



SESSION ABSTRACT

National identities and cultural production during the dissolution of Yugoslavia and beyond

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Abstract: Thirty-two years have passed since Yugoslavia started to fall apart. Thirty-one year has passed since Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence and since the YNA soldiers marched on their borders and thirty years have passed since the same army moved their weapons to Bosnia-Herzegovina, occupied the majority of the territory and besieged many cities, including the capital city Sarajevo.

With the beginning of the war in both countries, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina the cultural production started to blossom and popular artists contributed their part in propaganda purposes. Some took the stand of “cultural resistance” and were promoting peace and freedom, while other were promoting nationalism and nationalistic rhetoric of their leaders.

This panel is investigating the relations between cultural production (including arts, music, theatre, film, literature), propaganda and national identity in all ex-Yugoslav countries and is trying to unveil the curtain of cultural production in order to prove/deny its importance and involvement in the political conflict and war on the territory of ex-Yugoslavia.

Through the lens of cultural production, the panel is elaborating and questioning the role of many national identities that gain their importance in the 1990s and is trying to present the rich and various landscape of sounds, vocals and words. It opens the variety of questions and dilemmas and it allows scholars to present their theoretical and methodological approaches to the research of cultural production during the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

SESSION SCHEDULE

Wednesday, September 28, 2020 | Slot 1 | Room 1

Charles O. Warner III: Veterans in Verse & Volta: Post-war poetry, performance and participant sensation in Former Yugoslavia

Miloš Ničić: One cannot simply avoid the monuments: the life and times of postsocialist Yugoslav monuments in Serbia

Hana Hawlin & Matthew Porges: Seeking the Good War: Slovenian Nationalism Between the Partisans and the Ten-Day War

Sejla Dzuzdanovic: Progressive music as a medium of resistance directed towards nationalistic ideologies (Poster Presentation)

Petra Hamer: Cultural production in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1992 to 1995

SESSION PAPERS

Veterans in Verse & Volta: Post-war poetry, performance and participant sensation in Former Yugoslavia

Charles O. Warner III

Ethnographic fieldwork alongside combat veterans living today in the regions of Former Yugoslavia allows for unique insights to post-war subjectivities and more nuanced conceptualizations of post-war (trans/national) identities. This fieldwork, as a component of broader anthropological engagement with veterans, also facilitates more intimate/emic access to cultural production and performance by veterans as they navigate life after service in combat. To explore these dynamics of veteran life in Former Yugoslavia (thereby moving veterans from the margins of socio-academic consideration and Southeast Europe from the margins of the North Atlantic), this work takes as its guide post-war poetry composed by veterans as well as ethnographic encounters and anthropological framing of poetry in “the field.” It is demonstrated via poetical verse and volta that veterans are agents of cultural production and that with their poetry, veterans 1) reinforce their own shared-yet-exclusionary social imaginary while 2) contributing to the consolidation of ethno-nationalist narratives of pain, promise, and perseverance. Concluding on a theoretical note, it is posited that due to the socio-cultural “capital” embodied by veterans, capital generated by service in combat for society, their poetry can become a powerful tactic within strategies of post-war peacebuilding. This note is influenced by the deep traditions of “epic” poetry producing and maintaining ethno-historical imaginaries in Southeast Europe. (Note: In the spirit of Hannerz, Finnegan, Maynard & Cahnmann-Taylor, and others expanding the possibilities of academic writing as well as the voices brought together here from Southeast Europe, this work builds with prose/prose-poetry to situate original veteran verse and convey academic content.)

One cannot simply avoid the monuments: the life and times of postsocialist Yugoslav monuments in Serbia

Miloš Ničić (University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia)

This paper investigates the cultural production of memorial architecture and sculpture in Serbia during the breakup of Socialist Yugoslavia and the initial years of its postsocialist transformation. As clear markers of links between art, public memory and identity making processes, monuments form a focal point in both interior and international public dialog among the relevant ideological and political forces that shaped the newly formed post-Yugoslav states. By touching upon the complex ideological framework of transitional Serbian society, this paper presents the ways the monuments in Serbia were constructed, preserved, destroyed and utilized in specific political and cultural settings during the last decade of the 20th and at the very beginning of the 21st century.

Keywords: Monuments, memorial architecture, postsocialist, Yugoslavia, Serbia.

Seeking the Good War: Slovenian Nationalism Between the Partisans and the Ten-Day War

Hana Hawlina (University of Neuchatel, Solvenia); Matthew Porqes (University of Oxford)

The Slovenian national imaginary has often been framed in reference to the Second World War, and Yugoslavia's successful Partisan resistance to German occupation. Visual art, sculpture, theatrical productions, and music have made positive reference to the Partisans, while monuments to the struggle are situated in city centres, in front of governmental buildings, and scattered throughout the countryside. Positive nostalgia for the Partisans and the anti-occupation struggle has been relatively consistent across the political spectrum. Yet this placed the 2020-22 far-right government of Janez Janša in an awkward rhetorical position; while Janša sought to play up a militarised Slovenian nationalism, the most obvious vector for this nationalism was a left-wing resistance movement. To solve this problem, Janša-aligned media gradually pivoted from representations of the Partisans towards representations of the Ten-Day War, Slovenia's brief struggle against the Yugoslav National Army in the fight for the acknowledgment of its independence, during which Janša had served as Slovenia's first independent Minister of Defense. In addition to redirecting the discourses around the two historic military struggles for independence in constructing the Slovenian national imaginary, Janša's government initiated the removal of notable Yugoslav monuments from public spaces and sequestering them in archives and museums. This presentation will examine the dialogical tensions between the representations of the Partisan Liberation Front and the Ten-Day War, drawing on fieldwork carried out in Slovenia during the lead-up to the 2022 election.

Progressive music as a medium of resistance directed towards nationalistic ideologies

Sejla Dzuzdanovi (University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria)

Keywords: resistance, musical production, the siege of Sarajevo, national identity

The people of besieged Sarajevo found themselves in an unforeseen situation in April of 1992 when the first shots were fired in what will become the bloodiest conflict in Europe since World War II. Due to the deep infiltration of music in the Yugoslav everyday life, some musicians were the first ones to foresee the coming war events.

Given the circumstances, the music started reflecting rising nationalism as well as endorsing political disparities, and accordingly, large numbers of patriotic songs were created. On the one hand, these were songs which glorified nationalism and the creation of national identity and on the other hand, there were many songs written with the purpose of supporting the troops on the frontlines and thus contributing to a further strengthening of each national identity. On the contrary, during the Bosnian War, the alternative bands showed resistance through the performance of their songs, that were often underlined with dark humor and criticism. The aim of this work is to highlight and investigate the role of music as a medium of resistance for the residents of the besieged Sarajevo. Rather than drawing attention to the creation of national identities during the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the focus remains on the alternative, progressive music scene that manifested anti-nationalistic and anti-war responses. My goal is to emphasize the connection created between the youth of Sarajevo and rock music during the war, since playing music in the besieged city at the time was not only a hobby, but it moreover served as a political statement to show the well-being of the very things being under attack by the nationalists.

Cultural production in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1992 to 1995

Petra Hamer (University of Graz, Graz, Austria)

With the dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1990s new national identities that were obviously present in the political and civic society before the dissolution itself, came to the surface with the need to set themselves in stone in all newly established countries. All six former republics followed the same three steps in re-inventing their own national identity; first, they destroyed and denied the common communist past, second, they destroyed (almost) everything related to the “Other”, and third, they started to construct and create new memories and national identities based on religion and their own nationhood.

Bosnia-Herzegovina, a state where three officially recognised nations lived, declared its independence in April 1992. Occupied and attacked by the Yugoslav/Bosnian Serb Army, many cities were besieged, including the capital city Sarajevo, population was expelled and ethnically cleansed (all that had an end in 1995, when the genocide in Srebrenica happened). As a response to the occupation B-H parliament formed the defence forces – the Army of B-H. In each army corps was one special group of singers, musicians and composers, responsible for creating patriotic songs. Those so called art units were performing for soldiers and civilians in order to boost morale and trust of civilians and fighting spirits of the soldiers.

This paper understands cultural production as one segment of national identity and is therefore focuses on presentation of B-H popular music production. The main aim is to look for signs of two national identities that were introduced to the B-H inhabitants; the Bosnian and Bosniak national identity – and how do they reflect in popular patriotic songs. Therefore, the paper will also present some music examples of those songs.