about a young man who sacrificed his life for his ideals. Indeed, the song seeks to remove Princip from discussions of collective identity and blame, emphasizing Princip's personal path. Knežević claims it would be much better if BH were recognized for something more than the shot that triggered the First World War. According to him and many other interlocutors, Bosnian society

7 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_bavO4tv4Y (accessed 10. 12. 2017.).

8 In the film, the contemporary Princip, who defends Serbian territorial claims over BH, tragically dies.

9 For an analysis of the reception of music dealing with the heritage of the First World War in post-Yugoslav space, see Lukec (2016).

should simply accept its past, abolish the heroization and demonization of Princip, and simply move on. Entanglements in conflicts over the interpretation of the past are therefore seen as fruitless and damaging to the present and future. But while some people drew on Princip to form a critical stance toward the dominant politics, for others, these "activist" uses of the past were still too risky and, for a number of Sarajevans, even irrelevant.

## From silence to "indifference"

As mentioned, interest in the Sarajevo assassination often arose among the local population precisely because of political and scholarly interest in the event, international funding (this also applies to many works of art and popular culture), and above all, the eagerness of the international political elite to celebrate peace and a common European future by organizing events in Sarajevo.

For decades, BH has been a significant concern for the international community, where, as mentioned, "dealing with the past" has become a buzzword linked to international intervention and empty promises. The restoration of social and especially ethno-national relations, i.e., "reconciliation" (see Hutchison and Bleiker 2008; Eastmond 2010; Jansen 2010), is assumed to be achieved simply by "telling the story" of the (traumatic) past (Eastmond and Mannergren Selimović 2002: 502). And while we can understand narratives of the past and the act of storytelling as ways to "maintain a sense of agency in the face of disempowering circumstances" (Jackson 2002: 15), it is nonetheless crucial to rethink our conceptual tools in order to examine how violent past events and ideas about "salvation through narration" can function as a subtle mechanism of othering (see Halilovich 2013).[10] The language of reconciliation also provokes affective reactions among locals. Moreover, it should be noted that the suffering of many "victims" increased after they had given some kind of public testimony about what had happened to them in the war (Eastmond and Mannergren Selimović 2002: 503; Marković 2020: 176). Some scholars have recently suggested that silence over the past[11] should not always be understood as oppressive or a tool to exert control over victims' narratives. Instead, it "may also help create a sense of possibility for a brighter future." (Eastmond and Mannergren Selimović 2012: 505; see also Hayner 2010; Golubović 2019; Guthrey 2015; Stefansson 2010). Nevertheless, most scholars consider silence in post-war BH as a political tool. The silencing of the past is interpreted mostly as a mechanism that stabilizes the boundaries between different nations and strengthens national belonging

10 For example, Hariz Halilovich advocates for the more reflexive use of the word "trauma" when describing unpleasant past narratives. According to him, "the overuse of the word 'trauma' has led to the medicalization and pathologizing of human suffering" (2013: 13).

11 Recently, scholars in anthropology have become more interested in silence, acknowledging that silence has diverse functions, effects, and outcomes (see Hrobat Virloget and Skrbić Alempijević 2021; Marković 2020; Winter 2010).

(Bianchi 2021; Mijić 2018). What these reflections on the meaning of silence have in common, however, is a focus on the intertwining of silence and ethnic or national boundaries in post-war BH, with a focus on the last war in the 1990s. Silence is therefore equated with the institutional and personal denial of the past crimes of a "we-group." This silence plays a crucial role in rewriting history, or it functions as a strategy in dealing with guilt, shame, anxiety, and victimhood (Bianchi 2021; Golubović 2019). My aim here is not to dismiss the presence and importance of institutional and personal denial; rather, it is important to see the diversity of silences and their meanings and implications.

The silence I encountered in Sarajevo is indeed different and, most of all, more agentive and subversive. It is a response to the deep aversion toward the complete post-war nationalization of all aspects of society, including the memory process. Advocating for silence (but not necessarily for forgetting) allows many Sarajevans to consciously ignore the past, instead attending to the concerns of the present and looking forward (Eastmond and Mannergren Selimović 2012). It also offers the possibility of stepping out of the imposed collective identity ascribed to them not only by the political structure of the Dayton-imposed state but also by the dominant scholarly discourse, which cannot see beyond "Dayton's trivision" (Jansen 2015). For example, when I was having coffee with my long-time friend Dino and talking about the protest outside the town hall, he explained his non-involvement as follows: "Everything I say was used to make me part of the tribe, and I'm constantly fighting to get away from the tribes. I'm doing this for my kid, we should think about the future of the kids."

Furthermore, avoiding talking about painful memories, and especially deciding when to talk about them (and not being forced to do so at a particular moment), can offer a certain kind of agency and control over one's future (see Marković 2020). While, as noted earlier, narratives and storytelling have often been recognized as agentive (Jackson 2002), silences can also be crucial to one's sense of agency in the post-war BH context. Therefore, I would like to point out that people who have suffered violence have often deliberately chosen to remain silent about the past, as these "agentive silences" generate an open space for nurturing not only hopes and aspirations but also future-oriented actions. For example, a former soldier who fought in the war as a young man in the 1990s deliberately deflected discussion about the past every time we met, drawing attention to his ambitions, travel plans, and the endless problems of the here and now. And this is not something reserved for memories or narratives from the recent war in the 1990s – it also reaches further into the past and influences narratives about the Sarajevo assassination. Thus, during my fieldwork, with few exceptions, I repeatedly encountered the complete absence of an urge to engage in debates about the assassination and its protagonists. Many people claimed they did not think much about these past events, which have been chewed over by numerous intellectuals and people in power. Most of them, if they were quite frank, "had no intention of learning more about it." Among the artisan producers working in the old town of Baščaršija, I kept stumbling upon them changing the subject.

Most of them redirected me not only to topics that they thought were relevant (the number of tourists in town, the weather, the rise in prices, thoughts on their new products) but also to their colleague down the street who has a small museum in the basement of his shop, because "he's the only one who cares about these old things and stories." Their facial expressions testified that they were fed up with the focus on historical battles. People who were interested in discussions over the past were sometimes considered "a bit strange." For example, Marija, one of my interlocutors in her late fifties, commented on her 15-year-old nephew's unusual interest in Princip:

> I understand his desire to question what's in the textbooks, because they're really problematic sometimes … we don't want to demotivate him … But honestly, he bores us all with his questions and theories. I commend him for being critical, but after all, there are other things in life he should be thinking about.

Additionally, she joked that girls would start avoiding him if he carried on being this "boring." Focusing on the past was supposed to hurt his chances of leading a meaningful life in the future. Thus, for many, polemics about distant historical events were seen as irrelevant.[12] These attitudes not only reflect the indifference of many Sarajevans to the events of more than 100 years ago but also testify to the avoidance of issues that spur unproductive conflicts in the present and future.

Similar attitudes could be observed through the everyday uses of "sites of memory," particularly the famous Sarajevo corner. Throughout the long twentieth century, different monuments and commemorative plaques have marked this place (Donia 2014; Harrington 2014, 2015; Kamberović 2014; Katz 2014; Miller 2014). Indeed, the first monument erected was dedicated to the Habsburg couple and, after the formation of the first South Slav state, the memorialization process was directed toward the celebration of the Yugoslav hero – Princip. Most effective were, as mentioned, Princip's footprints,[13] which allowed visitors from 1953 until the war in the 1990s to re-enact the assassination (see Bartulović 2018; Donia 2014), playing an important role in embodying memory (Connerton 1989). As mentioned, children growing up in Sarajevo regularly stepped into Princip's footsteps on their school excursions. This gave them an embodied experience in which cultural memory was not simply passed on; it was made afresh by the process of bodies enacting new visions of the collective past. It is indeed "repetition with revision" (Thompson Drewal 1992). Therefore, most of my interlocutors talked about their childhood experiences of joyfully playing around with the footsteps of "some guy" rather than discussing their political stances on the event. Yet, after the final removal of the Princip's footprints, the corner became nothing more than a waiting place and smoking spot for residents. Here I often noticed an old lady selling socks and flowers, and people usually just passed by

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12 She also complained that he had difficulty establishing relationships with other children because of his unusual interest.

13 In fact, they were the footprints of the feet of the sculptor Mirko Ostojić. According to Radenko Mišević, he had the smallest feet, and that is why he was chosen to represent Princip. The idea came from the famous Yugoslav architect Jurij Neidhardt, who conceptualized the museum (Antešević 2014: 79).

the place on the way to their destination. Sometimes they were stopped by a beggar. They searched their pockets and bags and shifted their attention downwards, where there was no trace of the assassination to be found. Once I heard a Japanese tourist ask a local man to lead him to the assassination site. It was evident that he was a little confused about where to point, although he was standing exactly on the "Princip's spot." Sometimes I overheard conversations between locals and their guests from abroad, and hosts were largely critical of the current political situation, taking just a few seconds to talk about the past. They also moved on quite quickly on their way to the old town. In many ways, the corner has become disconnected from its historical significance. But this indifference was only possible for people who were not professionally involved in interpreting the past. Sarajevo's tour guides, whose livelihoods depended on the constant cultivation of historical narratives and memories, did not have the same privilege; tourists continued to be interested in the past.[14]

## "Here the past is less certain than the future": Doubt, historical uncertainties, and risky memory

Coping with everyday uncertainties in the non-functioning state (see Bartulović 2013; Jansen 2015; Kurtović and Hromadžić 2017) was of crucial importance in negotiating the dominant, imposed, and often nationalized collective memories in the Federation of BH. For many interlocutors working in tourism, the Sarajevo assassination and the role of Princip were much more complex and confusing and hence impossible to neatly transform into weapons in ideological battles. In this section, I will briefly reflect on the guided tours I took in Sarajevo in 2017 and 2018 and analyze semi-structured interviews I conducted with tour guides and other tourism-industry workers.[15] The majority of tour guides followed the logic of the discourses of reconciliation when speaking to tourists on Sarajevo's most famous corner. They invariably reproduced the notion shaped by the media, regularly explaining that in Sarajevo, and more generally in the fragmented BH, there are strong divisions among the population in their perceptions of the role and intentions of Princip. Hero and terrorist were presented as two categories reflecting Bosnian ethno-national segregation and the tragic reality. Interestingly, none of them claimed that Princip should be considered a terrorist or a Serbian nationalist, nor did anyone classify him as a Yugoslav hero. They did, however, distance themselves from national collectives and their histories. For example, Haris stated in the early stages of the tour:

> I don't want to express my opinion about Princip. Let's be politically correct. After all, you are leaving, and I am staying here. I have my own opinion, which

14 Only tourists stand for longer at the site, reading the plaque and other materials presented by the curators of the former Museum of Young Bosnia, now the Sarajevo Museum 1878–1918.

15 For more opinions of salespeople and other tourist workers, see Bartulović (2018).

> I will keep to myself. You must form your own. Make up your own mind about Gavrilo!

After the tour, Haris was still hesitant to share his personal views in a more informal setting, not only because a clear answer would carry unwanted risks but also because he obviously doubted the accuracy of historical accounts produced in BH. He often raised his shoulders in a kind of submissive gesture that implied an apology for not being clear about some of his ideas, also admitting that he was confused about what he felt (see Ngai 2005). Like other guides, he claimed that history had become so deceptive and manipulable that "no one is sure anymore." His emphasis, then, was on the lack of non-politicized historical narratives on which to base an objective, definitive judgment. It also testified to the erosion of trust in authority structures that had occurred over the past few decades. Others spoke even more openly about the confusion that historical tensions bring, not only to the country but also to themselves: "The country is divided on this issue too. But to be honest, so am I," Belma admitted, noting that she felt completely lost and annoyed by diametrically opposed claims and that the truth was obviously somewhere in between.

This lack of a reliable historical narrative was especially troubling to tour guides who had studied history.[16] They struggled with their fears and anxieties over "saying something that may not be true." Nejra, for example, recently defended her master's thesis on Austro-Hungarian colonialism in BH. She emphasized that there are many unknown facts about the assassination and so many different positions that it is hard to form a clear opinion. As a former history teacher in a primary school in Sarajevo, she explained that, in her opinion, both the assassination and Princip are described in the textbooks of the Federation of BH in a relatively neutral way. However, at the same time, she also warned of the dangers of amnesia and, above all, missing data, which she had noted in the curricula. This data included silence surrounding the aggressive events that took place against the Serb population in Sarajevo immediately after the assassination. How these events were taught at the university level was even more neutral, yet also more confusing. Nejra confessed that students did not get clear answers from their professors, who guided them to evaluate archival documents critically:

> They gave us many contradictory texts to read, in fact… we had to read quite a lot… Everything was confusing, but in a way that was good, since we know what it's like here… They didn't force us to think one way or the other. We had discussions, that's all.

In fact, she recalled that on the first day of her studies, the now-deceased professor Dubravko Lovrenović warned her against politicizing history, claiming that: "We live in a society where history is deceptive. Don't trust anyone, including me." This feeling of uncertainty and disbelief was also enhanced in the exploration of different interpretations of the assassination throughout history. For them, it was obvious that

16 Some of the tour guides have studied languages; others started working after graduating.

Princip was a controversial figure from the beginning of the twentieth century and that he had been exploited by various regimes. For the Austro-Hungarian empire, he was a terrorist and criminal, in Yugoslavia, a national hero, and even considered a Jew during the short-lived Independent State of Croatia (Aleksov 2014). He has also been a revolutionary heroic youth, a Serbian martyr, a primitive rebel, etc. (see Donia 2014; Bartulović 2018). For many Sarajevans, he simply became an ambivalent and manipulable figure, difficult to understand. Tour guides, as experts and interpreters of the past for a wider and mostly foreign audience, also felt obliged to take responsibility for the information they passed on, but they were lost in the "flood of different claims." While, as mentioned, many tourism workers were not interested in the past and preferred silence, the tour guides were interested but also puzzled by the politicization of recent and distant historical events. The affective atmosphere of the post-war period, in which all feelings and thoughts related to the past were considered ideologically charged, generated more confusion than clarity and questions than answers.

## Conclusion

As Alon Confino argues, "the separation of the construction of memory from either its reception or contestation" is artificial (1997: 1398). Thus, this article has aimed to upturn the dominant perspective that focuses on the most visible and politicized narrations of the Sarajevo assassination in the twenty-first century post-war Sarajevo. It has offered a glimpse into the everyday effects of power struggles between "popular" and official memories, the "European" discourse of "dealing with the past," and individual struggles, anxieties, and hopes. I have argued that not only is the memory of the event, connected with the interpretation of Princip, highly negotiable despite, or precisely because of, the violent politicization of the transmitted memory, but also that the abundance of talk about the historical events produces revolt, doubts, "affective confusions" (Ngai 2005: 69), and disinterest. Uncertainty is, therefore, not only reserved for the Bosnian present and future, but it is also becoming allocated to the past – which has become a truly confusing "foreign country" (Lowenthal 1985).

While it is impossible to denounce the scholarly concern that the younger generations in post-war BH are – through education and public discourses – burdened by nationalized versions of the past (see Bartulović 2008; Hromadžić 2015), it is likewise impossible to overlook the fact that they are also active managers of their own and transmitted memories, which is testified by the attitudes of my interlocutors, especially the young ones. In addition, they have older generations of parents and relatives who are eager to protect their children's future by directing their attention away from the problematic past (see Sorabji 2006). It is important to emphasize that my interlocutors in Sarajevo were no less conscious than academics of the implications of the political manipulation of the past and the effects these processes have on their

everyday life. Caught between different ideas regarding what the assassination represented and who Princip was, they struggled to make up their minds. This was most obvious among people who engaged in a genuine historical learning process. The tour guides in Sarajevo tried to work with the variety of historical truths available in post-war BH. Although aware that all histories were constructed, they somehow believed that the narratives about the past in BH were more politicized than elsewhere and "harder to believe." Nevertheless, they tried desperately to find some answers but also acknowledged – during this process – that they had become increasingly confused as time passed. The lack of certainty was generated by too much clarity in the nationalized visions but also by empty promises and rhetoric from the international community, which expected people to finally resolve the "problematic past." Therefore, the aggressive and exclusive political and intellectual elites' approaches to erase the ambiguities became counterproductive. Tour guides had to confront their doubts, as they were professionally responsible for constantly questioning their own version of historical narratives and transmitted memories. Many preferred not to speak about politicized issues.

For many, this silence was agentive and reflected the idea that dwelling on the past, including the distant past, paralyzes the process of rebuilding lives in the aftermath of the war. Silence on these topics created a shared space and facilitated an affective attunement for one strand of Sarajevans who, by ignoring the conversation on the past, exposed the relevance of hope and the need to deal with the pressing issues of today. While their attitude seems to replicate Balkanist ideas, in which the Balkans seem all too caught up in the contingencies of the past, it also paradoxically exposes the self-reflexive nature of memory management in uncertain post-war times in a way that contradicts the idea of the passive acceptance of exclusive versions of the usable past. Moreover, this apparent "culture of indifference" could also be read as a strategic avoidance of conflicts and, indeed, as a "moral practice" (Lambek 1996) aimed at controlling (transmitted) memories for the benefit of the self and others (Sorabji 2006; Palmberger 2019), but also aversion toward the politicization of emotions (Ahmed 2004). This was confirmed by numerous interlocutors who repeated endlessly that it is the older generation's obligation to think about a better future for their children. Strategic silence also reflected critical stances toward the discourse of peace and reconciliation, which has specific demands toward history but also toward people with particular memories and experiences. Most of all, Sarajevans were trying to look forward and often felt this was impossible in BH. Many believed that the future is to be found beyond the borders of Dayton BH. As Emina said: "I want to move somewhere where we can talk mostly about the banalities, weather, and stupid things. I am fed up with solving historical injustices. We are all, I guess, just too exhausted, and, as Meša Selimović wrote, I really don't want my children to sing songs of revenge. Let's just live, or we will all have to leave."

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## *"Sami odlučujte o Gavrilu!"*. O sjećanju, tišini i sumnji u Sarajevu

**Polazeći od recentnih znanstvenih kritika dominantnih balkanističkih razumijevanja sjećanja u poslijeratnim društvima i fokusirajući se na pojedince kao aktivne menadžere prenesenih sjećanja, članak ilustrira dinamiku sjećanja na Sarajevski atentat i Gavrila Principa u Sarajevu. Etnografski prati posljedice borbe za moć između popularnih i službenih sjećanja te odgovara na pozive da se istraže afektivna stanja izazvana politizacijom prošlosti u specifičnim kontekstima. Ne negirajući važnost sjećanja u poslijeratnoj Bosni i Hercegovini, članak ukazuje na važnost istraživanja neizvjesnosti, sumnji, nezainteresiranosti i šutnje u etnografskim studijama memorijalizacije, odnosno sjećanja i zaboravljanja u postkonfliktnim društvima i šire.**

**Ključne riječi: Sarajevski atentat, Gavrilo Princip, sumnja, sjećanje, tišina, nezainteresiranost**