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SHARDS OF BROKEN GLASS: DAŠA DRNDIĆ'S ARCHIVAL POETICS

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This paper examines Daša Drndić's April in Berlin *(*April u Berlinu*, 2007), alongside the author's other Holocaust novels, as a literary response to historical revisionism and outright denialism of the Holocaust in Croatia, which had entered the political and cultural mainstream during the War of Independence (1991-1995) and has persisted into the post-war period. Since the historical legacy of NDH in Croatia has been de-traumatized, it no longer represents a crisis of historical consciousness, which would entail a confrontation with the violent past as well as a painful transformation of national identity and the political space in which this identity is articulated. In contrast to this de-traumatization, as an ethnocentric strategy that normalizes the nation's fascist crimes, Drndić's novels stage a shocking confrontation with the shards of the violent past. Through both their innovative graphic layout and interdiscursive textuality—which combines historiographical narration with fictional devices, words with images—Drndić's novels function as archives-monuments intended to disturb, disrupt, and jolt the reader into awareness of history, laying bare the ideological mechanisms of control and bringing the bodies of the victims to our doorsteps*

Key words: *trauma; archive; Holocaust; Croatia; literature; revisionism*

1. Timely Reception

Daša Drndić's ninth novel, *April in Berlin* (*April u Berlinu*, 2007) opens with a citation from T.S. Eliot's "Love Song for Alfred J. Prufrock": "Let us go then, you and I, /when the evening is spread against the sky/ like a patient etherized upon a table;... Oh, do not ask "What is it?"/ Let us go and make our visit" evoking the eccentric figure of the *flâneur*, but also the modernist form as a collection of cultural fragments shored against the ruins of history.[1] The "you" is presumably the reader, whom Drndić will take on a meandering and harrowing promenade through the historical atrocities and massive losses of lives in the twentieth century, and those of the new one, just beginning to take shape. The place is Berlin, more precisely, the Wannsee Villa, where the Final Solution was hatched as an official policy of the Third Reich, and which has now been turned into a commemorative site and a writer's residency. The latter is also the reason that the novel's narrator, here hardly indistinguishable from the author, has found herself in this city:

> in order to enjoy for some time Berlin's unified and patched-up present, to sit through a performance of [Brecht's] *Mother Courage*, to change a point of view for a bit, and instead of staring at the railway, the warehouses and dumpsters, to gaze at the boulevards, to promenade under the chestnut trees and so on.[2]

However, what was meant to be a culturally rewarding tourist experience to the German capital, an escape from the monotony of the daily routine, and a glimpse of a more prosperous, ordered, and modernized society than the Croatian one in which the narrator permanently resides, quickly becomes a rendezvous with the traces and specters of history: here, as in the novels of the German émigré writer W.G. Sebald, a fractured, overwhelming chain of historical catastrophes whose epicenter is the Holocaust. And while Sebald's literary promenades lead to encounters with enigmatic signs of modern history apprehended by the melancholy gaze of the brooding narrator, Drndić is more directly racked by the furies of the past.[3] Once in Berlin, the narrator continues:

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[1] Daša Drndić, *April u Berlinu*, (Zaprešić: Fraktura, 2009), p. 5, original in English.

[2] Drndić, *April u Berlinu*, p. 10. This and all subsequent translations are mine.

[3] The reviewers have tended to underscore Drndić's similarity to Sebald, both in terms of their obsessive return to the theme of the Holocaust, as well as in their inclusion of

> the deranged History caught up with me, always and everywhere, during the entirety of my stay in Berlin, screaming: Listen! Look! Like steam, History seethed from the lawns around the Wannsee lake, from paved avenues, from monumental constructions, from luxurious department stores, at exhibitions, like velvet ribbons it danced in the breath of my conversation partners, it injected its deathly stench under my skin, and wrapped in a nefarious black cape, much like a giant vampire-bat which frantically flutters its membranous wings, it twisted reality into a vortex of terror, darkening (my) Berlin sky.[4]

In this passage, characteristic for Drndić's acerbic narrative voice, the difficult past is not only made forcefully present, but history writ large becomes a signifier of trauma and large-scale violence of the 20th century. Foregrounded in archival documents, photographs, and names of Holocaust victims that the author inserts into the text of her sprawling novels, traumatic history refuses to pass away, to be buried and covered up, aestheticized and anaesthetized. Rather, the past forcefully erupts into the texture of everyday life, disrupting any sense of a coherent and meaningful temporal and historical order. "Poetry," as the Yugoslav writer Danilo Kiš had written in reference to the nihilistic strain of Central European modernism, "is [here] ugly like reality; while evoking it one can only mutter, ramble, bark and vomit."[5]

In his review of *April in Berlin*, Saša Ćirić gives a rather concise summary of this verbose and digressive novel, describing it as a "literary memorial" in its own right:

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documentary photographs into the text of their novels. However, there are significant differences between the two authors both in tone, mood, and their respective treatment of the Shoah. While Sebald's novels ultimately deal with the inability to mourn within the German postwar and post-fascist context, Drndić's fiction is marked more viscerally by the repetition of traumatic history within the context of Yugoslavia's violent dissolution and the author's multiple displacements as a result of the 1990s wars. As Dunja Detoni has noted, Drndić's novels intertwine autobiographical narratives—whether implicit or explicit—and urban histories, "with typical overlapping between personal martyrdom and alienated spaces" (*Lijepi prostori: Hrvatske prozaistice od 1949. do 2010.* (Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak, 2011), p. 20.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Danilo Kiš, "Variations on the Theme of Central Europe," *Cross Currents*, Volume 6 (1987), p. 4.

> This is a book of memory, more precisely a book of entwined memories, intimate and private, family memories and memories of friendships, and a book of information dug up and appropriated from various books, copied from commemorative plaques, from sidewalks and facades in Germany and Austria. By its very nature, this book is a type of atypical literary memorial, a cross-section of 'autobiography of others,' 'a history of the private life in prewar Yugoslavia, a diary of a 'non-national' (apatrid) and a diary of linguistic perplexities, a collection of autopoetic musings and an obsessive criminological directory. The book recalls the technology of mass crime, the [collective] psychology … that allowed the crime to be committed, and the abuse of language whose consequences have survived… in the era that replaced Nazism.[6]

The description, indeed, could be extended to the rest of Drndić's sprawling *oeuvre*, in which the principle of montage predominates and the archival base of historical documents and photographs, mostly related to the history of National Socialism, has acquired considerable autonomy with respect to the novel's narrative. In a review for the *LA Review of Books* of *EEG* (2016; English translation, 2018), the author's last novel written as she was dying, Josip Novakovich notes—quite aptly—that Drndić's imposing opus is composed not of eleven separate novels, but of "one huge novel in 11 volumes, not a Human Comedy à la Balzac, but an Inhuman Tragedy, in which no matter what happens on the individual level, a history of organized crime and fascism overwhelms the narrative."[7]

Now translated from the Croatian into numerous European languages, including English, Drndić's experimental and imposing novels on the theme of Nazism have received almost universal critical acclaim, with the critics commending both the author's righteous anger, impressive erudition, and her bleak vision of history. Reviewing her recently translated

[6] Saša Ćirić, "KULT SEĆANJA," on-line: http://www.booksa.hr/kolumne/kritika-71-dasa-drndic, last accessed 1 October, 2019, my translation.

[7] Josip Novakovich, "An Electric Encephalogram of a Mind: On Daša Drndić's EEG," *LA Review of Books*, April 30, 2019, on-line: https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/an-electric-encephalogram-of-a-mind-on-dasa-drndics-eeg/ In this sense, Drndić's novels consciously reiterate Joyce's famous line in Ulysses about history as a nightmare from which we're (hopelessly) trying to awake.

Doppelgänger (2018) for *Public Books*, Ben Streeter thus provocatively locates the novel within the temporality of the latest U.S. headlines:

> Daša Drndić bursts the boundaries of civil discourse at a time when turtle-like politicians from Kentucky seek to censure their female colleagues, and Trump and his apologists charge protesters with "incivility." Can't a Trump spokeswoman—who shares responsibility for kidnapping thousands of children—be left alone to enjoy a nice meal in peace? "No, not really," Drndić likely would have said.[8]

Interestingly, Streeter's rhetoric replicates both the performative force of the author's outrage as well as her analogical thinking, which sees present-day forms of domination as continuous with historical fascism. And Streeter is not the only critic to do so. The reception of Drndić's work, in other words, has coincided with the broader crisis of historical meaning occasioned by the shocking rise of alt-right and white nationalist movements worldwide. And while Drndić's characteristically "continental gloom" resonates with the loss of the belief in the automatic and guaranteed historical progress on the other side of the Atlantic, the reviewers have either glossed over the more local Croatian and post-Yugoslav context in which these novels appeared or have ignored it entirely.[9]

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[8] Ben Streeter, "The Righteous Anger of Dasa Drndic," *Public Books*, January 15, 2019, on-line: https://www.publicbooks.org/the-righteous-anger-of-dasa-drndic/.

[9] Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, this almost universal critical praise stands in contrast to the somewhat ambivalent academic reception of Drndić's prose. Situating the author's work in the broader context of Croatian historical metafiction responding to the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s, Natka Badurina argues that Drndić's Holocaust novels are marked by an unexamined and contradictory tension between postmodern polyphony as exemplified in the use of the patchwork form, on the one hand, and the narrowly juridical discourse of her "unwavering and authoritarian narrator" (30), on the other. While seemingly flaunting its hybrid and experiential form, Drndić's prose belies in fact a return to grand narratives and unambiguous moral categories of good and evil. See Natka Badurina, "Kraj povijesti i hrvatski novopovijesni roman," *Slavica Tergestina* 14 (2012), pp. 9-36. Echoing Badurina's criticism, Stijn Vervaet fruitfully interprets *April in Berlin* in the light of Michael Rothberg's theory of "implicated subjects," who stand beyond the dominant imaginary of guilt and innocence, victim and perpetrator vis-à-vis historical and continuing forms of state-sponsored violence. The use of network plots as well as the expansive archival base of documents in virtually all of Drndić's novels—testifying to various degrees of collaboration

2. From Archive to Counter-Monument

This chapter argues that Drndić's novels—and *April in Berlin*, specifically—makes use of the archive as both a material for fictional construction as well as a guiding formal and figurative principle, turning the Holocaust archive itself into an aesthetic, conceptual and commemorative object. Specifically, the historical inheritance of the Holocaust in Drndić's *oeuvre* can be conceptualized, following Peter Fritzsche, as an "archive of loss," whose "point of origin… is *discontinuity*, which makes special demands on its users."[10] According to Fritzsche, the specificity of the Holocaust archive is fully revealed only when compared to the most common historical constructions of the archive in the west, which coincides with the rise of the *nation-state*, and whose purpose is "reinforcing a common past within its borders and emphasizing the difference of cultural origins across its borders."[11] Historically, the task of the heirs to the archive was to delimit, organize and constitute a legible common past, namely, a national history that would testify to the continuity and legitimacy of the nation and hence to secure its future. However, in the case of post-fascist Germany, the context that Fritzsche most readily educes, "the experience of mass death and the Holocaust ended up creating dramatically divergent life stories that made it ever more difficult to hold onto the idea of a common German past or find shared memories among victims and perpetrators."[12] Consequently, the Holocaust archive, Fritzsche writes, "is

by individuals, states, and corporations in the Nazi genocide of the Jews—indeed reinforces such a reading. However, Vervaet argues, "the narrator's anger and the straightforwardness with which she confronts the reader with unsettling evidence do not work as a productive force but block off any positive action, instead leaving the reader overwhelmed by feelings of horror and guilt" (Stijn Vervaet, *Holocaust, War and Transnational Memory Testimony from Yugoslav and Post-Yugoslav Literature* (London: Routledge, 2019), p. 132). My own reading of Drndić's fiction is more attuned to the textual and linguistic polyphony and displacement that disrupts homogenous notions of space and time, territory and history, connected to the nation-state. Nevertheless, the appropriation of Holocaust testimonies and other archival documents in service of contemporary anti-fascist critique, as well as the blurring of boundaries between fact and fiction, story and history, autobiographical self and others will most likely continue to haunt Drndić's novels in ways that are both fascinating and unsettling for critics.

[10] Peter Fritzsche, "The Archive," History & Memory 17.1/2 (2005), p. 16, my emphasis.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid, p. 18.

plural, rather than authoritative; manifestly incomplete, rather than comprehensive; global, rather than local."[13]

Yet the rupture represented by the Holocaust archive with regard to national history cannot be limited solely to Germany; rather, its archival and memorial traces haunt the nations formerly under the Third Reich, a frequently unacknowledged imperial legacy in East Central Europe, whose aftereffects still shape both official national histories and structure its silences and elisions. Indeed, as Tony Judt has so forcefully argued, the Second World War "left a vicious legacy" of passivity, bystander mentality, and outright collaboration across the European continent and beyond.[14] The inculpatory passage from his essay, "The Past Is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe," bears quoting in full:

> … most of occupied Europe either collaborated with the occupying forces (a minority) or accepted with resignation and equanimity the presence and activities of the German forces (a majority). The Nazis could certainly never have sustained their hegemony over most of the continent for as long as they did, had it been otherwise. Norway and France were run by active partners in ideological collaboration with the occupiers; the Baltic nations, Ukraine, Hungary, Slovakia, Croatia, and Flemish speaking Belgium all took enthusiastic advantage of the opportunity afforded to settle ethnic and territorial disputes under benevolent German oversight.[15]

In line with Judt, Drndić's *oeuvre* thus conceptualizes the Holocaust as a European inheritance that evokes the enduring trauma of "borders and identities," privileging the stateless and uprooted archive as the witness of the short but brutal 20th century history.[16] Such an archive, in contrast to national historiography, is charged with a disruptive, provocative, and highly unsentimental power of negation.

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[13] Ibid, p. 39.

[14] "The Past Is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe," in *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe*: *Studies in the Presence of the Past*, ed. Jan-Werner Muller, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 159.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Daša Drndić, *Sonnenschein* (Zaprešić: Fraktura, 2006), p. 57. This and all subsequent translations are mine.

While Drndić's Holocaust novels both uncover and explore histories as part of a wider European legacy of Nazism, it is Croatian fascism that is most frequently evoked by Drndić's narrators, constituting a buried epicenter of her documentary fiction.[17] Indeed, her novels can easily be seen as specific responses to historical revisionism and outright denialism of the Holocaust in Croatia, which had emerged into the political and cultural mainstream during the War of Independence (1991-1995) and persisted into the post-war period. In particular, it was the nationalist vision of Croatia's first president and historian Franjo Tuđman that prepared the ground for the positive reevaluation and unproblematic integration of the historical legacy of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) into the larger narrative of Croatian history and national self-perception. Commenting on this revisionist current in Croatian historiography, the historians Ivo Goldstein and Goran Hutinec put it:

> In this context, the Ustaša-run Independent State of Croatia suddenly appears in a relatively positive light, in spite of its Nazi-fascist essence, its total political and military alliance with historical evil, genocide and other crimes which it

[17] It has been argued that the Holocaust, as the limit-event of 20th century history, has been going through a process of globalization. See Daniel Levy, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2006). While this shift in the reception of the Holocaust carries with it some positive consequences, such as the potential of a global moral consensus, there is also the risk of abstraction and decontextualization of the event or the set of events which—although prodigious in scope—has historical, local, and national specificities. Moreover, as the example of Croatia and the wider post-Yugoslav context shows the Holocaust already possess a history of varied reception and representation, which complicates the idea of the Holocaust as a universal, transparent, and self-evident signifier. As Ljiljana Radonić has recently argued with respect to Croatia's case, the historical legacy of the multi-national antifascist resistance as embodies in Yugoslavia's National Liberation Struggle (NOB) has given way to right-wing revisionism, on the one hand, and the discourse of human rights and its almost exclusive focus on the victims, on the other, which aligns with Croatia's desire to appropriate the European (and American) model of dealing with the Holocaust. See Ljiljana Radonić, "The post-Communist Invocations of Europe: Memorial Museums' Narratives and the Europeanization of Memory," *National Identities*, Vol. 19, Issue 2, 2019: 268–288. The danger of this model is that it has the potential to abstract the Holocaust as an external, metaphysical embodiment of evil, thereby locating it outside of its historical origin. Finally, more recently, we have been witnessing a breakdown of the postwar "anti-fascist consensus" and the concomitant rise of neo-fascism and white nationalism on a global scale. In this sense, Drndić's novels are quite timely and anticipatory artifacts of our present historical moment.

> committed (because it "was not only a creation of the fascists, but an expression of century-long longings of the Croatian people for an independent state"). In opposition to this, the weakness and guilt of both Yugoslav states, and especially the crimes committed in their name, are rendered absolute and are generalized to such a degree that they become arguments in favor of rigid nationalist politics, and, when possible, the justification of Ustaša crimes or at least their relativization.[18]

The revisionist attitude in Croatia extends not just to popular historiography and dominant political narratives, but also to commemorative silence about the Holocaust. Following Todor Kuljić, we can say that the historical legacy of NDH in Croatia has been "de-traumatized;" it no longer represents a crisis of "historical experience and historical consciousness, something which cannot be explained away through existing experience or system of interpretation"[19] Drndić's novels, on the other hand, stage a shocking confrontation with the shards of the violent past. Through both their innovative graphic layout and "interdiscursive" textuality—which combines historiographical narration with fictional devices—Drndić's novels function as archives-monuments intended to disturb, disrupt, and jolt the reader into awareness of history, bringing the bodies of victims to our doorstep.[20]

In this sense, Drndić's poetics are highly indebted to the aesthetics of "counter-memorials" (*Gegen-Denkmale*) that have emerged in the context of German commemorative culture in the late 1970s and 1980s as a postmodern response to the Holocaust. Accordingly, the Holocaust is seen

[18] Ivo Goldstein and Goran Hutinec, "Neki aspekti revizionizma u hrvatskoj historijografiji devedesetih godina XX stoljeća – motivi, metode i odjeci," *Revizija prošlosti na prostorima bivše Jugoslavije*, ed. Vera Katz (Sarajevo: Institut za istoriju u Sarajevu, 2007), pp. 188–189, my translation.

[19] Todor Kuljić, *Kultura Sećanja* (Belgrade: Čigoja štampa, 2006), p. 293.

[20] Anrea Ryznar examines Drndić's novels in the light of interdiscursivity, the mixing and interpenetration of different genres of speech, ranging from historiography, testimony, polemic, essay, autobiography, and fiction. "Playing with the inherent interdiscursivity of human memory and the narratives it generates," Ryznar writes, "these novels create a specific, hybrid stylistic format in which this overlapping [of discourses] becomes visible" (45). See Anrea Ryznar, "Interdiskurzivne fuge u romanu *Leica format* Daše Drndić," *Fluminensia: časopis za filološka istraživanja*, Vol. 6. No. 1, 2014, pp. 35–46), my translation.

as a sublime and incomprehensible historical rupture that defies figurative representation specific to traditional western monuments, and possesses "no narrative structure, only statistics."[21] In her 2007 novel *Sonnenschein* (English translation, *Trieste* 2012), for example, Drndić disrupts the narrative with an incomplete list of around 9,000 names of Jews deported or killed in Italy and countries occupied by Italy from 1943 to 1945, during the existence of *Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland (OZAK)*. The list spans around hundred pages, representing the most striking graphic feature of and the most avant-garde authorial intervention into this self-stylized "documentary novel."[22] The list is preceded by the overarching motto of the entire novel: "behind every name hides a story."[23] In the original Croatian edition, these pages are perforated, inviting the reader to tear them off, thereby creating a palpable absence in the very heart of the novel. Here figuration and narration are abolished in favor of commemoration and continuing historical research. More recently, Eelco Runia has restaged the postmodern argument of the negative sublime—that both exceeds and puts into question any form of representation—instantiated in the Holocaust in terms of the opposition between *representation* and *presence*, metaphor and metonymy, that is to say, between what he calls premodern and modern forms of commemoration. According to Runia, premodern "[m]onuments are [...] idiosyncratic compounds of metonymical denotations and metaphorical connotations: they *say* something (connotation) about what they *stand for* (denotation)."[24] Yet, whereas metaphorical monuments are primarily engaged in a transfer

[21] Henry Pickford, "Conflict and Commemoration: Two Berlin Memorials." *Modernism/modernity*, Volume 12, Number 1, January 2005, p. 160.

[22] In *Sonnenschein*, Drndić tells the deeply unsettling story of Haya Tedeschi, an assimilated Italian Jew from Gorizia who has spent the last fifty years searching for her son Antonio, product of a brief love affair with a ruthless SS officer and onetime commander of the Treblinka concentration camp. Haya's son, we later learn, was abducted from her at the end of the war as part of the *Lebensborn* project, one of numerous Nazi eugenics programs, and given to an Austrian family, where he was "aryanized" and raised under the name Hans Taube. The meeting of the mother and son after fifty years of separation, however, never takes place within the bounds of the novel. There is no ostensible closure, no catharsis. Rather, the reader is left with an open, unhealable wound as Haya almost objectively contemplates the horror of history in which she has played the part of a passive bystander.

[23] Drndić, *Sonnenschein*, p. 161.

[24] Runia, Eelco. "Presence." *History and Theory*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (Feb., 2006), p. 17, original emphasis.

of *meaning*, (post)modern or metonymical monuments concentrate on the transfer of *presence* itself. This transfer of presence comes in many forms and relies on an indexical relation to the commemorated event: from the incorporation of the original material (soil, wreckage, dust) into the monument to the list of names—as in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the projected monument to the victims of 9/11.[25] One of the main device for transferring presence, or opening "a reality outside of text" is therefore through the metonymical use of place-names, dates, 'original materials,' 'authentic' historical objects, *and* proper names.[26] By incorporating a list of victims' names into her text, Drndić thus asks us to step out of the world of fiction into something more "real" and "authentic," which does not immediately offer itself to interpretation insomuch as it "insinuates that there is an urgent *need* for meaning."[27] Through the metonymical use of the names, Drndić in a sense transforms the entire novel into a sort of Holocaust counter-monument, pushing against the divide between literature and archive, narrative and a collection, analytical and commemorative practice. But the list is also a "document" that calls out a specific, almost ritualized emotional response to which every reader will attempt to access in a different way. Similar to W.G. Sebald's use of photographs, the specificity of the names in Drndić's novel can be seen as a "'punctum' (a snip, a little blemish, a pinhole)," which, as Runia suggest, is "a kind of 'leak' in time through which 'presence' wells up."[28] Here, photographs and names become presences that invade and haunt the present moment, disjoining and disconnecting it from itself.

[25] Ibid, original emphasis. It is interesting to note here that proper names have been a central problem in the philosophy of language for some time now, opening up a question of meaning versus mere referentiality.

[26] Ibid, p. 20.

[27] Ibid, p. 19.

[28] Ibid, p. 16. The term '*punctum'* was coined by Barthes in his *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (1981) to describe the affective power of photography – a photographic detail, an "accident which pricks, bruises me" – as opposed to the *studium*, the social background which makes a photographic image, to some extent, classifiable and culturally legible. Drndić in contrast to Sebald's poetic and mysterious photographs uses images that are more encyclopedic and forensic.

3. *Mitteleuropa,* a Haunted Geography

April in Berlin belongs to a broader corpus of post-Yugoslav novels—such as Dubravka Ugrešić's *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender* (*Muzej bezuvjetne predaje*, 1997), Bora Ćosić's *The New Tenant* (*Novi Stanar*, 1998), Saša Ilić's *The Berlin Window* (*Berlinsko okno*, 2006), and Irfan Horozović's *The Anonymous Berlin Passerby* (*Nepoznati berlinski prolaznik*, 1998)—that appropriate Berlin's unsettling and jarring memory-scape to inscribe the collective and personal traumas of the recent Yugoslav Wars into European public memory. Berlin in these novels figures as an open-ended urban interface, a radical architectural montage that confronts the viewer/reader with the heterogeneous historical layers, major scars and ideological divisions of the German and therefore European 20th century; from the ruins of the Third Reich and the remains of the Cold War division to the conciliatory though troubled unification following 1989, Berlin evokes a complex palimpsest of memory and history. As Andrea Zlatar has argued with respect to Drndić's other novels, here too the reader is faced with a "virtual city" that generates "infinite textuality," breaking down the hierarchies between "the private and the public, the intimate and the commonplace, the internal and the external, personal and the collective."[29] This virtual city, in turn, interacts with the recent history to generate even more complex palimpsests, urban interventions, and dialectical montages posed between different media, disciplines, as well as national and global memory cultures. Here, "a city is not uniformly written over, but locally, irregularly, opportunistically, erratically written over;"[30] as such, it offers a an alternative conception of history, one that stresses discontinuity over continuity, the living presence of the past within the present—often as a traumatic remainder—rather than its historicist foreclosure.

In *Sonnenschein*, Drndić summarizes her position on Central European history in an aphoristic, caustic manner that follows a feverish and ominous description of the fascist takeover of Italy: "Borders and identities, our executors. Married spouses that sow war, disorder and death."[31] The history of Central Europe—in Drndić's novels—however is not told as an epic,

[29] Zlatar, Andrea. *Tekst, tijelo, trauma: ogledi o suvremenoj ženskoj književnosti* (Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak, 2004), pp. 156–157.

[30] Elco Runia, "Presence," p. 9.

[31] Drndić, *Sonnenschein*, p. 57.

unified narrative, since it is a story of changing collectives, shifting borders, movements of people, traumatic, nonredeemable and lingering absences, more than often preceded by wars, revolutions, and other violent historical ruptures. Rather, her "patchwork" novels are composed of recovered fragments of history which, following Walter Benjamin's method of "carry[ing] the principle of montage onto history" in hope that these jolting constellations, "constructed from the rags of a tradition [will form] an image of the 'oppressed past.'[32] This poetic method of writing history negates classical plot structures, which imply chronological ordering of events and an epic unity of the past, present, and future, since, in Drndić's own words, they cannot truly capture contemporary experience that is "crippled, maimed," in which "the particles of time… have unfastened from each other."[33] Moreover, Drndić herself writes from an articulated—political and poetic—position of displacement, thereby distancing herself from fixed national frameworks, canons, and identities. In *April in Berlin*, she writes,

> To be naturalized means to *domesticate* oneself, to feel at home, but I don't feel completely domesticated anywhere, I feel more *disjointed*, as if the vertebral disks of my spine have worn down (which they have), so that I can't stand straight, I'm not rooted, encamped on any soil bounded by borders.[34]

The passage invokes the author's biography, who had spent most of her life in Belgrade before she moved to Croatia (more specifically, to the port city of Rijeka) in 1992, fleeing the escalating Serbian ethnic nationalism only to encounter its Croatian variant in the void left by the collapse of the shared Yugoslav state. Or, she had left a "city gone crazy," only to return to Rijeka, "a small nervous space, wounded and dark."[35] And she adds, with an acidic flair, "[i]f I had where, I'd move away from that relocation as well."[36]

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[32] Matthias Fritsch, *The Promise of Memory: History and Politics in Marx, Benjamin, and Derrida*. (Albany, NY: CUNY Press, 2005), p 173. For a detailed reading of Drndić's poetics in the light of Walter Benjamin's philosophy of history see Aleksandar Mijatović, "Vrijeme nestajanja Sjećanje, kino i fotografija u romanu *Leica format* Daše Drndić" *Fluminensia: časopis za fililoška istraživanja*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 2010, pp. 25–44).

[33] Drndić, *April u Berlinu*, p. 296.

[34] Ibid, p. 176, my emphasis.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

In this sense, Drndić's archival poetics in *April in Berlin* foreground the traumatic legacies of Central European cities, in the first place of Berlin, but also, given the author's native context, of Zagreb, Rijeka, Vienna, and Belgrade. The novel is littered with "found objects" and *ad hoc* collages of archival documents, such as the unifinished picture book of buildings formerly occupied by Viennese Jews, reminiscent of Brecht's *War Primer.*

Radnik Leopold Götzel, rođen 18. svibnja 1898. u Beču, stanovao je u 2. okrugu u Engerthstraße 230/7/5. Bježi u Francusku da bi 4. rujna 1942. bio interniran u Drancyju, potom deportiran u Auschwitz, gdje je ubijen.

Here we are not dealing so much with the representation of the past, but with the obdurate presence of the past as a traumatic remainder, mediated technologically through photography and staged as an intervention into the present, a kind of shard jammed into the fabric of time. This literary strategy comes into sharper focus when read against the rise of nationalism and accompanying historical revisionism in Croatia and Serbia to which the author, as an internal *émigré,* has been a witness in the past two and a half decades. Although a large part of the novel is spent on describing the Germany's relation to its difficult past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*), as well as the unfinished process of de-nazification in postwar Europe, the novel's polemical thrust is primarily aimed against ethnic nationalism as an ideology that survived the 1990s in Croatia and Serbia. By unearthing and restaging those memories, material traces of the past that would rather be left buried —in individual speech acts, literature, urban textures, and unmanageable

and deterritorialized archives such as the Internet—Drndić directly taps into the collective unconscious and destabilizes current constructions of the symbolic national spaces in the post-Yugoslav context. Here Drndić comes very close to Walter Benjamin's figure of a chronicler who can cite the past in all its moments "without distinguishing between major and minor ones."[37] The effect of these citations of bone-chilling transcripts and testimonies—as I pointed out—is to form unsettling constellations between the past and the present moment. In this sense, Drndić's anti-aesthetic of collage and juxtaposition, used to capture the 'totality' of National Socialism, can be compared to more radical strains of exhibition culture in FRG after 1968, when the postwar generation was critically confronting the crimes of their parents. By juxtaposing Nationalist Socialist "wish-images"—the racially pure, idealized bodies and the sleek imperial monumentalism of the Third Reich—to its dark and violent underside, namely, the extermination camps, the cattle cars, eugenics programs, and medical experimentation on live human bodies, Drndić's aims to desublimate and dislodge the "sublime object" of nationalist ideology.

Drndić radicalizes even further her critique of homogenization of the public sphere by performing virtual, literary interventions into the urban texture of European, and more specifically, Croatian cities. Taking her cue from Günter Demnig's urban intervention—golden "stumbling blocks" commemorating individual victims of the Holocaust—she proposes to scatter these same blocks across Croatia so that "the sparks of the past would flicker in many places, even in the villages, even when there is no sun, even during the moonless nights, the names of the returnees would flash."[38] She then goes on to enumerate the figures and names of the Jews who were deported to the concentration camps from various Croatian cities such as Zagreb, Osijek, and Rijeka, occasionally interrupting the list with the witness accounts of individuals whose families have been murdered in the Holocaust. The effect this produces is one of disruption in the familiar symbolic space of the nation by evoking the forgotten absence of a specific culture or population, where one previously existed, and recollecting difference that has been violently eradicated. These avant-garde procedures cannot be easily placed in either the fictional or documentary domain; rather, Drndić "smuggles" the as of yet non-literary elements, namely, the

[37] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 254.

[38] Drndić, *April u Berlinu*, p. 238.

politicized art practices of urban interventions, into the aesthetic domain of *belles-letters,* transforming the latter into a podium for political speech.

4. The Scattered Library

April in Berlin digs up heterogeneous and often traumatic layers of memory connected to the Second World War and the Holocaust, but rehearses them in the context of the present. Like other Croatian and broader post-Yugoslav women's writing, such as Irena Vrkljan, Dubravka Ugrešić, and Slavenka Drakulić, she uses autobiographic codes, personal memories, and archival materials in order to distance herself from monolithic national(ist) narration and other totalizing or ethnocentric narratives of history. History in her Berlin novel often appears in the guise of persiflage, internal monologue, and bitter polemics which lead the reader through the various "stations of memory" which don't stop at national borders and customs. This integration of the mundane and vernacular into a novel, which flaunts its difficult form by appropriating the modernist and avant-garde tradition typifies Croatian postmodernist fiction with a strong mooring in the feminist and anti-nationalist critique. As Renata Jambrešić-Kirin has argued, drawing on Linda Hutcheon's work:

> The postmodern, philosophical, historiographical and belletristic disruption of 'realist' strategies for representing indisputable facts and unquestionable values is articulated as a resistance to the native 'culture of lies,' a space inhibited by wartime propaganda, but also by the outsider metropolitan discourse of engaged humanitarianism imbued with the prejudices about the Balkans. The novelistic combining of the fictional and the documentary, the autobiographical and the historiographical, according to Linda Hutcheon, is a constitutive mark of postmodernist historiographical fiction, which contributes to its 'destabilizing and disturbing effect.'[39]

The postmodernist suspicion of master narratives, combined with its privileging of the fragment over organic totality, (individual) memory over (collective) history, and hybridity over the purity of genre and style, is

[39] Renata Jambrešić-Kirin, "Egzil i hrvatska ženska autobiografska proza." *Reč*, no. 61/7, March 2001, p. 184, my translation.

characteristic of the decentered subject who feels discontented and uneasy within rigid linguistic, national and cultural boundaries.

In particular, *April in Berlin* recalls the forgotten, transnational, and 'bastardly' tradition of modernist literary experiment that had found its place precisely in Central Europe, with its mélange of Slavic, Germanic, Jewish, and Ugric languages and cultures, with its interrupted, eclectic, and peripheral modernities. For Danilo Kiš, often referred to as the last Yugoslav writer, this tradition of Central Europe represented a phantom 'nostalgia for Europe,' albeit one that is ruptured by totalitarian violence and traumatic absence, in particular, the history of Stalinist repression and almost complete eradication of the Jewish population in in the Holocaust. [40] Hardly a longing for the imperial and multicultural order of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Kiš's definition of Central Europe, which Drndić implicitly adopts, is that of a broken dialectic of dispersion and unification, without a clear teleology. The hybrid literary and cultural tradition, which has been territorialized anew into respective national canons, becomes a sort of transnational *lieu de mémoire*. Cities (Zagreb, Vienna, Belgrade, Berlin, Budapest, Rijeka), poems, fragments of diaries, large excerpts of other novels appear with regularity throughout *April in Berlin:*

> This isn't my diary. It's not a travelogue, nor a novel. It's something in-between. It's crippled and maimed skipping through congealed time, through particles of time that have unfastened from each other, so they float through the underpasses of the present. Skipping in-between. April is a month that is in-between, Berlin is in-between, and Vienna, and Belgrade is in-between, and Rijeka. I am in-between.[41]

These allusions, quotations, and cities also act as stations of pilgrimage, dialogue, identification, and unofficial, vernacular memory. *April in Berlin* foregrounds its hybrid and polyphonic form through dialog

[40] Kiš, "Variations on the Theme of Central Europe," p. 3. The use of archival materials and historical references, whose sources are often obscured, an ethical and engaged view of literature as a form of protest against all forms of totalitarianism, as well as a pessimistic stance towards historical progress, indeed reveal Drndić's substantial debt to Kiš. For a broader examination of Danilo Kiš's influence on post-Yugoslav writers, see Andrew Wachtel, "The legacy of Danilo Kiš in Post-Yugoslav Literature," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 50, no. 1 (2006): 135–49.

[41] Drndić, *April u Berlinu*, pp. 295–296.

with Central European authors, where literary form itself embodies a revolt against conformity, homogeneity, and social discipline. The body of the literary text, like time itself, is out of joint—awaiting to be healed, gathered, set right; just as the act of writing as re-reading testifies to this interminable and indefinite work of healing the wounds of history. The list of writers mentioned or explicitly cited in the novel are too numerable to be listed here, but they include, among others, Witold Gombrowicz, Thomas Bernhard, Erica Fischer, Danilo Kiš, Wisława Szymborska, Herta Müller, Bora Ćosić, David Albahari, Miroslav Krleža, Dubravka Ugrešić and others.

The presence of this literary tradition of Central Europe nonetheless points to an underlying historical continuity that overcomes the history of rupture and violence, albeit in the embittered, exilic, and dissonant voices of the writers renowned for their *Nestbeschmutzung* (dirtying one's own nest), such as the authors enumerated above. "The memory of a text," as Renate Lachhmann has argued, "is its intertextuality. [...] Intertextuality demonstrates a process by which a culture continually *rewrites* and *retranscribes* itself, where culture is a 'book' culture, a semiotic culture, constantly redefining itself through signs."[42] Lachhmann's notion of "culture" as a book culture, and memory as a(n) (inter)textual memory, allows for different notions of community to emerge based on a dialogue that aims to transcend space and time. Yet at the same time, this dialogue explicitly marks the temporal and spatial distance, that is to say, the loss of information, past horizons, and context such distance inevitably involves, and foregrounds the process of writing as *rewriting*. Drndić testifies to this virtual community through the frequent use of explicit intertextuality, alien utterances, in her novel, oftentimes to justify her own hybrid, essayistic and "anti-literary style." For example she cites Gombrowicz and his diaries, in an apostrophe typical of the author, to talk about the virtues of the experimental, disjointed form as a sign of nonconformity:

> Robert Perišić would say that she thinks she can insert whatever she wants into her neo-avant-garde prose model.
>
> Gombrowicz!

[42] Renate Lachmann, *Memory and Literature: Intertextuality in Russian Modernism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 15.

> […] *As far as excess is concerned, let me have a free hand. I stuff all kinds of things into this bag. Besides, art almost always speaks to me more intensely when it's being discovered in an imperfect, haphazard, and fragmentary way*.[43]

Importantly, however, the pilgrim to these wayward and ambulatory literary sites of memory is not a 'national' but a voracious reader, a feverish chronicler and an archivist who finds temporary solace in the dissonant and critical voices of its predecessors. The question *April in Berlin* constantly asks is not "Where are you from?" but "*Have you read…?*", "*Do you remember?*"

5. Shards of Speech

Insofar as *April in Berlin* embraces the (post)modernist Central European experience of discontinuity, or as I have described it, continuity in discontinuity, it also does so with respect to Croatian history and literary tradition which has recorded that experience; although such discontinuity has been largely denied and suppressed in the recent process of nation-building. The novel recuperates the fragments of vernacular and unofficial memory as an assertion of individual autonomy against the closed, collectivist, and essentialist understanding of national culture promoted by the ideology of nationalism and fascism. I therefore read Drndić's Berlin novel against the background of cultural destruction and erasure of memory, in particular the memory of linguistic and cultural *plurality* that has been repressed by the nationalist insistence on the *purity* of national culture, in the first place, the purity of language and speech.[44] Drndić politicizes this memory firstly by engaging in a dialogue with Viktor Klemperer, a German-Jewish philologist who analyzed the transformation, regulation, and censorship of everyday speech by Nazi ideology in his *LTI:*

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[43] Drndić, *April u Berlinu*, p. 51, original italics.

[44] For a history and systematic overview of linguistic 'purism' in Croatian see Snježana Kordić, *Jezik i nacionalizam* (Zagreb: Durieux, 2010). Kordić's book, when it came out, triggered a series of bitter polemics in Croatia, which pointed to the outmost importance of the "language question" and its ties to the "national question" in the minds of Croatian nationalists—namely, the prevailing idea that the boundaries of the state have to coincide with the boundaries of a language. What especially enraged Kordić's critics was the book's main argument that Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian were slight variations of the same polycentric language. Moreover, the polemics around Kordić's book indicate that the language question in Croatia still remains one of the most powerful taboos.

Lingua Tertii Imperii: A Philologist's Notebook, and secondly, by inserting literary quotations by Serbian, German, Polish, Jewish and other authors. In this sense, *April in Berlin* assumes a place similar to that which Tatjana Jukić has recently ascribed to Danilo Kiš's *Tomb for Boris Davidovich*, not only for the Croatian literary history, but for the scattered post-Yugoslav tradition as a whole:

> It recalls a cultural memory, which forms around intimacy with different languages, memory which questions the very concept of a majority language in favor of language as a zone of indeterminacy; precisely this memory is at the root of everything that modern Croatian culture tries to determine as its own identity or its own history.[45]

I would add that this "memory of linguistic intimacy" can be properly understood precisely as a memory that has been overwritten in the 1990s in an attempt to construct a monolithic and ideologically suitable national identity in times of war, but whose consequences extend into the present.

The process of top-down identity-construction has had lasting consequences for Croatian national identity and the ideological space in which it is articulated. Moreover, it went largely unquestioned by the subsequent political and cultural elites, resulting in the ongoing "discrepancy between identity as a national program and identity as a living collective reality" characteristic even for the post-Tuđman era. [46] As Katarina Luketić has aptly pointed out, this national identity

> only appears to be fluid and abstract, since its content within the ideology of nationalism is indeed firmly fixed and required by all. In opposition to [this identity], our individual identity, the identity of each of us as it really is—shifting, full of inconsistencies and hybrid elements—has to be sacrificed on the altar of the homeland. [47]

[45] Jukić, Tatjana. *Revolucija i melankolija: granice pamćenja hrvatske književnosti*. Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak, 2011, p. 48, my translation.

[46] Luketić, Katarina. "Prošlost je naša budućnost" in *Zid je mrtav, živeli zidovi!: pad Berlinskog zida i raspad Jugoslavije*. Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek, 2009, p. 104, my translation.

[47] Ibid, p. 77

The linguistic purism these "organic" theories of the nation attempted to justify did take root, especially as a way to perpetuate the state of siege, in which the invasive, foreign element was replaced by the Serbian language as such. The goal of linguistic purism was to make the Croatian language

> all the more purer and distinct from the Serbian language, so that one was forced to use unpronounceable neologisms and archaisms, while the difference [between the Serbian and Croatian language] was emphasized by the *pretense of mutual non-comprehension*, that is, through the subtitling of [Serbian] films, the renaming of the childhood comic book heroes, the translation of official documents from one language to another, etc. The most radical example of the break with the Serbian culture was the thousands upon thousands of books printed in Cyrillic or by Serbian authors, rubbished by the sanctimonious librarians.[48]

Thus, at the beginning of the *April in Berlin*, Drndić, whose speech has been marked by her time spent in Belgrade, notes, "It will soon be seventeen years since they've started to correct her language."[49] And while the history of bibliocide has been recently revisited in Croatia, with the publication of Ante Lešaje's book, *Knjigocid: uništavanje knjiga u Hrvatskoj 1990-ih* (2012), there is still a widespread inability to mourn or even to note this gaping absence in Croatia. *April in Berlin* therefore demands to be read against this recent and silent eradication of cultural memory. By insisting on the hybrid and "impure" nature of individual speech acts against the purified and "cleansed" linguistic standard, Drndić once again reconstitutes the public sphere as a necessarily heterogeneous and plural body politic that can responsibly possess and process its own past, instead of relegating it to the dominant ideologies and their appointees.

Thus, at the outset, Drndić reasserts the memory of linguistic intimacy in the very title of the novel, *April u Berlinu*, using the Serbian word for the month of April ("april"), instead of the Croatian "travanj." The novel additionally reassembles the networks of literary transmission and intellectual friendship that existed before the breakup of Yugoslavia, when

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[48] Ibid, pp. 89–90.

[49] Drndić, *April u Berlinu*, p. 11. The question of language runs throughout Drndić's novels since the publication of her debut Croatian novel *Umiranje u Torontu* (1997).

such exchanges were possible without the backdrop of competing victimization and mutual suspicion that marks the contemporary discourses of Serbian and Croatian nationalism. Drndić stages these memories and encounters matter-of-factly, as part of the common history of the Yugoslav cosmopolitan intelligentsia, many of whom have left the region in protest of nationalist politics that resulted in a series of wars marked by ethnic cleansing campaigns, often under the threat of violence or excommunication from the national community. Thus we find out that the author had read Schulz and Bernhardt in the Serbian translation long before they were re-translated and 'rediscovered' in post-independence Croatia.

Although these memories may appear trivial, their power lies precisely in the way they stage an intimate encounter with a book or person as an assertion of individual autonomy against the pressures of a closed collective empowered and mobilized by the state. Perhaps the most powerful example of linguistic intimacy and shared history which the novel repeatedly recalls is the reproduction of Tadeusz Różewicz's poem "Posthumous rehabilitation" in Serbian translation. Różewicz's poem about our irredeemable duty to the dead, especially those who have been violently murdered in our name, is 'recited' by Nenad Dimitrijević, a political scientist who has written several books about collective responsibility for mass crimes committed during the Yugoslav Wars, directed primarily, but not exclusively, at the Serbian silence over Srebrenica genocide. Różewicz's poem additionally rehearses Dimitrijević's argument—which includes not only cross-generational responsibility, but also the responsibility of those who have distanced themselves from the community in whose name the mass crimes have been committed. Poetry and philosophy here meet on the ground of commemorative ethics, stages a spectral tribunal in which the dead pronounce verdicts upon the living in the present moment:

> "The dead remember/ our indifference/ The dead remember/ our silence/ The dead remember our words […] The living are all guilty/ guilty are the children/ who offered bouquets of flowers/ guilty are the lovers/ they are guilty// guilty are those who escaped/ and those who remained/ those who said yes/ and those who said no/ and those who said nothing at all// the dead are taking stock of the living/ the dead will not rehabilitate us.[50]

[50] Drndić, *April u Berlinu*, p. 266.

The poem is preceded by a description and a photograph of an *ad hoc* Holocaust memorial, which Dimtrijević had visited and included in his letter to Drndić, composed of forty pairs of shoes from the 1940s scattered on the Danube bank in Budapest as a memorial to the Jewish citizens executed in 1945 by Szálasi's soldiers.

While reinforcing the commemorative function of Drndić's text, the photograph also gestures towards the interactive, embodied, and affective dimension of various mnemotechnics, asking the reader to performatively step into those shoes, to imagine stories that may never be told. By intertwining text and image, absence and presence, past and present, Drndić reconstitutes the intimacy between different times, places, persons, languages, and media but in the ethical space of mutual responsibility and opening up to the other, both the living and the dead, of which Różewicz's poem and Gyula Pauer and Can Togay's Budapest memorial are a forceful reminder.

In *April in Berlin*, language is therefore both a site of ethics and responsibility and a site that is thoroughly permeated with ideology, regulation, and historical trauma. The former is most evident in Drndić's evocation of Victor Klemperer, a German-Jewish philologist who analyzed the influence of Nazi ideology in everyday speech in his *LTI: Lingua Tertii Imperii: A Philologist's Notebook*. Drndić inserts into her novel entire

fragments of Klemperer's discourse, which become, in turn, a historical document not only of the Third Reich's regulation of language, but also of the continued manipulation, regulation and censorship of speech by contemporary ideologies, including that of Croatian nationalism of the 1990s; although this could be extended to all hegemonic ideologies and totalizing systems of thought, including capitalism:

> Klemperer explores how and to what extent the all-encompassing, manipulative language system, along with other symbolic systems, has poisoned the everyday thoughts and speech of ordinary people; accordingly, he is surprised by the speed at which the Nazi terminology has spread and by the readiness of the people to believe in Nazi propaganda, especially those who aren't in fact declared Nazis [...] he shows how the official Nazi vocabulary has firmly "entrenched" itself in everyday communication, concluding, like Schiller, that this is speech which "thinks in your place." [...] He concludes: the Nazi use of language has outlived the Nazi regime.[51]

What strikes Drndić about Klemperer's diagnosis, in other words, is the expansive, totalizing reach of ideology and its interiorization through *language* as a privileged and primary medium of thought. Here, ideology literally invades the deep interiority of the subject, your soul, as it were, and "thinks in your place." In particular, Klemperer's book singles out bureaucratic euphemisms, neologisms, organic and hygienic metaphors, as well as mystical words peculiar to the Nazi speech, which exalt the regime and the cult of the unified German people, while suppressing dissent. As some have argued, Klemperer assumes an unproblematic and strictly referential relationship between language and reality, as well as its totalizing effect on human thought, which Drndić's in many ways replicates in her novel.[52] Drndić's purpose however is not solely to highlight the larger

[51] Drndić, *April u Berlinu*, p. 35.

[52] For a nuanced critique of Klemperer, see: Young, John Wesley. "From LTI to LQI: Victor Klemperer on Totalitarian Language." *German Studies Review*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Feb., 2005), pp. 45–64; Critics have pointed out that Klemperer's (often non-ironic) deployment of pathological metaphors to describe Nazi language (LTI) makes him liable to his own charges of ideological speech, thereby contradicting his argument. However, as Young points out, we should read Klemperer's argument more as a critique of the Nazi regime itself rather than (exclusively) of the language which it used to indoctrinate people into Nazi ideology (pp 52–

point about the totalizing effects of official and prescriptive language policies, but to shock the reader by constructing—through the theme linguistic purism—a historical constellation between Croatian ethnic nationalism of the 1990s and German fascism of the 1930s. In this sense, *April in Berlin* does not engage in merely diagnostic discourse, but imbues it with traumatic affect, recalling the recent past that still lingers—indeed, is uncomfortably lodged in the throat of the linguistic present.

Here, *April in Berlin* is performing the work of "secondary" or "belated traumatization," which has been analyzed by the German theorist Jörn Rüsen. Writing in the context of postwar and post-fascist German collective memory, Rüsen views secondary traumatization as a historiographical, symbolic and narrative strategy of shock that prevents the Holocaust from becoming normalized, rationalized away, aestheticized, covered up, and therefore removed from the public. Such an integration of negative, even disastrous and deeply hurtful, experiences into one's own identity," Rüsen writes, "causes a new awareness of the elements of loss and trauma in historical thinking. New modes of dealing with these experiences, of working them through, become necessary."[53] Drawing on Rüsen's discussion of trauma and national narration, Todor Kuljić, a Serbian sociologist, writing in the context of memory politics in Serbia and Croatia, puts it this way: "we shouldn't be afraid of shock therapy, we shouldn't cover up the scenes execution. 'We should preserve the shards of broken glass so that we can get cut,' as the German writer Klüger reminds us."[54] This painful and repeated confrontation with the crimes committed in the name of one's nation, which are for that very reason resistant to heroic semantics and self-victimization (or any other form of narrative ethnocentrism), both Rüsen and Kuljić view as essential in the work of mourning and hence to the unsettling, painful exposure to otherness and difference. By locating the more recent layers of

53). As Natka Badurina argues, Drndić does something very similar in her own novels; namely, she employs the language of blood, genes, and pathology, which is especially prevalent in racist ideologies, to describe fascism and with the aim of implicating the perpetrators and their offspring into collective guilt for fascist crimes. See "Kraj povijesti i hrvatski novopovijesni roman." *Slavica tergestina*, Vol. 14, 2012, pp. 28–30.

[53] "How to Overcome Ethnocentrism: Approaches to a Culture of Recognition by History in the Twenty-First Century." *History and Theory*, Vol. 43, No. 4, Theme Issue 43: Historians and Ethics (Dec., 2004), p. 130.

[54] *Kultura sećanja: teorijska objašnjenja upotrebe prošlosti*. Beograd: Čigoja štampa, 2006, p. 298.

the Croatian language in its fascist past, Drndić renders them into sites of secondary traumatization. She draws a jolting parallel between the Croatian nationalism of the 1990s, in particular the prescriptive language policies, and the mystical, organic, and pseudo-Romantic theories of the nation and society characteristic of Nazism and fascism:

> [...] it would have been great if Klemperer's book appeared in Croatia at the beginning of nineties when many copy editors, main editors and journalists, and even some writers, not to mention the ordinary people, glared at Tuđman's language decree and self-censored [their speech] *ad nauseam*.[55]

Drndić then goes on to enumerate different words that have been appropriated by Tuđman's regime in the 1990s from the military language of NDH (Independent State of Croatia), such as "stožer," "bojna," and "zdrug" (military staff, battalion, unit), indicative of the larger militarization of culture and society. *April in Berlin* engages therefore in a traumatic archeology of language, the confrontation with the broken shards of violent history, on which the reader can get cut. By foregrounding this negative heritage of NDH as a living sediment of the contemporary Croatian language, which has been reintroduced and de-traumatized during the 1990s, the author jolts the reader into the consideration of disturbing continuities between the past and the present, between the old and the new order, especially since the Croatian (Central European and Balkan) historical experience of 20th century modernity has been marked precisely by so many ideological breaks, ruptures, and discontinuities.

6. Coda: Alarm Bell of History

Daša Drndić's novels bear the unhealed wounds of traumatic history, both personal and collective, one's own and those of absent others. As textual interventions into Croatian and European memorial culture more broadly, the printed pages of Drndić's *oeuvre* aim to become a sanctuary of *logos* resistant to ideological control, where, in the words of Danilo Kiš, "shards (*krhotine*) of written monuments" are transposed and re-composed in a new configuration, as "a new logos, in a new light, in a new world."[56]

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55 Drndić, *April u Berlinu*, pp. 34–35.

56 Danilo Kiš, *Čas Anatomije* (Belgrade: Nolit, 1977), p. 157, my translation.

The mosaic of history that these novels constellate and arrest in the present moment is one of an endless catastrophe that extends into the future, where we can already discern new flashes of fascism on the near horizon. These are indeed terrifying images of a terrifying world that raise the author's voice to the pitch of an alarm bell. As aesthetic forms, Drndić's novels offer spectacular testimonies of radical disintegration, not only of historical meaning, but also of a consciousness nearing death, its last howl in the darkness. And as protest novels for our uncertain age, they may still resound as a sharp and sobering wakeup call—but only if we dare to listen and be wounded in turn.

SAŽETAK
Vlad Beronja
KRHOTINE RAZBIJENOG STAKLA: POETIKA ARHIVIRANJA U PROZI DAŠE DRNDIĆ

Ovaj tekst analizira *April u Berlinu* (2007) te ostale romane o Holokaustu hrvatske spisateljice Daše Drndić kao književne odgovore na povijesni revizionizam Drugog svjetskog rata i Holokausta u Hrvatskoj, proces koji se ustalio kao jedan od dominantnih političkih i kulturnih struja za vrijeme Domovinskog rata (1991-1995), no koji također ustraje u poslijeratnom razdoblju. Budući da je povijesno nasljeđe fašističke NDH detraumatizirano, ono više ne predstavlja krizu povijesne svijesti, koja bi zahtijevala suočavanje s nasilnom prošlošću kao i bolnu transformaciju nacionalnog identiteta te političkog i kulturnog prostora u okvirima kojeg se taj identitet artikulira. Naspram detraumatizacije, kao etnocentrične strategije koja normalizira fašističke zločine nacije, romani Daše Drndić predstavljaju šokantno suočavanje s krhotinama nasilne prošlosti. Putem inovativne grafičke obrade i interdiskurzivne tekstualnosti, koja kombinira historiografsku naraciju s avangardnim književnim i umjetničkim postupcima, romani Daše Drndić funkcioniraju kao književni arhivi i spomenici, odnosno arhivi-spomenici, koji žele uznemiriti čitatelje i osvijestiti prekrivenu ili normaliziranu traumatičnu prošlost.

Ključne riječi: *trauma; arhiv; Holokaust; hrvatska književnost; povijesni revizionizam*