Cultural Formation in post-Yugoslav Serbia: Divides, Debates, and Dialogues

Dissertation

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Abstract

During the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, Serbia fought to preserve a unified Yugoslavia, as its preservation also could have maintained the primacy of Serbian identity in place since the creation of the first Yugoslavia. Serbian identity had been inextricably linked to Yugoslavia, for Serbs comprised the federation’s dominant nation, culture, and language. Yet with each cease-fire at the end of each secession war, the importance of Serbian cultural products diminished along with the conflation of Serb and Yugoslav. The NATO bombing in 1999 solidified the sense of Serbia’s demise, and proved Serbian political and cultural insignificance. This revolutionary change in the Serbian nation, both in the country and its people, was not greeted with jubilation as in other Eastern Bloc countries. Serbia did not want independence; however, it was the inevitable outcome of the fracturing of Yugoslavia and its people into distinct nations with culturally exclusive expressions of identity.

The tendency to characterize Serbia’s transition from Socialist to post-Socialist nation as exceptional is common. However, much of the academic literature focuses on the nature of the transition of ex-Eastern Bloc nations into respectable and recognizable democratic states, based on Western standards. Therefore, Yugoslavia’s wars are viewed as extreme anomalies, incompatible with the trajectories of other countries’ successful transition to democracy. Thus, Serbia was viewed as particularly backward; not only was it seemingly incapable of conforming to the Western norm, its people, and politicians
were supportive of recalcitrant policies that isolated Serbia, virtually bereft of regional and international support, except from Russia, whose stances were nuanced and culturally loaded.

This dissertation offers perspectives on Serbia’s transition to post-Communist, and draws from post-Socialist scholarship on Eastern Europe as a basis for understanding. In this way, this dissertation departs from conventional post-Communist scholarship on contemporary Serbia, and is engaged in a dialogue on Serbia’s political, cultural, historical, and social components of Serbia’s transition. This dissertation argues that Serbia’s transition to democracy bears little resemblance or relation to that of the other nations. As proof, I use historical events and literature on internal colonization to illustrate how Serbia’s position of privilege in Yugoslavia set a dangerous paradigm for sustaining Serbian hegemony and dominance. I contrast Serbia’s elevated position in Yugoslavia to its insignificance today, both regionally and internationally.

In order to provide the cultural context for this contemporary reality of Serbia, I analyze the rifts in society between particular imaginings of the ideal direction for Serbia, as a preference of either Local or Western paradigms. These contrasting standpoints on Serbia’s cultural and political future materializes primarily through generational differences, whereby the Local is championed by artists and writers of the older generation, or the Yugoslav generation, whereas the West garners support from the younger generation, or the Serbian generation.
Dedication

To a brighter, more prosperous future for Serbia.
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Introduction: Postcolonialism in a Post-Yugoslav context?

Unlike the former Yugoslav nations of Croatia, Montenegro, and Slovenia that have been relatively successful in their social and political transitions, Serbia is finding it difficult to progress beyond the catastrophic events of the 1990s. These events are, of course, the wars in Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo, and also Serbia’s difficult transition into Western-style democracy. The dismantling of Yugoslavia was a time of destruction, but it also proved to be a time of cultural rebirth and creation. For all of the republics, that time brought forth the possibility of forming expressions of cultural exclusivity and developing an independent political voice when, for decades, it had previously not been possible. They were able to reclaim their cultural icons, and create a new literary canon and cultural ideal that would dictate their future.

It is not merely Serbia’s guilt in the wars of the 1990s that plagues its inability to progress along with Western trends; it is a number of factors, many of which have their source in the way in which Yugoslavia was founded and functioned with Belgrade as its center. Though “Serbs were neither numerous nor strong enough to impose their political will on the rest of the country…they were unwilling to entertain any other form of political interaction” (Wachtel, 1998: 79). This position of Serbia within the federation led to the formation of unique cultural understanding of Serb in relation to Yugoslavia, exemplified through the wars and Serbia’s troubled transition.

This vantage point as center granted Belgrade, and by extension, Serbs, disproportionate power within the union, and was continually a source of discontent among the Yugoslavs. Some scholars would argue that this unequal distribution of power within Yugoslavia was a great source for its eventual demise. However, despite the
mistakes made during the Kingdom of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs (later Yugoslavia) that gave Serbia too much political power, post-World War II (WWII) Yugoslavia was, in essence, organized in the same way. Because Belgrade was always at the center of all political, cultural, and social matters, Serbia’s relationship with the other republics, especially Croatia and Slovenia, was always strained.

Since 1992, the former Yugoslav republics have been busy using cultural outlets such as media, film, and literature to reclaim what is unique about their culture, nation, and people. They are establishing their political legitimacy within a Western democracy-centric Europe. Serbia, quite the contrary, seems to be having a difficult time creating a comparable identity for itself and lingers seemingly in limbo between maintaining what is perceived as Serbian and Western cultural norms.

In order to explore the ways in which Serbia is forging an independent identity and the outlets for its expression, I will employ the mode of postcolonial theory, whereby I posit that Serbia was at the center of a colonial project. I use the argument set forth by N. L. Karlovic to describe the structure of Yugoslavia as “internal colonization” to localize the idea that both Yugoslavias were *colonialesque* projects. In my dissertation I describe the *colonialesque* Yugoslav construct that gave Belgrade too much power as an original source of its unfavorable position within the region, especially causing Croats to assert that the structure of Yugoslavia was an act of Serbian imperialism. (Borowiec, 1977: 30) The notion that Serbia was engaged in a colonial project, specifically in the creation of a “greater Serbia,” only heightened during the wars (Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo) of the 1990s. Exacerbating this situation for Serbia, though, was that this idea became well-known beyond the former Yugoslav nations, causing Western nations to
concur on Serbia’s insatiable desire to rule and dominate, an idea previously localized in Yugoslavia.

That this understanding formed the basis of Western ideas about Serbia was problematic. Culturally, socially, and politically the South Slavic lands were always shrouded in obscurity and backwardness in the Western imagination—neither East nor West, but a great “mental empty space [that] begins somewhere beyond the iron curtain, somewhere behind the wall” (Ugrešić).¹ Within the current political space, however, the other republics in the region are attempting to progress within the Western European framework. However, their progress is happening with various levels of success, and Bosnia and Macedonia present exceptions to the general progression of the region (along democratic and Western standards). Many of these former Yugoslav states, especially Slovenia, are viewed as examples of successful democratic transition, both socially and politically, for other countries in the region. During the recent wars, however, Serbia’s political moves served as proof of its inability to make those same necessary political and social steps its neighbors took, and Serbia was, therefore, almost the sole beneficiary of the stereotypes and caricatures, including backwardness, savagery whose “inhabitants do not care to conform to the standards of behavior devised as normative by and for the civilized world” once associated with the region as a whole. (Todorova, 1997: 1)

Serbia’s self-perception as the most important nation in the region replete with seemingly boundless power within the state of Yugoslavia seems to be forever changed. Serbia is, similar to other fallen dominant imperial nations, trying to resituate itself both

politically and socially to locate the source of its contemporary culture and identity.²

The comparisons to other, actual empires cannot be pushed any further, however, because of Serbia’s differing historical, social, and geo-political realities. Though Serbia shares a historical reality of a fallen empire of a type, Serbia’s process of reconciliation with this new reality is specific to its particular history and culture. Because of these manifest differences between traditional forms of colonialism and Yugoslavia’s *colonialesque* project, I will use the scholarship that most directly relates to Serbia’s position as a post-Socialist state, which is the scholarship of post-Socialism and post-Communism. I explain how the disparate realities in Socialist Yugoslavia and post-Socialist Serbia surface in two distinct generations: “Yugoslav” and “Serbian,” whereby the former relates to those born in the early decades of Yugoslavia and the latter to those who came of age during Milošević’s rise to power. I am hesitant, however, to assign specific age constraints to these generations, as “generations are not natural, they are produced through common experiences and through discourse about it” (Yurchak, 2006: 30). In post-war, post-Communist Serbia, shared experiences—peace and stability versus war and destitution—bind intragenerational members and distinguish intergenerational members. At the same time, their “discourses,” specifically the artistic products that they produced in response to shared contemporary realities reflect the perspective of each generation.

Because Serbia’s international and regional prominence no longer exists, it is nearly

² Contributing to this idea is Ratko Mladić who continues to be “at large,” and Milošević’s daily televised court performances at the Hague until 2006 and violent Serbian reaction to Kosovo’s 2008 proclamation of independence. Of course the ways in which an empire negotiates its identity directly following the end of its empire status varies. This point is especially compelling as French and British identity is currently in flux, especially with regard to its multiculturalism and citizenry that are the result of their former colonial pursuits.
impossible to find what shapes and moulds the country and its citizens without looking into its cultural products. In order to find the sources for the shifting Serbian identity, I will use film, media, and literature of the last decade and catalogue how those products respond to the contemporary ideologies of Serbian identity. Of particular focus will be the items produced following the end of the Kosovo war, where Serbia became an example of a problematic nation, and the modicum of failure in the transition into democracy.

**Yugoslav roots and Serbian present**

Belgrade became the center of the first Yugoslavia, formed in 1918, under the leadership of Nikola Pašić and the Obrenović crown. Belgrade’s status as capital, coupled with heavy-handed Serbian attempts to assimilate Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Bosnian Muslims, and other non-Serb national minorities under a “Yugoslav” identity, produced much resentment from non-Serb nationals. This unilateral domination (in the first Yugoslavia) caused Croats and Slovenes to believe elements of their national identity were suppressed, and even entirely negated, so the Yugoslav identity was viewed as a thinly veiled guise for Serbian assimilationism (Franolić, 1998: 34; Vodopivec, 1988). With much skepticism and mistrust among constituent Yugoslav nationals at its conception, Yugoslavia failed to dismantle individual national identities and the differences that existed between them. As such, those differences persisted up to 1941, the end of the first Yugoslavia, and continued into the cultural memory of Yugoslav peoples when the second Yugoslavia was created in 1945. Despite the failure of the Serbian-centric Belgrade government to unify the peoples of the first Yugoslavia, the second Yugoslavia replicated the same model with Belgrade as its center,
disregarding prior lessons on what such a Yugoslavia would connote for the non-Serb populations in the union (Rusinow, 1977: 18).

The Serb position, in both the first and second Yugoslavias, has been articulated as a dominant, predatory force. In Yugoslavia, Belgrade dictated culture, language, and the direction of the individual nations regardless of the desires of the individual nations and nationalities. During the first Yugoslavia, “Yugoslav” and “Serb” were essentially one in the same; this historical precedent served as a foundation for a Yugoslav society designed and ruled from Belgrade with elements of Serbdom as a primary marker of identification (Rusinow, 1977: 135-136).

For many non-Serb Yugoslav nationalities, Yugoslav and Yugoslavism were never sufficiently defined. In fact, “Yugoslav” as a national category only began to appear on official censuses in 1961. Even then, only 1.7% of the nation considered itself Yugoslav, which essentially meant either that an individual was Serb or the child of mixed marriage (e.g., Croat & Serb, Slovene & Croat, etc.) (Sekulic, Hodson, and Massey, 1994: 85). Moreover, Yugoslav nations always acknowledged their geographic borders; so all nationalities saw themselves as distinct. Also, true Yugoslav cultural products were few; thus, the concept of Yugoslav never competed as a viable alternative to the discrete national identities of Yugoslav republics. Because of the failure of the all-encompassing Yugoslav idea (i.e., culture, national affiliation, etc.), Belgrade was never simply the capital of Yugoslavia. It was the capital of both Yugoslavia and Serbia, and as such, its identity as the unifying capital, and any of its products, were always considered by many living outside Belgrade to be primarily Serb and only peripherally Yugoslav.

It is therefore, the position of this dissertation that through the first and second
Yugoslavias, Yugoslav became, in effect, an empty concept tinged with Serbian connotations.

Literary scholar Andrew Wachtel points out in his work *Making the Nation Breaking the Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia* that post WWII Yugoslavia was based on two fundamental myths. The first was a “brotherly struggle...subsumed by an essential unity that derived, in theory, from the partisans’ shared belief in communist ideals and the fact that they worked under the overall ideological umbrella of Josip Broz Tito’s party” (Wachtel, 1998: 133). It was likewise believed that Tito’s partisans incorporated all Yugoslav nationalities, so they fought for all the Yugoslavs. During WWII, also termed the “Liberation War,” Tito and his Partisans battled Croatian Ustasha and Serbian and Montenegrin Chetniks to ensure that the newly established country was governed by a representative, multi-ethnic Communist system utilizing “a federal structure that would include separate units for Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia plus minority rights for Albanians” and other ethnic minorities (Lampe, 1999: 217). So Tito’s Yugoslavia was founded as a nation where all nationalities would have equal say, equal contribution and equal representation in the government structure (Lendvai, 1991: 252).

The ultimate system of governance in Yugoslavia anticipated reciprocity as a core principle, by which Yugoslavia would work as much for Yugoslavs as Yugoslavs worked for Yugoslavia. It was unique: economically socialist as much as it was capitalist, it “symbolized a ‘third way’ between state socialism run along orthodox Soviet lines and Western free-market principles, achieved through independent control of the economy and a decentralized government” (Lendvai, 1991: 252). Yugoslavia of the late 1950s and
1960s was situated comfortably between East and West, Democracy and Communism, a *hybridity* that arose from Tito’s break with Stalin in 1948 over an unfair trade agreement with the USSR and Stalin’s attempts to control Yugoslav enterprises, independent-minded Yugoslav communists and Tito himself (Sudetic, 1992: 45-46). The Tito-Stalin break improved relations between Yugoslavia and the West, and in 1949 “the West commenced a flow of economic aid and covered much of Yugoslavia’s trade deficit for the next decade” (Sudetic, 1992: 47). Due to strong relations with the West, Yugoslavia emerged from the conflict with Stalin as a nation with an economic system that ushered in the withering away of the state in the 1950s, when “workers were able to set broad production goals and supervise finances” (Sudetic, 1992: 47).

This system of worker-governance provided the basis for what Wachtel calls “the second great Yugoslav myth” (Wachtel, 1998: 133). “The concept of worker self-management… explained how Yugoslavs would work on their own after the Tito-Stalin split” (Wachtel, 1998: 133). Though the Party-appointed management made the final economic and production decisions, workers participated in the processes of decision-making; so, in theory, Yugoslav communism was very different than the Soviet-centered communism that existed in the neighboring countries.

Tito “saw no inconsistency in wanting to play a major role in [the] Communist community, and to lead the third world” through his non-alignment movement and funding from the West, despite the wishes of the post-Stalin Soviet Union (Pavlowitch, 1992: 68-70). Tito had many allies around the world, owing to Yugoslavia’s image of an easily pliable government as well as non-alignment treaties signed with other countries, primarily in Africa and the Middle East. Though Tito’s Yugoslavia was able to secure an
array of bilateral pacts, thereby broadening the meaning of Communism in a global sphere, internally Yugoslavia lacked that same balance as “the central party, State and police apparatuses [were] dominated by Serbs” (Rusinow, 1978: 136).

Quite contrary to Tito’s goals, what ultimately comprised the Yugoslav union was not simply a conglomerate of nations with shared power or a federation but, rather, countries and peoples with different cultural and linguistic identities and histories that could not be reconciled through the creation of and propagation of an overarching Yugoslav identity (Budding, 1997: 407-426, Wachtel, 1998; Rusinow, 1977). On paper, Yugoslavia was a federation, and as such, each individual nation should have equally constituted a part of the whole. The non-negotiable aspect of the Yugoslav union was that no one entity would have more power than the other. Though great lip service was given at the initial founding of Yugoslavia to give each nation and nationality equal representation, Serbia always garnered more power, and that created a union with an unequal representative government.

Since the government was unequally structured, policies and decisions that came from its bodies in Belgrade were perceived by many to be acts of Serbian protectionism and outright aggression. Serbs were seen as having more of a paternal relationship with the other republics, as opposed to the fraternal relationship that Yugoslavia was supposed to foster. Belgrade’s dominance left non-Serbs feeling powerless over policies that directly affected their peoples. With such great disparity among the republics, “each republic protected and articulated the rights of its ethnic group and relied on the federation only to protect its members in other republics” (Sekora, 2000: 445).

“Belgrade’s political centralism had a parallel linguistic direction, which amounted
to the infiltration of Serbian terms and forms throughout Yugoslavia by means of military, civil administration, and schools” (Banac, 1988: 212-213). Further evidence of Serbian linguistic dominance came through use of ekavian by some major Yugoslav writers, including Ivo Andrić and Meša Selimović, their dialect of choice, even though their native dialect was ijekavian. Ijekavian, quite the contrary, had very little status within the union and was rarely used in official publications outside of Croatia.

Consistent inequalities provide evidence that Tito governed his country similarly to an empire, where a nation governs over other culturally and lexically distinct nations, administering all governmental institutions necessary for the country’s infrastructure. At various points in time in the union, “Slovenia and Croatia, the most advanced parts of Yugoslavia, [felt] that they should have larger autonomy and greater influence at the Belgrade center than they [had]” (Franolić, 1988: 35). Because of this unbalanced power structure and lack of regard for the rights and desires of non-Serb nations, N. L. Karlovic recognized the relationship shared between Belgrade and the union (specifically Croatia in his writings) as “internal colonialism,”

the model [which] hinges on the relationship between a ‘core’ of a multi-ethnic state, where a strong central government first developed, and one or more ‘peripheries,’ areas absorbed by the core and differing for the latter in cultural terms, such as language or religion. (Karlovic, 1982: 284)

The lack of parity of wealth held by the Serbs, Slovenes and Croats further proves this point. Even though Slovenian and Croatian industries generated the majority of Yugoslav gross domestic product, proceeds were funneled back to Serbia. In fact, Croatia had the “role of accumulating and providing capital, particularly in foreign currency, for the developmental needs of the core (Karlovic, 1982: 284). The influx of capital to
Belgrade from Zagreb (and Ljubljana) indicates that Belgrade dominated the economic sphere in a way similar to how it controlled culture, as referenced earlier. Although the structure in Yugoslavia defies the traditional definition of colonization, the core periphery relationship encouraged “the appropriation of material resources, exploitation of labour and interference with political and cultural structures,” and indicates that Yugoslavia shared similarities with colonial and *colonialesque* projects (Loomba, 2002: 6).

The fracturing of Yugoslavia into individual nations in the 1990s via secession wars is proof that those living outside the direct cultural sphere of Belgrade, i.e., Serbia proper, believed themselves to be governed by an entity other than themselves. The constitution of 1946 granted constituent nations the right to secede and subsequent constitutions (1963 and 1974) granted the right of “self-determination” (Lampe, 1996: 234,303; Trifunovska, 1994: 474; Rusinow, 1977: 71, 106, 305, 326). Though the precise meaning of the term “narod” used in the 1974 constitution is disputed, the 1974 Constitution granted self-determination to the “nations,” (narod) of Yugoslavia. However, as the Yugoslav wars illustrate, neither the people nor the country were allowed to separate from the union, despite the wording in any of the Constitutions

Therefore membership in the Yugoslav union was voluntary, theoretically granting constituent members the right to secede at any point. However, the political and economic turmoil of the late 1970s and 1980s and the wars precipitated by attempts of the republics to secede in the 1990s illustrate that actual practices of the government were

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3 There is debate as to whether the language in the 1974 constitution of “right to self-determination” referenced nationalities or the nations themselves. These latter pole of this argument is articulated by Robert Hayden in “Imagined Communities and Real Victims: Self-Determination and Ethnic Cleansing in Yugoslavia” and the former in Daniel Kofman’s “Secession, Law, and Rights: The Case of the Former Yugoslavia.”
not in compliance with the wording of the Constitution.

In addition to political dominance, Belgrade housed all of the best and most prominent cultural outlets of the union, including the film and publishing industries, and all major political operations happened in Belgrade. It is true that the same or similar institutions existed in Zagreb and Sarajevo. In fact, each country had (and continues to have) its own central publishing house. However, as Daniel Goulding recognizes, Serbian film output was nearly double that of any of the other republics, and if other cultural institutions mirrored the trends of film, it can be assumed that other cultural products had similar inequality (Goulding, 2002: 3-4). Because Belgrade was the capital of Yugoslavia, it would seem that all nations would have benefitted from its films, literature and other such products, but it must be reiterated that this dominance of Belgrade was just another manifestation of Serbian domination to those living outside of Serbia.

In both Yugoslavias, but particularly in the second, there was a complex feeling of national loyalty and a reluctant allegiance to Belgrade as its capital. Some, however, were faithful to the Yugoslav idea and worked very hard to transform Yugoslavia from simply an idea and a landmass into a cohesive culture and identity in which all citizens could participate and belong. Wachtel clearly explains how, in the first Yugoslavia, the concept of Yugoslav was realized through cultural products, especially literature and cultural monuments. However, its cultivation was cut short by nationalist fervor and a Belgrade-based government that failed to recognize the disparity of power and access among the various Yugoslav republics. As the seeds of Belgrade’s prominence and unbalanced importance had already taken root, the equilibrium sought by those original pioneers among the republics could never be realized. All that could come from it was an
attempt by other nations to realize parity with Serbia (and Serbian culture and cultural institutions) within the federation, but that equality was never realized, instead war was raged.

**Post-Yugoslavia**

Serbia has held a problematic status in the region since the secessionist wars of the 1990s, and has found it difficult to progress beyond them. The dismantling of Yugoslavia was destructive, but it was also a period of rebirth and creation. For all of the republics, the regional upheaval brought forth opportunities for expressions of cultural exclusivity and the development of an independent political voice when, for decades, it had not been possible. The nations and nationalities of the former Yugoslav federation were able to reclaim their cultural icons and create new literary canons and cultural ideals capable of dictating their future.

The prominence and importance that the Serbian nation and its people once had has dissipated. However, their prior status as most important nationality and nation in the union has had a great impact on the political, cultural, and social institutions in Serbia and the ways in which they projected an image of Serbia, which conflated the notions of Serb and Yugoslav. This pre-war reality has proven difficult to reconcile against the contemporary Serbian reality. Some young Serbian adults grew up schooled in the idea that they were Yugoslavs; their pioneer membership, literary canon and pan-Yugoslav curriculum taught them so, although these were Serbian dominant. However, census data supports the idea that despite the indoctrination of Yugoslav ideology, declaring oneself a Serb was more popular than the Yugoslav identity. In fact, in the 2002 census, only 1.08% of respondents in Serbia and Montenegro considered themselves Yugoslav, as
compared to the relatively larger percentages in 1971 (1.3%) and 1981 (5.4%) (Belgrade Census Bureau, 2003; Sekulic, Massey and Hodson, 1994: 85).

What has been interesting to observe is how, since the end of the war in Kosovo, Serbian society has responded to the loss of regional and international prominence, causing the nation to become increasingly more insular and introspective. Because of the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Serb and Yugoslav could no longer be conflated (Budding, 1997: 407-426). This downgrading of Serb to a singular national identity, during the wars, as opposed to a unifying, pan-national identity indicated a toppling of the elevated status they enjoyed for generations. In the 2002 census referenced above, 83% of the population claimed Serb as an ethnicity, which may speak to the contemporary homogeneity of Serbia, but more to the point, Serb, like Yugoslav, meant something different than what it did before. By 2002, Yugoslavia only included Montenegro and Serbia, causing one to wonder if the 1.08% of Yugoslavs envisioned “Yugoslav” in a historical or contemporary context. The early 21st century brought sweeping changes through Yugoslavia: 2003 ushered in the union of Serbia and Montenegro, and in the years that followed, the other republics continued to disassociate themselves from Serbia. In turn, Serbia sought alliances with nations amiable to their principles and territorial integrity, such as China and Russia. However, geopolitical realities also made it germane for Serbia to negotiate with European Union leaders. All the while, internal conflicts mirrored the inconsistencies of the government. With so much constant instability, Serbian leadership began to teeter between nationalism and westernization, and between localization and globalization.

The status of Serbia in the world, too, is in flux, even regarding the European
Union. From 2004 to 2009, Serbian political systems experienced significant challenges to the democratic standard, which was so highly valued by the European Union (E.U.) and seemed to be embraced by its new members. In 2004 the European Union enlarged to incorporate Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. The former Soviet Bloc countries (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, and Slovakia) proved able to shed their formal image as political, social, and even cultural outcasts in Europe and gain [quasi-] equal footing in the E.U., and theoretically provided the opportunity to improve their economies and political systems. In addition, citizens of the 2004 round of E.U. member nations were allowed to travel and work throughout the Union. In 2004 Croatia also officially became an E.U. candidate nation, affording it access to E.U. funds for infrastructure improvements, among other benefits. The year 2007 also marked great progress for former Soviet Bloc nations when Bulgaria and Romania joined the E.U. Even though some of the benefits of E.U. membership eluded these two newcomers, they, too became linked to the other nations whose process of ascension, candidacy and membership precipitated monumental changes, garnering greater financial access and securing a more favorable image, in line with the European ideal.

By contrast, Serbia began formal Stabilization and Association Agreement negotiations with the E.U. in 2005. But from 2005 to 2009 there were only (re)formulations of, but little movement on, Serbia’s status in relation to the E.U. In 2006 Serbian consideration for E.U. candidacy was revoked because it was deemed that Serbia was not sufficiently cooperating with The Hague in turning over war criminals. Serbia signed a Stabilization and Association agreement with the E.U. on April 29, 2008 and
since then, Serbia has remained an ascension country; it was not until December 2009 that Serbia applied for E.U. membership.

Within a generation-and-a-half, Serbs have gone from regional primacy to pariah, in the eyes of neighbors who used to be “brothers” and with regard to the relative positions of former Socialist countries (Mekina-Vasović, 2007). Because of the pessimism associated with Serbia’s current cultural, social, and political state, Serbia’s cultural products and outlets are carving out a new space for engaging in a dialogue about Serbia’s current identity as well as its possible future through various cultural products.

**Post-communist/Post-socialist Scholarship**

As a successor to studies of Eastern Europe that view the region through the lens of Communism, Post-communist and Post-socialist studies focus on the transition of Eastern and Central European nations into Western-styled democracies, economies, and societies. The field itself acts as an umbrella and employs various disciplines in its analysis, including history, social science, and economics. Scholarly literature on Post-communism is immense. However, I will only focus on those works which are most applicable to post-war, post-Milošević Serbia.

Early post-communist literature focused on finding schema to identify shared trends among Eastern European nations in their transition out of Communism into a new system of governance which would be, presumably, democracy. For example, Michael Mandelbaum’s 1996 edited volume *Postcommunism: Four Perspectives* is indeed “backward-looking.” It studies the “world defined by what it used to be but no longer is” (Mandelbaum, 1996: 1). It examines the “common experience” of Eastern European Communist project that began in 1917 and ended, in effect, in 1989. As is typical in early
works, Mandelbaum’s *Postcommunism: Four Perspectives* focuses on the Russian transition as it relates to the former periphery of Russia and the Communist Bloc. Such works therefore maintain the centrality of Russia even in the aftermath of the Communist project.

Leslie Holmes’s 1997 monograph *Postcommunism: An Introduction* centers on policy, economics, politics, and incorporates the study of society and social patterns only inasmuch as governmental initiatives affect people on a macro level. It does not focus on social trends in general and how society as a whole changed after the break from Communist and/or Socialist systems. Unlike Mandelbaum’s volume, Holmes’s monograph highlights how Yugoslavia stands apart from the other post-socialist transitions and directs special attention to the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s. Chapter six, “A Comparative Overview,” is one of the most useful sections of the work, as it offers a “Model of the Transition to Postcommunism” and recalls the individual countries that have transitioned out of Communism. Holmes recognizes that definitions of Post-communism are few and “hazy” because, at the time she was writing, the meaning had not yet crystallized. She tentatively suggests that Post-communism is a study of “goals, policies, structures, and behaviors” informed by “the practice of the countries that were formally communist” (Holmes, 1997: 1).

Studies in the early 2000s depart from the heavy reliance on political science, history, and economics and begin to incorporate, in earnest, elements of sociology, focusing on the relationship between the people and their governments, through their governmental policies and response. Sociologist Michael Kennedy utilizes this trend in his 2002 work *Cultural Formation of Postcommunism: Emancipation, Transition, Nation*
He defines Post-communism in terms of transition culture, “a mobilizing culture organized around certain logical and normative oppositions, valuations of expertise and interpretations of history that provide a basic framework through which actors undertake strategic action to realize their needs and wishes” (Kennedy, 2002: 9). More than that, however, transition culture outlines the processes by which once-Communist societies become democratic. This work still categorizes movements and trends in society as they relate to history, economics, and policy-making. What is new, however, is the study of the environmental impact of transition culture as well as an in-depth study of nationalism and war in Eastern Europe, but finds it to be the exception to the transition out of Communism. The work stresses the urgency of post-communist studies in spurring change in the countries where transition was then still in process. It assumes that the result of transition is a society and government on par, or at least comparable, with Western counterparts. As the author views it, “the war-torn are especially exceptional, and undeserving of analysis within transition culture’s generalizing parameters. . .[thus], Central Asia and the former Yugoslavia are not so relevant” (Kennedy, 2002: 101). To not include those nations leaves the analysis lacking and essentialist in many ways, against which Alison Stenning and Kathrin Horschelmann warn as a failure in their 2008 article “History, Geography and Difference in the Post-socialist World: Or, Do We Still Need Post-Socialism?” in that the argument articulated does not recognize the multiplicity of transitions of the post-socialisms of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc.

The 2009 article “Thinking between the Posts: Postcolonialism, Postsocialism, and Ethnography after the Cold War” is the result of a collaboration between Katherine
Verdery, an anthropologist who focuses on Eastern and Central Europe, with Sharad Chari, a professor of geography who focuses on Postcolonialism. Their work approaches Post-communism and Postcolonialism as complementary, arguing that though the fields are not the same, their lessons and ideas can help, nevertheless, to inform each other. Other arguments presented in the article go much further than a simple analysis of the similarities of Postcolonialism and Post-communism and provide substance for a great debate on the effectiveness of social versus capitalist economies, including a compelling argument of whether the Soviet Union prolonged the existence of Apartheid South Africa through economic ties.

More generally, Chari and Verdery posit that postcolonial scholars “have focused more on questions of epistemology than have post-socialist scholars,” whereas Post-socialism too came to signify a critical standpoint, in several senses: critical of the socialist past and of possible socialist futures; critical of the present as neoliberal verities about transition, markets and democracy…, and critical of the possibilities for knowledge as shared by Cold War institutions. (11)

Though this work introduces many new, very relevant arguments in comparing Postcolonialism and Post-communism, it, like other works, analyzes Russia as the sole imperial force within the former Satellite states, indicating that “satellites formed replica regimes, each accumulating redistributive power within its own borders but not transferring that power to the hegemon in Moscow” (Verdery, Chari, 2009:16). While this idea supports the broader construct of the argument, it does not take into account the relationship between Yugoslavia (Serbia) and Moscow, nor does it consider the specific position of Serbia within its own colonialesque project in Yugoslavia. Further analysis of Yugoslavia’s structures and interaction with the other republics provides a space for the
analysis of the epistemology of Yugoslavia as it relates to colonialism and colonial hegemony. Moreover, in analyzing the construct of Yugoslavia, it becomes clear that many of the other arguments set forth by Chari and Verdery, e.g., with regard to China and the United States (U.S.) and the relative theorizing that must be made to conclude the existence of imperial or colonial structures controlled by these nations prove unnecessary in illustrating a direct correlation between Post-socialism and Postcolonialism. Yugoslavia’s internal colonialization directly correlates to traditional forms of colonialism. It follows then that post-socialist Yugoslavia relates, albeit indirectly, to Postcolonialism as its government structure employed “internal colonialism.”

Transition in post-Yugoslav countries was violent, comprising a glaring exception to the abandonment of Communism (except Romania). Yet not all former Yugoslav republics separated from the Union by violent means. Therefore, studies of individual former Yugoslav countries surfaced alongside the general, more thematically based works of Post-communism. Among which are volumes on Slovenia: Jill Benderly and Evan Kraft’s *Independent Slovenia: Origins, Movements, Prospects* and John Cox’s *Slovenia: Evolving Loyalties*. Focusing on post-war Croatia are: William Bartlett’s *Croatia: Between Europe and the Balkans* and Alex J. Bellamy’s *The Formation of Croatian National Identity: A Centuries-old Dream*. All these works share the themes of post-communist and post-war realities of the independent former Yugoslav nations. Most relevant for this dissertation, these works refuse to dwell on the shroud of war and, instead, present more contemporary realities including the processes of cultural formation.
Whereas the other post-Yugoslav nations have been able to define themselves beyond the wars, Serbia, as the wars’ main aggressor, has been primarily studied for its role in the wars. One such book is Tim Judah’s *The Serbs: History, Myth, and the Destruction of Yugoslavia*, more backward- than forward-looking and insufficient in probing contemporary formations of Serbian identity. Similar critique could be offered for Branimir Anzulovic’s work *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide*. My intention is to add to existing scholarship by recognizing a post-war Serbia that is struggling to create a new cultural identity, informed by historical as well as contemporary realities.

My study does not ignore the role of Serbia in Yugoslavia and the secessionist wars, but those events constitute a point of departure to examine what has been shaping Serbia’s culture since the demise of Yugoslavia since 2000. It is, therefore, in line with the other works that examine other post-Yugoslav, post-war states. Additionally, my dissertation continues along the lines of current trends by incorporating post-communist studies; it aligns, compares and contrasts the realities of post-war Yugoslavia with the nations and concepts of Postcolonialism, thereby addressing Serbia’s unique and privileged status in the union.

In order to find the sources on shifting Serbian identity, I examine film, media, and literature of the last decade. Of particular importance will be the cultural output after the Kosovo war, when Serbia internationally became a problematic nation and the epitome of failure in its transition into democracy. Internally, the position of Serbia was further complicated; its *colonial* structure failed, precipitating the fall of the status and importance of Serbia. The ramifications of which reverberated throughout Serbian society. Serbian cultural identity was in flux, and stood to challenge what had been the
cultural norm in Serbian society for generations. The result of this inner turmoil was a comingling of cultural ideals, and a reanalysis of the Serbian position, particularly as it related to the wars of the 1990s. Cultural products of the time period most aptly relay the cultural debates of the time, as they bolster or question the role of Serbia in the wars through their particular assertion of what should constitute the fundamental elements of post-war and post-Yugoslav Serbian cultural identity.

The films I use in my study were produced primarily from 2000 to 2006, the time period directly following the Kosovo war and the NATO bombing campaign. During those years, Serbian power was proven null and void, and because an aspect of Serbian identity was derived from power and might, this time period also poses the greatest challenge to contemporary formations of Serbian identity. The films I analyze, which are included in filmography, converge on the primary themes of contemporary Serbian identity. The majority of the films focus on Serbs living in Serbia, and, in particular, in Belgrade. Within these contemporary films, Serbian filmmakers are able to explore new territory in the complexities of their relationship to the “near abroad” and the West. Some films confront the shift from Yugoslav to Serb, while others problematize the continued coexistence of both.

For the media aspects of this research, I have opted to study the thematic trends in four periodicals, *NIN (НИН), Politics (Politika), Today (Danas) Time (Vreme)* and the online news source B92. However, due to the general focus on less-studied Serbian media outlets, I do not include in-depth analysis of B92 as it has been extensively written about, both in English and Serbian, by scholars and journalists in the field (Matic & Patic, 1999; Collin, 2004; Matic & Skoric, 1993). I have studied *NIN, Politics, Today,*
*Time* and *B92* primarily during the time period that corresponds to the films included in the study. The publications also parallel the primary dichotomy of political trends of liberal/democratic versus conservative-radical party trends currently taking hold of Serbia.

In turning to literature, I recognize that post-war writers in Serbia have turned away from the poetics of Postmodernism to create works more firmly positioned in concrete and familiar settings and times. I analyze both postmodern and realist works to demonstrate how the shift from Postmodernism to Realism corresponds to an attempt, on behalf of the younger generation, to use literature to make sense of the contemporary confused and unrecognizable reality and argue for a reformulation of the understanding of Serbian cultural identity.

**Structure**

**Chapter 1: To Make a Serb Yugoslav**

Chapter one provides a theoretical overview of the formations of identity and nationalism as they relate to a general understanding of cultural identity formation and the methods through which these ideas are disseminated. I explore the foundations of nationalism studies and explain the primordialist and modernist arguments that have shaped notions of Serbian national identity as an understanding of it aids in extrapolating the foundation(s) of post-war Serbian cultural identity. To this end, I include international studies professor Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* and historian Eric Hobsbawm’s *Nations and Nationalism*. This chapter also revisits the historical ways in which identities have been formed in the Balkans via the *millets* of the Ottoman Empire and the influence of empire on cultural and national affiliations (Austro-Hungarian influence vs. Ottoman). This chapter
enumerates the ways in which the Yugoslav identity derived meaning from Serbian undertones. This understanding aids in describing why the identity of Yugoslav problematized the relationship between center (Belgrade) and periphery (all five other republics), and the connection of “Serbian” and “Serb” to “Yugoslav.” Lastly, this chapter explores the ways in which Serbian identity was formed after the war and what constitutes the essential elements of that identity.

Chapter 2: “Unity Will Make Prosperity Possible”: From Yugoslav to Serb

Following the collapse of Yugoslavia, Serbia had the difficult task of deciding what would comprise its society and culture. In this chapter, I explore the various cultural outlets that surfaced following the wars and the various trends in society that allowed Yugoslav culture to turn into Serbian culture. In studying the changes in Serbian social and national identity, I use the works of Serbian sociologist Ivan Čolović, which document the development of independent Serbian culture through historical precedents and the contemporary setting of the mid to late 1990s. Čolović’s account is thorough because it analyzes both the positive and negative aspects of the development of Serbian society.

Chapter 3: Serbian Politics and Culture: Russia vs. The West

In order to solidify the notion that there are similar trends in all of the arts that horizontally connect the Serbian populace to one another, I also include a brief study of the political trends of news stories in four national periodicals. These articles, which generally focus on the same topics (European Union (E.U.) integration, Serbian political trends of radical versus socialist versus democratic thought, and the changing status of Kosovo) add insight into the current developments in Serbian society—most notably, the
rifts between the Radical and Democratic Parties and highlights the Serbian turn to support of and for Russia or the West as Western nations and Russia sought to support or deny Kosovo independence in 2007-8. Interestingly, Of all the cultural outlets analyzed here, media is the only form that overtly asserts or refutes Serbian victimhood basing the potential source of Serbian prosperity outside Serbia.

Chapter 4: The Generational Clash in Post-war Serbian Film

This chapter details the two main movements in the Serbian film industry—the tendency to employ the contemporary setting and distant past to expose social problems in the society. Recent realist films, created by a younger generation of directors, focus on the daily lives of average Serbs, questioning the actions of the Serbian government and how post-war Serbia might fit into Europe, both politically and socially. To analyze these films I use literary and culture critic and scholar Fredric Jameson’s social theories to help explain the social function of the arts, which is particularly applicable in a nation that had no other outlets of expression due to their international silencing caused by the wars in Kosovo, Bosnia, and Croatia. The other dominant trend is Romanticism, produced by an older generation of directors and expressed through the use of historical settings and pastoral landscapes. Their exploration of the very distant past is nostalgic toward a time when the national character of ordinary Serbian citizens was strong.

Chapter 5: Post-War Serbian Literature: From Postmodernism to (Neo)realism

This chapter analyzes the resurgence of realist expression as an aesthetic means of representation as opposed to the postmodern aesthetic that has been popular for at least a generation. I analyze the poetics of Postmodernism, Realism and (Neo)realism to illustrate what the shift connotes within post-war Serbian society. I include writers whose
works are primarily postmodern and writers whose works are simply realist, or (neo)realist. Selected authors in this study are David Albahari, Milorad Pavić, Vladimir Arsenijević and Vule Zurić. Though somewhat unorthodox, I also discuss seemingly more pop-fiction writers such as Mirjana Bobić-Mojšilović and Marko Vidojković, who can be useful gauges of what literary works, themes, and ideas are of interest to Serbs and what moves the populace at large. I am particularly interested in how Serbian literary proclivities correspond to the social and political orientations; though the list is not exhaustive, these selected works will help reveal the evolution of those literary inclinations and what that indicates about contemporary Serbian identity.
Chapter 1: To Make a Serb Yugoslav

Regarding contemporary constructions of identity, anthropologists Cora Govers and Hans Vermeulen note in their work *The Politics of Ethnic Consciousness* suggest that “markers of ethnic or national difference are those of religion, language, and physical appearance,” as they aid in distinguishing one group from another (Vermeulen and Govers, 1997: 8). Religion and language have long worked in tandem to define the Serbian nation and its people. These two concepts have historically been linked inextricably to Serbdom (*srpstvo*), or Serbian national and, which frequently overlaps with national identity as Serbs are the dominant population of Serbia, and their practices, norms, and history tie them to the land, and their history provides an understanding for the formation of Serbian culture.

Scholarship on national identity formation has historically been dominated by “primordialist” and “modernist” scholarship, which represents diametrically opposed visions of how the nation came into being. The late sociologist Edward Shils and anthropologist Clifford Geertz are considered the fathers of “primordialism,” an ideology that asserts that the nation is based on relationships and associations that predate the 18th and 19th century, a time which modernists recognize as the period of national awakening and, therefore, the birth of the nation. For the primordialism camp, however, “national identity existed before nationalism” (Bellamy, 2003: 8-9).

In what Bellamy terms “a more sophisticated brand of primordialism,” Anthony Smith and Walker Conner introduced themselves as “ethno-symbolists” as opposed to primordialists. (Belamy, 2003: 8-9) They introduced ideas based on “tangible essences of
nations, such as language or religion, have changed, but the nation itself and the communal ties within it have persisted,” the idea compounded in this ideology provided the framework for the idea of *ethnie* that Smith advanced (Bellamy, 2003: 9). To speak of *ethnie* is to recognize that every nation has its essence; the components of *ethnie* may change and develop overtime, but what created the *ethnie* is static, which is unaffected by time and has a particularly connection to shared historical memory.4

In direct opposition to the primordialist position is the modernist ideological framework that connects notions of national identity to the 18th and 19th century the time when the concept of the “nation” came into fruition. Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm are two scholars whose works are representative of the modernist camp, and both of their works are referenced throughout this work. However, I introduce them here in order to illustrate how the modernist framework functions as an antipode to the primordialist framework with full recognition of the prevalence of their literature throughout this dissertation.

Neither the primordialist nor modernist ways of recognizing national identity suffice when examining the formation within the context of Serbia, because neither permit for ideas of the birth of nationhood outside of the confines of antiquity or the 19th century. Each ideology provides aspects of understanding historical formulations of how identity was formed, however, the notion of change, as it relates to Serbian identity must be introduced here because post-war, post-Yugoslav Serbian identity is in a state of change, however those intellectuals who are vying for the foundation of what will be

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4 *Ethnie* contains six characteristics: a collective proper name (i.e. national assignation), a myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more differentiating elements of common culture, connection with a specific homeland, a sense of solidarity for portions of the population. (Bellamy, 2003: 9)
added on to Serbian identity and go through the processes of ‘internalisation,’ the process where national ideas become aspects of daily life, as identified by Radcliffe and Westwood. (Bellamy, 2003: 28)

In this dissertation, I am exploring the ways in which national identity have historically been articulated, the various shifts in the definition of identity and how the wars of the 1990s and immediate aftermath have affected that identity. My analysis is focused on macro constructions of national and cultural identity as integral elements of 
sprstvo as they relate to the individual. Also important for this study is how leaders of political movements and creators of cultural products are participating in the formation of the nexus of the new post-war, post-Yugoslav, national and cultural identity.

However, prior to contemplating the on-going formations of post-war Serbian identity, the paragraphs that follow explore the historical formations of what have functioned as the basis of Serbian national identity for generations. The sections that follow detail how these elements of national identity came to function as markers of cultural identity as well, illustrating the ongoing change and reformulation of Serbian cultural identity.

**Serbian Identity and the Serbian Orthodoxy Church**

Official links between church and state in the Serbian kingdom originated with nobleman Stephan Nemanja, who “began the tradition of royal church-and-monastery-building” in the 12th century (Judah, 1997: 18-19). That connection between church and state was deepened when St. Sava, venerated national hero, statesman and eventual national saint, abdicated the throne to become a monk, while remaining a diplomat and government official. Sava was also responsible for the recognition of the Serbian
kingdom, for establishing Serbian Orthodoxy as an autocephalous church in 1219, and for penning the first Serbian legal code (Judah, 1997: 20). Sava’s father, Simeon, was canonized as Serbia’s first saint; like his father, Sava was canonized upon his death (in 1236). Sava is venerated in Serbia on many levels, and as Judah notes, “it is impossible to overstate Sava’s contribution to the shaping of Serbian history”; his governmental and religious acumen was instrumental in laying the foundation of Serbian society and cultural identity (Judah, 1997: 20).

Since its 13th century establishment as the state religion in Serbia, Orthodoxy has been at the core of Serbdom. Hobsbawm notes that “religion is an ancient and well tried method of establishing communion through common practice and a sort of brotherhood between people who otherwise have nothing much in common” (Hobsbawm, 1990: 68). By the time of Ottoman conquest, Serbs were unified in their religion, which was reinforced through its continued existence as an element of Serbian life. Culturally, the links between culture and religion came through the portrayal of the spiritual triumph of Orthodoxy during the battle of Kosovo, the specifics of which I will return to later.

Indeed, the importance of Kosovo comes not only from the mythic songs, but also because the Patriarchate of the Serbian Orthodox Church was established in the city of Peć (also known historically as Ipek or Pejë, as it is also known contemporarily) in Kosovo in 1346 by Czar Stafan Dušan (1331-55), though it was not recognized until 1375 by Constantinople. Its status as Patriarchate was abolished by the Ottomans in 1453, but was reestablished as a Patriarchate under the Ottoman millet system in 1557, affording the Serbs an archbishop independent of the Greek Patriarchate in

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5 A Patriarchate is the territory under the religious authority of the Patriarch, the term used for the religious leader in Orthodoxy.
Orthodoxy was sustained through the Ottoman *millet* system, a way of organizing Ottoman subjects into the following contingents based on religion: Jewish, Orthodox and Armenian (Sugar, 1977: 277-279). The Orthodox millet was called the *Rum millet*, which encompassed Bulgarians, Romanians, Serbs, Greeks, and Albanians. Within the Rum millet, the revival of the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate in Peć further solidified Serbian religious identity, allowing the Serbs to “escap[e] Greek spiritual tutelage for the majority of the period under Ottoman rule” from 1557 to 1766 (Poulton, 2000: 47; Soward, 1996). Reintroducing the Serbian patriarchate within Serbian space, positioned an integral aspect of Serbdom back in the seat of Serbian cultural, and arguably national space.

Because “the Ottomans transferred almost all civil authority of the former Serbian state to the patriarchs of Peć … the Patriarchate controlled civil society, dictated their own native rules and way of life, and was not subject to şeriat [*sharia*] law” (Banac, 1988: 64-5). The Patriarchate was also permitted “a significant amount of judicial power within the Orthodox community,” which had "the paradoxical effect of investing the Serbs with a great instrument of national expansion" because the influence of the church was easily extended and national traditions preserved (Banac, 1984: 65). Within a contemporary setting, the significance of the historical seat of the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate was elevated and it became used as a strong symbol of the foundation of Serbian cultural history, understood as the heart and soul of Serbia and was even used to justify the 1990s wars in Kosovo.

6 The patriarchate is currently located in Belgrade, Serbia.
7 Şeriat law is Islamic law.
Serbian Identity and Language

Although religion was firmly in place as a tenet of “Serb,” various registers of language persisted among Serbs. Anderson stresses that knowledge of a language is a key element of membership to a nation or group, and within the European context, language had various social registers and forms to accommodate the needs of a nation and promulgation of a particular identity (Anderson, 1991: 13). Throughout the history of the Serbian language, high registers including the Serbian recension of Old Church Slavonic and Sloveno-Serbski, were spoken by few, and used by the elite to preserve their place in society. Regarding the literary language, major changes took place during the 18th century with the use of the printing press in modern day Vojvodina and Hungary, which, in the mid 18th century spurred the development of the Serbian literary language, and became one of the fundamental bases of Serbian nationalism. Prior to the publication of non-religious works, Serbian language was a comingling of the use of Russian OCS recension and Serbian OCS recension. The year 1768 marked an important turn in the development of Serbian linguistic norms when Zaharije Orfelin (1726-1785) issued a change in language by proclamation for the Slavo-Serbian, a language that mixed Church Slavonic and Serbian vernacular, and had virtually no lexical or grammatical governance. The language was subject to the “arbitrary subjectiveness of the author” and was therefore understood by few (Ivić, 1994: 45-47). In fact, his journal Slaveno-Serbski Magazin (Slavic-Serbian Journal), was established in 1768 to serve as a forum to discuss Serbian education, literature and culture for Serbs living under the foreign empires of the Ottomans and Austro-Hungarians. Though the journal was only produced once, it is frequently noted as the first literary forum “in which the doctrines of European 18th
century Rationalism and the Enlightenment were presented in the Serbian language” (Bjelica, 1994: 273). Regarding the linguistic context, the work also proves important because it was the first Serbian journalistic publication whose content helped create a cultural context and provided the space for a debate on registers of language. Furthermore, the arguments presented within its pages spurred debate on the standardization.

The next significant development in the language came in 1783 when the monk Dositej Obradović (1739-1811) posited that language must be understood throughout various levels of society, and therefore advocated primarily for the use of vernacular. Obradović realized that high registers of language had little or no crossover into the lower echelon of society. Similar to Anderson’s conjecture, Obradović recognized that for a language to truly be capable of defining a nation, it must be spoken by broad sectors of society. Though Obradović left Church Slavonic and Russian words in tact where there were no Serbian equivalents his positions on language allowed for the propagation of vernacular as a standard language, an idea that would take root and eventually be realized through Vuk Karadžić’s 1814 language reforms. (Ivić, 1994: 47)

In the Serbian case, the various registers of language, especially ecclesiastical and elite, taught several cultural leaders, most notably Vuk Karadžić and proponents of the Romantic nationalist movements such as Ilyrianism and Pan-Slavism, that one of the best ways to connect a people to a land was a widely recognized and spoken language. Although the Church was able to bond individuals, there was a lack of alternate foci around which their identity could converge. It was with this goal in mind that intellectuals of the 19th century worked to codify a language that could unite the Serbs of
the region under religion—a method that could not be utilized prior to language
codification. Of all the intellectual leaders of the time concerned with language reforms,
Karadžić reforms became the linguist standard. His reforms are essentially articulated as,
“Speak as you write and read as it is written.” (Piši kao što govoriš i čitaj kako je
napisano). This concept supported the notion of a nation united to language, religion and
future aspirations.

The Kosovo Myth

The Kosovo battle of 1389, in its various manifestations—folkloric, highly
symbolic and historical—has had (and continues to have) great cultural capital within the
Serbian psyche. Moreover, it links language, religion, Serbian might and consequentially
aids in defining the Serbian ethnie. Accounts of the Kosovo battle, through the epic cycle,
have helped to codify the principles of Serbian national consciousness both in prescribing
and in affirming the connection among church, state, and individual—which, in turn,
solidifies the primacy of the Serbian Orthodox Church. As such, the epic provides traits
by which members of society can prove their ethnie, or Serbdom.

The cycle of the battle is an example of epic lyric poetry of high mimetic
expression, which, according to literary critic Northrop Frye, indicates “the poetry of the
social spokesman” with a focus on “seek[ing] extended patterns” (Frye, 1957: 55). What
is especially compelling and distinct about the “spokesman” in the Kosovo epic is that
there is no single narrator, but a multiplicity of narrators. In this cycle, the “patterns” are
the behaviors, actions, and symbols that created cultural norms for Serbian society.
Foundation myths of epics usually have one narrator, however, because the Kosovo epic
describes an event that is meant to bridge all Serbs across time and geography, the voices
are befittingly multifarious and ultimately become universal for Serbs. Literature professor Radmila Gorup observes the uniqueness of the Kosovo cycle as national epic. “Rather than depicting one famous individual (a norm for the epic genre), the songs of Kosovo depict the anguish of the collective soul of the Serbian people” through the portrayal of collective suffering (Gorup, 1991: 118). In addition, the perceived universality of the lessons of the battle, in all of its manifestations but especially in the mythologized accounts, proves a significant force within the cultural formation of Serbdom.

The Battle of Kosovo epic recounts the defeat that ended the life and rule of Czar Lazar, then ruler of the Serbian crown, and his resistance of conquest by Turkish Sultan Murat. It simultaneously depicts the lives of those who surrounded him, his loyal subjects as well as those who eventually betray him. Within the song, “The Downfall of Serbia” prescribes the morale that the ruler must choose the kingdom of heaven over the earthly kingdom. The paradigm is set when Czar Lazar is asked, “Will you choose a heavenly crown today? or will you choose an earthly crown?” To which he responds:

O, Dearest God, what shall I do, and how?  
Shall I choose the earth? Shall I choose  
The skies? And if I choose the kingdom,  
If I choose an earthly kingdom now,  
Earthly kingdoms are such passing things-  
A heavenly kingdom, raging in the dark, endures eternally.  
(Matthias and Vuckovic, 1987)

The folklore surrounding this song suggests that Lazar’s choice to take his troops into battle committed all Serbs to earthly death, but spiritual eternity, which created the idea that by choosing heaven over earth, eternal spiritual life for all Serbs is affirmed.
“Lazar’s Serbia had been relatively wealthy and strong, but it was no long-term match for the far more powerful Ottomans,” because “only the Turks had a plentiful supply of fresh man power to call upon when they returned home” (Judah, 1997: 32). Though he was forewarned in an omen of the impending danger, Lazar’s resolve to fight the Ottoman army reflected the will and strength—more mental than physical—of the troops and their leader. Their charge into battle has come to symbolize the fearlessness Serbian leaders must exhibit in leading their troops and country into battle; for death on the battlefield commits the people to the kingdom of heaven.

Subsequent folkloric interpretations of earthly demise and heavenly promise have only served to enhance and strengthen Serbian coalescence around the themes of their national identity, which includes the primacy of Serbian Orthodoxy above all other religions, the might of the Serbian people, and the trust of Serbian subjects in their leaders. Through Lazar’s singular action, continuity was established between physical death and spiritual rebirth, if combat is in defense of perceived Serbian land. Through the betrayal of Vuk Branković the epic also illustrates the truth of the inverse that “disunity and conflict were the cause of [Serbian] defeat” (Čolović, 2002: 12). Thus, the Kosovo myth helped to codify some of the earliest instances of collective Serbian identity of us-versus-them, whereby the “Other” is any party that attempts to break the cohesion of the Serbian people, including the connection between a Serb and his religion or a Serb and his land.

Regarding how a Serbian civilian should behave, even in the face of possible defeat or death, the character Stefan Mushich says to his son, in the song “Mushich Stefan”:
Whoever is a Serb, of Serbian blood,
Whoever shares with me this heritage,
And he comes not to fight at Kosovo,
May he never have the progeny
His heart desires, neither son nor daughter;
Beneath his hand let nothing decent grow-
Neither purple grapes nor wholesome wheat;
Let him rust away like dripping iron
Until his name shall be extinguished!
(Matthias and Vuckovic, 1987)

In addition to the roles for men, the songs provide standards for how a woman is
to behave when faced with the death of her spouse, fiancé, or son(s), as the only defined
roles for women at this time revolved around their male counterparts. This is illustrated in
the songs “The Death of the Mother of the Yugovichi,” “Tsaritsa Militsa and Vladeta the
Voyvoda,” “The Kosovo Maiden,” and “Tsar Lazar and Tsaritsa Militsa,” all of which
dictate steadfast Penelope-like loyalty for women.

Through the inclusion of the various social layers of society, the Kosovo myth
sets forth a comprehensive framework for norms of Serbian culture. It likewise
emphasizes ties among the church, the individual, and the individual’s responsibility to
her ruler and people. Similarly, it prescribes the duties of a ruler to his people, and
establishes “heroism, victimization, and fatalism” as foundational components of the
Serbian cultural landscape; collectively, these features define what it means to be a

However, “whatever the ‘Serbs’ are today, it is clear that the term was not used in
the same sense at the time of [the Battle of] Kosovo” (Allcock, 2000: 317). Though the
actual facts of the battle, in terms of who fought whom, cannot truly be known, it is
undeniable that both sides contained cadres that were multiethnic, and not simply the
monolith of Turks on one side and Serbs on the other, as presented in the Kosovo cycle.
In fact, Allcock notes that on the “Turkish” side, an Ottoman noble led “an army composed of not only other Muslims but also contingents from other European groups who were their vassals—including Serbs” (Allcock, 2000: 315). On the Serbian side, “Serbs, Albanians, Wallachians, Croats, Hungarians, [and] Bosnians are all mentioned by various commentators as having been among the participants” (Allcock, 2000: 316). The historical realities, however, do not factor into the national narrative vis-à-vis the historical construct of the Serbian nation. In fact, the absence of historically accurate diversity in the lyrical accounts contributes to the false dichotomies of us-versus-them, Serbian versus Ottoman Empire, good versus evil and right versus wrong. The reductionist terms, in which the battle is recounted, prove that in this mythic tale, fact is of little consequence. What is important, though, are the symbolism and the overall message that can be manipulated from themes in the songs about the battle.

A number of scholars and journalists, including Gorup, Branimir Anzulovic, Tim Judah and Ismail Kadarë, have commented that in the Kosovo cycle the significance of the myth overshadows its historical veracity (Gorup, 1991; Kadarë, 2000; Anzulovic, 1999; Judah, 2000). Gorup notes that the songs contained in the cycle “are surreal in their rendering of actual events and characters, [whereby] even historical events in them are juxtaposed to their fictitious counterparts” (Gorup, 111: 1991). As a result, the only constant motifs are the idea of the battle of Kosovo and the way in which the battle and subsequent Serbian loss to the Ottomans is portrayed throughout various instruments of cultural memory (songs, poetry, arts, folklore)—losses in the physical sense but victories for the collective soul of the Serbian people.
Fictionalized renderings of the battle together with themes presented therein serve as principle sources of Serbian identity. The Kosovo battle remains, and “whenever Serbs are faced with events of great historical importance, they invariably turn to the one source of strength and inspiration—the Kosovo mystique” (Mihailovic, 1991: 141). The battle and its subsequent mythologizing of it foment the importance of God, religion, Serbian Orthodoxy and commitment to the Serbian ideal and its signifiers.

**The Birth of Serbian Nationalism**

After Serbian identity coalesced over the centuries, historical events—most notably wars and attacks on Serbian dominance in the region—would challenge that identity, and it was during the various times of conflict when the components of Serbian identity were reexamined and most clearly defined, via reconsolidation of power and clarification of linguistic norms. Therefore, only with the demise of the Ottoman Empire and rise of the Austro-Hungarian Empire did the religio-cultural national assignment come to occupy a place of prominence as rudimentary concepts of nation transformed into full-fledged nationalities. It is no coincidence that these national expressions coincided with the rise of the Romantic nationalist movements in the region. In fact, Ottoman historian Kemal Karpat argues that one of the many reasons for the disintegration of the millet system, and ultimately the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, came from those educated abroad, who returned to the millets to spread the various strains of Romantic nationalism to the elite. These ideas were, in turn, translated into local forms via the espousal of Pan-Slavism and Orthodoxy (Karpat, 2002: 319-333). Returning to the issue of language, Karpat argues that “the language issue produced a
major open break in the very fabric of the Orthodox Christian millet” because it accentuated the differences between those in the Rum millet (Karpat, 2002: 161).

However, despite the formation of linguistic and religious self-identity, the nations of the Balkans remained small, and unification provided a means of defense against the large empires that wished to take or keep the Balkans under their control. As such, unification became a means by which the South Slav nations could throw off non-Slav rule and prevent further intrusion from external forces, thus for many in power, especially those in Serbia, a nation that had already achieved various levels of independence throughout the years of 1804 – 1830 from the Ottoman Empire, sought to unify with the other South Slav nations.8

Intellectuals theorized that there was indeed an essence, or, at least, something uniform and shared by the South Slavic nations, or at least by those who spoke Vuk Karadžić’s štokavian, or similar dialects—a variant of the language that would later be known as Serbo-Croatian during the existence of Yugoslavia, which has been parceled into Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian since the early 1990s. Ideas for unification were based on long-standing theories of South Slav unity, most of which were based on shared linguistic or cultural similarities including the Illyrian movement, headed by Ljudevit Gaj (1809-1872), a journalist and printer of German-Slovak origin who settled in Croatia. (Trencsényi and Kopeček, 2006: 231) His movement was the first to suggest South Slavic unification, and had backers in Croatia, including the important Croatian Bishop Josip Strossmayer (1815-1905), who was a staunch proponent of Yugoslavism advocating “the spiritual unification of the South Slavs, founded upon a common culture and literary
Thus the Illyrian movement also included a religious component and Strossmayer’s vision, included a space for both the Orthodox and Catholic Christians, although he also believed that religion could be an eventual impetus behind irreconcilable differences between the South Slavs. Gaj, similar to Vuk Karadžić proposed a shared South Slavic identity based on a language, which he termed Illyrian, a language based on “the refined štokavian of the republic of Dubrovnik,” a medieval independent city-state located in the Dalmatian region of Southern Croatia. (Trenčsényi and Kopeček, 2006: 231-34) Also relevant was the Pan-Slavism movement, which has its origins in the mid 19th century, too, and was based on an idea of shared heritage, purpose and vision of all Slavs. Movements such as those articulated above represent the various formulations of unity that were a result of the zeitgeist of the period that gave birth not only to the concretizing of the nation, but to the development of nationalism, according to proponents of modernist theories of national identity formation.

What complicated the issue of unification, though, were the two origins of South Slavic traditions in the region: Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman. Therefore, what bound the individual nations, more than anything else, was the shared language spoken by a large majority of the South Slavic people, and in particular the Croats, Serbs and Muslims (Bosnians). The similarities between the Serbs and the Croats were particularly contrived, since it was their government officials who initially manipulated a shared identity in order to secure an alliance against the greater Empires. Some citizens genuinely believed in a shared identity, but just as many, if not more, found identity based on language questionable. In fact, the concept of a unification based on shared language seemed to many Croats involved in the construction of the first Yugoslavia like an exercise in
domination of the majority ethnic group—the Serbs—over all of the other smaller nations. Thus, the common identity was complicated by its supporters because of theoretical and/or academic reasons, and by skeptics who fought it as an exercise in national and cultural preservation.⁹

During the 19th century, Serbian Interior Minister, Ilija Garašanin (1812-1874), worked tirelessly to achieve independence for Serbia through expanding the borders of Serbia to incorporate neighboring Slavic lands, an act he believed would reunite the Serbs in one landmass because he “believed that Serbia’s national mission was to complete the liberating task initiated by the Serbian Revolution” (Banac, 1988: 83). During this time, the prevailing basis for identity formation was language, and Garašanin tagged Serbs based on their use of štokavian, which, argues historian Ivo Banac, became the basis for the creation of a Greater Serbian state (Banac, 1988: 83). Uniting Serbs has roots in Romantic notions of Pan-Slavism, which justified Slavic cohesion by any means; a project in process until the rise of the Ottoman Empire, a task Garašanin secretly positioned himself to realize (Banac, 1988: 83).

However, Garašanin was only able to push a Serbian role in the reunification process via František A. Zach (1807-1892), a “Moravian enthusiast of Slavic reciprocity who entered the service of [a]…Polish émigré organization” (Banac, 1988: 83). Zach “envisioned [a] new empire as a product of the steady expansion of Serbian state idea among South Slavs,” and “no other South Slavic people except the Serbs could undertake to lead the South Slavs into a unified state” (Banac, 1988: 83). From this ideology,

⁹ See Ivo Banac’s The National Question in Yugoslavia for an in-depth discussion of the forming of Yugoslavia and the intellectual and pragmatic discussions that accompanied its creation.
Garašanin’s infamous work Načertanije was born, a work that outlined the platform for what is termed Greater Serbia, a plan to reunite all Serbs in one territory without regard for the populations of the countries that would need to become a part of Serbia’s territory. Garašanin’s goal was to “deny the Balkans to both Russia and Austrian domination,” but this could not be accomplished without the cooperation of other South Slavic nations (Lampe, 1999: 52). What the Serbian government ultimately envisioned was a unified state that incorporated all Serbs and “would include Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, Kosovo, and northern Albania” (MacKenzie, 1985: 40). The initial negotiations also suggested that “separate identities [would] be respected, and the Croats were promised full religious freedom” (MacKenzie, 1985: 41). Thus, through Garašanin’s conceptualization, Serbs would be able to both forge Greater Serbia and unite with South Slavs, all while bringing into fruition some desires of the Croats—the second largest nationality of the kingdom.

Despite the assessment that “Serbia remained poorly prepared” to fight for independence on behalf of all of the South Slavs, Garašanin worked hard to promote the idea that Serbia was the only nation in the region situated to negotiate on behalf of the South Slavs, despite the attempts of Croatian officials to get involved in liberation from foreign rule (MacKenzie, 1985: 41). Though Garašanin was ultimately unsuccessful in his attempts to secure a Balkan alliance, his work was instrumental in the ultimate realization of a unified Yugoslavia and his work Načertanje also continued to play a role in the formation of Serbian nationalism and Serbian expansionism in the 1980s and 1990s.
The First Yugoslavia (1918-1941)

Nikola Pašić (1845-1926), then leader of Serbia, sought to secure South Slavic political solidarity, and concluded that if the Serbs could unite with other South Slavic nations, they could potentially overthrow the Austro-Hungarian forces because they would have a greater number of troops. Additionally, other leaders in the region, including Ante Trumbić, Frano Supilo and foreign émigrés, formed the Jugoslovenski Odbor, insisting on the right of self-determination of those living in Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia.

In the Yugoslavia that the Serbs championed, individual national identities would become secondary to the collective identity of Yugoslav. However, in the first Yugoslavia, “Yugoslavs remained disunited by nationality, religion and diverse Habsburg, Ottoman and Venetian influences on such basic features of their way of life as urban forms, rural economic and social development and modes of perception” (Rusinow, 1977: xvi). “Their State was a multi-national anachronism in an age characterized by the ideology of the nation-State” (Rusinow, 1977: xvi). The Yugoslavs, which ultimately consisted of the populations of Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and what would eventually be the nations of Slovenia and Macedonia attempted to create a nation-State, in effect, by creating a Yugoslav identity; but there was no true ideology, history, or ideal to support that identity, so it failed because the notions and components of the separate identities of Serbs, Croats, Slovenes and Macedonians had already been developed.

Prime Minister Pašić, who acted as the chief negotiator of the first Yugoslavia, ensured that after the war, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes would be at the service of the Serbian crown. As a member of the Radical Party, he and other party
members worked to incorporate the ideologies of the Radical Party into the platform of Yugoslavia, including the retention of the Serbian crown and Serbian institutions, the adoption of Serbian štokavian as the official state language, the position of the Serbian dinar as a strongest currency in the union, and the supremacy of Orthodoxy (Banac, 1988: 154-55). The continued dominance of Serbia cast Serbs and Serbia as more powerful and more important than other Yugoslav member nations among the elite who were leading Yugoslavia, a mentality that surfaced during the Romantic period and provided fodder for individuals and political parties that sought to thwart acts of Serbian supremacy. These policies, which gave Serbia unfair advantages within the kingdom, eventually favored everything that came from Serbia and fostered the adoption of Serbian supremacy as the principle guiding the acts of the Serbs. Following from the idea that Kosovo gave Serbia a position of elevated importance because of the connection to God through martyrdom, the establishment of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes simply provided a stage to act upon latent ideas of Serbian supremacy. I theorize, also, that because Serbs had this stage, the perception of their own supremacy became a prominent marker of Serbdom.

*The Second Yugoslavia (1945-1992)*

The creation of the second Yugoslavia after the disastrous war presented the possibility of power redistribution, so that Zagreb and Belgrade could have a greater amount of symbiosis. However, the power share concept was quelled when the formation of the second Yugoslavia virtually mirrored the structure of the first, with a “highly centralised and hierarchical” system where Belgrade was the unequivocal capital of the union (Rusinow, 1977: 17). Nevertheless, the constitution “sought to begin fulfilling Partisan pledges to equalise prosperity and opportunities in all regions” (Rusinow, 1977: 17).
Unlike the first Yugoslavia, the new Yugoslavia recognized national borders and positioned country-specific Communist parties within each nation, granting each nation some degree of self-rule. Tito’s 1948 break with Stalin further presented the possibility of greater political autonomy; but the realization of that autonomy was primarily through economic reforms, not the promised political reforms. However, with every progression, there was another setback via centralization reforms, which resulted in greater control from Belgrade. Because of the continued moves toward centralization, the debate about progress and reform became tinged with ethnic overtones, resulting in “an ever clear popular identification of economic centralism with Greater Serbian nationalism” (Rusinow, 1977: 135). The various conflicts between Belgrade and the other capitals became ethnic in nature; for many, the idea of Yugoslavism became synonymous with Serbian hegemony, which both Banac and Rusinow argue as being intertwined with the origins of the first and second Yugoslavias, and as having spurred great mistrust between the various ethnic groups, and therefore diminished the hope and promise that the new nation of Yugoslavia once offered.

With Serbian dominance, Croatian and Slovene nationals were concerned about the secondary and tertiary standing of their cultures and languages following a Yugoslav linguistic union with the Novi Sad Agreement, signed in 1954. At the expense of the Croats and other national and cultural communities, the union helped to solidify two components of Serbian identity: language and power. These two elements of Serbian identity would come to play as important a role as religion and language had prior to the existence of the first and second Yugoslavias. Through the practices of Yugoslav government officials, Serbia was able to explore its expansionist ideas, exercising its
might. Prior to the existence of Yugoslavia, Serbian primacy was merely an idea that could be extracted from the Kosovo epic espousing heroism and supremacy via the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven.\textsuperscript{10}

However, Yugoslavia benefited externally from the superficial appearance of a well-functioning federation, and as such, its citizens enjoyed a relatively comfortable and economically secure life. Unlike in other neighboring Communist/Socialist countries, Yugoslavs traveled freely in the West and had widespread access to foreign goods. Compared to counterparts in other Eastern Bloc nations, artists were able to create relatively freely because they were not bound to the tenants of Socialist Realism (Sudetic, 1992: 48). It would seem that the federalist structure of the government could have only aided in the equal distribution of power, and, by extension, control for a greater equality of culture. However, internally, Yugoslavia lacked the same balance (culturally, politically and socially) that it projected to the outside. In fact, the unique government that theoretically was a hybrid of capitalism and socialism produced an imbalance of power favoring Serbia and Serbian cultural products in practice.

\textit{The Disintegration of Yugoslavia (1991-1999)}

Ethnic discord resulting from the forming of the union, and the primacy of Serbian cultural markers of identity, surfaced in the late 1960s via Croatian demands for economic and linguistic parity with the federation’s capital, Belgrade. Dissatisfaction with the power structure of the federation even gave rise to demands for a separate banking entity in Croatia, complete with its own currency. The culmination of this period...

\textsuperscript{10} The Kosovo epic would later be used by nationalists late in the 1980s and into the 1990s to justify war, nationalism and resistance to Western demands.
of Croatian discontent came in 1971 when over 30,000 Croatian university students protested in support of greater Croatian autonomy. (Batović, 2009: 17) This discontent surfaced in other nations and provinces of Yugoslavia. Other conflicts between Belgrade and the periphery were present in Kosovo on many levels, included disparity among Serbs and Kosovar Albanian political representation and even independence in the autonomous region during the 1970s. In the 1976 Kosovo student protests, participants fought simply for better living conditions and food. However, the 1981 student protests that followed erupted into violence and region-wide discontent with the many disparities between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo. In addition, at the time, Kosovo suffered from a failing economy, rampant unemployment and few opportunities for work. The discontent was not relegated only to a unharmonious relationship between Belgrade and the periphery. In 1986 the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences wrote and distributed the now infamous Arts and Sciences memorandum, advocating institutionally-sanctioned Serbian nationalism, based on what the authors believed injustices committed towards Serbs. These details further advance the notion that the wars of the 1990s, now infamous, were the culmination of the initial concerns of all non-Serbian Yugoslav member states. Perpetuation of these conflicts that were ethnic in nature indicate that the initial discontents of the Yugoslav ethnicities only lied dormant during the reign of Tito. In fact, I believe that when the wars of the 1990s are considered in tandem with the decades of interethnic conflict, becomes imprecise to define individual ethnic and national sentiment as “dormant,” since tensions continued to exist but were either simply suppressed or ignored until they intensified and escalated into wars. Although tensions were always high between the Serbs and the Croats, Kennedy notes, no one ever could have expected
that Yugoslavia would devolve into a series of very dirty wars, the likes of which had not been seen in Europe since WWII. In contrast, Banac’s *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* reminds the reader of the various tensions that existed during the founding of Yugoslavia, which indicate that Yugoslavia’s end could, in no way, be any more amicable than its beginning.

The 1990s Yugoslav secessionist wars and subsequent social and political restructuring in the region continue to affect the (re)formation of a post-war Serbian identity and current cultural products. Such cultural products aid in creating or, in some cases, reaffirming the specificity of the nation.

The final Yugoslav Communist party congress in 1990, where Slovenia and Croatia walked out, ultimately pushed Serbia and all other republics to embark on something new. The 1990 party congress served as an affirmation of the cultural and political disassociation that began in Slovenia as early as 1989 via amendments to its constitution, ensuring not only the right to secede from the union but also the legal formation of political parties (Cox, 2005: 78). The eventual 1990 Slovene referendum for independence ultimately ensured the demise of Yugoslavia in addition to the creation of the first independent Slovene state. Bosnia, Croatia, and Macedonia then declared independence from Yugoslavia, precipitating individual cultural renaissances as well, but, unlike Slovenia, only after the horrific wars of the 1990s in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo (Cox, 2005: 79).

What all of their independence movements illustrate, though, is how these nations reformulated their cultural identities, bringing together their cultural products and revisiting their pre-Yugoslav history. They also reclaimed their cultural icons, who had
theretofore been simply Yugoslav, even though many had existed in their specific cultural assignment prior to the creation of Yugoslavia, but held hostage under an all-encompassing Yugoslav identity. The only former-Yugoslav nation that had a difficult time reckoning the new individual identity was Serbia, whose identity was so intertwined with the Yugoslav identity that reclaiming its cultural icons frequently proved controversial.\textsuperscript{11} Serbs could no longer retain the same money, government, or prominence that they once enjoyed. Because Milošević was unsuccessful in salvaging the existence of Yugoslavia, the result was the disintegration of what had been a sustainable construct of Serb identity. As a result, the new Serbian identity could not be formed by collecting and recommitting elements of the Yugoslav construct, as was done in the other republics, but in rearranging a patchwork of constituents. For example, Andrić was reclaimed as Bosnian, Ivan Meštrović as Croatian, Danilo Kiš as Hungarian Jew, and Petar Njegoš as Montenegrin.

While other post-Communist nations throughout Eastern Europe were progressing toward democratic standards and acquiring greater diplomatic ties with Western nations through NATO membership or affiliation with similar organizations, Serbia was engaged in war and only experiencing changes by way of protests from grassroots organizations and undercurrents of dissatisfaction with what was becoming status quo in Serbia. Disconnected student resistance, became organized through the student \textit{Otpor} (resistance) movement a group that began in 1998 and was instrumental in voting Milošević out of power by aligning itself with the Democratic Opposition of Serbia, (DOS) a coalition of anti-Milošević political Parties. (Ilić, 2000: 1) \textit{Otpor} was a well organized student

\textsuperscript{11} The difficulties came from the fact that some cultural icons, who were historically deemed Serbs, were actually ethnically something other than Serb – e.g. Nikola Tesla and Ivo Andrić.
political organization, that embodied everything that the establishment was not—change, difference, democratic principles, and youth. This resistance to the Milošević regime and its tactics was a bottom-up movement, which had a majority of students in its ranks, but also included artists, cultural dissidents, and common citizens. In fact, among their ranks was a harmony of the working class and the *intelligentsia* (Popov, 2002: 375-400). These various resistance movements played a great role in eventually bringing down the Milošević regime and setting Serbia, politically and socially, on a different course of democracy and progress.

Historically, the only well-organized protests in Yugoslavia were met with wide-scale arrest and party expulsions.\(^{12}\) Though Yugoslavia was considerably more open than the other Communist republics, social dissonance was not tolerated. Thus, the protests of the 1990s marked a new understanding that social unrest could bring about change. In order to spread their message, protesters used independent media outlets, such as B92 and student-run underground radio stations.

Though some protested the Milošević regime and its policies, just as many were happy to continue promoting the idea of Serbian superiority and dominance throughout the region, and even the world if given the chance. The phrase “*Srbija do Tokija*” (Serbia to Tokyo) is emblematic of that stance. They were the benefactors of the nationalism that swept through Serbia during the wars, as a protest to the dissolution of Serbian supremacy. During the wars of the 1990s, these individuals followed the ideas propagated by the Milošević regime. Their venues of expression were turbo folk, various football

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\(^{12}\) This is reference to the large-scale Croatian protests in 1971 and those who were sent to *Goli Otok* in order to be “reeducated” in proper behavior for Yugoslav citizens.
matches throughout Serbia, and the signs of Serbian nationalism, namely, the sign of the three fingers and the flag; they used the Serbian Orthodox Church as an instrument of terror instead of peace (Čolović, 2002).

In keeping with the trends of time—political and social change—these two very distinct arms of the then contemporary Serbian social movements were beginning to take hold and change the very way in which Serbs used their culture and invoked elements of their identity. The means by which cultural affinities were articulated and cultural practices changed conformed with the contemporary setting, which cleaved the very fabric of Serbian society and consciousness into two very distinct halves. One represented an old way, wherein historical elements of Serbian culture, namely, language, and religious practices were maintained as active components of their definition of “Serb.” Among their ranks were typically older individuals, but not always. Those espousing the ideas of this redefinition of Serbian culture found comfort and justification through the words, actions, and deeds of the Milošević government. Once Milošević was deposed, they found refuge in the policies and ideas put forth by the Radical Party in Serbia (a party that touted Vojislav Šešelj as its leader, a war criminal and former leader of the Eastern Serbian dominant side of Bosnia—current-day Republika Srpska). The Radical Party was established under Šešelj’s leadership in 1992, as an offshoot of the party of the same name originally established in WWII under Pašić. The Radical Party promotes noninvolvement in international organizations, a reunification of all ethnic Serbs in one country, the sole use of Cyrillic, and promotion of Serbian nationalism.

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13 Serbian Hero – this sentiment was especially prevalent in the summer of 2005, when Vojislav Šešelj was being sought out by the Hague for conviction. See the profile of Vojislav Šešelj from BBC online at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2317765.stm.
which includes the supremacy and singular worth of Serbian culture and cultural institutions.14

Pro-Europe and anti-isolationist individuals stood in contrast to those whose ideas and messages were and continue to be carried out through the Radical Party, and they found an outlet for their voices through the Democratic Party of Serbia as well as through the Western nations and pro-integrationist outsiders. They, along with their Western and NGO counterparts, believed that the only way for Serbia to progress and walk away from the legacy of the wars in the 1990s was to return to the international example that Serbia represented during Yugoslavia, so Serbia could recreate itself as compliant with Western institutions and reintegrate itself into them. The democratic movement in Serbia was represented initially by students, but was eventually projected out as the dominant way of thinking in Serbia beginning with the election of Zoran Đinđić in 2001.15 Since then, the political powers in Serbia have worked to project a democratic, progressive nation through deeds that the West finds favorable, including the continued election of a Democratic bloc president and prime minister since 2001.16 Serbia has been cooperating with the demands of the former Chief Prosecutor for the Hague, Carla Del Ponte, to hand

14 The Serbian Radical Party is gaining in popularity and continues to win a large number of seats in the parliament. Though it is still a minority party, it remains the second largest party in Serbia, after the Democratic Party.

15 The election of Đinđić was viewed as a positive development in the West, but before he was able to meaningfully implement his pro-Western platform, he was assassinated.

16 By stating that elected president and prime minister are part of the Democratic bloc are technically true. However, this may insinuate that by democratic bloc, I mean that these leaders are proponents of the Western democratic ideal. However, Koštunica and his Serbian Democratic Party (DSS) were defined primarily through their opposition to Communism, but they are strong proponents of Serbian nationalism and protectionism.
over its war criminals in order to improve its chances for eventual European Union
Membership, all achievements that accord with the new practices of the government.

This divide in Serbian society presents the most current representation of the
cultural and now even political pulse of Serbia. These ideological stances dictating the
predominant trends in Serbian society inform the cultural products of the society as well.
That is not to say that there are no other trends within Serbian society, but it is true that
the hard line nationalist movement and its adherents stand in stark contrast to the pro-
Western, anti-Serbian hegemony, progressive movement that surfaced during Milošević’s
oppressive and unilateral regime, and continues to contend for the heart and soul of
Serbia. The cultural products that have been emerging from Serbia tend to clearly
espouse one movement over the other through the themes that those cultural expressions
explore.
Chapter 2: “Unity Will Make Prosperity Possible”: From Yugoslav to Serb

Post-Yugoslav Serbia continues to languish in a state of failed transition. In its quest to define, or at least articulate, its sense of self, the greatest role has been played by the cultural crisis that began anew at the onset of the 1990s and early 2000s, crescendoed during Belgrade bombing, and continues to the present. This crisis results from the abolition of a fundamental tenet of Serbian identity: Serbia’s perceived and apparent political and cultural supremacy in the Yugoslav Union. Serbia’s fall from primacy in the Union to not only powerlessness and insignificance but also ostracism began with the 1990s independence wars and was solidified with the 1999 NATO bombing and Kosovo independence. Prior to 1999, historical events that had ushered great change into Serbia only reshaped or restructured Serbian cultural identity, or at least added to established cultural norms. However, the Yugoslav wars destroyed much of Serbia’s cultural framework, including the literary canon and Yugoslav nationality. Additionally the adjustment in status necessitated that the fundamentals of the Serbian cultural understanding of self be altered to compensate for the severe loss of culture, cultural products and other components of their identity.

In the article “Towards Reconciling with Ourselves and Others,” Jelena Srna considers “the perpetuating pattern of frequent, intensive, extreme, ongoing, and violent changes [in Serbian history]. . .[and]. . .its impact on the lives of individuals and families, society, and culture” (Srna, 2005: 9). Historical acts that have caused a great change in Serbian society include the mythologized Kosovo battle of 1389, the Serbian uprising in 1804, the formation of autonomous, Ottoman-ruled, Serbia in 1831, WWI and WWII,
and the formation of the two Yugoslavias. Though each of these historical events has affected Serbian society in different ways, they are connected because they helped to change the various components defining Serbian society. With each historical event came an accompanying mythology, whereby Serbia (as a nation and people) was cast as the protagonist incapable of any wrongdoing, and any opponent of Serbia as the antagonist. These myths that arose with these historical events helped to define who was friend or foe and bolster the notion of Serbia’s cultural and political identity, providing points around which Serbs could rally.

In a contemporary setting, these collective formations of self stemmed from the “permanent fragmentation, polarization, isolation, and discontinuity” following the cataclysmic events that transformed Serbian identity (Srna, 2005: 10). The existence of an ever-changing formation of identity has “strengthen[ed] collectivization and centralization as strong centripetal forces, which usually operate as defense mechanisms in troubled times” (Srna, 2005: 10). This point is particularly relevant when analyzing the social trends that have emerged in Serbia after the 1999 NATO bombing. As such, it is proper to speak of the ongoing formulation of Serbian identity as a set of affinities that interplay with and react to each other because they are in direct opposition to one another and provide the source for the cultural, political, and social divide in Serbia. In contemporary Serbia, the two tendencies running through society set forth two very different, but clearly articulated ideals for Serbia, which I term the Local and the West, based on the source of the components of each ideal. The concepts that are encompassed in each social, cultural, and political pathway are in competition to locate the model path for post-Yugoslav Serbia. Subsumed in those concepts is also a generational divide
between the Serb and Yugoslav generation in the ways in which they understand the ideal construct of contemporary cultural identity. Though the divide cannot be completely defined based on generation, the generations provide a useful basis for the idealized and imagined notions of Serbian cultural identity because similar experiences mold the ways members of a particular generation think about, understand, experience, and imagine their surroundings. Apart from generations, political affinities also provide a useful means of understanding how individual thought systems are formed. When considered together, the political and generational aspects of a particular individual bears a direct relation to the way they imagine an ideal Serbia. For these reasons in the chapters that follow, I analyze cultural products in relation to the generational affiliation and/or political affinities, inasmuch as those two elements can be assessed.

**Foundations of generational schisms in Serbia**

Some of the earliest ideas that aided in the formation of Serbian identity come from Jovan Cvijić (1862-1924), who, though a geographer by training, came to be one of Serbia’s earliest, and most important, cultural anthropologists (Woodward, 1997: 4; Obituary: Jovan Cvijić, 1992). His theories provided a framework for the original anthropological formulations of Serbian national character and cultural ideals of the Balkans. His classification system of Balkan inhabitants was based on regional cultural influences such as “the zone of the modified Byzantine culture, patriarchal cultural zone, zone of the Western culture and the zone of the Turkish and Eastern influences” (Ćulibrk, 1971: 11). The region was then analyzed according to characteristics of the inhabitants of specific regions of the Balkans: Dinaric, Centralic, Panonic, and Eastern-Balkan. Serbs fell into the Dinaric classification. The most prominent characteristics of the Dinaric are
versatile wit, keen intelligence, extreme sensibility, and abundance of intellectual power (Milivoy, 1919). This classification system helped to assert fundamental differences between those living in the various climates and topographies of the Balkans, which influenced ideas of identity and culture formation for the 1880s generation of Serbs and, in addition to the sense of belonging to one language and religion, continues to inform the fundamental ideas of Serbian identity. Cvijić distinguished populations in the region with minimal regard to the fact that many Balkan inhabitants were ethnic Slavs. Instead he focused his theories on shared cultural characteristics within specific frames, which included geography, nation, tribe and even the nature of multiethnic societies, unusual at the time since the idea of the nation state was prevalent. Cvijić recognized that national character is not merely based on national birth, origin or ethnic ties, but rather shared geographical space, history and tradition(s).

Cvijić is important because his views on Serbian identity debuted during a period of great change in Serbian society. He is considered a revolutionary for his time; his 1880s generation introduced a way of thinking to the Balkans that was based less on national assignation and more on shared traditions and cultural characteristics, which was in direct opposition to that of the preceding generation. Ideas of the 1860s generation were formed on the foundation of self and “Other.” For them, nationality and ethnicity were based solely on those who belonged and those who did not. The “Other” usually meant the Ottoman Empire, but could have easily included any non-Serb political entity that had Serbs living under its rule. This generation was fueled by a desire to unite all Serb nationals under Serbian self-governance (Jovanović, 2005: 13). It can be inferred that the impetus behind the 1860s generation came directly from the Kosovo myth, as
their generation stressed that victory, both actual and highly symbolic, could only be achieved through unity. Also driving this generation of Serbs was Romantic nationalism, but not so unrestrained as to spill into xenophobia; for pragmatic reasons, they were ever careful not to offend the West (Jovanović, 2005: 14).

There were significant differences between the two aforementioned generations. The 1860s generation adopted an essentialist way of viewing Serbia and the Balkans: a duality, which imposed the us-versus-them framework, basing their ideas on “one clear authentic set of characteristics which all Serbs share and which do not alter across time,” an idea similar to the primordialist notion of ethnie (Woodward, 1997: 11). By contrast, the 1880s generation preferred a more non-essentialist, or nuanced, approach, which “focus[ed] on differences as well as common or shared characteristics, both between Serbs and also other ethnic groups,” and diachronically on “how the definition of ‘Serb’ has changed across the centuries” (Woodward, 1997: 11). Both methods contained similar ideologies in their understanding of the nation, as both definitions were rooted in ideas that the nation was formed in times of antiquity and did not change. However, the 1880s generation recognized the arbitrary nature of cultural and national affiliation, where as the 1860s generation did not.

This generational tension set a paradigm mirrored in future generations during times of great change in Serbian society. These patterns of generational difference even existed in the creation of the second Yugoslavia, and surfaced primarily through student protests and other expressions of discontent with the Belgrade based government and patterns of Serbian hegemony. However, as the Milošević period in Serbia presented a time of great change and potential revolution, a generational divide surfaced again as in
other liminal times in Serbian history. Younger generations have been the catalysts and agents of change in Serbian society, and that tradition persists today as Serbia remains a culturally, politically, and socially liminal state. In fact, it is likewise possible to parse generational differences within today’s articulations of the nature of Serbian identity, too.

Though the goals and imaginations of an ideal for Serbia are divided, primarily, once again generationally, this does not presume that these differences permeate all members of a particular generation, however, there are dominant views and affinities that differentiate the Yugoslav and Serb generations. I define the bases of these affinities as Local and West, which the different generations mediate. The generational divide is pervasive throughout the post-Communist realm, however what is different about Serbia is on-going trauma of being a post-imperial nation, an issue with which the younger generation grapples regularly in their artistic expressions.

**Political Divides**

In the article, “Post-Dayton Interregnum: Serbia and its Political Parties up to the NATO Aggression of 1999” Momčilo Subotić meticulously details how the “political panorama of Serbia ushered in a definitive polarization of Serbian political parties” (Subotić, 2007: 61). In post-Yugoslav Serbia, political parties played a prominent role in shaping the outlooks of the Local or the West, based on a particular imagining of an ideal future for Serbia. Hence, to understand the politics of the Radical Party is to better understand the currents of in the Local, and to understand the Democratic Party aides in understanding the aspiration of the West. Interestingly, during the years of my study (2001-2008), there has been a teetering of political power from Democratic to Radical, with neither party commanding a clear majority of public support, save local elections.
This absence of no clear majority representation illustrates a lack of dominance of West or Local. In fact, political embodiments of the two views have merely alternated power. For example, after Koštunica’s ousting as Prime Minister, Belgrade made a concerted effort to project the image of a more Western-friendly government. A November 20, 2008 article by Teofil Pančić, regular contributor to the Serbian weekly periodical *Time*, even proclaimed that the hold of the Radical Party was waning, evident in the scramble for leadership since the imprisonment of Vojislav Šešelj (Pančić, 2008: 35). The anti-American sentiment expressed in the spring of 2008 with the destruction of American institutions in Belgrade, demonstrates that sentiments of the Local are just as powerful as the pro-Western inclinations. What follows are in depth description of the history and motivation behind the sentiment of each idea.

### The Local

The idea of the Local is informed by what is believed to be intrinsically Serbian, culturally, politically and socially. Manifestations of the Local surface in the cultural products analyzed in the chapters that follow. Within post-Yugoslav Serbia, the ideology of the Local has changed in tandem with the historical realities of the time. However, what has remained relatively consistent is the assertion that (the components of) Serbian culture, cultural products, and political evolution are far superior than in other nations. The Local is also based on a passionately held belief that Serbia has historically been strong and will continue to retain its might, provided its culture is preserved. It also affirms that the connection of each Serb to his country and the Serbian Orthodox Church cannot be broken by time, space, or country of birth or residence, which illustrates the
primacy of the Church. Lastly, the Local seeks to tie every Serb to the great history that delivered the nation, both earthly and heavenly.

The *Politics of Symbol* by Čolović dissect characteristics and events in Serbian culture and history that exemplify the Local. This work departs from the widespread ethnonationalism that took hold of Serbia in the 1990s and the historical antecedents that paved the way for the Local. Asserting that the Kosovo myth is a source of Serbian cultural identity, Čolović picks apart the themes of the myth, illustrating how it lives on in the minds of those who espouse the most nationalist aspects of the Local. Expressions of nationalism are precisely what the Local has become—a world-view for adherents of Milošević’s Socialist Party and, following his demise, Vojislav Šešelj’s Radical Party, who “believe they will correct the inequity that the world power players have committed against them that ignores their right to live in a united Serbian state” (Serbian Radical Party, 2009). In order to do this, however, they “will have to wait for a better time when a stronger Russia will facilitate the unification of *Republika Srpska*, the Federal Republic of Serbia, and Montenegro into one Serbian state” (Subotić, 2007: 63).

The Local concept was pushed by Milošević and other political leaders in the 1980s and 1990s, and then in the early 2000s by Šešelj and other politicians within the Radical Party. The Local can be classified as a top-down concept, whereby the individual citizens who espouse the trends follow the directions of a strong-willed leader. Collectively, their vision of contemporary Serbian identity is essentialist, and recycles

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18 The Russia as savior myth is a fundamental aspect of the Radical Party because it is only with the aid of Russia that Serbia will be able to reclaim its people and land. It is their belief that Russia will come to the aid of Serbia again as it has done in the past.
ideas of the Kosovo cycle with very few modifications for modern times, and utilizes the idea that “recovery of the past is part of the process of constructing identity” (Woodward, 1997: 11).

Even prior to the 1990s, Milošević established nationalism as his modus operandi, and his methods provide a great example of what is meant here as Local. In 1987, when Milošević traveled to Kosovo to proclaim to Serbs that, “No one will dare to beat you again,” no one could have predicted what would follow (Doder and Branson, 1999: 304). In fact, in Milošević, Portrait of a Tyrant, Dusko Doder and Louise Branson declare that “the world might never have heard of Slobodan Milošević if he had not been sent in 1987 to the southern Serbian province of Kosovo to mediate what was considered a minor incident in a dispute between the ethnic Albanian majority and minority Serbs” (Doder and Branson, 1999: 3). With this singular event, Milošević rose to prominence, and the action awakened visceral reactions to the interminable battle between Serbs and any foe. That this proclamation was made in Kosovo, however, took on elemental importance, because it became connected to the Kosovo battle of 1389 and its myth. The association was intentionally reinforced when Milošević traveled to Kosovo on Vidovdan 1989 and proclaimed that “after six centuries we are again waging struggle and confronting battles” and continued on to proclaim that “unity will make prosperity possible,” proving that he had been a good student of the Kosovo cycle and was willing to use what “has provided the Serbs with their defining myths of nationalism, pain, and endurance” (Doder and Branson, 1999: 5). Through these actions, Milošević taught Serbs in Kosovo, and eventually throughout Yugoslavia, that they could redeem the injustices against the Serbs from the battle of Kosovo. Even more presciently, Milošević portrayed himself as a new
Lazar carrying his people into a battle, despite knowing they could never be victorious in
the flesh, though victorious in spirit for facing the possibility of defeat. It is impossible to
know whether Milošević entertained delusions of grandeur or if he was simply
calculating the results of his actions.

These, and similar sentiments and actions, had historically shaped the Local, but
with the 1999 NATO bombing, a strong wave of ethnonationalism surfaced throughout
certain populations of Serbia, devoid of any nuance in the definition of “Serb.” Moreover,
the NATO bombing campaign formally solidified Serbia’s status as “Other” to the West.
Leaving the nation devastated and destroyed, the bombing and its aftermath caused a
“crisis [that] spontaneously awoke collective memories,” and the bombing was thus
connected to other transformative events in Serbia’s history (Daković, 2004: 200). As
such, the NATO bombing became a memorialized event, molding it into an act of
aggression in line with bitter Serbian defeat in the past.

Another historically based, but culturally present aspect of the Local is the
intellectual posturing that positions Europe as the antithesis of Serbia and Serbdom,
which characterizes Europe as sick, ailing, and in cultural state of disrepair. As cultural
Serbian writer and former government official Vladimir Velmar-Janković (1895-1976)
and Serbian cultural figure Vladimir Vujić say, “Serbia is not Europe” (Čolović, 2002:
41). Serbia has not succumbed to Europe’s decay. Unlike the Europeans, “Serbs have
protected the continuation of their analysis of self, their national identity, and sacred
history;” hence, they alone can save Europe from itself, and a “deep European soul
endures through them” (Čolović, 2002: 42).¹⁹ What Europe has lost—i.e., its soul and depth of history inherited from the Byzantium and Greek Empires—can be found in Serbs (Čolović, 2002: 42). Because Europe is a vacuous entity, Serbia should choose to exist on its own, without any contemporary European influence—political, cultural or otherwise.

**The West**

The West, as a set of cultural and political aspirations and values, appeals primarily to the younger generations, or those who I have chosen to term “Serb” as opposed to “Yugoslav.” This is not to say that all of the younger generations of Serbs, particularly those who came of age during the Yugoslav wars, define themselves solely in terms of Western values; however, artists whose cultural expressions comingle their imaginings of Western norms with Serbian norms are predominately of the younger generation. The desire to follow Western political, cultural and social norms forms a societal outlook, which I will refer to herein the “West.” Those who embrace elements of the West would undo the political, social, and cultural isolation resulting from the Yugoslav secession wars of the 1990s. Their works express a desire that the West cease to be upheld as antithetical to the Local, but rather as potentially contributing to the complexity of Serbian cultural identity. As such, proponents of Serbian integration with the West “focus on difference, as well as common or shared characteristics, both between Serbs and also other ethnic groups” (Woodward, 1997: 11). In addition, this outlook also seeks to align Serbian political and social systems with those of their Western counterparts.

¹⁹ Such rhetoric can be observed in writings of Ismail Kadare and Julia Kristeva about all peoples in the Balkans, but they do not project nationalist fervor.
A preference of the West, as opposed to the Local, in Serbian society also came into existence as a reaction to the rise of Milošević and the ethnonationalism that accompanied it, which facilitated the impossibility of “alternatives,” as Eric Gordy terms in his work *The Culture of Power in Serbia: Nationalism and the Destruction of Alternatives*. Since the 1990s there has been a lack of popular consensus on which of these cultural elements will dominate the Serbian populace, resulting in a comingling of expressions of both Local and West, observable in cultural products and political affinities of the population.

During the wars, and especially with the bombing of Belgrade, the West surfaced via two distinct realizations, rooted in two graphic spaces: Western Europe and the U.S. This new configuration of the West differs from Maria Todorova’s description of the West in *Imagining the Balkans*, in which she asserts that the West within the Eastern European imagination was, at the time, primarily Western Europe (Todorova, 1997: 10-13). Despite NATO’s bombing campaign of 1999, spearheaded by the U.S. early in the 21st century: Europe signified the political West, while the U.S. signified a cultural West which was at the center of a hegemony of a global culture. With the widespread adoption of the Euro as Europe’s primary currency and the subsequent enlargement of the European Union, political alliances in Southeast Europe have been redefined, with “European” being an amorphous political and social goal for each nation. Though seemingly ever distant, in order to achieve the possibility of European Union membership, major political changes were necessary for Serbia. Western political norms became the standards for opponents of the politicians in power in Serbia, whose actions
and stances were becoming increasingly more isolationist as other neighboring nations achieved European Union membership or ascension status.

Serbian political relations with the European Union only began in 2001, when the European Union-Federal Republic of Yugoslavia Consultative Task Force came into being, whose objective was to aid in “the stabilisation of the region through political and economic reforms in the five countries which are ‘potential candidates’ to the European Union” (europa.eu, 2001).20 As I write this, Serbia is no closer today than it was in 2001 (at the onset of pre-negotiation talks) to European Union membership. Serbia is now receiving European aid; however, that aid has been given only to help achieve the goals set forth by the European Union. In 2007, Serbia received €164.8 million to reform its systems. “Focus areas for financial assistance include political requirements covering, inter alia, democratic institutions, public administration reform, rule of law, reform of the judiciary, fight against corruption, human rights, and protection of minorities, socio-economic requirements and European Standards” (Commission Decision, 2007).21 Another requirement was effective cooperation with The Hague, which charges Serbia’s leaders with the task of capturing and presenting war criminals for trial. As of the summer of 2007, this stipulation has focused on the capture of war criminal Ratko Mladić, who faces 11 counts, including “genocide, crimes against humanity and violation of the laws of war” (BBC, 2008).22 Since Radovan Karadžić’s capture in 2008, E.U.-Serbia relations have improved, albeit on a small scale, so the availability of visas for

22<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/1766806.stm>
Serbian citizens to travel throughout Western Europe, and especially European Union countries, has been extended. Whereas it had been extremely difficult, and at times nearly impossible, for Serbian nationals to obtain visas to travel westward, this is apparently no longer the case. Additionally, the potential for Serbs to travel within Europe has greatly improved since the European Union has reduced the visa fee for Serbs and eased visa requirements. This step is an implicit admission that blockading Serbs from travel beyond their national borders benefits neither Serbia nor its neighbors. Prior to that, even the fares, which would typically costs hundreds of Euros barred all but wealthy and well-connected from traveling abroad and ensured that the younger generation had little or no exposure to anything outside of their country. The average salary in December 2006, according to Serbian news source Beta, was 28,267 Dinars, roughly 285-300 Euros, depending on the exchange rate, and travel to Europe can be hundreds of Euros (Beta, 2007).

More important for the European context is the idea that they will never see the benefit of European systems—educational, political, and socio-cultural. In announcing the existence of a foreseeable road map for visa-free travel for Serbs, European Commission Vice President Jacques Barrot, declared that Serbian travel to the E.U. “will increase mutual understanding and improve [Serbian-E.U.] relations in all fields. But facilitating travelling to the E.U. is in particular important to the younger generation in a country where 70% of the young people have never traveled abroad” (europa.eu, 2008).²³ It is important to remember that the European Union is a political body. As such, its foci

for Serbia are political. This way of thinking supports the idea that Serbia can change socially and culturally by changing its ways politically. Despite the well-intentioned path, this construct of Serbia maintains the perception of Serbia as backward and different, a perception that shuns the notion of cultural relativism. Nevertheless, for many Serbs, Western institutions are far more desirable than what the Local can offer since they represent progress and the possibility of something new.

By way of contrast, as the primary mechanism of globalization, American culture dominates cultural manifestations of the West in Serbia. With the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe, the role of the U.S. has changed from advocate of democracy to purveyor of culture via consumer products, films, and other similar visual and audible media. The case of Serbia is no different than the rest of the world, for which the U.S.’s main exports are its cultural products. Anthony Lake, former Clinton National Security Advisor has said, “Whereas during the Cold War the United States had been preoccupied with containing the apparent threat of Communist expansion, now, as it looked toward the 21st century, it should seek to enlarge the reach of the market democracies” (Campbell, Kean, 1997: 268). This objective rendered the goal of spreading democracy secondary for the U.S., since that had, in effect, already been achieved in Eastern Europe. With democracy firmly in place, the political focus shifted to a cultural one, and American cultural products gained primacy within that region, and arguably in a great majority of the world.

There are many cultural responses to the encroachment of the West; however, the two following examples help to illustrate how the West materializes in Serbia. The first is a collection of opposition memorabilia from the time of the Belgrade and Novi Sad
bombing—parodies that appear on a collection of free postcards that mimic the ads of Western companies (See Figure 1). Similar types of postcards can be found in bars and pubs; they are advertisements for the companies whose logos are printed on them. These spoofs mock British and American companies by using their logos against a backdrop of horrific images from the Novi Sad bombings of 1999. The products in this series include: a Ballentine’s whiskey ad with the packaging being used as a candle holder with the phrase “Inspiration;” Goodyear tires with the caption “Not So Good Year” in front of a pile of cars that appear to have been overturned by the bombing; Coca-Cola with the slogan “Always” showing someone using a Coca-Cola bottle as a funnel to put a substance into his car’s gas tank, since sanctions made acquiring fuel impossible; a postcard with a Sony Playstation with the Novi Sad oil refinery on an aerial military target screen and the phrase “It’s not a game;” a Microsoft Windows postcard simply depicting the Windows 98 logo in front of an image of the taped and boarded up windows—protection from potential bombing reverberations; a Lucky Stripe cigarette add with the phrase “Get Lucky” and signs that convey that the stores are out of cigarettes, again a situation caused by the sanctions. There is a final postcard parodying an ad by the British motor oil company Comma, with a cat using one of the company’s shipping boxes as a makeshift house, and the caption “Shelter.” These postcards prove useful in analyzing the cultural West in Serbia as protests against the actions of the West, especially the U.S. and Great Britain. However, in addition to protesting the actions of the West, or inaction as the case was at times, the postcards also underscore the existence of the West through its cultural products. The existence of solely British and American

24 All of the postcards are included in Figure one except the one that mocks Windows
products in this series suggests that the U.S. and United Kingdom (U.K.) are fungible for Serbian citizens, assuming that the messages conveyed by the postcards could be appreciated by Serbian citizens. Most important about the postcards is how they express a general disdain of the paternalism and destruction of the West, but indicate that the West persists in Serbia through its consumer products, despite the bombing.

These parodies dating primarily from the early 2000s are apt counterpoints to the satirical television show “Mile against the Transition,” a weekly B92 show that aired in 2003 and starred famous Yugoslav generation actor Zoran Cvijanović as Mile, an irreverent, fed-up Serb rebelling against the political, social, and economic transition in early 2000s Serbia. The show simultaneously criticized Serbia’s inability to accept the political changes happening elsewhere in the region and recognized the incompatibility of the European Union mandated political and social reforms and Serbian political and social realities. The criticisms against Western Europe, and specifically the European Union, target the political institutions that the West is seeking to impose on Serbia, including anti-piracy measures, and seat belt rules to name a few. With the rise in importance of the European Union, and the adoption of the Euro in 2002, most former Central and Eastern European nations have sought to join the European Union and reap the benefits that accompany that membership: a more prosperous economy, a globally acceptable political system, and free trade and movement for its citizens. The European Union thus determines the standards of modernization for each member and would-be member. What hinders Serbia from stronger relations with the European Union, though, is a lack of overt political repentance for the crimes committed by Serbs during the wars in Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, all of which illustrated just how out of sync
Serbia was with the norms of other, more democratic Western European countries. Though this fact is not necessarily gleaned from “Mile against the Transition,” it is an aspect of the general criticism that the show offers.

In post-Yugoslav Serbia, the definitions of the Local and the West have many variations in their modes of expression, and what I have provided here are only examples. For a more complete picture, we must also turn to the themes presented in cultural products such as literature, film, print and news media. Though the Local and West are not always expressed in those terms, all cultural products analyzed in the pages that follow illustrate that there is a divide in society, which corresponds to a particular set of ideals, values, and aspirations, of which the divide of the West and Local is only one example. The divides that surface are reminiscent of the West and Local in their own way, in that most of the divide can be traced to generational preferences, and the presence of themes that run through the Local and West, which I will address specifically in the chapters on each cultural product. Regarding film, I directly address how the Local and West are explored; in media, I depart from the classification of Local and West to illustrate the divide in the dominant political leanings regarding Russia and the West as standard bearers of the international divide; and in literature I illustrate how the divide is borne out in literary aesthetic preference of either (Neo)realism or Postmodernism, and how each preference recalls a particular cultural and, in some cases, political leaning coded in the ideas present in the Local and West.
Chapter 3: Serbian Politics and Culture: Russia vs. The West

In an academic department at the University of Belgrade hangs a poster with the caption, “Careful what you write, words can kill - 5. October, One year later.” The background of the poster features an assortment of images dating from the time of the Yugoslav wars: Milošević giving speeches in different settings, student protests, Politics headlines and other events that led up to the election of Vojislav Koštunica in 2000. The message at the bottom of the poster, together with the images, illustrates how, in Serbia during the 1990s and 2000s, the words in speeches and in print were quickly transformed from the symbolic to the real, and their messages were eventually realized through acts of violence and even war. Media imbues words with power, and print media, in particular, provides a forum for people to consume those words which persuade and motivate them, reaffirming or dismantling a particular set of beliefs. Media is not simply a by-product of a nation, culture, or transition process, but an instrument, in and of itself, that enriches a society by providing a particular narrative. It is “the voice of public thought…[and] gives expression to all layers of the society, and conveys the wishes and needs of the people” (Lončarević, 1919: 5). Media has played, and continues to play, a great role during the transition of Serbia from part (although dominant part) of Yugoslavia to an independent democratic nation. As such, Serbian media functions not simply as a conveyor of information, but transmits Serbian social, cultural, and especially political norms. In this chapter I explore the role of media in Serbia as a means of vehicle to express political and social preferences and desires during the years of 2003-2008 as they relate to new
formations of Serbian identity structured around a Russian, and therefore Slavic ideal representative of its historical formations or a Western progressive mode, expressing itself through political, social, and cultural progress.

The beginnings of Serbian print media can be traced to 1768 with the earlier-referenced periodical *Slaveno-Srpski Magazin (Slavo-Serbian Magazine)*, produced in Venice. *Slavo-Serbian Magazine* was founded by Orfelin Stefanović in order to create a press industry in Serbia and “to ensure the development of education” and “modestly develop literature, especially of church and school tenor” (Milinčević, 1992). At the time of the paper’s founding, Serb, as a concept existed, but for those Serbs who were subjects of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian crowns, information on Serbian culture, language, and history was scarce. Therefore, *Slavo-Serbian Magazine* helped to disseminate knowledge about Serbia and foster a connection between Serbs living in the regional empires. Production of print media in Serbia arose from an idea that every nation must possess the ability to express the essence of its people, or *narod*, and print media provided one of the earliest means of expressing a singular understanding of Serbian culture and cultural ideology to Serbs throughout the Balkans. (Kisić, Bulatović, and Mišović, 1996).

In the late 19th early 20th century print media ceased to be used solely for cultural expression and it became a means to disseminate positions on both culture and politics in the decades that followed. Among the catalysts for the development of Serbian journalistic expression were shifts in political realities, examples of which include the establishment of governmental entities, emerging or continuing political conflict and political upheaval. The anti-Magyarization revolts of Serbs in Vojvodina (1848-1849),
for instance, were some of the earliest events that had an effect on the production of periodicals. The result of those revolts was the creation of the journal *Napredak* (*Progress*), published in the cities of Sremski Karlovac and Zemun and “was the first to be printed according to Vuk Karadžić’s spelling rules” (MacKenzie, 2004; Skerlić, 1911: 38).

In the year 1858, the Serbian Parliament was established, which further helped to advance Serbian media, as the two dominant sides of the political spectrum, liberalism and conservatism, sought platforms to publicly exhibit their [political] ideas and programs. (Bjelica, 1994: 275) Over the years as “the old divisions of liberal and conservative, became redistributed into Radicals, Progressives, Liberals, and Socialists, [and] each party used print media as an instrument of political propaganda, and editorial papers were the leading centers of party life” (Bjelica, 1994: 275-276).

The 20th century gave rise to daily newspapers, of which there were 13 major titles including *Srpske novine* (*Serbian News*) and *Politika* (*Politics*). Of particular importance, though, was the daily *Politics* (1904), noted for its principled stance on the most important of domestic and foreign issues, securing it great support among the intellectual readers of the day (Bjelica, 1994: 277). In fact, *Politics* persists as a well-patronized and widely-read newspaper today.

During Yugoslavia, print media thrived and according to journalist Mark Thompson, in the Socialsit Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) media was “more abundant, varied, and unconstrained,” and the political power exercised on the various forms of print media was less blatant and oppressive in comparison to any other Communist state. (Thompson, 2005: 7) In Yugoslavia there were 27 daily newspapers, 17
major magazines and hundreds of local papers and social interest periodicals. (Thompson, 2005: 7) Despite the diversity of publications in Yugoslavia, the print media outlets usually focused on the events that affected the country in which the paper or magazine was written. This tendency only grew during the years that led up to the dismantling of Yugoslavia, and particularly disturbing in Serbia where the Milošević regime slowly came to control the media outlets and the messages that they bolstered. Oppositional voices were crowded out and usurped by those in power, and the press became a instrument of official government stances. Thus, the press in the early 1990s and early 2000s employed a role that it had never held, and its function became questionable.

**The Post-war Context**

Of all the political developments from 2004 to 2008, the most important was the change in Kosovo’s status from autonomous region to independent nation. Kosovo’s independence was negotiated on an international stage on which Russia and the U.S. were the two major poles that supported or denied Kosovo independence. Other nations fell in step with either the Russian or the U.S. stance on Kosovo. The height of this international debate came in the summer of 2007, when then-President Bush traveled to Albania and declared that Kosovo must be free, an action that surprised the international community, and revived a conflict between Russia and the U.S. This split between Russia and the U.S. included two ideological frameworks for the two dominant political factions in Serbia—the Democratic Party whose ideals are aligned with those of the West, and the Radical Party whose supporters subscribe to the Russia as savior myth, and therefore seek greater ties with Russia. The ways in which the two countries participated in this Serbian
conflict closely resembled their positions during the Yugoslav wars, which in turn mirrored Cold War politics where the Soviet Union and the U.S. functioned as antagonists in a conflict of many words and few actions.

On February 3, 2008, days before Kosovo was poised to become an independent country, Democratic Party member Boris Tadić was elected to power in Serbia, presenting the possibility of leading the country from international isolation to engagement. However, celebration of the potential advancement of Serbian democracy was quickly squelched because the E.U. member nations offered to enter again into negotiations with Serbia, causing great discord in the fragile coalition government. Though the Democrats got a majority of the votes, and therefore the presidency, the coalition government was composed primarily of the competing factions, with Tadić as the president, but Oliver Đurić and Vojislav Koštunica, both members of the conservative Democratic Party of Serbia, as president of the parliament and Prime Minister. Therefore, they thought that the E.U. proposal, if accepted would be akin to acquiescing to the E.U. position of pro-Kosovo independence. They rejected the proposal. Nevertheless, Kosovo’s independence quickly followed, and a large number of Western nations and organizations quickly extended their support. Despite the Western reforms that the country was set to enact with Tadić in power, Serbian leaders defied Western calls for Kosovo’s independence, as they believed that Serbia’s territorial integrity was being challenged. Ultimately, though, the language of territorial integrity would prove ineffective against the imminence of Kosovo’s independence.

Kosovo became an independent state on February 17, 2008, and that independence ushered in tremendous change in Serbia and challenged Serbian notions of self. It changed not only the geographical boundaries of Serbia, but also the foundation of Serbian identity, premised on Kosovo as the heart and soul of Serbia. In addition, it reawakened the divide in Serbia between Russia and the West.

This geopolitical positioning of Russia against the West elucidated a similar divide in political affinities within Serbia itself, a divide that surfaced in Serbian print media. Since its inception, Serbian news sources have exhibited distinct political bents. In keeping with this tradition, each publication, during the period of 2004-2009, adhered to the political posture of its audience. The clearest litmus test for such postures was the preference for greater political and cultural ties between Serbia and Russia or the West.

Returning to Nations and Nationalisms: Programme, Myth and Reality, where Hobsbawm argues that the role of mass media, which includes press, cinema, and radio, is to “make … national symbols part of the life of every individual, and thus…break down the divisions between the private and local spheres in which most citizens normally lived” (142). Within contemporary Serbia the press is uniquely positioned to connect the individual to the political sphere because it is massively consumed. Also, culturally encoded in the relationship between Serbia and Russia and Serbia and the U.S. are a set of indicators with origins in the Yugoslav conflict of the 1990s and American involvement in the NATO bombing. Moreover, the Serbian connection to Russia has its roots in ideas of Pan-Slavism and the notion of a Slavic ideal, which represents centuries of interaction unencumbered by the confines of space and time. As these two poles dominate the political ideologies in Serbia, they too represent the two dominant poles.
presented in Serbian media. For supporters of Western ideology and democracy, governmental progress toward an E.U. ideal and social and political integration are deemed highly important. Yet those citizens who prefer to have a greater partnership with Russia, advocate that Serbia remains outside Western influence, champion isolationism and the Slavic ideal. These ideas and concepts possess great capital within the two ways of perceiving Serbian political, and even cultural future. Notions contained within the Western or Russian understanding of self are highly symbolic and theoretical, and the “newspaper” in all its modern iterations helps to reinforce the symbolic conceptualization of the Serbian community as a particular set of readers envisions it (Hobsbawm, 1990: 25). As Anderson notes, “the [daily] ceremony [of reading the paper] is . . . replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence [the reader] is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion” (Anderson, 1991: 35). Thus, the reader sees her newspaper being read by others, and the newspaper becomes an instrument connecting her to a greater “imagined community” (Anderson, 1991: 35). Serbs read publications that reaffirm the particular “confidence of community” and, in doing so, confirm the political, cultural, and ideological symbols of their “imagined community” (Anderson, 1991: 36).

In sum, the political events of the late 20th and early 21st centuries in Serbia have created imagined communities which track the divide between Russian and Western ideological “communities,” a divide picked up and emulated by the Serbian print media. Thus, media, more so that film, is molded by the various exogenous forces that manifest aspects of the Local—namely, Russia, through ideas of Pan-Slavism and Russia as
savior—and the West—as a set of aspirations based on E.U. and American political and social standards.

**The Serbian Media Landscape of the 20th and 21st Centuries**

During the radical changes of the modern and post-modern political, social and cultural landscape, the diametrically positioned Serbian media outlets have continued to pay critical roles. Indeed, some news agencies—Tanjug (Telegraphic Agency of New Yugoslavia) and *Politics*, for example, have played and continue to play an important role in the transmission of political events in Serbia (Wien International, 2008).

According to Thompson, *Politika* readership in the early 1990s was in the low 1990s, thus the importance of the newspaper cannot be understated.

During the Milošević regime *Politics* was known for towing the party line and acted as the mouthpiece of the regime, and for a portion of the Serbian public, the publication squandered its credibility (Čolović, 2002). Examples of how *Politics* ceased to be a reliable and widely read newspaper are detailed in the work *When I Say Newspaper* by Čolović, a work that harshly criticizes the bias of *Politics* during the Milošević regime. Pančić, went so far as to call its reporting “trash-media” (Pančić, 1999). Since Milošević’s ousting, however, *Politics* remains somewhat conservative, but has adopted a neutral tone in reporting. In addition, its current collaboration with left-leaning French daily *Le Monde* illustrates that it at least tolerates diverse perspectives since the downfall of the Milošević regime. *Politics* is currently owned jointly by two private companies: the *Politika* media group and WAZ Media Group, a German publishing company with ownership in various print media throughout the former Yugoslavia, Russia and Central Europe. Their goal as stated on the company’s website is
to provide the financial backing for newspapers so that they can be independent. ("Nur wirtschaftlich unabhängige Zeitungen sind freie Zeitungen.") In addition to Politics, the company also has holdings in Dnevnik (Journal), a popular daily in Vojvodina.

At the other end of the spectrum, the newspaper Danas (Today) and the television, Internet, and radio-based news outlet B92, openly opposed the Milošević regime and continue to be critical of those in power. The daily Today began in 1997 after the disaffected employees of another newspaper Naša Borba (Our Battle) left to create an independent daily. Because they were an independent media news source with no ties to the regime, they were initially free to print oppositional pieces. This changed once the government banneed such independent publications and fined them based on their content. News outlets such as Danas were eventually requited to get daily consent from the Ministry of Information before going to press. (Thompson: 2005, 132) Though the paper struggled to remain relevant during the regime, it was able to persist and it currently occupies a distinct position in the landscape of contemporary Serbian print media, as the only daily based in Novi Sad that enjoys wide readership throughout Serbia (Wein International, 2008). The paper remains independently owned by the Serbian company Dan Graf d.o.o.

B92, on the other hand, was established in the 1990s as the voice of the anti-Milošević opposition, an outlet for those seeking alternative sources of information apart from the official position of the then administration. B92 is currently Serbia’s only Internet-based news source with no print presence. B92 has been able to garner readership from a large number of Serbs, despite the country’s low Internet usage. In fact,

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26 Actual numbers of readers of the papers and magazines are not recorded in the statistics bureau, and therefore, the exact numbers of readers are unknown.
its website was documented by Larisa Rankovic in “Serbian Media between Alternative Past and Future” to be Serbia’s most popular website in 2006 (Rankovic, 2007).

B92 “began life in 1989 as a student-run, punk rock radio station” and “became the globally ubiquitous voice of dissent in the former Yugoslavia,” and drew Western attention because of its anti-Milošević stance (LaMay, 2007: 230). However, since the early 2000s, B92 has become a multimedia company including a radio station, 24-hour television station, book publishing, and music distribution. It was also the largest Internet service provider in 2003 (LaMay, 2007: 231). B92 is frequently presented as the most Western-oriented news source of all mainstream media outlets in Serbia, and sees its “social mission as helping to heal a democratizing Serbia” (LaMay, 2007: 231).

Alongside B92 and Today, Time also became synonymous with anti-authoritarian resistance. “[I]n the 1990s, the magazine Time was one of the symbols of the fight for media freedom and, much like Today, among the daily papers that takes an explicitly critical stance towards those in power” (Wien International, 2008). In contrast to Time was the more traditional NIN, a magazine that was a major market player during former Yugoslavia (Wien International, 2008). Unlike the newer publications in Serbia, NIN, similar to Politics is written using Cyrillic. The themes and arguments presented in NIN articles are, according to Gordy, principally “anti-regime. . .oriented toward the political right and toward some nationalist parties and intellectuals” (Gordy, 1999 : 69 ) Because of its ideological stance, the journal has become the polar opposite to the most popular political weekly, Time. Irrespective of its ideological stance, NIN remains important because of its cultural role. Since its inception in 1954, its annual book prize continues to provide a major boost in sales and respect for the recipient. Many novelists, who are
important to the cultural landscape of Yugoslav and now Serbian literature, have received this prize including Borislav Pekić (1970), Danilo Kiš (1972), Aleksandar Tišma (1976), Branko Ćopić (1958), Milorad Pavić (1984), and Svetislav Basara (2006). It remains to be seen if the change in ownership to the Swedish media group Ringier in 2009, a company that also now owns the Serbian daily tabloid-style paper Blic (Flash), will change the tone and relevance of the magazine.

The political divide of Russia versus the West colors Serbian periodicals through an endorsement of either strengthening ties with Western nations and institutions or retreating into old alliances with Russia to reestablish Pan-Slavism. NIN falls squarely within the Russia camp. During the years surveyed for this chapter (2004-2008), articles that support Russia argue for strengthening ties to Russia and reestablishing Pan-Slavism for current and future generations. Russia’s international significance grew during those years, and proponents of greater comingling of Russian and Serbian ties believed that closer connections between Serbia and Russia could elevate Serbia’s profile in the world, as Russia would provide the force necessary to implement Serbian actions. Moreover, through readopting the ideas of Pan-Slavism, Serbia could become stronger, in faith and culture and expand its territory. Articles that strongly support this position are frequently published in NIN, but are sometimes found in Politics as well. While there are other publications with content that similarly supports strengthening ties between Serbia and Russia, such as Blic (Flash) and Srpska Reć (Serbian Word), NIN is the most historically important and oldest weekly periodical in Serbia, among publications surveyed in this chapter. Therefore, its articles will serve as the primary source for

27 See http://www.nin.co.rs/pages/romani.php?id=567 for a complete list of NIN awardees.
28 These ideas are expressly conveyed in the pages of the Serbian Radical Party.
documentation of pro-Russia and anti-West sentiments.

In contrast are articles that express reasons why Serbia should bridge the gap with the West culturally, socially and, most importantly, politically. This line of argument proposes that Serbia follow a Western mode of political and social development to move beyond its role in the wars of the 1990s. Supporters of this idea recognize that Serbia’s image is tarnished and only capable of restoration if diplomatic ties with Western nations and relations with Western organizations are reinstated. Especially important for this camp is eventual Serbian E.U. membership. According to this logic, closer ties between Serbia and the West will yield better lives for the people of Serbia, and a more promising political future for the country. Articles that lobby for closer links between Serbia and the West illustrate why such political ties would be more beneficial for Serbia than a close relationship with Russia. These articles are regularly found in *Time, Today and B92*. Of those three publications, B92 contains articles most ardently in support the West.

**Russia and the West**

The June 7, 2007 edition of *NIN* includes a reprinted interview between the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, and Russia scholar Lesley Chamberlain that provides the substances for the article “A conversation about Christ and the Russian Ideal.” In the interview Chamberlain and Williams discuss Dostoevsky’s ideas as they relate to the West and the Russian ideal. The article was originally printed in the May 26, 2009 edition of the British weekly *Prospect*. The discussion is based on the premise that “for those steeped in Russian culture, the relationship between literature and religious thought always seem very inspiring, but it’s exotic and strange from a British viewpoint” (Chamberlain, 2007). “Individualism” dominates in the West, which is in contrast to the
Russian “personalism,” that “creates a kind of way through to community and freedom at the heart of human life. It doesn’t set individual dignity and integrity against anything.” This is in opposition “to wills asserting themselves against reality” (Chamberlain, 2007). Not so much a critique of the West, as it is an exploration of Dostoevsky’s ideas as they relate to Western ideology, the article seems used by NIN to illustrate the stark differences between Western and Russian ideology, and in that way it deftly summarizes the conflict between the West and Russia, and articulates not just Russian thought, but the Slavic ideal, which champions soul and draws from community and passion, not logic and the individualism of the West. This hearkening back to Dostoevsky would seem to indicate that little has changed in the Western and the Slavic worlds that Dostoevsky encountered in the 19th century, whose incompatibility persists. In fact, within the context of NIN’s readership, it highlights a Dostoevskian idea that Western and Slavic cultures must be kept separate, lest Orthodox and Slavic culture go the way of the ailing West and become void of substance.²⁹ To recognize the West and the Slavic world as incompatible is tantamount to understanding why the Serbs must reject any Western ideas impressed upon them—Western culture is dead, and if the Slavic world is to avoid the same fate, Slavs must reject any path lacking Russia and Orthodoxy. Though originally meant to be an honest exploration of the theories of Dostoevsky, Williams’s words conveniently contain culturally coded ideas used for generations to argue for a Russian-Serbian symbiosis. The current battle for what will comprise a newly formulated Serbian identity has allowed for a renaissance of this idea, leaving a distinct imprint through the

²⁹ This similar argument is present in formulations of Serbian exceptionalism, as well. For a brief discussion on this topic see chapter 2.
news articles written in this tenor.

Within Serbia’s historical postulation of Russia, Russia can, once again, be the savior of the Serbian people, in the same way that it was during the Yugoslav wars and war against the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Connections between the Serbs and the Russians have run deeply for generations, and were fostered in the ideas of Pan-Slavism. These purported affinities are, of course oversimplifications, which gloss over the specific political agendas of both Serbia and Russia. In the modern context, the connections between Serbia and Russia have in fact been economic and political; the impression of cultural ties only arises from the manipulation of historical ties by politicians and those in power.

An example of this pro-Russia sentiment can be found in the June 7, 2007 NIN, “Kosovo-A Problem of World Implications,” (“Kosovo – problem sa svetskim poslećama”) a translation by Ljiljana Nedeljković, who is purportedly Koštunica’s former chief of staff, according to a NIN article from February 1, 2001 by Ljiljana Smajlović who is herself the former editor-in-chief of Politika and current president of the Union of Serbian Journalists.

The Nedeljković translation is of a truncated transcript of a press conference given by Putin to newspaper reporters from G8 countries, including American The Wall Street Journal, German Der Spiegel, French Le Figaro, Italian Corriere Della Sera, Russian Komersant and Canadian Globe and Mail. The title, “Kosovo-A Problem of World Implications,” suggests that the article’s content will focus primarily on Kosovo as an international issue, but Kosovo is only the subject of two out of twelve questions (in this truncated transcript). Instead, the article features a series of questions and answers
that illustrate how the U.S. and the West were working against Russian (and therefore Serbian) interests.

*NIN*’s reprint omits the opening and closing remarks. This editorial choice seems curious since it is in his opening and closing statements that Putin seems to be most diplomatic (Mathaba News Network, 2007). With the welcoming statements cut, the first words comprise the question from the German news weekly *Der Spiegel*: “It seems that Russia no longer likes the West. Relations with Germany have gotten somewhat worse, but relations with America have gotten even worse. Does this mean that we are again getting close to a cold war?” (Nedeljković, 2007a). Adding to the West-versus-Serbia-and-Russia paradigm is a photo of Putin appearing to shake his finger under which the following caption appears:

In Eastern Germany there was a popular saying/joke: How can you know which telephone on Honnecker’s desk has a direct connection to Moscow? The one that doesn’t have a mouthpiece, only a headpiece. In NATO it’s exactly the same, the only difference is that the telephone isn’t connected to Moscow, but to Washington (Nedeljković, 2007a).  

Those in Serbia who subscribe to this reformulation of the Serbia-Russia relationship believe that NATO is a U.S. proxy. In fact, “due in part to memories of NATO’s 1999 bombing of Serbia, public opinion polls have shown that less than one-third of the Serbian public favor NATO membership” (Woehrel, 2008: 4). Therefore, connecting NATO to the West, and specifically the U.S., creates an anti-Western sentiment. For Serbs who support an anti-Western ideology, NATO’s continued presence

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30 This was part of the last statement that Putin made in the press conference.
in Serbia’s internal affairs serves as a reminder of the U.S. intervention during the wars in Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, and most importantly the bombings in Belgrade and Novi Sad. NATO and the U.S., embodied through the figures of Maarti Ahtisaari and George Bush, were foes of the Serbs and not to be trusted. Russia, on the other hand can always be relied on to uphold Serbian interests because of its staunch anti-NATO position.

There were 57 questions/comments asked by the G8 nations’ journalists in the original press conference, and, in the NIN rendering only twelve, and in both versions, only two questions directly addressed Kosovo. However, the title of the article sets an expectation that it will be focused on the international community and its response to the Kosovo issue. However, “Kosovo-A Problem of International Implications” promulgates an anti-Western sentiment and includes culturally coded content that places Russia as the savior of the Serbs yet again. Questions excluded from the NIN article that do not advance that agenda dealt with the following: the problems of the free and open flow of Russian energy; the potential American missile defense shield in Eastern Europe and an unintended arms race; the problems of democracy, or lack thereof in Russia; and the position of Ukraine in reference to potential NATO and E.U. membership. There was actually a reporter at the press conference from the Japanese publication Nikkei; however, the questions that he asked did not appear in the Serbian transcript. This omission further supports the notion that the NIN rendering sets up a dichotomy of Russia vs. the West, in the same way that stances on Kosovo were presented at that time. Also lacking were several questions from the Russian newspaper Kommersant that focused on domestic (Russian) issues. Reporters from Le Figaro, Corriere Della Sera and The Wall Street Journal asked about questionable Russian business practices. Those questions were
excluded in NIN’s rendering. Had these other topics been included, the article would have been simply a transcript of a press conference. However, it was edited to promote Russia as an ideal friend to Serbia.

Another example of NIN’s use of selective coverage to push a political message is in its coverage of Russian investment during the Kosovo crisis of 2007. On this topic, there is clearly divergent reporting in liberal publications. This is illustrated in the NIN article “When Russians Shop” (“Kad Rusi Kupuju”) from June 7, 2007 and the Time article “JAT: Rumor Has It the Russians are Coming” (“JAT – Šuška se, šuška Rusi Dolaze”) June 14, 2007.

“When Russians Shop,” by Jelica Putniković details all of the major “shopping” that Russian companies had been doing in Serbia, which began in 2003 with Lukoil’s purchase of Beopetrol, a Serbian oil company, and continued with Russian interest in purchasing Belgrade’s Nikola Tesla airport, Serbia’s sole airline Yugoslav Airlines (JAT), the Serbian bank Agrobank, and allegedly a copper and mining smelting complex in Bor, a city in Eastern Serbia (Putniković, 2007). In addition to these developments, the first Russian bank was opening in Serbia then as well, which was accompanied by a desire for Serbian companies, such as Serbian Oil Company (N.I.S), to be privatized, presumably so that Russian entities could take a large stake in those companies, too. Putniković includes quotes from the Russian ambassador to Belgrade, Aleksandar Aleyev, who hopes to prove that there is, and will continue to be unwavering Russian interest in Serbian companies. The article reveals that Russian interest in purchasing JAT is sourced in a political agenda that Russia would receive privatization protection in buying JAT in exchange for their support of Kosovo (Putniković, 2007). However, by
placing the purchase of JAT in context with other Russian company acquisitions that had taken place since 2003, the article minimizes the political and economic ramifications of Russian interest in JAT and, arguably, other companies. The article also presents the possibility that privatizing Serbia’s major national companies (including JAT) will allow Serbia to repay a large part of its debt to Gasprom, as if the sale were the responsible thing to do. Thus, the argument of Putniković is complicated, but presents a mostly favorable image of the Russian purchase of Serbian companies.

Conversely, the article in *Time* “Rumor has it that the Russians are Coming” by Zoran Majdin is more thorough in its explanations of the various companies and industries that Russia wants to buy. Majdin includes information on Air India’s interest in purchasing a portion of JAT. It also reports that Russians were potentially purchasing Al Italia, “the worst airline in Europe” and it was rumored that “JAT was a backup plan for Aeroflot in the event that the Al Italia deal fell through, and that Air India was a backup for the Serbian government”—proof that Russia’s Serbian acquisitions were based on economics alone. (Majdin, 2007) In short, *Time’s* coverage is more comprehensive and does not seem to push an agenda through selective focus as in the *NIN* article.

**Kosovo and the Renewed Positions of Russia and the West**

In the weeks and months leading up to Kosovo’s declaration of independence, the verbal disagreements between Russia and the West regarding Kosovo’s impending independence surfaced again. These differences galvanized the positions in Serbia on Kosovo’s independence. In the articles I reference below, one can see support of Western positions in *Time* and particularly in *B92*, but staunch, unwavering support for the
Russian calls against Kosovo independence in *NIN*. The analysis below explores how those themes surface in those periodicals.

*NIN*

The February 14, 2008 edition of *NIN* included the article, “Czar Lazar is again amongst the Serbs,” ("Car Lazar opet među Srbima") by Ruža Ćirković a journalist who has written for both *Today* and *NIN*, which directly positions the 21st century battle of Kosovo next to the medieval battle and its mythology. The opening sets the scene: “Three Serbian (*Serbijanska*) presidents surprisingly and smoothly agreed on Monday that the forthcoming political agreement on cooperation in Serbia with the E.U. is definitely dead, and the government of Serbia lives on” (Ćirković, 2008). The article continues with the following quote: “Historiography has shown that Vuk Branković did not betray Kosovo. Centuries weren’t sufficient enough to correct that mistake in the legend. For that reason Boris Tadić didn’t want to take the risk” of signing the agreement with the E.U. (Ćirković, 2008).

A reader must possess a cultural understanding of the symbolic contents of the Kosovo myth and the significance of a holy trinity, constructed by the three presidents, to fully appreciate the text, especially within the context of Kosovo’s looming independence. In addition to these blatant forced parallels between the Serbian leaders and the Kosovo myth encoded into this article is the idea that Europe was attempting to take Kosovo, the heart and soul of the Serbian people. In reality the article simply details the conflict between the coalition government and their inability to come to an agreement on future relations between Serbia and the E.U. with Kosovo independence on the horizon. The coalition was formed between Boris Tadić’s liberal Democratic Party (DS),
and the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) of which Oliver Dulić is a member and Vojislav Koštunica the leader. On the symbolic level the article positions “European oriented Tadić (evropski predeljeni Tadić)” in the role of Vuk Branković but never explicitly states who Czar Lazar would be in this case.31

Within the same issue of NIN is the article, “Ode to Lawlessness” (“Oda bezakonju”) which focuses on the lawlessness involved in Kosovo’s potential independence, both regarding International law, Kosovo’s pending independence, and protection for Serbs living there. The image included with the article is of a Kosovar Albanian in front of an American flag and Albanian flag, which NIN editors symbolically position to sum up the symbolism of Kosovo’s independence: it was an American and Albanian project with no space for Serbian involvement. The title of the article is a play on Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy,” which the Kosovo Philharmonic played to honor the declaration of Kosovo independence.

Embedded in this article is a perpetuation not only of the idea that the West is responsible for Kosovo’s independence, but also of the position that the Kosovars were dependent on the West and while “in Priština they were preparing everything for the gala concert” NATO “forces were on standby” and Brussels (E.U.) “was still chaotically transferring power from UNMIK to EULEX” (Janković and Vrzić, 2008). Deemed “a nation-changing institutional experiment with the patronage of the European Union” by the editors of NIN and proving that the Kosovars themselves had very little to do with implementing their own independence (Janković and Vrzić, 2008).

31 I can only assume that the article is referencing the spirit of Czar Lazar, urging his people to go into battle, albeit a political one with Europe.
The article’s authors Ivana Janković and Nikola Vrzić express doubt that “the cosmetic concessions by means of symbols and declarative statements on the respect for human and minority rights” in the draft constitution will satisfy the needs of Serbs because the Serbs are a constant reminder to Kosovars of the Milošević politics. Therefore laws could never translate into actions. Reconciliation between Serbs and Albanians living in Kosovo would be impossible because “Priština doesn’t have a problem just with the state of Serbia, but with all Serbs and Serbian citizens as well” (Janković and Vrzić, 2008). Also important in this construction is that “Albanians do not wish to have anything to do with neither Serbia, nor Serbs” (Janković and Vrzić, 2008). Janković and Vrzić, however, fail to write that the inverse is also true.

Instead of offering a solution, the article recognizes that “the leaders of Kosovo’s Serbs are aware that they have only one option aside from accepting independence, which would be to create parallel institutions” (Janković and Vrzić, 2008). Another sign of Serbian resistance is that “geographical maps in [their] atlases and offices will not change” (Janković and Vrzić, 2008). That is to say that Kosovo will always be considered a part of Serbia, and as of 2010, two years after Kosovo independence, Kosovo is still on Serbian maps as a part of Serbia, not as an independent nation.

Finally, the article presents a potential problem if Kosovo’s independence were not unanimously recognized by the members of the UN and NATO, but postulates that “the first recognition [of independence] will come from the U.S., U.K., France, Germany, and then the majority of the E.U” but assumes that Spain, Cyprus, Slovakia, Romania, and Greece would not recognize Kosovo’s independence, which was precisely what happened (Janković and Vrzić, 2008). As of the summer of 2009, according to the
Kosovo Ministry of Foreign Affairs, only 31 percent (60 of the 192) of member nations of the United Nations have recognized Kosovo’s independence. This relatively small number of nations recognizing Kosovo’s independence supports the idea that Kosovo’s independence was a Western construction based on Serbian geo-political realities. Because as Putin recognized in his press conference with the G8 country journalists, Kosovo’s status was not unique; there are similar autonomous regions seeking independence in the world, but there is no outside pressure on those countries to make them independent.

Following the declaration of Kosovo independence, in the February 21 edition of NIN, another article by Ivana Janković entitled “Young Serbian Anger” (“Mladosrpska Srđba”) reiterates the circular nature of Albanian-Serbian and Serbian-U.S. relations. The article points to the zeal with which the young population rushed to the streets to vandalize Western establishments like McDonalds and “other pro-Western store fronts on their way to their main destinations—the Slovenian and U.S. embassies” (Janković, 2008a). Janković writes that the violent actions of the young people tell “a complicated story that fractured everything that was promised to [the Serbs] during the past years, but occurred in a completely opposite way. The international coalition related to an ugly situation in Serbia in the name of some kind of rules and principles, and then all of a sudden let go of those principles,” concluding that the radicalization of the youth will continue so long as American hypocrisy persists, or until they get answers to their questions (Janković, 2008a). Globus, a Croatian weekly, is a source for the article, and points to an interview with Latinka Petrović, a Croatian social researcher who has noticed

The majority of UN members have not recognized Kosovo independence.
that “more young and educated people who are joining the Serbian Radical Party,” and “those young people, just like those who have been wearing national symbols over the last few days, barely remember the 1990s” (Janković, 2008a). This excerpt hints that ethnonationalism in Serbia has continued to develop, independent of the wars, and remains strong because sources and platforms for its expression persist, and because Serbia’s leaders do little to prevent the proliferation of violence and destruction, much like Serbia in the 1980s and 1990s. Moreover, resentment and hatred have been perpetuated in this new generation.

In the same article, Miša Đurković at the institute for European Studies, an institution in Belgrade focused on the study of European political, social and cultural processes, expresses a doubt that “this generation will really ever engage in political life,” and complicating their lives is that they “have lived in three or four countries and lived through just as many wars. They are the children of mass culture and communication and the paradoxical reality in which the Shchengen visa is the greatest life achievement” (Janković, 2008a). He, too, iterates that the “radicalization of the youth is happening” (Janković, 2008a). He insists that this generation “is not wild, but civilized Serbian youths who have been raised in Western media” but need to “seek out answers for themselves, go to the streets to try to change the world” or at least their country and their government (Janković, 2008a). By way of contrast, social scientist and professor of social psychology at the University of Belgrade, Dragan Popadić claims that the reactions of the Serbian youth to Kosovo’s independence is not an act of searching for a national identity, but rather an assertion of national identity (Janković, 2008a). Boris Mitić, a producer of documentary films “believes that the source of the strong feelings is not any kind of crisis
of identity, either national or European, but rather a deep political feeling of injustice that each one of us feels, regardless of knowledge or age of a problem or of, educational or social status” (Janković, 2008a). If this is indeed, the case, it illustrates that the events of the 1990s affected those who were children and solidified an idea of their nation and that the only way to secure/affirm it is to go to the streets in protest. However, the protests of the youth in Serbia following Kosovo’s independence were violent, unlike the peaceful student protests of the 1990s. The article insinuates that what has been happening in Serbia for generations is indicative of the cyclical nature of historical realities and cultural trends in Serbia, and international (meaning Western) interference is exacerbating those realities; as they act with little or no regard for all who are affected by their actions, a phenomenon that has been happening in Serbia for centuries.

**Time**

Another article that explores the interference of the international community in Serbian affairs is written by *Time* political analyst Milan Milošević, who has been writing for the publication since the early 1990s. His article from June 14, 2007 entitled “Vladimir, George and the Rest of the World” (“Vladimir, Džordž i Ostatak Sveta”), directly addresses Serbia’s relationship to the West (U.S.) and Russia, but is based on the positions of the U.S. and Russia regarding the Kosovo issue in 2007. Unlike the NIN article mentioned above, “Vladimir, George and the Rest of the World” illustrates how both Russia and the West were responsible for an internal issue becoming international.

According to M. Milošević, the Serbian public has become so fixated on the U.S. and Russian positions on Kosovo, that the reaction of the remainder of the world to the Kosovo situation was a result of siding with either Putin or Bush. The renewed split
between Russia and the U.S. in 2007 on Serbian issues was predictable and consistent with previous actions. The author’s use of first names only for Putin and Bush, further indicates the familiarity of their positions—and mockingly reinforces the roles of the two men and their international importance.

The article opens with the following quote from then premier Koštunica:

“America needs to find some other way of displaying its sympathy and love for Albanians instead of giving them Serbian territory” (Milošević, 2007). Had this quote been in *NIN*, it could be taken as words to construct an anti-West position. However, it appears in *Time* with very little context. As such, Koštunica’s words seem used there to illustrate the official stance of the government because it contrasts Koštunica’s sentences to then-President Bush’s during his “running European tour” (*Bušovoj trčećoj evropskoj turneji*), where he told an Albanian audience that “he supports their aspirations to join NATO and Kosovo’s near (*skoro*) independence” (Milošević, 2007).

Interestingly enough, *Time* was able to make light of the conflict between Bush and Putin, not through the actual text itself, but through the loaded subheadings of the individual sections. For example, the first section, which is focused on President Bush has the headline “Black Cadillac” (“Black Cadillac”) written in English detailing how he traveled with a cavalcade of American secret service agents in American limousines, and a Black Cadillac. Though this was not the focus of the magazine, it provides commentary for the grand reception Kosovo’s Albanians gave to the president, so strong that they even offered praise for the Iraqi war (Milošević, 2007). With this as the sole paragraph devoted to Bush in Albania, it establishes the visit, and Bush as farcical. In a manner out of character for the writing in *Time*, the article actually centers on the importance of
Russian support for the Serbian cause, acknowledging that there would be no platform for a Serbian-Kosovar compromise without Russian support, which stressed greater autonomy for Kosovo while recognizing the territorial integrity of Serbia. Moreover, the articles use of English points to *Time’s* readership: a pro-Western audience familiar with English.

The subheading “Sarko the American,” (*Sarko Amerikanac*) outlines that French president Nikola Sarkozy, too, proposed negotiations and compromise for the Serbian-Kosovo conflict. It also explains the moniker “Sarko the American” that some French citizens adopted for their president. The nickname originated from the election campaign, where his compatriots thought his policies and positions were too close to those of America. In the initial discussions on the status of Kosovo, Sarkozy proposed that the status of Kosovo be revisited if a compromise between Belgrade and Priština could not be met within six months. By including Sarkozy’s positions, *Time* brings attention to the fact that Russia was not the only nation suggesting a compromise, and illustrates the more favorable image of the West, specifically the E.U. contained in *Time* articles.

The penultimate section of the article relays the interaction between Moscow and Washington with regard to the potential placement of the American proposed missile defense system. According to the article, Putin suggested that Russia and the U.S. jointly use space in Azerbaijan, causing France and Germany to remark on Putin’s apparent diplomatic intentions. Including the problem of the missile defense system in an article primarily focused on the Kosovo issue provides evidence of the divide between Russia and the U.S. was the result of many differences, and the Kosovo issue was just another
point of contention between Russia and the U.S., not the only one, which seems true in NIN articles.

The final subheading “The Standbys,” (Rezerve) details different positions of various nations regarding the Kosovo issue, including Greece, Slovakia, Germany, China, S. Africa and the Congo. Even with such a multiplicity of views on the Kosovo issue, the only proposed solutions that were given any serious attention were those presented by Russia and the U.S. Even though the Kosovo issue affected Serbia, articles in Time were not focused on Serbia, proving that small countries, such as the ones listed above, can only play a very minor role in their important national decisions because larger international players will always have greater say, as the negotiations about Kosovo’s independence validates.33 A similar argument is presented in NIN in the article “Czar Lazar is again Among the Serbs,” but it only presents the West as playing a role in interfering with domestic issues, but this Time article positions Russia along side of the U.S. in using Serbian land as a negotiating point, and therefore interfering in domestic issues, as well.

As a point of contrast, in the Novi Sad daily, Today, one article in particular stands out with regard to the status of Kosovo and the divergent opinions of Russia and the U.S. Unlike the other pieces included for analysis, “How Putin and I are Alike” (“Učemu smo slični Putin i ja”) from June 9, 2007 is an opinion piece stressing the

33 Jovan Ristić (1831-1899) and his attempts to gain Serbian independence during the 1878 Berlin Congress where Balkan nations were divided up by more powerful countries, proof that the world is as it was then for small countries, at the will of larger ones. China is not a small country, but frequently abstains on important international issues, and therefore cannot really be considered as the important international political force that it could be. Regarding Kosovo’s independence, China expressed “great concern.” (Beck, 2008)
similarities between the author, former Serbian Ambassador William Montgomery and Putin, inasmuch as Montgomery considers himself and Putin cold war veterans ("hladni ratnici"), priming the ground for an equal mistrust of one another’s histories and political systems. Of this Montgomery writes, “As much as I thought that I could confront the Soviet Union and conquer it, he [Putin] thought the same way about NATO, but on a deeper level” (Montgomery, 2007). In addition to stressing similarities U.S. and Russian positions, the article also illustrates similarities between former Soviet Satellite states and the U.S. in their mistrust of the Soviet Union. Thus, this article, though an op-ed piece by an American in a Serbian publication, conveys two very important facts that are not included in the other pieces: the positions of Russia and the U.S. relate to one another, with regard to what motivates them in their countries and their political realities, and that East Central Europe is as mistrustful of Putin and his initiatives in the region as the U.S., irrespective of what the politicians peddle. Considering this very different stance than that of other publications and/or news sources, this article illustrates some very compelling points about Today as a publication and its ability to represent an important voice for the promulgation of diverse thought in Serbia.

Though Montgomery perpetuates the idea of a world split between Russia and the U.S., his argument differs from others because it positions Serbia in relation to the other former Soviet Bloc nations in the region, which have become, by and large, European Union members, thereby recognizing the lack of differences between them. Montgomery also indicates that the desires of the government do not always reflect the wishes of the people they govern. Other articles examined herein place the government in the position of dictating the vox populi, and not the converse.
One such example of how the government is frequently connected directly to the people can be found in the February 21, 2008 *Time* article “Madness and Reason” ("Ljutnja i razum") by M. Milošević, which focuses on the separate reactions of three Serbian leaders and various governments to the process of Kosovo independence. Unlike the *NIN* article, “Czar Lazar is again among the Serbs,” the politicians’ reactions are evaluated to reflect their separate opinions, and not as parts of a greater whole, indicating the divisions that existed in the government at that time. Using the dichotomy of madness and reason, the article begins with the divergent approaches of then Prime Minister Vojislav Koštunica, Minister of Environment and Spatial Planning Oliver Dulić, then Deputy leader of the Radical Party Tomislav Nikolić and President Boris Tadić to the crisis happening, not in Kosovo, but in Belgrade as a reaction to the declaration of independence of Kosovo. Upon learning of Kosovo’s intent to declare independence, Tadić called for reason. Dulić similarly appealed to all in Serbia to uphold peace in the city so that their reactions not provoke any kind of problem in Kosovo and Metohija.34 Nikolić argued that dissatisfaction should be channeled, and finally Koštunica said that with [Kosovo’s declaration of independence], the whole world would know the fact that American power is above the Charter of the U.N., and is ready to willfully, wantonly and grossly violate international law for the sake of their military interest (Milošević, 2008a). He also said that the American president would be written about with harsh words in Serbian history, and called to raise a voice of opposition against the politics of force incited against Serbia (Milošević, 2008a). However, as word of Kosovo’s independence

34 Metohija is the Serbian dominated area of Kosovo. The formal Serbian name for Kosovo is Kosovo and Metohija.
spread, the government was ineffective in preempting the violent protests that followed Kosovo’s independence and quelling them once they began.

Another *Time* article that illustrates the irresponsibility of the government following Kosovo’s independence is “Orašac—celebration of independence day: We were born as Serbs,” (“Orašac—proslava Dana državnosti: Rođeni smo kao Srbi”) by *Time* reporter Dragan Todorović from February 21, 2007 illustrates how historical truths and present realities were conflated during the Kosovo independence crisis, and provides the text of a speech given by Koštunica in the Serbian town of Orašac, site of the first Serbian uprising against the Ottomans by Karađorđe in 1804. Serbian independence day falls on February 15, only two days before what is now Kosovo’s Statehood day, thus elevating the importance of Serbian independence day activities in 2008. In reporting on Koštunica’s speech, *Time* does not highlight its power, but rather Koštunica’s useless and problematic vitriol, and implies the potential danger and ridiculousness that could have ensued because of his actions.

In the opening paragraph that set the scene of the day, included the description of signs in the crowd that said, “Russia, between a red heart, Serbia, the same people, the same soul! Let’s unite!” (“Rusija, između crveno srce, Srbija, Isti narod, ista duša! Ujedinimo se!”) “And there were even [some] in Russian: “Dear mother Russia. Many thanks for everything!” (“Dorogaia mat Rosia, Ogromnoe spasibo za vse”).

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35 The transcription into Russian, using Serbian script appears this way in the text: “Daragoja mat Rasija. Ogromnoe spasibo za vsjo.”
Interesting is the colloquial ‘o in the past tense form in subheading of the title, as in “doš’o DSS,” when referencing Koštunica’s words and/or interactions with people. The use of colloquial past tense marks the article’s satire, which ridicules Koštunica’s attempts at portraying himself as one of the commoners, when his PhD, law degree, and former position as president clearly place him outside of the milieu of the “people.” If the colloquial form were not used, the irony and critique of the article could go unnoticed.

As these last two articles support, the content of Time dating from the Kosovo declaration is focused on the government and their appropriate or inappropriate handling of the events in Kosovo. However, there are a few articles about the citizens of Kosovo and Serbia and their reactions to the declaration of independence, including the article entitled, “No bagpipes, no fireworks,” (Ni zurli ni vatrometa) detailing reactions of Serbs in Mitrovica to Kosovo’s declaration of independence, and how “the weekend [following Kosovo’s declaration of independence] in Mitrovica [was] safer than in Belgrade,” and that “the weekend passed without any major incident” (Lazić, 2008). The article illustrates how life in Kosovo continued in the same manner as it had before in Mitrovica. What was different, as noted in this article, was the concern over what the future held for Serbs in Kosovo. Most of the Serbs interviewed and highlighted in the article stress that they do not plan to leave Kosovo, but that they would be willing to defend their land if it became necessary to do so. The local director for Time in Kosovo adds that a great concern for the Serbs in Kosovo is the let down they will experience as some countries recognize Kosovo’s independence, specifically noting that “there will be a great

36 The grammatically correct way to form the past tense of this sentence in Serbia is “je došao,” but by changing it to doš’o, it becomes something akin to English dropping of -g final in “ing” present continuous forms.
disappointment if Macedonia and Slovenia were to recognize the independence of Kosovo, [especially since] they have no interest in doing that, save the political pressure of America” (Lazić, 2008).

Overall, those articles prove effective in documenting the lack of a reaction of Serbs in Kosovo to the declaration, especially when compared to the events that took place throughout Serbia and Republika Srpska. In fact, rather than being angry or incited to violence, the Serbs in Kosovo seemed to be overcome with resignation and disappointment. Quite a lot happened to the Serbs in Kosovo with the declaration of independence, however, their lack of acknowledgement of their new reality may indicate a greater problem that neither population has yet to reckon with the existence of the other, or it could indicate that each accepts their reality and wishes to get beyond the symbolism of Kosovo, Russia and the West that affects the Serbs in territories outside Kosovo. These articles portray a deeply divided nation entering into statehood with no sense of shared vision, purpose, or even nationality; ideas which are highlighted in the Time article “Separate Worlds,” (“Odvojeni Svetovi) by Ratko Femić, a B92 reporter who has won awards for his investigative journalism for his work with the B92 program “Insajder,” an investigative program. The article focuses on the divergent Serbian and Albanian responses to the declaration of independence with virtually universal correspondence between nationality and positive or negative attitudes about independence. Not surprisingly, Kosovo independence is regarded as a positive development by Albanians,

37 This idea is compelling because it shows that there is still a belief in shared interest between those who lived in Kosovo and other former Yugoslav states. Both Macedonia and Slovenia recognized Kosovo’s independence in 2008—Slovenia in March and Macedonia in October.
but mostly problematic for Serbs. What Femić stresses is how the Serbs and Albanians inhabit significantly different worlds and embrace diametric viewpoints, which have been in place for generations with seemingly no space for change, which will eventually have (negative) implications (again), on the population, an idea replicated in various articles (from various stand points) referenced above.

**B92**

During the Kosovo crisis, B92 coverage did not differ much from what was included in *Time*; however the most obvious differences come in the content of the articles and the events surrounding the eventual declaration of independence from Kosovo.\(^{38}\) Because B92 is an online news source, the content is constantly updated and comes from various national and international news sources. Perhaps that is the reason why the website, unlike any other news source detailed in this chapter, placed news stories on Kosovo under the subheadings of “Kosovo” as they related to Kosovo specifically and “Politics” as they related to the Serbian government, a visual recognition of Kosovo and Serbia as two separate entities.\(^{39}\) Also interesting is that of the media sources used in the chapter, only B92 ventured beyond detailing the European positions on the secession of Kosovo from Serbia, by also covering the Slovene government’s position on the bombing of the Slovenian department store Mercator in New Belgrade prior to the declaration of independence of Kosovo. Another very important difference between the coverage in B92 and the other news outlets discussed in this chapter, was the inclusion of a FoNet story detailing student pro-Kosovo independence marches led by a

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\(^{38}\) The goal of this section is to analyze B92 coverage on Kosovo following Kosovo’s independence, and is therefore very limited in scope. Please see chapter 1 for English sources on B92.

\(^{39}\) B92 archives only date back to 2004, but the “Kosovo” classification also existed then. Perhaps, it has been a B92 article classification for even longer.
group calling themselves “There is no alternative to Europe.”\(^{40}\) This student-led group advocated that the Serbian government sign the Stabilization and Association Agreement at any cost, and demanded that Tadić step down if he was unwilling to do so (B92, 2008). In including such a story, B92 illustrated their continued commitment to issues paramount to university students in Serbia. This is especially important because B92 is now frequently accused of becoming too corporate and therefore distant from their original purpose of being the voice of dissent against the government.

Another compelling inclusion in the B92 articles is the specific attention paid to the Slovenian support for eventual Serbian entry into the E.U. prior to Kosovo’s independence (B92, 2008). Regionally, Slovenia has historically been viewed as the most Western nation in Southeast Europe and persists as such in a contemporary context. As such, the attention paid to Slovenia’s positions on a variety of issues that were important at the time is indicative of the pro-Western bent of B92. Also included in B92 were stories during the lead up to Kosovo independence and after including the position of the U.S., which, at that time, many believed to be interfering in domestic problems. In keeping with their attention to wholeness of perspective, B92 also had news reports from other Western news reporting sources including *Reuters, Financial Times, Guardian, and Washington Times* among others.

**Conclusion**

As the publications outlined above illustrate, the media landscape in Serbia, has tracked and reaffirmed the substantive divisions within the dominant political positions in Serbia. Each publication in its own way draws both on events and cultural coding to

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\(^{40}\) FoNet is another Serbian news source.
establish arguments recognizable to its Serbian readership. This fact is especially true for NIN, which relies heavily on Serbian cultural myths to convey its arguments. Of all publications cited and referenced in this chapter, B92 seems to be the most balanced in sources; but the editorial position of the news source is overwhelmingly liberal and pro-West. It is *Time*, more than any of the other referenced periodicals, that includes articles and pieces that present a variety of viewpoints. Although the publication was established with a liberal bent, its articles are more balanced and nuanced, as evidenced by the article, “Black Cadillac” which acknowledges that compromise between Serbia and Kosovo (on Kosovo’s status) would have been the most effective way to resolve the dispute. With this recognition, the magazine was able to acknowledge Russia’s potential role in realizing that compromise, despite the general disregard for the Russia-Serbia relations typically found in *Time*. This eye on compromise was consistently lacking in the *NIN* articles from the timeframe of this analysis. Quite the contrary, the possibility of Kosovo independence reawakened the nationalist zeal and staunch anti-Western sentiment typical of *NIN* articles.

With such stark contrasts in the presentation of Serbian interest, it remains true that Serbian print media persists as a means of expressing political standpoints and no longer only retains the overtly cultural focus that its originators envisioned. Instead it keeps the political poles of Serbian society intact and firmly in place, with little to no overlap in the ideological stance taken by the various publications referenced above. Print media, more than any other media, referenced herein can really impact the trajectory of a nation because it is the mouthpiece for political parties and social movements in Serbia. For now, the divergent positions in print media follow the dichotomy manifested through
an articulation of favoritism of Russia or the West, rather than endogenous Serbian
cultural, political or social ideological themes (as with film and literature). This reliance
on Russian or Western institutions remains despite the recalcitrance of both positions, but
continued Serbian reliance on either the West or Russia for support does not bode well
for an independent Serbian political point of view to surface in the near future, a
definition which will become increasingly important as Serbia moves toward
reintegration into the European community, both through the E.U. and through Western
institutions.
Chapter 4: The Generational Clash in Post-war Serbian Film

In post-WWII Yugoslavia, film was heralded as “the most important mass medium for reaching all levels of society,” as it provided a universally accessible visual outlet for Yugoslavs (Goulding, 2002: 7). Film enabled the creation and perpetuation of a foundation myth for citizens to rally around, based on the battles fought by the Partisans during WWII. Indeed “[o]f the thirteen films produced in Yugoslavia by the end of 1950, all but one dealt either with the National War of Liberation or with socialist reconstruction following the war” (Goulding, 2002: 11). Film reinforced an idea of what Yugoslavia constituted and what it meant to be a Yugoslav, and eventually became focused on social and political goals over entertainment. Other modes of cultural expression came into being in the decades that followed, but Yugoslav film never lost its penchant for captivating political and social realities and aspirations.

Unlike the other Yugoslav successor states, film is Serbia continues to occupy a place of importance within the cultural sphere. Films are well-patronized and funding comes from a multiplicity of sources, including the Ministry of Culture, companies and banks. Serbian society and this is in part due to direct government investment in film through the Serbian ministry of culture, which has regular competitions for various stages of film production, including scene construction and post-production activities. On its website the Ministry of Culture includes film development as a specific goal of the Ministry. In addition, it lists four types of annual funding competitions for film, including: scene development; co-financing a film production of a feature-length film;
stimulation of the production film shorts, documentaries, and animated films; co-financing of a minority co-production. (Ministry of Culture)\textsuperscript{41} The details of award recipients are only listed from years 2006 – 2010, years outside the timeframe of films analyzed in this chapter.\textsuperscript{42} Despite the incongruence of the films listed as recipients of awards and the films analyzed in this chapter, the continued involvement of the Ministry of Culture in the development and prosperity of film in Serbia, indicates a great level of commitment to the promulgation of film as an expressive and important cultural medium.

In his book, \textit{Liberated Cinema}, Daniel Goulding catalogues the themes of Yugoslav cinema that were shared by the five republics. Goulding recognizes that the filmic trends changed in tandem with the political and social realities in the Yugoslav constituent republics. Thus, post-WWII films created the foundation myths, films of the 1950s explored new genres and socialist topics such as worker’s self management; films of the 1960s and 1970s responded to the debate of national identity, and films of the 1980s invoked Yugoslav foundation myths of the Partisans and the Liberation War in order to debunk them and provide source material for the awakening national identity that the 1970s spurred and the 1980s maintained. However, films of the 1990s were documentary in style and highly allegorical in substance, narrating the ineffable realities of the wars.

At its onset, Yugoslav cinema was established to address the political and social concerns of the citizens of the then new nation. The hope that film would convey \textit{savremene teme}, or contemporary themes, was never relinquished by contemporary

\textsuperscript{42} Results of the competitions from 2006-2010: <http://fcs.rs/generic.php?page=odluke>.

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Serbian filmmakers. (Goulding, 2002: 68) Serbian film continues to grapple with timely social and political themes, like retrograde politics, generational conflict and social stagnation and decay. Recent films have seized upon the critical junction that Serbia faces, by engaging in a dialogue on Serbian culture—will Serbia hearken to the past for sources of its culture, or will it look to the future and create something new?

Concomitantly, in addition to its internal struggle, Serbia is trying to determine the national image that the Serbs want to project out to the world. These films question whether Serbs will continue along with a status quo that leaves them out of sync with mainstream political and social trends of Europe, or will they attempt to change by putting the 1990s behind them.

Jameson terms film a “degraded work of mass culture,” but he also recognizes that “all contemporary works of art…have their underlying impulse [in] our deepest fantasies about the nature of social life, both as we live it now and as we feel it in our bones it ought rather to be lived” (Jameson, 1979: 148). More specifically, he points out how images created in Hollywood serve the American populace as a method of examining racism and classism—two taboo yet prevalent problems of contemporary American society. Recognizing the universality of the idea that films reflect deep-rooted social concerns, films from any given nation can testify to vital, perhaps suppressed, or only half-acknowledged, social concerns of any given society.

Currents of political, social, and cultural change are all reflected in contemporary Serbian films, but the breadth and scope of the examination varies with the generation of the filmmaker and/or director. Two distinct generations mark today’s filmmakers: Yugoslav and Serbian. The earlier generation lived through the war, but it was the later
generation who came of age during it, witnessing the demise of Yugoslavia and its institutions. The late stages of Yugoslavia saw its unity unravel and a growth of ethnocentric nationalism. This was the Yugoslavia in which the younger generation of directors grew up. By contrast, the older generation of directors was raised at the height of the Yugoslav branding in the 1960s. Those directors were indoctrinated with the idea of the Yugoslav union—brotherhood and unity, and the primacy of socialism. The same principles informed the younger generation, too, but because they were born at the height of Yugoslav Communism, they express themselves with a different set of aesthetics.

Specific historical realities that bred the directors directly informed the themes of their films. Films of the younger, or Serbian, generation of directors seem to address the possibility of change in Serbian society, and those filmmakers use their films to address the concerns about how Serbia fits and will continue to fit into a contemporary European landscape.

The Serbian Generation

Directors of a younger, Serbian generation, such as Raša Andrić (1967-), Miroslav Momčiloović (1969-) Oleg Novković (1968-), and Srdjan Golubović (1972-), are ushering in a new Serbian paradigm, but suggest that it will only come in the future, once the old antiquated generation, somewhat defunct in the new world, falls from power. As Andrić notes, “There is no way to save those of the older generation [because] they are so wrapped up in their own lives, and it is difficult to turn them around” (Andrić, 2007).

The older, Yugoslav generation of directors uses very different means to express their views about the current state of Serbia. In their films, it is possible to see a return to the original techniques and themes of early Yugoslav film, whereby one uses the past,
which was then WWII and the valor of the partisan fighters, to engage in a dialogue about the present and contemplate the future. Films by the Yugoslav directors also return to periods of strength in Serbian history and suggest the possibility of a promising future for the country and its people. Though it initially seems incongruent to return to historical frames within the seeming mode of *savremene teme*, these directors are simply using the *savremene teme* of their youth to critique Serbia through a lens that is most familiar to them. Exceptions are the films set in the distant past for example, at the end of the 19th century, when the Ottoman Empire was withdrawing from its Southeast European colonies. I will return to the justification for such remote historical frames. Regardless of the time frame—ranging from near to distant past—films of this Yugoslav generation refer to epochs of *liminality*, when Serbia’s culture and identity were in flux, similar to contemporary Serbia.

Films of the Serbian generation of directors focus on the “R generation,” a term coined by researcher-sociologist Isidora Jarić, after *rat* the Serbian word for war. The R generation came of age during the wars of the 1990s; was born between 1971 and 1984 and have vivid memories of the effects of war on their families. Jarić details the characteristics of this generation in an article in the Serbian newspaper *Politika (Politics)* dated June 2, 2004, entitled, “The Struggle of the R Generation: It is Possible that those Born at the End of the 70s are Fundamentally Changing Political Life,” which analyzes the lives of those in their mid-twenties and early thirties who came of age during the wars of the 1990s. She explains that the members of this generation share the following characteristics:

Their youth is highlighted by wars, destruction, a lack of respect for their family, the pervasion of problems, living through a
period of shortened classes, a lengthening of vacation periods of school as a result of insufficient heating, a multitude of strikes, bombings. (Jarić, 2004)

As a result of growing up under these conditions, these twentysomethings and thirtysomethings, contrary to the previous generations, “lack friends and a solid education, do not speak foreign languages or speak them poorly” (Jarić, 2004). Thus, they are cut off from the world. Owing to the wars and period of sanctions, members of the R generation went hungry and lacked adequate clothing during the winter months. The R lacks respect for their parents because the youth blame their destitution on their parents. The only lasting impressions from the youth are the mistakes of their governments, and an idealization of immigration to some Western country, where they believe greater success lies (Jarić, 2004).

One of the earliest films that documents the effects of the wars on this generation Serbs is Rane/Wounds (2000) directed by Srdjan Dragojević. Wounds, although extreme in its depictions, exemplifies how the negative cultural trends of the 1990s contributed to a gangster youth culture. The film debuted in 1998—only three years after the cease-fire in Bosnia, and only one year prior to the bombing of Belgrade and the start of the major military campaigns in Kosovo—a time when the wounds of the war were still fresh. Wounds takes place in Belgrade from 1991 to 1996 and centers on the moral degradation of two teenagers, Pinkie and Svabe. Enticed by the material wealth that their guardians are unable to provide, they turn to illegal means to make money. While their parents and grandmother remember the honorable, liberation wars that preceded the shameful wars of the 1990s, such as WWI and WWII, and the glory of the Partisans and Tito, Pinkie and Svabe are concerned only with the acquisition of money, cars, and drugs.
and are prepared to kill in pursuit of them. In essence, the R generation is responding to
cultural icons/realities of the time, namely gang thug culture, which, in the film, is the
only successful subculture at the time. In illustrating that contrast, the film also
document s protagonists’ families and acquaintances, and the change of values from the
older generation to the younger. It portrays the classic confrontation of father and son, but
within a contemporary post-war Serbian context.

Pinkie is the son of a former Tito loyalist. Svabe is the second teenager and
Pinkie’s best friend. It is never revealed where Svabe’s parents are, but he lives in an
apartment with his grandmother and her pet chickens. The last of the trio is Diablo, the
outsider of the group, who lives with his mother, the host of a fictitious talk show that
features criminals narrating their personal stories. Diablo is enticed by the prospect of
criminal life, but is never able to become part of it because of his social ineptitude.

The film reflects the social disorder, general anarchy and lawlessness that arose
with the wars. It also explores other societal consequences of the war, including the
disastrous NATO sanctions, the turbofolk phenomenon and the cultural and social
upheaval experienced by the generation born after Tito (to whom Dragojević dedicates
the film). The film also offers the Serbian representation of Germany—former enemy of
the Partisans but current embodiment of West Europe—as a stable and more
economically prosperous place, and therefore an alternative to the carnivalesque situation
in which the Serbs lived in the 1990s.

Nearly all of the adults in the film are the victims of Yugonostalgia in some form,
which is in direct opposition to the aspirations of the youth. Foundational myths of
Yugoslavia—such as Tito’s stature as father, despot and leader—to which Pinkie’s father
subscribes, the myth of the Croatian Ustasha, and the might of Tito’s Partisans, have
cultural capital within the society, assuming a mythic dimension larger than historical
truths forming their kernel. The source material for Yugonostalgia, dubbed such by
Professor Mitja Velikonja, stems from basic elements of the creation of the second
Yugoslavia in 1945. They all relate to Tito and the foundational ideas of what Yugoslavia
was supposed to embrace: the belief that Partisans helped create Yugoslavia and that
brotherhood and unity was a universal and worthy aspiration. Also largely incorporated
into these myths is Tito as the father and protector of the Yugoslavs and Yugoslavia, a
nation where nationality and religious differences were supposed to be inconsequential (a
basic tenant of brotherhood and unity) (Velikonja, 2002). For the adult characters in the
film, Tito was the only person who was able to keep the country united. This legacy
causes the older generation to recall the image of Tito when they realize that their country
is in a precarious situation. One other popular myth is that the Ustahas, or the Croatian
Fascists of WWII, are a pillar of Croatian identity, both past and present. This stands in
contrast to Tito’s Partisans, who are viewed as WWII defenders of the Serbian people
and Serbian nationhood. By calling them myths, I am not asserting that there is no truth
to the ideas surrounding Tito or the Partisans, but rather using this idea to illustrate how
historical truths can be developed into more all-encompassing ideas that become myths
because of their general utility and purpose within society and cultural identification.

In Wounds, the grandmother and father share the same myths. When the
grandmother reminisces about Tito’s Yugoslavia, the scenes are shot similarly to
theatrical scenes as if the grandmother was intoxicated. These scenes acknowledge that
Yugoslav ideas and concepts were theatrical in their formulation. The father’s faith in
Tito is evoked through lucid memories. Unlike the grandmother, the father’s myths are placed in a larger context with the fall of Knin, which begins in 1995, when the father declares “they are the same people, and cannot understand why these ‘brothers’ are fighting one another,” recalling brotherhood and unity in earnest, despite the obvious realities of war and ethnic separation that surround him. Even a gangster in the film, Dickie, whom Pinkie and Svabe admire, fantasizes about how crime was more admirable in the past because criminals had respect for each other, and they would not simply reenact Hollywood gangster movies. Nearly all members of the older generation are linked through their idealism about the past. In fact, the only character of the older generation in the film that does not “romanticize the past,” to use the character’s own words, is another criminal, Pepper. However, even he acknowledges the generational gap when he states, “all the new kids are the same” because they have no respect for the profession; they are only playing the role of gangster.

The children in *Wounds* attempt to break with that past that their parents conjure up as better than the present. The culmination of this attempt comes when the grandmother recalls the Ustasha through a hallucinated theatrical scene, while Pinkie persuades her to snort cocaine with him off of a plate commemorating Marshall Tito. Through the use of cocaine, an evocation of the West, and Tito, a throwback to the previous generation, the film shows the younger generation trading the myths of their parents for new myths of their own, based on corrosive images from the West. This exchange will ultimately kill their culture because there will be nothing left of the history and myths that established the country where their parents and grandparents grew up. Pinkie and Svabe trample on what the older generation views as the prior foundation, by
killing their guardians’ beliefs, then the guardians themselves, and finally, though metaphorically, their country all in the “defiance of the alleged stodginess of tradition” (Berger, 2001: 2).

In *Wounds*, Dragojević ultimately wishes to stress the devastating moral consequences of the war on the generation of Yugoslav teenagers. Their childlike mannerism—carrying out crimes as if they were playing video games, and imitating Hollywood films by shooting their victims with as many bullets as possible—reminds the viewer that they are children. Their childlike nature becomes particularly apparent in the scenes when they are shown playing with toy balls, and also in one of the final scenes when they are snorting cocaine from a crude childish image of a house, a tree, a boat, and a sun formed entirely from lines of cocaine. Symbolically, the snorting of cocaine and reenacting of Hollywood mobster scenes illustrate how blindly the younger generation is allowing its country’s culture and history to be destroyed by consuming the Western lifestyles that are killing it. Furthermore, as this generation comes into adulthood, Serbia is emerging from Communism and war; the infantile behavior only highlights the questionable cultural, social, and political future for Serbia.

*Munje!/Thunderbirds!* (Radivoje Andrić, 2001) also explores Serbian life under Milošević, from the vantage of Serbian society on the eve of Milošević falling from power. There is no mention of a specific date, but the scenes of protest, *Otpor* signs and rock songs that blame the current crisis on “one man,” and the recurrent theme of sanctions place the movie approximately in the early 2000s. One other obvious period marker is the use of Deutsche marks for a bribe by a character pulled over by the police.
*Thunderbirds!* documents the misadventures of Pop and Mare in attempting to retrieve their money given to an old friend, Gojko, to produce a demo tape of what they call “the first Serbian drum and bass music,” the funds for which were collected by selling a brother’s records and a parent’s vacuum cleaner. Gojko neither produces the tape nor returns the money, and with this begins the random events of the night that lead them to meet people along the way who are representative of the various members of contemporary Belgrade society, a cinematic method used earlier in the Yugoslav film *Who’s Singin’ Over There* (1980), by Slobodan Šijan. On the eve of Milošević falling from power the most visible members of Serbian society are: the younger generations, represented by Pop, Mare, and their girlfriends, all forced to become thieves by their circumstances; and the police, who signify power.

Pop and Mare are members of the R generation, but in a 2000 context: they feel the war has caused them to depend on their parents for everything. Though they are in their twenties, they live with their parents, ask their parents for money, and must use their parents’ possessions, such as cars, which they steal from time to time. Their jokes about the 1999 Belgrade bombings reveal that they personally experienced the chaos. The film, similar to *Wounds*, is an exploration of generational transition, shown primarily as a schism between the values, interests, and activities of the younger and older characters. This contrast between the generations proves an important comparison to their parents, and the older generation in general, who grew up in Yugoslavia with considerably more stability. In fact, the only characters to surface in the film who are of the Yugoslav generation are caricatures of certain social archetypes. Examples include the following:
•The only shot of the parents comes in the first few minutes of the film, as grotesque, metonymic figures—only their clothing is shown and their nagging voices are heard.
•The other characters of the older generation are the volunteer policeman, who takes bribes; Đule Savić, a once very famous ex-soccer player, who claims that under the hood of his fancy car runs a Volkswagen engine, the most common of European cars.
•The final character of the adult generation is Ded Mraz, a madman with a predilection for theft.43

Interestingly enough, Thunderbirds! shares many similarities with Who’s Singing Over There, whose themes focus on savremene teme. Thunderbirds! portrays various individuals of different classes and ages who are thrown together into a vehicle for a day, whose interactions reveal the cultural, socio-economic, and ethnic composition of society. But whereas Who’s Singing Over There focuses on the similarities among individuals who seemingly have very little in common except for their Yugoslav citizenship, Thunderbirds! examines six otherwise unconnected individuals whose realities coincide while traveling on the road, in a fashion typical of the road chronotope, “where people separated by social and spatial distance can accidentally meet” (Ganser, Alexandra, Pühringer and Rheindorf, 2006: 1-17). The travelers are also united by the war and its physical effects on the city of Belgrade that was then severed from the rest of the world.

At the conclusion of Thunderbirds! the younger characters walk away from a parked car; when they are gone, two of the older characters, Ded Mraz and the volunteer

43 The character is called Ded Mraz because when they meet him, he is dressed as Santa Claus, or Ded Mraz in Serbian.
policeman steal the car and take it to Portugal, yet another reference to the West, where
the policeman believes life to be better. However, when the two men attempt to start a
barely functioning car, it goes forward instead of backward, tips over the parking garage
and just rocks back and forth, a motion which ultimately ties all the themes together. The
pendulum effect of the car rocking back and forth represents ambivalence about moving
towards the direction of the older generations or the direction of the younger generations;
meanwhile the youth walk away from the rocking car that embodies Serbia. Like Wounds
this abandonment indicates a questionable future for Serbia since the generation that will
assume power seems to be virtually defunct in the society.

*Kad Porastem Biću Kengur/When I Grow Up I Want to be Kangaroo (Kangaroo)*
(Radivoje Andrić, 2004) in many ways continues where *Thunderbirds!* ends. In fact,
many believed it to be a sequel to *Thunderbirds!*, but the director, Andrić, said that the
two films relate to one another only in terms of “the spirit and type of humor within
them” (Andrić, Momčilović, 2004). Both films cover the experiences of average
twentysomethings in Belgrade. In Andrić’s words, *When I Grow up I Want to be
Kangaroo*, shows that

[T]he majority of [his] friends who are 30 years old live with
their parents. [He] wanted to tell a story about those types of
people because it is bothersome that in [Serbian] films young
people live alone and have
Ikea furniture.” “Generally speaking,” Andrić relays, “[He
doesn’t] know anyone like that” (Intervju, 2004).

*Kangaroo* examines life for average youth in Serbia without hyperbole through a
portrayal of a common existence. Most Serbs in their twenties and early thirties “feel that

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44 <www.kengur.b92.net/intervju/e/interview.html> 28 April 2010.

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they are at the point when their youth [is] end[ing] and they haven't accomplished anything in their lives” (Tridestogodišnja deca, 2004).45 A B92 Kažiprst (“Index finger”) interview with social psychologist Dragan Popadić, “Tridesetgodišnja Deca” (“Thirty-year-old Child”), notes that many people in their late twenties and thirties suffer from a syndrome of “extended youth,” and the thirties is the time period where people consider what they would like to do for their life to have financial security. The problem with this, however, is whether Serbs in their twenties or thirties, are able to prepare for their future. Popadić concludes that this will only be possible for Serbian twentysomethings and thirtysomethings when they are between forty and fifty. Further exacerbating their situation is the fact that the younger generation no longer receives an apartment with employment, as could have happened during Communism. That is not to say that children did not live with their parents during Communism, but during Communism many more young people were able to establish residences separate from their parents upon reaching adulthood. However, because of rampant unemployment and influence from Western sources such as film and television, the desire of young people to live in their own apartments is growing, and twenty and thirtysomethings are becoming frustrated with the lack of housing options, primarily because of a lack of income.

*Kangaroo* is precisely about the options, or lack thereof, of twenty- and thirty-year-olds to earn money: borrowing from friends and relatives; gambling; buying items in bulk for resell; or going abroad, as Kengur, a Serbian soccer player now in England, has done. The title of the film itself recalls a 1980s Yugoslav joke about the first Yugoslav-made car, Fića, “*Kad porastem biću Mercedes,***” (“When I grow up, I’m going to be a

Mercedes”) a joke that reflects aspirations and hopelessness, both for this age group and for the nation.

*Kangaroo* tells four concurrent stories: characters Somi and Cile and their attempt to make money by betting on their ex-pat buddy’s professional soccer game; Branislav (Braca) and Iris’s date and the realization that they are from two different worlds; Avaks and Hibrid’s idle time spent, day in and day out, on the roof; and finally Sumpor, a Bosnian refugee who tries to make a dinar through various schemes. The common thread of all plots is Kangaroo. These stories scrutinize the relationship between Serbia and the West through the daily experiences of these twentysomething Belgraders and the proximity of each character to the West. This film, more than any others analyzed herein, critiques Serbia’s relationship with both Europe and America. Europe surfaces through the character Kangaroo, around which the film centers; and the U.S. surfaces through Avaks’s expatriate uncle, who has told Avaks about the overly litigious U.S. legal system, as Avaks muses that the fly he finds in his beer could bring millions in the U.S. American culture is also subtly referenced through an Abercrombie sweatshirt worn by Avaks, presumably purchased by his uncle living in the U.S. These references provide commentary on both the plight of the immigrant—and the ways in which the U.S. plays a role in contemporary Serbia via consumer products and immigration myths. This theme of the West surfaces again when Braca and Iris are having drinks in a café: they are struggling to sustain a conversation. A breakthrough comes when Iris states, “I don’t know. I don’t like American films.”

Braca responds: “Well, which kind do you like then, Romanian?” This causes him to ask himself why he said such a stupid thing, adding, “why am I such a bum with a complex?”
Iris then says: “I don’t know about Romanian films, but American films are so predictable.” Braca shows off his knowledge of American films and tells Iris that not all American films are predictable, and that she must know the difference between “the Hollywood and New York School” and references the film *Todd Bannister*, which they are supposed to watch that evening. It is unclear to the viewer if Braca is making excuses for the film or genuinely knows that the film is unlike the American films that Iris dislikes.

Despite his actual intent, Braca has made Iris insecure, and she asks herself, why she is bantering about American films when she has no clue about them. The conversation comes to a close when Braca scans the room and the camera pans to the soccer match on the television. Looking at the soccer match reminds Braca that he can go ask someone at the betting hall to borrow money to fund his date. He excuses himself, telling Iris that he’s going to go buy more cigarettes. Iris is sure that it is her fault that Braca is leaving and is convinced that he will never come back because she’s said stupid things. She thinks to herself that she is a stupid model with a stupid personality and that she should just shut up and show her legs.

This scene highlights the contrast between the two characters, and turns their positions as Westerner and Balkanite on their heads: Braca has some understanding of the most prevalent of all American cultural products: American films, whereas Iris does not. Her lack of appreciation for American film, or film, in general advances the idea of the West as lacking in depth and substance. This sentiment is echoed when Braca and Iris arrive at an empty theatre, and Iris remarks that the theatre is empty, whereupon Braca asks rhetorically, “What do the masses know about film?” It turns out that they are going
to see the film *Todd Bannister*, the *unpredictable* American film that Braca referenced at the cafe. Despite Braca’s express admiration of the film in the cafe, his sentiment changes when he sees his parents come into the virtually empty theatre. Instead of lauding the films merits, he explains that it has explicit scenes when his parents wind up in the same theatre—playing on the expectation of Western film as vapid and insubstantial.

The post-1999 image of the West reduces American culture to simulacra void of any real substance. Western Europe is also criticized, but via push-pull factors for immigration, and not merely consumer goods. Characters with a great connection to the West stand in contrast to those with little or no such connection. Iris and Braca exemplify this dichotomy. Iris is a model who has worked around the world and has even been rumored to have ties to a Hollywood actor. She is known both locally and globally. Braca is only known in his small, remote area of Belgrade—he, similar to other twentysomethings in Belgrade, possesses very little and his situation is not likely to improve. When these two go on their first date, the differences between them are striking, especially to Braca who at the end of the date concludes that as a 28 year old, who lives with his parents, he has nothing and will continue to have nothing. He resolves to live in his solitary world, where he can keep to himself and not have to worry Iris or have her change her lifestyle. Iris has everything because of her global life and career, causing Braca to feel unworthy of her, even if she is interested in him. It is her proximity to the West that Braca believes makes her too good for him, even though she has chosen to date someone at home, despite her life abroad. Braca has no realistic understanding of the West, but has enough of a concept to know that Serbia is not the West and therefore not good enough for it. Meanwhile, Iris does not share Braca’s doubts. For her there is no
issue of being good or worthy enough, just that one is a good person, regardless of personal or cultural affinities. Braca behaves in an offensive manner, which Iris finds unacceptable. They part, but for very different reasons—Braca because he cannot imagine that he could be good enough for her, Iris because of his rude behavior. They stand for the inability of the West and the Local to understand one another, though they will attempt reconciliation later.

The characters of Somi and Cile have a connection to the West, as best friends of Kangaroo. Though their link is fading the longer Kangaroo remains in England, they stay connected to him by watching and betting on his soccer games. They also remain a part of the life Kangaroo might have led, had he stayed behind in Belgrade: they make bets on games, eat and drink at restaurants on tab, shuffle money by borrowing and lending, and, more than anything, hope that things will get better.

The portrayal of life in Serbia is an acknowledgement that emigrating may seem glamorous, but is fraught with problems. Though moving abroad frequently affords financial comfort, it also means forsaking family, native language and native culture to forge something new in the unknown. This is especially relevant for Kangaroo, who has left behind a mother, ex-girlfriend, best friends, his native language and culture. The abandoned life continues without him: his girlfriend is now pregnant with another man’s baby, and his country has changed into something that would undeniably be unrecognizable to him. Even with these critiques of life abroad, the film is ambiguous toward leaving one’s country. In contrast to the dearth for Serbs in Belgrade, the film also imagines America and England as spaces that supply all the needs of their citizens to the point of excess. Ultimately the film is as critical of life in contemporary Serbia as it is of
those who have left, in that both remaining and emigrating leave individuals equally unfulfilled, a recognition of the complications of either life.

Yet another film that should be analyzed within these same parameters is *Sedm i Po*/Seven and a Half (Miroslav Momčilović, 2006), which analyzes the ails of Serbian society by addressing the biblical idea of the seven deadly sins thematically: pride, greed, envy, gluttony, wrath, lust, sloth and a sin unique to Serbia, despair. Set in New Belgrade, the film explores each of the sins within Serbian confines and at the end, all the characters wind up in a hospital, awaiting the “cures” for the illnesses that contemporary Serbian society has presented to them.

Given the primacy of Orthodoxy Serbian culture, the references of *Seven and a Half* to the Bible suggests an attempt to target fundamental aspects of Serbian society; through religion, the film is able to reach a broader cross-section of the Serbian population than just the Serbian generation. Moreover, it not only targets the historical undercurrents of Serbian cultural formation, it also brings to light contemporary realities in Serbian society, including what the society lacks—money, opportunity, gender equality and a robust older generation. Some redemption does come with the birth of a baby, coinciding with the death of an elderly teacher in the final scene of the film.

Though its themes relate to the other films, *Seven and a Half* dwells minimally on the West. In fact, the only obvious outside influence on contemporary identity is the Chinese population in Serbia, which cannot precisely be termed “outside,” since their presence is an actual part of the contemporary cultural landscape of Serbia. Treatment of this subject, too, is fleeting, through a Bruce Lee poster that is spit upon by a young bodybuilding nationalist. He disregards Bruce Lee as just another Chinese person “selling
toys and shoes for three Euros” and claims that Bruce Lee cannot match him. This comparison of Bruce Lee to the merchants in New Belgrade is a direct reference to the large population of Chinese men and women living in New Belgrade, who many in Serbia have difficulty accepting as a now consistent part of their landscape. In contrast to the previously persistent presence of the West, the only way the West surfaces is in the first of the seven shorts through the short themed Srebroljublje, or “Greed,” where two friends, Keboja and Rade, decide to fake paralysis and record a video asking famed Argentinean football player Maradona for money for an accident. They later find out Maradona has been seriously injured in an accident, and cannot ask him for money. The film is similar to Kangaroo in its multilayer story line, but focuses on contemporary Serbian society with very little reference to the outside sources of contemporary Serbian identity, lest they be present within Serbia themselves, like the Chinese for example.

Seven and a Half reinterprets individual “sins” through contemporary trends in Serbian society. Serbia is shown as a multifaceted society, ethnically, culturally, and morally—a diversity which hints at the possibility of Serbia finding internal sources for its post-war identity. Similar to the other films analyzed herein, Seven and a Half addresses these issues:

• Young twentysomethings with nothing to do.

• Members of the older generation with nothing to do.

• Depicting the West as a wealthier, but not necessarily more promising, land.

• The promise that Serbia holds will not be realized until the future.

However, this film also features themes and characters that typically only surface in works of the Yugoslav filmmaker generation, an idea explored later in this chapter. As
noted above, the entire premise of the film is based on biblical principles. The exception is the theme of despair, which is covered in a story line about two twentysomethings who steal because they have nothing better to do. These two arrive at a high-rise building iconic to New Belgrade. It is not one of the ubiquitous nondescript high-rises, but rather a building that appears to be a gate to New Belgrade. When built, the building must have suggested modernity and progress. Now, however, the elevator does not work and, since the apartment they want to rob is on the 23rd floor, the two out-of-shape youths must walk up the stairs. Since they cannot make it up to the 23rd floor, they settle on the first unlocked apartment they find, which happens to belong to their elementary school teacher. Upon entering the apartment, they find old compositions they had written about what they wanted to be when they grew up. They read them out loud and are amazed by their correct use of grammar and creative childhood desires, all of which greatly contrasts to what they, and by extension the majority of their generation, have become. Once their former teacher realizes that they are in the house, despite her advanced age, she remembers the two boys and demands that they sing the song that they used to sing when they were in elementary school, an unusual rock song about bamboo. Because the song from the “Despair” short reappears throughout the movie, it becomes a leitmotif for the film, recalling the despair of the scene with which it is associated, and connects all the characters who sing it collectively at the close of the movie, illustrating how despair permeates the society on all levels.

While all the films analyze the issue of female inequality in Serbian society in some way, only Seven and a Half meaningfully addresses it. This theme appears in both shorts “Pride” and “Rage.” “Pride” takes place on the set of a quiz show where couples
compete and win money based on the number of correct answers given. Since it is a couples’ show, participants are supposed to answer questions after consulting one another, but the professional couple at the center of the story is not willing to relinquish control in the relationship, and instead of winning the jackpot, they lose everything because of their pride. The woman is shown as an uptight business professional, who the game show host recognizes with patronizing condescension because she has chosen to keep her maiden name instead of taking her husband’s last name. It also hints at the complex role assigned to women in contemporary Serbian society—a mix of primary care giver for children, mother, wife, and earner, while husbands retain their typical role of alpha male in the household with minimal responsibilities, except making money. In the short “Rage,” the nationalist body-builder verbally and physically abuses his girlfriend. Though he is cruel to everyone around him, she seems to receive his rage; he never asks anything of her, but rather demands it, and she always willingly obliges. *Seven and a Half* critiques this fundamental aspect of Serbian society as if to seek out the possibility of an alternative, but without directly suggesting what that alternative might be.

Employing themes of both generations of filmmakers, *Seven and a Half* is uniquely positioned thematically between Yugoslav and Serbian cultural products. This makes the film especially compelling, as the majority of the other films presented herein typically illustrate only the themes of one generation. Since this film is chronologically last on my list of films by the Serbian generation, it may indicate that the West is moving away from the forefront of the lives of the younger generations. Instead there is an implicit acknowledgement that introspection, rather than comparison to the West, is
needed to understand the social and cultural ails of Serbian society; this, in turn, segues into understanding the sharpest dichotomy of thinking in Serbia.

These films of the younger generation began with consistent references to the West, comparing Serbian society to the West, and in many ways offered the West as a paragon. It would take time for a Serbian identity anchored in something other than Yugoslav paradigms to emerge, in which Serbia itself could serve as the center of identity formation rather than simple comparisons to other cultures. The most telling aspect of this identity formation is portrayed in other contemporary films focusing on the problems of Serbian society, which seek solutions from within the country instead of from the outside. Thus, as Serbian identity has become more cohesive, the critiques are coming from Serbian voices, and a film like *Seven and a Half* presents a harsh criticism of the society but also opens a space for self-reflection, offering hope for revival or reification of society and its people. The director himself notes that the film is intended to be a form of catharsis and self-realization (Momčilović, 2006). In fact, the final scenes in the hospital suggest there is hope for the future generations with the death of the old and the birth of the new, a common trope of postcolonial literature, raising questions of how the post-colonial and post-imperial merge in Serbian post-war cultural products. Though it is difficult to let go of the past, the birth of the baby provides evidence that each new generation brings hope and the possibility of something new and better than the present.

Films of the Serbian generation of filmmakers continue the 1990s trend that surfaced in Serbia to reject the nationalism that controlled the nation and even prevented Serbia from being European. These films grapple with the problematic position the R generation occupy in contemporary Serbia. Also of concern for these filmmakers is the
issue of the regional and international status of Serbia. By questioning the position of future generations, the issue of where Serbia will be in the global sphere provides cathartic space for self-reflection by their viewers. After all, this is the generation that protested against Milošević in hopes of ushering in a new reality for Serbia. In addition to contemplating the contemporary state of the society, these films simultaneously question what was accomplished by protesting and standing up to the regime.

The Yugoslav Generation

In the Serbian filmic landscape, there are films set in contemporary urban spaces, as well as films that take place in distant periods of Serbian history; both categories use their settings to define the present and postulate about the future. These latter types include Zona Zamfirova (Zdravko Šotra, 2002), Ivkova Slava/Ivan’s Nameday Celebration (Zdravko Šotra, 2005), Jesen Stiže Dunjo Moja/Goose Feather (Ljubiša Samardžić, 2004), and the alleged documentary Gde Cveta Limun Žut/Where the Lemon Flower Blooms (Zdravko Šotra, 2006).46

The Yugoslav generation is concerned, by and large, with the competition between the Local and the West and how the West has the capacity to overtake the Local as a viable option for Serbia and its people. A useful point of comparison of how this conflict surfaces in contemporary films from the Yugoslav generation is a triangulation method that Mark Lipovetsky, via Alexander Etkind, employs when analyzing Russian films to provide insight into Russia’s self-colonization. According to Lipovetsky, 19th

46 Karaula/The Border Post, 2006, which, though directed by Rajko Grlić, a noteworthy Croatian director who works at Ohio University, was actually a collaborative effort that included the work of Serbian, Macedonian, Croatian, Bosnian, and Slovene directors and actors. Even though Border Post was produced many years after the dismantling of Yugoslavia, it was created in the spirit of Yugoslav cinema, and should be considered Yugoslav film, not an expression of any specific national cinematic landscape.
century Russian novels utilize this triangulation that includes a man of the people, a man of power and a Russian *krasavitsa*, who mediates between the two of them (Lipovetsky).

In the article “In the Absence of a Mediator,” Lipovetsky outlines how this classic formulation is realized in contemporary Russian filmic contexts to symbolize Russia’s internal colonization and self-colonization with characters in the roles of the mediator, object of desire, and rival representing the various poles of internal and self-colonization (Lipovetsky, 2003). This is a reinterpretation what Rene Girard observed in the works of Stendhal, Cervantes and Dostoevsky among others, and consists of characters acting in the roles of mediator, rival and an object of desire, a construct he termed “triangular desire” (Girard, 1965: 6-13).

Serbian films produced by the Yugoslav generation who adopt the Local framework use this classic triangulation to describe the *desire* of their generation for Serbia to be defined within Local terms. The triangulation presented in their films is rendered by a representative of the people, or the Local, a representative of the West, and someone to mediate between the two. In the Serbian rendering, however, the gender of the characters is not predetermined, and the mediator is always more comfortable in Local settings. Films of this type subvert Western ideology through insignificant character development of those who represent the West, while bolstering Serbian culture through either an evocation to Serbia’s greater past or by using present situations to insinuate the great potential of the present.

With these films, it is possible to see the older generation of filmmakers returning to the methods of early Yugoslav film, whereby one uses the distant and very distant past, including WWII and the valor of the Partisan fighters, to engage in a dialogue about the
present and even consider possible future realities. These films, though they debuted within a few years of each other, return to periods of strength in Serbian history and offer a promising future for the country and its people. Films listed above are only attributed to three directors all of the same generation, who use historical timeframes from their youth. Through the past, these directors are able to critique contemporary Serbia through a familiar lens. The four films reference periods of liminality, when Serbia’s culture and identity were in flux and, as such, the themes of the referenced historical points parallel the contemporary state of Serbia.

Two of the three Zdravko Šotra films included in this study are adaptations of 19th century novels by Stefan Sremac, a Romantic Serbian novelist, and are set at the cusp of the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the beginning of Serbian autonomy. Both films take place in Niš, the adoptive home of Sremac, therefore the characters (in the film) speak Torlak—a Serbian dialect that semantically and morphologically more resembles modern-day Bulgarian (and Macedonian) than Serbo-Croatian (or Serbian). The actors in the films are in period dress and the customs and traditions of that time are highlighted through the plot.

On the surface, Šotra’s Zona Zamfira is simply a love story about Mane and Zona, and their romantic incompatibility due to unequal social standings—Zona’s father, Zamfir, is a çorbaci, the wealthiest man in the town. Mane, on the other hand, is a young, self-made entrepreneur who is a goldsmith by trade. His family occupies a lower social status than the çorbaci family, but through his trade he has steadily climbed through the well-established social hierarchy. Despite his personal and professional successes, he is always viewed as a simple tradesman and, as such, could never be a suitable match for
Zona. In contrast to Mane is Manulač, simultaneously the village idiot and the only socially suitable match for Zona. Manulač is clearly a jester-type character, but Zona’s family pressures her to accept his courtship—all in the name of tradition. Their forced relationship illustrates the idiocy of a social system that can no longer be relevant in a society that prizes motivation and one’s ability to be a self-starter.

_Zona Zamfirova_ was an extremely popular film. Many people watched the film on television, but it also achieved popularity among contemporary Serbian audiences because of the highly symbolic nature of its content (Vojnov, 2007). Particularly of interest is how the setting of Niš provides the viewer with a pastoral, romantic landscape ripe for the imagination. Furthermore, 1888 would have been highly significant for the 2002 audience to which it was directed, both time periods are turning points for Serbia: In 1888, the Ottoman Empire was retreating from Serbia, and Serbian language and religion was being defined. _Zona Zamfirova_ reflects that early time of cultural change, when Serbian lands were coming back under the control of Serbia, and explores how these transitions were affecting the daily lives of the citizens. It explores the transformations in Niš through the older and younger generations by contrasting socio-economic classes of what was before and what was coming into being.

Turkey and Serbia are both located on the Balkan peninsula; yet Turkey occupies both Europe and Asia, whereas Serbia is only in Europe. However, because Serbia was under Ottoman tutelage for centuries the Ottoman Empire was envisioned as an alien element and oppressor in the Slavic countries in the Balkans, and therefore in need of expulsion. When the empire waned, however, aspects of Ottoman culture were already deeply entrenched within the Balkans.
In *Zona Zamfirova*, aspects of Ottoman culture surface in the Oriental style of dress worn by men and women in Niš. Moreover, gender boundaries are clearly delineated in the film: men travel freely and congregate at the cafes and pubs, whereas women keep to the home or communal baths. Some women can be found within the male spaces, but those women are social misfits in some way: Doka, Mane’s aunt, is cast at times as the village idiot and at other times as the village witch, complete with apotropaic in hand. The only other women who occupy male spaces are the performers in the pub, who are dressed as Roma, the traditional performers in Serbian society. These are the only exceptions in the film to the assigned roles of women. Zona, the protagonist of the film, is of high social rank, and her movement is even more restricted. She is only permitted to walk through town in the presence of escorts. In fact, she can only move freely within the family compound, and even there she is frequently seen with a chambermaid. Men and women do interact in the communal *kolos* and *oros*, but Zona, as a daughter of the richest man in the town, is excluded from these spaces as well.\textsuperscript{47}

The characters thus exemplify how one’s social class dictated what professions one could hold, as well as who one could marry. The two main characters of the film, Mane and Zona, are captive to the social parameters assigned them. Though they are a part of the younger generation, they are initially influenced by the older generation in their steadfast adherence to the social and gender class system kept in place by Mane’s mother and Zona’s father and aunts.

Transition, is the uniting theme in this film. In fact, the conflict that arises between the two families arises from a shifting cultural paradigm allowing people to

\textsuperscript{47} The *kolos* and *oros* are both traditional dances.
define for themselves what will be the norm for their culture. Mane is a goldsmith and therefore belongs to a lower class than Zona’s family, who hold the status of çorbaci. Yet this status stems from Hadji Zamfir’s former ties to the defunct Empire. With the retreat of the Ottomans, the cultural norms and social class parameters of Niš were being repositioned. These changes were spearheaded by those who had been of the lower class during Ottoman times, a group whose own status was changing then. In fact, Doka, Mane’s social misfit aunt, tells Hadji Zamfir that Mane is gaining the position in society that the çorbaci is losing. This difference between the success of Mane and the insinuated decline of the çorbaci is highlighted by Mane’s continual elevation through the social ranks—his small kiosk grows into an actual store with an assistant, he buys a German safe, and gets important clients, including the local church. Ultimately, however, Mane weds Zona, thus linking him to the former hierarchal structure that was in place in Ottoman times. Upon the çorbaci’s acceptance of the marriage of his daughter to Mane, the very image of the self-made man, both men simultaneously acknowledge Mane’s new-found wealth and prominence. In this way, it is shown that the generations have much to learn from one another; the youth should not discount the elders, but neither should the elders dismiss the youth. Another message of the film is the need to unite the generations through a Serbian norm, for it is Mane, not the Western-educated Manulač, who becomes the ultimate choice for Zona, this suggests that the solution to the future must be found through compromise and mutual understanding between the generations as well as adherence to Serbian norms.

Though Zona Zamfirova represents the romantic nationalist spirit, it features the West, the Local and a mediator between the two. The West, in this film, is unlike the U.S.
or Western Europe that surfaces in the films of the younger generations, but the West as “Other,” outsider, or usurper of the local social and cultural landscape. The West is represented by Manulač, who was educated in the West and, unlike the others in the film, seems unable to dance the traditional dances of the kolo and oro. He speaks about a recession that no one has heard of and his father boast that “he will be a banker in Belgrade,” as opposed to Mane, whose goal is to stay in Niš and develop the city. In this way Manulač and Mane, in addition to being doubles as suggested by their similar name, are foils to one another via their interests and cultural orientation. Mane is referred to (by one of Zona’s female family members) as “a common craftsman” but, through his actions, demonstrates a belief in Serbian might. Since Zona will inherit the çorbaci’s name and all of the traditions that come with it, she is a symbol of how the future of Serbia will be decided—will it look to the past through a system of rank and social status that is waning or will she create something new. In this way, Zona becomes a symbol for Niš as well as a symbol for the nation. Zona must chose the path of the Local or the West, and Serbia too must change. But, as the West is portrayed as an infantile idiot that does not understand how the world works, the West is deemed an unnatural choice for Zona, and by extension Serbia.

_Jesen Stiže Dunjo Moja/Goose Feather_ (Ljubiša Samardzić, 2004) likewise employs the examination of the conflict between the West and the Local, but via the lens of WWI, and, as such, places this conflict between Vojvodinian (chiefly presented as a Serb-dominant culture) and Austro-Hungarian culture. The choice of Vojvodina as the seat of Serbian culture in this film proves interesting since in 2004 Maja Gojković, former Vice President of the Radical Party, became mayor of Novi Sad, thus reaffirming
Vojvodina as an integral part of Serbia, and quelling any immediate realization of independence for Vojvodina or greater autonomy for the region. By choosing the multiethnic region of the Banat, where the Serbian population is the majority, the film places Serbian culture over all of the ethnicities that, due to various historical reasons, have come to live under the Serbian umbrella.

In *Goose Feather*, the three main characters who represent the triangulation of the Local vs. Western divide are Sava, the protagonist, Ancica and Marija. This triangulation, more than any other relationship in the films examined, is especially compelling because the names of the characters representing the Local—Sava and Marija—evoke something of the divine. Sava’s namesake, St. Sava, is one of the most venerated saints in Serbia and Marija is the Serbian version of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Their names are greater than themselves, and their reconnection through their love helps to reaffirm the proper position of Serbia in the kingdom of heaven. These names stand in contrast to the name Ancica, a diminutive name with no particular historical or religious significance for Serbia, and her last name of Granfeld simply marks her as of German decent, and therefore squarely within the realm of the West. Also included in the Local vs. West confrontation are all those who come into contact with them, including Sava’s *kum*, Kum Petrasin; Ancica’s father; Gazda Granfeld (Sir or Mr. Granfield); Sava’s parents; and Dunja, Sava and Marija’s daughter.¹⁴⁸ All firmly occupy one of the two poles of the conflict.

¹⁴⁸ A *kum* can have three separate meanings in Serbia: the best man who stands up for you at your wedding, a child’s godfather, or the family of either your best man or godfather.
Goose Feather chronicles the life of Sava and his relationships with two women, Marija and then Ancica. The story is traditional and set, like Zona Zamfirova, in a romantic pastoral landscape. Marija is Sava’s childhood sweetheart: she waits for him when he goes off to war, and he proposes to her when he gets back. Sava’s father rejects the prospect of their marriage, proclaiming that “he has too many women in his house to take on another,” thus rendering a marriage between Sava and Marija impossible. In protest Sava attempts patricide, but is unsuccessful and leaves home first to live with a friend and next to live and work on the Granfild estate. Even though Sava and Ancica were already acquainted with one another from childhood, they only really get to know one another once Sava lives on her family’s estate. Once there, Ancica does her best to seduce Sava, and eventually convinces him to marry her. Once Ancica shows an interest in Sava, and her father agrees to her courting Sava, Mr. Granfield begins to give Sava gifts, including a suit and a horse-drawn carriage, both luxuries in their own right as well as metonyms for the world that Sava did not occupy until his association with the Granfilds. The suit proves important because when Sava puts it on, he becomes someone who is enticed by the wealth and promise that the Granfild household can offer him. The suit becomes representative of a Western mindset, and it transforms him when he wears it. Wearing of special clothing is indicative of a change in status: when important life changes take place, one wears special clothing, e.g., a baptismal gown, a graduation gown and cap, or a wedding gown or tuxedo. The suit in this case provides a great example of the transformational quality of clothing in two ways—the suit brings Sava into the Western realm and the Western way of life.
Sava is less interested in Ancica than the financial and social benefits that a relationship with her might afford him. With his new carriage, Sava begins to travel between his old and new worlds—one occupied by his family and friends, and the other where the Grandfilds reside. On one of these trips, he finds out that Marija has died, but has left her daughter Dunja behind. He finds out much later that the daughter is actually his. Following his journey to the other side, Sava and Ancica’s marriage begins to falter, eventually ending as he decides never to return to her. Instead of returning to the Granfild estate, he goes back to his village on the other side of the bridge, to his more traditional attire and claims Dunja. Sava has chosen to leave behind the way of life afforded him by the Grandfilds in order to assume a life interrupted by heartache and shame. Sava chooses the local culture, and in doing so, he rejects a future for him and his progeny that does not embrace the local culture.

Ancica and Marija are quite different, and the two very distinct worlds in which they live are emblematic of that difference. Goose Feather, more than any other films within this dynamic truly illustrates the differences in which the West and Local manifest themselves. For example, as stated earlier, Sava and Marija, through their names alone, are an evocation to the most fundamental aspects of Serbian religious identity, which, as is established in the previous chapter, are the fundamental constituent elements of Serbian identity. As a reflection of this idea, the scenes in which they dominate are infused with not only Serbian customs, but also general Slavic customs, including mummary, visiting a fortuneteller and the folkloric father with too many women under his care. In direct contrast to them is the relationship between Ancica and Sava, whose interaction is forced and causes Sava to literally change into someone more befitting for
this other, more opulent side of the town, which is separated from his native neighborhood by a bridge—reinforcing the distance between the two lands. The Granfilds change him into the person who they would like for him to be, with little or no regard for what he wants for himself. In Marija’s world Sava is acceptable as his is, in the realm of the Granfeld’s he must assimilate—a direct parallel to how some see the relationship between Serbia and the West. The two worlds are further contrasted in that the inhabitants of the Granfelds are static and occupied by the sickly (Ancica) and the elderly (her father), whereas the home Sava departs from is full of life and dynamism. More importantly, Sava’s home possesses the possibility of renewal, as illustrated through the inclusion of children, and especially Sava’s daughter, Dunja.

In that Goose Feather ends with the presence of a child, it is similar to the film Seven and a Half. However, unlike the ending of the Momčilović film, the child is much older, showing that the potential of Serbia is already present and can be realized, unlike Seven and a Half, that ends with the death of the old and birth of the new. Equally telling is that the film concludes with Kum Petrasin’s mother, a representative of an older generation standing side by side with Dunja. She, along with Sava and Dunja, symbolizes an ideal similar to that in Zona Zamfirova where the future, or at least a promising one, can only be realized by contributions of all generations. The films also share the idea that the mediator, Zona and Sava, respectively, chose the Serbian or local way by completely abandoning the West or the objects or individuals symbolizing the West.

Ivkova Slava or Ivan’s Name Day Celebration (Zdravko Šotra, 2005) need only be inserted here in the spirit in which the film was created. This film is yet another adaptation of a early 20th century novel by Stefan Sremac and celebrates the changing of
the guard, so to speak, in turn-of-the-century Niš and is, again, set in distant historical frames.

*Gde Cveta Limun Žut/Where the Lemon Flower Blooms* (Zdravko Šotra, 2006) is a hybrid film classified as documentary, but is both documentary and historical dramatization that is part of a three part historical series. The film does not fully realize the trends outlined above, but similar to *Ivan’s Name Day Celebration*, strongly espouses the themes and spirit of the films of this older generation, or Yugoslav generation of directors. The documentary was initially released in theaters, and all grade school teachers were instructed to take their students to view the film. It seems that the logistics of getting all school-age children to the theater proved difficult, resulting in the film being eventually released as a television movie, affording the film a larger audience.

The documentary, like *Goose Feather*, focuses on WWI, but specifically documents how Serbia suffered during the war, and chronicles Serbian hardships, losses and the forced exile of the Royal Serbian government and troops to the island of Corfu. The film is an unusual combination of narration, film footage and dramatization, giving it a historical feel while never completely straying from its obvious contemporary focus. The most curious aspect of this documentary is the way in which Serbia and its citizens are portrayed, universally, as martyrs and deeply patriotic as seen in the scenes when the Serbian soldier reflects on the land that he has left to the foreign nurse who is caring for him. He speaks of Serbia with a genuine longing, and the nurse is able to tell him everything about Serbia that he would want to tell her, presumably because he has told her the same tales repeatedly. Not only is Serbia where his family is, but it is also the place with plums in place of Corfu’s olives and prairies and fields instead of mountains.
He states that his days are hardest because he is unable to return to Serbia. Another, equally grandiose, display of national pride comes from a scene where a common soldier speaks to his commanding officer to find out why he is not sitting with the other common soldiers for warmth and why he is in low spirits. During the course of the conversation, the soldier, who is speaking with a very strong accent in ijekavian, informs the commanding officer that he is actually from Lika, a northern town in current day Croatia, and switched over to the Serbian side to fight alongside them. He asserts his drive to continue fighting, despite the obvious setbacks of the brigade. He then reminds the commander that even Jesus suffered before his resurrection, and that God has not left Serbia. The commander thanks the soldier for reminding him that God had not left Serbia. Thus, it is the commoner who reminds those in power of the legacy that suffering brings victory—a lesson taught from the Kosovo myth and general culture of victimization.

The film espouses the idea that WWI was a model for Serbia, instructing it to arise from hardship, in a phoenix-like nature, to become victorious and prepare for any and all hardships that can come in the future. This constructed narrative of WWI works in tandem with the Kosovo myth, but in newer, more familiar frames, to renew the battle cry around which Serbs rally. The release of this film illustrates that Serbian culture remains strong and firmly in place, despite any perceived attempts at its negation.

The film is narrated by Dragan Nikolić, a famous Serbian actor of the Yugoslav generation, and adds to the dramatization of it all, further taking the production away from documentary. At the film’s end he is shown standing at Kalemegdan, a medieval fortress in Belgrade, where he speaks briefly about the time that has passed since WWI,
and references WWII and the beginning of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. By making reference to those two very historically relevant periods of time in Serbian history, this 2006 film is focused on a Serbian-specific identity, one whose reference points, like the other films in this section, return to a pre-Yugoslav Serbia in order to find the sources of Serbian identity and draw ideas from those experiences for a contemporary or current Serbian identity. It also links contemporary Serbia to the cycle of death and rebirth/defeat and victory initiated by the Kosovo epic.

The title of the film, \textit{Gde Cveta Limun Žut/Where the Lemon Flower Blooms} is excerpted from an army song, \textquotedblleft Tamo Daleko,\textquotedblright or \textquotedblleft There, Far Away.\textquotedblright Thus the title itself serves as an analogy to the song that, according to the film, originates from the time when the Serbian army and government were in exile and sang about their country, homeland, friends and family who were far away. The verse from which the title of the film originates is:

\begin{quote}
Tamo daleko, daleko od mora./ There, far away from the sea
Tamo je selo moje, tamo je Srbija. / There is my village, there is my Serbia
Tamo daleko, gde cveta limun žut./ There, far away where the lemon blossom blooms (Stamenkovića).\textsuperscript{49}
\end{quote}

There are, at least, four different versions of this song, and even variations of those versions. Regardless of the version, however, each, in its own way, hearkens back to the Serbian homeland. One line that does not, however, recall the homeland itself is the line \textquotedblleft čeka mi Srpkinja\textquotedblright or \textquotedblleft a Serbian woman waits for me,\textquotedblright which, takes us full circle with our film of the Yugoslav generation. Though a woman awaiting her soldier to return back to the home front may be a typical, almost pedestrian, trope of war and war films,

\textsuperscript{49} <http://www.rastko.rs/knjizevnost/umetnicka/himne.html> 25 April 2010.
the idea appears in *Goose Feather*, and can, in turn, be a subtle analogy to the song “Tamo Daleko,” which, no doubt would be familiar to the majority of the film’s viewers. Even if it is a stretch to suggest some link between the song and the story of Marija and Sava in *Goose Feather*, the overarching link of the nationalist fervor in which the films were created cannot be denied.

As if the song does not have enough of a nationalist tone within popular folklore the song is even believed by some to be a Chetnik song, which for some is a source of pride, others a source of disgust, and for many outsiders, a song that stirs disdain. The song also serves as a rallying cry of the fatherland for those Serbs who live abroad, especially for the early generations of Serbian migrants. Keeping these facts in mind, a few conclusions can be made about this very nationalist film-documentary and the unusual timing of its debut. Most importantly, the similarity that can be found, in the author’s opinion, is that between the Serbs who were expelled from Serbia to Corfu and the Serbs who are suffering from what is believed to be de facto expulsion from Kosovo, and Albania is what links these generations of Serbs to each other. During WWI, both the Serbian army and Serbian soldiers were forced out, and the mountains of Albania were their last stop before reaching the place where they were to live in exile. (Many of the narrated sections of the documentary are shot on location in both Albania and Corfu.) Kosovo, in turn, has historically been, and continues to be an event that established the foundational principles of Serbian might. As is well documented, Kosovo, within popular folklore, is believed to be the heart of Serbian culture and society. Therefore, evicting Serbs from Kosovo would be akin to being forced out of the entirety of their homeland—like what happened during WWI. Within a contemporary context, Serbs of Kosovo just
want to return to Kosovo, the perceived heart of Serbian culture and their home. During
WWI, Serbs likewise wanted to return home to the country from which they had been
expelled. In fact, the narrator of the documentary characterizes this as the singular desire
of the Serbian soldiers—returning home to their “fatherland” in order to see all of the
beauty that they left behind, verbalized as such by many of the characters in the film, and
the subject matter of the song “Tamo Daleko.”

Keeping these similarities in mind, the question should be raised of whether the
film is simply the documentary it proclaims itself to be, or, in a similar vein to the song
the title evokes, a call to arms for Serbs to act, or react, as the case may be. In the same
way that the other films advocate “fighting” on a highly symbolic level for the fatherland
and its culture, so too does Where the Lemon Flower Blooms. Similar to Zona Zamfirova,
Goose Feather, and Ivan’s Nameday Celebration, Where the Lemon Flower Blooms is a
call for Serbs to preserve Serbian culture, and the evocation of the past is to remind Serbs
that Serbia has existed as an independent state with an independent culture, and has
functioned independent of outside help or influence. This turn to history also illustrates
what pre-Yugoslav Serbian culture was made of: strength, determination, and unity even
in the face of possible harm. Serbian culture must be preserved wherever it may be:
Kosovo, Serbia, or Corfu. This sentiment is reminiscent of the Serb saying that wherever
there is Serbian grave, there too is Serbia, which is clearly shown when the narrator
travels to Corfu to pay his respects to the fallen Serbs whose lives ended there. Whereas
the younger generation of filmmakers advocates the questioning of the constructs of
contemporary Serbian culture in order to forge something new, the older Yugoslav
generation argues that Serbs must stand up in arms, both literally and figuratively, to fight
for what is theirs—culture, heritage, history, and ultimately their land—all of which was done during all challenging times in Serbian history, including this most recent decade following the ousting of Milošević.

Film, more than any other outlet surveyed herein, is universally synonymous with enjoyment and entertainment. Film reaches large numbers of citizens in any given nation, and, unlike film from other Yugoslav successor states, Serbian film has continued to enjoy wide-spread success and is well patronized. Contemporary filmmakers and directors are using film in ways similar to those used by the architects of Yugoslav culture. They are promoting their personal philosophy (through film) in an effort to explore savremene teme present in the culture, politics, and society of Serbia. Unlike the uniformity of the themes and methodologies of the films created during Yugoslavia, Serbian films of today are divided in subject matter, ideological stance, and means of expression. Though the two generations express their affinities in different ways, each in their own way is a benefactor of the original function of film.
Chapter 5: Post-War Serbian Literature: From Postmodernism to (Neo)realism

*The Post-War Literary Landscape in Serbia*

In addition to film and media, literature played a major role in the establishment of Yugoslav culture, and the themes explored within contemporary literature continue to inform Serbian identity today. The works analyzed in this chapter demonstrate the ways different generations of Serbian writers depict the situation in Serbia during the Yugoslav wars and after: some writers recall Tito’s Yugoslavia to illuminate their post-war reality in Milošević’s Serbia; others intertwine past and present to draw conclusions about both. Additionally, in the years following the Kosovo war (2000-present), other writers have produced literature solely as a means of artistic expression, and those works feature minimal, if any, contemplation about Serbian political or social realities.

In this chapter, I analyze the works of postmodern writers David Albahari and Milorad Pavić with a view toward how events in Serbian history, specifically the civil unrest in Yugoslavia in the late 1970s and general regional turmoil in Eastern Europe in the 1980s, affected Pavić’s works and how the wars in the 1990s caused a metamorphosis in Albahari’s fiction. Regarding Pavić, I explore the themes in his works and the effects of his unique status among Yugoslav, and now Serbian, writers. Both Albahari and Pavić have been active writers for decades, and a brief analysis of their writings provides examples of the tendencies and trends of Postmodernism, which was the dominant artistic means of expression in Serbian literature prior to the Yugoslav wars and their aftermath.
Much scholarship exists on these two authors, and this chapter is not an exhaustive list of scholarship or methods of analyzing their works.

The main focus of this chapter, however, is realist and (neo)realist writing from the 1990s to the 2000s that chronicles (i) life in Serbia during the wars in Bosnia and Croatia, which recognizes and, at times, denies the negative political and social changes that were simultaneously taking place in Serbia, including the rise of Milošević; (ii) life in Belgrade before, during, and after the NATO bombing campaign of 1999; and (iii) the change in status of former Yugoslav citizens throughout the world after the wars precipitated a massive exodus—chosen for some and forced for others. Such works include *In the Hold* (*U potpalublu*, 1994), *Andjela: Cloaca maxima II Sapunska opera* (Angel, 1997) and *Predator* (*Predator*, 2008) by Vladimir Arsenijević, *U Krevetu sa Madonom* (*In the Bed with Madonna*, 1998) by Vule Žurić, *Dnevnik srpske domaćice* (*Diary of a Serbian Housewife*, 2000) by Mirjana Bobić-Mojšilović and *Ples sitnih demona* (*The Dance of the Petty Demons*, 2001), *Đavo je moj drug* (*The Devil is my Friend*, 2002) and *Kandže* (*Claws*, 2004) by Marko Vidojković.

With the exception of Bobić-Mojšilović, the authors who focus on the recent past (1990s to present) represent a new artistic class that is coming into prominence in Serbia. These writers are similar to the younger generation of filmmakers, whose development was informed by the destitution and destruction precipitated by UN sanctions, NATO bombings and the unraveling of a once touted but now questionable identity and reality. Prior to the emergence of these authors, the Serbian literary scene was dominated by fantastic and romantic themes told in disjointed, enigmatic, and experimental forms—all in keeping with the then post-modern aesthetic. Works of the new writers are generally
written in the vein of Realism with first-person narrative and linear structures, a clear departure from the Postmodernism that came before.

Notwithstanding the new writers, some artists have continued to adhere to the postmodern aesthetic popular prior to the war and in the early post-war period. They tend to be established, older writers whose early post-war works lack analysis of contemporary issues; their works straddle both the old Yugoslav and the new Serbian canons, much like the products of the older generation of Serbian filmmakers who pull from both their previous works and Serbian history to find sources for their newer productions.

Within these two categories of Postmodernism and Realism, writers display broad diversity. Some are considered to be classical writers, whose works are well-known and well-respected. Others have created what would, in effect, be considered pop-literature; their works have not received the same level of acclaim, but are, in my opinion, incredibly important in determining the direction of contemporary Serbian literature. To gauge social identity, what people actually read is as important as what people write. Most Literature (note the capital L) is what is reviewed and respected by critics and academics, though often unexplored by the reading public. By contrast, pop-fiction enjoys wide readership but is frequently disregarded by critics and academics. Yet pop-fiction clearly signals popular tastes and communal sentiments. Emblematic of pop-literature works are those by Vidojković and Bobić-Mojisilović, which, though not expressly a part of the esteemed post-war literary canon, contribute significantly to the body of post-war literature. They use varying degrees of hindsight to illuminate pre-war and wartime Yugoslavia. They draw indisputably large numbers of readers—many of the
books by Bobić-Mojsilović and Vidojković have reached bestseller status. Specifically, Bobić-Mojsilović’s *Diary of a Serbian Housewife* is already in its thirtieth printing and has been translated into French. Vidojković’s *The Dance of the Petty Demons* has been translated into English and is currently being translated into German. In addition, Vidojković’s novel has been made into a screenplay and now a film that is in pre-production (Authors Network, 2000). Their popularity indicates that literary expression, even if part of so-called low art, must be incorporated into studies of the intersection of literature and cultural identity.

Unlike the Yugoslav generation of filmmakers who implicitly used historical settings to draw parallels to their contemporary realities, most well-established postmodern writers of the Yugoslav generation seem indifferent to the connection that their output following the Yugoslav wars could have to the contemporary, post-war political or cultural scene. Their artistic expression is in keeping with a bygone era of sufficiency, leisure, and harmony, which enabled their aesthetic novels, short stories, and hybrid genres. As such, the ontology of their works stands in sharp contrast to the current reality where so much is lacking, not just in the region, but also in the world. New literary aesthetic movements spring forth when there is great transformation or revolution, and changes during the 1990s in Yugoslavia could and should be considered revolutionary—politically, socially, and culturally. Accordingly, these changes have shepherded a turn from Postmodernism to Realism/(Neo)realism among the younger generation of Serbian writers.

Despite this clear shift in aesthetic values, Postmodernism has remained the preferred mode of literary expression for those older generations or writers. Pavić stands
out, of course, for his prolific bibliography and international renown. Though he has written many titles during the past twenty years, all fall into the vein of Postmodernism and, in general, his works feature elements of the fantastic and hybrid literary genres. He likewise stood apart from other Yugoslav writers, as, according to literary scholar Edward Možejko, “the [Yugoslav] postmodernist artist was a loner preoccupied with his/her own individual questions and answers, with his/her own world or signs, an individual who kept away from ideological involvement” (Možejko, 1992: 444-445).

Though in the article “Milorad Pavić: He Thinks the Way We Dream” Gorup illustrates how Pavić “endeavour[ed] to re-establish contact with what [he] regard[ed] as their true spiritual and intellectual origin, the art of Byzantium” (Gorup, 1998: 119).

Simultaneously, Pavić’s works have exhibited an impulse toward wild experimentation in form. His output of the late 1980s and early 1990s includes Landscape Painted with Tea (1991), a crossword novel, and Last Love in Constantinople (1989), a novel based on tarot cards. In addition, Pavić include[d] folktales and legends, riddles and proverbs, historical documents and literary criticism, cookbooks and jokes and much much more” in his works (Gorup, 1998: 119). Yet for all his exercises in literariness, it can be argued that Pavić was engaged in ideological questions and exploring political trends through his works, and as he insisted “that he [did] not have a biography, just a bibliography and that his books speak for him,” one can gauge a great deal about Pavić’s intent through his works (Gorup, 1998: 119).

One example of how Pavić’s Dictionary of the Khazars can be interpreted through Pavić’s political motivations comes in Wachtel’s 1998 article “Postmodernism as Nightmare: Milorad Pavić’s Literary Demolition of Yugoslavia,” which analyzes Pavić’s
Dictionary of the Khazars, the singular work that skyrocketed Pavić to international literary acclaim, and gave him a unique status among Yugoslav and then Serbian writers. Dictionary of the Khazars has remained popular during the last decade, appearing on bestseller lists as late as 2004, twenty years after its initial publication, proving that Pavić’s stature within Serbia has not diminished, neither throughout Serbia despite the dominance of the realist aesthetic. Its continued presence on bestseller lists, dominated by translations of foreign publications, may also point to a prevailing interest in the themes that it promotes, including bolstering elements of the Local through a promotion of Serbian superiority.

Though Dictionary of the Khazars has been revered as a great work of Yugoslav, and now Serbian, literature, Wachtel argues that the work is actually an attempt to posit that the overarching Yugoslav idea could never be successful, and (quite in keeping with a postmodern ideology) that only relative postulations of self can be successful. In this assertion, the work discourages the existence of multiethnic societies, such as Yugoslavia. Gorup posits that it “was a warning to small nations about their vulnerability” (Gorup, 1998: 120). She also includes Landscape Painted with Tea as a work having an ideological basis, as it was “published one year before the fall of the Berlin Wall, [and] spoke of name, language, and identity changes” (Gorup, 1998: 120). In addition, “the hero of Inner Side of the Wind [Leander] fretfully builds as the Austrians and Ottomans repeatedly destroy Belgrade in their fight for it. Leander hopes that those who are destroying will tire [before he’s finished]” (Gorup, 1998: 120). Moreover, in “Wedgwood Tea Set,” a story written in 1976, Pavić portrays the relationship between Europe and the Balkans through a male and female student taking classes together. In the
story Europe is always seeking to help the Balkans, but the Balkans is only using Europe for what she can offer him. This portrayal sets up the relationship between Europe and the Balkans as problematic.

In addition, Pavić composed *A Short History of Belgrade* (1990) and two volumes on the history of Serbian literature, part of a four-volume set begun in the mid-1970s. Produced at the height of the Serb-Croat conflicts of the 1970s and 1980s, these works help to establish the historical relevance of Serbian literary heritage, culture, and history. In Pavić’s Yugoslavia, the role of the writer was to moderate the culture. But Pavić sought to establish Serbian, not Yugoslav culture, and in doing so, helped to define what he deemed superior Serbian culture, history, and heritage.

However, after the Yugoslav wars, from 2001 to 2002, Pavić returned to the medium of the short story, one of the first media in which he wrote. He moved on to the novel format with a short novel entitled *The Seven Deadly Sins* (2002) and delved into plays and children’s books. His novella *The Tale that Killed Emily Knorr* (2005) seems an homage to himself, where the narrator continually refers to “a man with rosy cheeks,” who is in the company of accomplished world writers such as Saul Bellows, Margaret Atwood, Derek Walcott, Salman Rushdie and Amos Oz. Later in the text, Pavić reveals that the man “with the rosy cheeks” is author of *Dictionary of the Khazars*. This “man with rosy cheeks” is important because he can tell a story that causes the person who hears it to envision his personal “death landscape,” resulting in nearly instantaneous death. Though it is not directly stated, the main character of the story is Pavić himself.

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50 When Pavić began writing in the 1960s, Socialist Realism was the accepted literary means of expression, which provided the clear narrative of Realism, an ideal vehicle through which culture could be moderated. It seems that Pavić applied this position of the writer, but to his postmodern works.
whose stories possess enormous, incomparable power over others. As a work of fantasy, 
_The Tale that Killed Emily Knorr_ demonstrates the gulf between Pavić’s works and 
contemporary reality that had become irreconcilable. Through the novella, Pavić could 
have pushed the symbolism of words, power, and death by relating it to the 1990s. 
Instead he uses them as a metaphor for the strength of his stories.

Similar to Pavić, Albahari’s works are unequivocally considered postmodern, but 
during the dissolution of Yugoslavia, his works do not comfortably fit into any particular 
categorization. Further complicating classification, is the fact that his works were written 
outside of his home country, and are therefore simultaneously Serbian and émigré 
literature. However, because he continues to publish with Serbian publishing houses and 
writes primarily within a Serbian cultural idiom at least he did right after the 
independence wars, his works are included for analysis. In total, Albahari’s writings span 
a diverse array of genres, including short stories, short short stories, historical fiction, 
 novels, and immigration narratives. His novels directly following the war provided an 
outlet for self-reflection, allowing him to search for an identity as a Serbian Jew and as a 
refugee/immigrant in Canada. As a writer, Albahari seems to seamlessly change between 
genres at will, and therefore his choice of genres bears no relationship to a change in 
aesthetic, which I believe to be true for the younger generations of realist writers, but 
rather experimentations in forms—a basic aspect of the postmodern means of expression.

Albahari, similar to other Yugoslav writers, is in dialogue with the national 
literary canon; yet personal experiences seem to have influenced his writings more than 
any particular aesthetic movement, and his life abroad marked his stories with the unique 
vantage of the immigrant. Albahari began his writing career in 1972, a period which
allowed him education in the Yugoslav canon and identity, before he immigrated. According to scholar Vladislava Ribnikar in “History as Trauma in the Works of David Albahari,” Albahari’s works can be parceled into two periods. “The first period from 1973 to 1993, covers the novels and short stories he wrote before leaving for Canada. The second phase opens with the short novel Šnežni čovek (Man of Snow, 1995) and continues to include all his works published since then” (Ribnikar, 2005). Ribnikar remarks that “the reasons behind this division are not of a purely literary nature since his poetics and aesthetic sensibility have not changed in the meantime as much as might appear at first glance” (Ribnikar, 2005). Even prior to the wars, Albahari “took his artistic material from personal and familiar surroundings, from the world of private experiences, feelings and thoughts”; in his works, the hero usually is his alter-ego (Ribnikar, 2005). Kratka Knjiga (Small Book, 1993) marks the source of the transition from stage one to stage two of Albahari’s writings—namely, the war in Bosnia that started as he began writing, causing him to disassociate his materials from any regional or cultural specificity (Ribnikar, 2005). Ribnikar contends that the three novels following Small Book, including Mamac (Bait, 1996), Mrak (Darkness, 1997) and Götz i Meyer (Götz and Meyer, 1998) are motivated by the trauma of his “wounded consciousness” that Albahari experienced as a somewhat forced immigrant. It is as if Albahari were trying to make sense of what unfolded in the former Yugoslavia, to understand how those events have affected him, his former nation and his identity (Ribnikar, 2005). In that way, it can be stated that Albahari’s works of the time are more connected to works of exile literature, in that he writes in absentia from his country and culture, but in his native language, and his works help to define his identity.
Ultimately, Albahari’s works, similar to products of other artists of the Yugoslav generation, opened a space to analyze and (re)evaluate the dismantling of Yugoslavia, as well as identity formation in the absence of Yugoslavia and Yugoslav nationality. In his latest fiction writings since the early 2000s, however, he has promptly returned to artistic, postmodern novels and short stories covering subject matters distant from the issues directly raised by the Yugoslav wars, indicating that the wars no longer need have a place among his works. It is as he has contended with what the wars personally connote, and is therefore free to return to artistic forms of expression void of contemplation about Serbia and Serbia’s future regarding fall out from the wars. Albahari continues to be a prolific writer who avoids political themes, and this disavowal of the personalized subject matter and near-realist aesthetic has allowed him to leave behind the breakup of Yugoslavia and all of its baggage, to return to the principles of Postmodernism and contribute to his literary repertoire as he did before the wars.

**From Postmodernism to Realism**

In contrast to Postmodernism, the language of Realism is clear and simple; its aesthetics do not permit for the structural play and fantasy of Postmodernism. In the post-war literary scene in Serbia, realist poetics surface most prevalently in works written by authors born in the 1960s and 1970s, termed “Sixties and Seventies writers” by Srđan Tešin (which I have referenced elsewhere as the Serbian generation) (Tešin, 2008). Their Realism represents an “artistic intent to render life as it is,” which is evident in their universality of themes, settings, and historical events (Jacobson).51 These presentations of

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verisimilitude provide a sense of familiarity, establishing realities, and potential realities that readers can envision within an identifiable framework.

The literary antecedents of contemporary realist Serbian fiction can be traced to Arsenijević’s much-acclaimed novels *In the Hold* and *Angel* (Vladušić, 2006). *In the Hold* is set in Belgrade during the Yugoslav secession wars and focuses on the life of a nameless narrator and his wife, Angela, a pregnant drug dealer and recovering addict. The young couple is trying to retain some semblance of normalcy, despite the destruction of social and political systems and infrastructure in Serbia. The nameless narrator is faced with friends who are being drafted, dying in the wars, and he avoids his mother’s house because army officials regularly search for him there in order to draft him. The protagonist and his wife have very little, but in the midst of the society falling apart, they are awaiting the birth of their child, a postcolonial trope mirrored in the film *Seven and a Half*. *In the Hold* is about life “on hold,” as all characters in the novel are alive, but waiting to live. Because the work was published in 1995, Arsenijević was able to illustrate how the wars were affecting people’s lives in Serbia, and stymieing a generation. Following *In the Hold* was *Angel*, a work which is virtually unavailable and will therefore only be referenced peripherally in this chapter.

*In the Hold* debuted with great critical acclaim. Despite Arsenijević’s assertion that the novel’s success was part of Milošević’s carefully constructed illusion of an open society in post-Dayton Serbia, Arsenijević became the youngest author ever to receive the coveted NIN prize for fiction in 1994 (Arsenijević, 2009: 142). According to literature professor, scholar, and critic, Slobodan Vladušić, *In the Hold*, together with *Angel*, presented Realism that was supposed to project a *totality* to be accomplished through a
planned cycle, *Cloaxa Maxima*. However, Arsenijević only completed two of the three novels, thus never accomplishing the *totality* he sought to portray (Vladašić, 2006: 151). Vladašić notes that “the [NIN] award, as well as a very warm critical reception of the book, implied that something new had happened in Serbian literature...[because] there is a huge discrepancy between [earlier] postmodern poetics and the (neo)realistic poetics of Arsenijević’s novel” (Vladašić, 2006: 151). “(Neo)realism,” to use Vladašić’s term, marked a shift in the primacy of the whole to emphasis on the fragment—specifically, a “fragment” which is not tied to any particular form. Hence, (Neo)realism suggests that this type of new literature is no longer capable of expressing a totality.

Literature scholar Zoran Đerić, does not specify what makes the works of the younger generation realist or (neo)realist, but he articulates the new poetics as “fear for oneself, friends and family, [and] egocentrism” (Đerić, 345). He is quick to note that this new Realism bears no relationship to the Realism that followed WWII. Lacking in the new works is the socialist “we,” having been replaced by what Đerić calls the “assured ‘I’ (*Nesumnjivo Ja*).” He defines these works as generational, coming-of-age stories, with “contemporary social-economic, cultural and daily war [realities] in the background, if not in the center of the events,” characteristics shared by all realist and (neo)realist novels surveyed in this chapter (Đerić, 345).

Despite Vladašić’s use of “(neo)realist” and Đerić’s use of “realist” to describe the same type of works, I believe that the two terms explain the same phenomenon. Vladašić defines (Neo)realism through the structure, including the absence of wholeness and totality. Traditional Realism is closely related to the phenomenon of the body and the eye, but Vladašić posits that in the newest iterations of Serbian Realism, there is a
“tendency to replace the eye with the ear” (Vladušić, 2006: 154). In his description of (Neo)realism, Vladušić includes the triumph of the ear (an agency of recording) over the eye (an agency of sight) as a convention of (neo)realist narration (Vladušić, 2006: 154).

In realist or (neo)realist Serbian literature, there is a recognition from the narrator that he cannot preside over the world around him, only that which he experiences directly. It is at this point when Đerić’s classification of the Assured I proves useful, as it conveys a circumscribed world for a narrator, who can only express his own personal, singular reality. Vladušić’s (Neo)realism and Đerić’s Realism overlap in nearly all parameters, save their own nomenclature. Therefore, for the remainder of this chapter, I will use “(Neo)realism” to describe the post-war literary phenomenon occurring in Serbian literature, paying attention to the (neo) in (Neo)realism, to express the newness of the literature, while recognizing the poetics that Đerić describes.

Post-war Serbian literature that are examples of the traditional 19th century bildungsroman are The Dance of the Petty Demons, The Devil is my Friend and Diary of a Serbian Housewife. In their expression of singular realities, these works focus on one character, which allows for uninterrupted self-expression, self-analysis, and motivation. In addition, the first-person narrator perspective is personalized and subjective. These novels feature narrators of limited knowledge and experience who chronicle daily events in their lives, and throughout the course of the plot, these narrator-protagonists grow through their experiences.

There is much overlap in the poetics of the bildungsroman and the diary, but strictly speaking, Diary of a Serbian Housewife is not a diary; it is not formatted to include dates that correspond to discrete narrative entries. Yet Diary of a Serbian

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*Housewife* does resemble the diary for thematic and substantive reasons. Because works like this are not diaries but functionally serve the same purpose, I have chosen to call them “confessional formats.” Nearly all contemporary Serbian writers analyzed in this chapter have all created work(s) in the vein of a “confessional formats” because of its allowance for self-reflection and examination. And in the Serbian confessional formats, the “Other” only enters the narrative as he or she relates to the protagonist, allowing for the uninterrupted exposition of the narrator. In fact, because narrators of these works have “a failure of unlimited knowledge,” they cannot attempt to portray the feelings or opinions of other characters, so supporting characters are cast as flat and ancillary to the goals of the narrator (Vladašić, 2006: 153). Due to this genre’s first-person narrative and lack of dialogicity, the credibility of the events it chronicles is affected by the motivation of the author, resulting in a fabricated hero or heroine. But because the creation of a diary is a narcissistic act, “the diarist is usually concerned, with greater or less intensity, to see himself through the agency of his diary” and nothing else (Abbott, 1984: 24). It can, however, convey the impression, albeit false, that the narrator’s version of events is true.

Another work that exhibits the tendencies listed above is *The Dance of the Petty Demons* by Vidojković set during the start of the wars in Croatia in 1991 and leads up to the wars in Bosnia, and ends in 1993. The novel primarily chronicles the life of Boban who is growing up in the social and political chaos of early-1990s Serbia. However, in his teenage ignorance or desire to project a sense of normalcy in his and his friends’ lives, the narrator never directly addresses the wars, and therefore they surface as a backdrop to the events happening in the teenage lives of Boban and his friends in Belgrade, a point which I will return to later. Culture critic Pančić describes *The Dance of the Petty
Demons as the novel that probably best reflects life for a typical teenager growing up in Milošević’s Yugoslavia/Serbia (Pančić, 2002).

As a teenager, Boban can only be mildly nostalgic about his life during Tito’s Yugoslavia because he was only a small child when Tito died. However, his parents have presented that life to him and those recollections provide the basis of his nostalgia. In addition, he sees how life was then through a family photo that he looks at in the opening scenes of the book, which causes him to look back fondly on a life about which he only has impressions. He contrasts the impressions that he has of that life and that early-childhood image to the confusing life that he lives in newly independent Serbia.

Boban describes himself as a punk who wore “shorts, T-shirt, and All Star high tops. Bad Religion was playing in [his] Walkman, and [he] had beer in [his] hair” (Vidojković, 2002: 13). Why he styles his hair with beer is never directly addressed—he seems to think that it makes him a unique punk. In reality, his use of beer probably reflects that alternatives to beer for hair products were lacking. His outward appearance changes throughout the novel, most visibly through his hair. When the novel opens, he wears long, punkish hair, then gets a mohawk, but becomes dissatisfied with his hair and winds up with a bald head, causing his friends and acquaintances to call him “baldy.” His bald head may hold close associations with the outward appearance of a skinhead for some readers; however, Boban’s lack of hair was simply his personal interpretation of what he deemed “punk.” His bald head allowed him the opportunity to cultivate an image for himself, and in doing so, he was able to attempt to define an aspect of his unformed personal identity even though he does not really understand what “punk” means. Another aspect of Boban’s character emerges through the first-person narration of the novel,
which is crass and offensive—the language of youth and rebellion befitting of the image that Boban wishes to project.

The novel’s title The Dance of the Petty Demons may seem odd, but it can be assumed that the novel is consciously engaged in intertextuality with Russian literature, a practice once common in Yugoslav literature. The Dance of the Petty Demons specifically enters into a dialogue with Russian Symbolist writer Fyodor Sologub’s 1907 novel Melkiy Bes (Petty Demon), which surfaces through the parallel themes, situations and overall spirit that the novels share. Petty Demon chronicles the drab, disappointing life of Peredonov, a schoolteacher living in provincial 19th century Russia and contrasts the byt of his life to the fantastic and supernatural that exists in the town. Petty Demon is a fin de siècle novel, written during late 19th and early 20th century, a time of chaos and turmoil in Russian society, and Peredonov is based on Sologub’s comparatively more successful life in a provincial town as a school administrator and teacher. Similar parallels can be found between Marko Vidojković and Boban, whom Vidojković calls his alter-ego, and though when he wrote The Dance of the Petty Demons is not well documented, its initial publishing date of 2001 hints that the work was written either during or directly following the bombings in Serbia, Montenegro, and Kosovo or the brutal war in Kosovo (Sindelić, 2009).

Both anti-heroes of the two novels, Peredonov and Boban are social misfits and oppressed by the presence of a spirit, Peredonov via the nedotykomka and Boban through an old lady only he can see, whom he runs into every time he goes to his father’s house. The old lady’s first appearance coincides with Boban’s trip to his late grandmother’s

52 Byt is a term used in Russian literature for commonplace, every day life. 
53 The nedotykomka is an apparition that only Peredonov can see.
memorial party at her flat. Before arriving, Boban decides to go to a local market and steal whatever he can get his hands on, which turns out to be a magazine entitled *The Practical Woman,* (*Praktična Žena*) an apparently random, insignificant title for Boban. However, this magazine, according to *Lexicon YU Mitologije* (*Lexicon of YU Mythology*), a collection of memories and cultural references from the period of Yugoslavia, “was one of the first women’s magazines that debuted in 1956,” was very popular and helped women to be “ideal” (*Lexicon of YU Mythology*). It is as if Boban stealing this magazine conjures up the old lady, as the old lady appears to Boban when he is shoplifting and tells him, “This is bad business, Boban,” to which Boban replies, “Get out of my way, witch” (Vidojković, 2002: 68). The old lady appears again after Boban steals his grandmother’s left-over valium, and upon leaving his father’s house he again notices the “the ancient freak with the hooked nose,” who tells him that what he is doing “is bad business.” She tells him, “I know all. I know about your getting drunk [and] about the medications” (Vidojković, 2002: 68). The final time that the old woman is referenced comes prior to Boban asking his father if he knows who she is. When he sees her for that final time, she tells him again, “This is bad business; I know everything” (Vidojković, 2002: 69). Boban admits to himself that he must be hallucinating because he “didn’t drink anything for a couple of days” (Vidojković, 2002: 69). Whenever the apparition of the old lady appears, Boban is frequently engaged in questionable acts, and she always appears when Boban goes to visit his father. Because she first appears prior to Boban’s grandmother’s funeral and always during his father’s visits, one can see that old lady is a stand-in for Boban’s missing conscience and parental figure(s). Even though he visits his father, he only sees

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him sparingly on the weekends, and Boban’s mother is portrayed as having a minimal presence in Boban’s life, and seems to do little in the way of parenting. In the few scenes when Boban’s mother surfaces, she is watching television or preparing to watch television. Thus the old lady is the only stable, authority structure present in Boban’s life, and the need for her presence was heightened because 1990s Serbia was a society functioning without any social, political or cultural norms.

The nedotykomka similarly torments Peredonov like the old lady torments Boban. However, the primary difference comes in the nature of the torment. The old lady for Boban provides structure and morality in its absence, whereas the nedotykomka exaggerates the chaos and lack of structure in Peredonov’s life, and as the novel progresses, the nedotykomka becomes more and more real, whereas in The Dance of the Petty Demons, the old lady fades back into the fantastic world from which she came. Despite the differences, both apparitions highlight aspects of the characters lives that they would like to keep hidden, specifically Peredonov’s paranoia and for Boban, the fact that he is growing up in a dysfunctional society.

Boban’s disavowal of the old lady and Peredonov’s acceptance, albeit reluctant, of the nedotykomka is as much a function of the characters themselves as it is the aesthetic preference of Sologub and Vidojković. In Symbolist poetics, decadence and the fantastic are mainstays, but the old lady cannot persist in the realist world of The Dance of the Petty Demons. Therefore, Boban must explain it away, and does so by connecting the old lady’s appearance to intoxication, providing rationale for her appearance.

As Boban is a 21st century literary reincarnation of Peredonov, he believes spirits are after him at times. An example comes in the final scene at his father’s place, and finds
that the “old witch” is not there; however, he fears that she will surface again because of
the atmosphere. As he leaves his father’s apartment, he notices “the shadows of treetops
bending in an evening breeze reaching through the glass walls of the building. On the
glass walls, the shadows looked like tall women waving their arms, and their shadows on
the staircase looked like drunks trying to climb the sky,” a scene that mimics when
Peredonov leaves the Rutilov house and notices that “the trees at the back of the Rutilov
garden were turning suspiciously dark and whispering about something” (Vidojković,
2002: 173). As the scene continues, Boban is acutely aware of his surroundings, all of
which seem to be targeting him even though they are not (Vidojković, 2002: 174). This is
an example of romantic irony in that it positions aspects of the common along side
elements of the ethereal and romantic. Instances of romantic irony “operate in such a
fashion that both options presented are regarded as valid (or put inversely, neither is
invalid) with the result that writer as well as reader find themselves compelled to straddle
a middle ground of ambivalence between dichotomous or contrastive options”
(Hoffmeister, 1990: 22). As such, the reader is left to wonder if the shadows are real or
imagined or if the truth of the situation lies somewhere between the tangible or imagined
reality.

Despite Boban’s attempts to remove himself from the fantastic world, his
connection to it is pushed further through a séance that he holds with his friends, where
they ask a makeshift Ouija board made of “cut up pieces of paper and written letters from
the alphabet and numbers from one to nine…[and] yes and no written on two slips of
paper and a yogurt cup”—their physical connection to the phantasmagorical world
(Vidojković, 2002: 164). The Ouiji board scene is yet another example of romantic irony,
which combines the high of the spirit world and low of the commonplace items used by
the teens. (Vidojković, 2002: 164). Through their makeshift Ouija board, Boban hopes to
contact his grandfather and recently deceased grandmother. When Boban’s grandparents
do not respond, the boys opt to call on someone named Mr. Pera, and, once contacted, the
spirit informs Boban that he will not get the girl he likes, so Boban walks away from the
Ouija board. His departure precipitously causes a disconnection to the spirit world.

In addition to recalling the atmosphere of The Petty Demon, the Ouija board scene
alludes to the obsession with spirits and fortune telling that was sweeping through Serbia
during the rise of Milošević. As such, this scene conjures both the spirit world of the 20th
century teenage version of Peredonov and the events in Serbia during the tumultuous
years of the Yugoslav wars. There was no structure in Serbian society—everything was
in flux—and people were attempting to create some structure for themselves. Some were
creating that structure through religion, while others were filling the void with the spirit
and fantastic worlds as Boban and his friends are doing.

Once Boban abandons the spirit world, he ceases to be a Peredonov prototype and
becomes his own character, and he is squarely transported back to the byt of teenage life
in an ever-changing Serbia. This return to the commonplace marks a shift in the focus of
the novel to the parallels between Boban and Serbia—both were changing because of
external factors that they had no control over. Boban never fully recognizes the chaos
happening around him, even though the narrative of the novel clearly underscores that
Boban’s generation is in trouble, mirroring the sentiment in the films referenced in
chapter three. Despite the cataclysmic zeitgeist, Boban is singularly focused on himself.
His self-interest relegates the wars to a minor role in the novel, because the wars were perceived as being outside of Serbia, and though they were not taking place within the geographical space of Serbia, they were affecting the population in Serbia, a nation at war, through retrograde politics, extraordinary inflation, and by changing the constituent elements of the Yugoslav identity. Direct dialogue on the wars only happens when Boban’s father discusses politics with Boban to help him better understand their significance. But when Boban and his friends prank call people in Croatia and eventually Bosnia, it becomes clear that they do not understand the magnitude of the Yugoslav conflict, insinuating that the teens are in denial of or simply do not understand the significance of the wars. But as teenagers, they could not understand how much those wars that seemed distant and to be only occurring on television would impact them in the future. Yet for his father’s generation, the wars represented an end to a way of life and an understanding of self.

As a follow up to The Dance of the Petty Demons, Vidojković produced the novel Đavo je moj drug (The Devil is My Friend) in 2002, which features an older Boban from 1995 to 1996, in his final year of high school casually contemplating what he will do after graduation. Boban is the same irreverent teenager, but unlike in The Dance of the Petty Demons, he is popular with girls and never without their company. The presence of the supernatural world is not as prevalent as in the previous work, and is only incorporated into the work incidentally, through the title and minor themes. This is primarily owing to Boban’s more structured relationship with his father, whom he visits, together with his step-sister and step-mother weekly, which creates a semblance of a family. As such, he does not need to rely on the spirit world to act as his moral compass.
At many points in the novel, Boban says that the devil is his best friend, as he fashions himself as a “devil,” but this type of devil differs from the devil of the spirit world. Accordingly, *The Devil is my Friend* focuses less on the supernatural manifestations of the “devil,” and more on the petty devil archetype and Boban’s attempts to define himself as he prepares to enter adulthood.

In keeping with the intertextuality with Russian literature, there is a minor character named Delores apparently fashioned after Nabokov’s Lolita, her namesake, and described as “a young one” who “is playing” (Vidojković, 2002: 34). In their first interaction, she sits down next to Boban, and he describes her as “an unfamiliar girl, actually a young girl (*devojčica*)” (Vidojković, 2002: 34). She was at least three years younger than [him]. However, that she had black makeup around her eyes, a black shirt and black pants” and is described as “mentally disturbed” dismisses the idea that she is directly modeled on Nabokov’s Lolita (Vidojković, 2002: 34). Delores may actually be a composite character, possessing the youth of Lolita and the enchantment of Natalya Afanas’evna Vershina, a character in *Petty Demon* who wears black and is considered a witch by her acquaintances.

Boban’s friend warns Boban to stay away from Dolores because she is a “horrible witch” who “eats up men,” but Boban ignores his friend, goes off with Delores, only to leave her once she gets too drunk. Delores surfaces again when they meet at her family’s apartment, which superficially resembles a dwelling befitting a witch. In her room “there was a bed, a table, chair, and dresser. The table and chair were covered with black items,” and on the walls were pictures of “the devil, a pentagram, a girl with long black hair and another devil” (Vidojković, 2002: 52). “The devil was red, muscular, with horns and a
pointed tail” (Vidojković, 2002: 52). Boban is drawn to the image of the devil because it is false for him. The devil is in his nature. Indeed, even his surname, Šestić, is a diminutive form for the number six, the number most closely linked to the devil. Boban takes issue with Delores’s image, because the devil to him is the Peredonov petty demon of *poshlost* that does not have a supernatural shape but is simple and commonplace, as the devil is in this world.55 Moreover, Boban’s recognition of this demonic type is in keeping with Vidojković’s inclusion of Russian literary themes. The petty demon type has deep roots in Russian literature, which, in this case most directly relates to Sologub, however, this archetype can be traced even further back to the “petty demon of Pushkin’s “Devils,” the *besy* and *cherti* of Gogol, Dostoevsky, Saltykov, Sologub and Briusov” (Weiner, 1998: 52).

The remainder of the novel places Boban in situations typical for a teenager—attending school and spending time with his parents and his girlfriends. In 1995 and early 1996, Boban experiences nothing atypical for a teenager, despite the disarray that surrounds him. Again, however, significant historical events of the region—specifically the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement—are highlighted, but not much attention is paid to them. In fact, when Boban and his friends are watching television and the proceedings come on, they matter-of-factly note that they know no one in Bosnia and change the channel to another program (Vidojković, 2002: 181). The Dayton Peace Accords, similar to the start of the wars in the previous novel, are inconsequential matters of fact because as teenagers, the characters cannot understand how those historically

55 “*Poshlost* [is] a term particular to Russian suggesting, among other things, banality, self-satisfied mediocrity, phony sentiment, and vegetative existence” (Mersereau 1992, 167).
important events could relate to them, and instead of connecting the chaos in Serbia around them to the wars in Bosnia and Croatia, they turn off the television, which allows them to prolong their ignorance as it is preferable to the tragic reality that surrounds them.

In substance, the novel explores the ethos of growing up in a politically and socially torn country, and how that reality seems to minimally affect Boban’s coming of age process—he still goes to the graduation ball, graduates, goes to law school and has insignificant relationships with girls. However, it is unknown if Boban is truly unaffected by the wars or if he as the narrator of the work is constructing a reality to portray himself and his country as normal, even though both he and his country are affected by the death, destruction and madness that surrounds them. These events are not detailed in these works, though, the novel assumes a great deal of background knowledge from the reader. He must know about the wars and the affects that they had on Serbia and that the war in Kosovo and bombings in Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia will happen within a few years of the chronological end of this book. Even though the timeline of the story corresponds to the wars in Croatia and then Bosnia, the fact that this work was written in 2001 means that the war in Kosovo and those bombings were history. Though the teens in the novel seem unfazed by the wars, readers understand that the future will change their lives dramatically.

It is only in Vidojković’s fourth novel, Kanđže (The Claws, 2004) that the political and social effects of the Milošević regime in Serbia come to the forefront of the narration. The protagonist of The Claws, is Boban, but he is not directly named. He is the same age and has the same temperament and lifestyle as Boban, but because he is not
named, he represents the experiences of the generation similar to the nameless narrator of *In the Hold*. In this work the Milošević regime is taking a toll on the nameless narrator’s life: he is a poor and hungry student who fervently participates in protests against the Milošević regime, and the political and social turmoil have even caused his father to emigrate. This book, more than the other two referenced in this chapter, garnered Vidojković acclaim throughout the former post-Yugoslav territory. I believe that this popularity was sourced in a Serbian projection of what those once-Yugoslav nations would have liked to see in Serbian cultural products—recognition of the havoc caused by the Milošević regime.

When these three novels about Boban are considered together, they present aspects of a typical teenager existence leading up to the transition in Serbia, including a believable portrayal of teenage ignorance and inexperience. Wars are happening at the time of the novels’ narration, however, the lives of the Belgrade characters are presented as unchanged until the dissolution of Yugoslavia directly impacts peoples’ daily lives through the rise of Milošević, and general deficiencies in society, especially as they relate to the individual. Because Vidojković’s novels were written ten years after the events in the novel, however, the reader is painfully aware that the future for Boban, his classmates and friends would resemble a reality closer to that in *In the Hold*. Unlike Arsenijević, Vidojković preserves the youth of his characters, despite the knowledge that by 2002 (the year of publication for the novel) the future would bear no resemblance to the seemingly blissful teenage years of the mid-1990s, Vidojković’s attempt to render life as the youth saw it then.
Diary of a Serbian Housewife is similar to Vidojković’s novels, but instead of focusing on a teenager coming of age, the novel chronicles the life of Andelka, a thirtysomething woman who is coming to grips with the reality of the 1990s Serbia by reminiscing about her life growing up in Socialist Yugoslavia, both good and bad aspects. Through the juxtaposition of past and present, the situation in Serbia is presented as a stark contrast to Andelka’s childhood in Yugoslavia. She, similarly to Boban, is coming into a new reality and finding ways to cope with what surrounds her. But while The Dance of the Petty Demons, The Devil is my Friend and Claws are coming-of-age stories, Diary of a Serbian Housewife is a self-realization story—realization of Andelka’s situation and identity as a Serb. Even though her understanding of that identity changes, she eventually comes to possess a mature and responsible understanding of Serb and Serbdom (srpstvo), and she falls in love with her country and her new identity as a Serbian woman. In contrast to Boban, however, Andelka relies heavily on the past to understand her present.

Through each chapter the reader learns more and more about Andelka, as her life experiences relate to historical developments in Yugoslavia and her interactions with her family. We learn that her mother was the backbone of her family and never wanted or received anything out of life for herself, but did everything for her family. Her father gained his self-worth through being a good provider, and her brother, though a companion of Andelka’s in their youth, becomes a war profiteer, smuggling people out of the country and buying and selling the goods of struggling Croats and Bosnians.

The novel presumably begins in 1989, because Andelka is struck by Milošević’s comments to the miners in Kosovo when he tells them, “No one dare to hurt you,” a
“sentence that [Andelka] deems necessary for her life” because it “returned her self-respect and pulled her from her desperate and amorous nature” (Bobić-Mojšilović, 21: 2005). Of Milošević, Andelka notes that his voice was “of decisiveness and defiance, a voice that [she] had wanted for” (Bobić-Mojšilović, 21: 2005). His words trigger Andelka’s remembrances and the growth of her country, the Serbian identity and herself as a Serbian woman. The events she details in the novel take place during some of the most tumultuous points in Yugoslav and Serbian history, including the wars in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo as well as the bombing in Belgrade, but, except for the bombing in Belgrade, these events only serve as a backdrop to what is happening in her life. It is as if for Andelka, as for Boban, the neighboring wars hardly ever registered in her day-to-day life; therefore, they were unworthy of the pages of her narrative, so long as they seemed to have no direct impact on her life. Similar to Boban and his friends, Andelka also perceives the wars as happening in the neighboring countries. Unlike Boban and his friends, Andelka registers the effects of the wars personally, as they negate her identity as a Yugoslav, but provide a source for her as a Serbian woman.

The structure of *Diary of a Serbian Housewife* is worth noting. The title of each chapter is a sentence, which then becomes the first sentence of the chapter. Each chapter explores and develops the theme(s) presented in the title. Through these chapters we learn about Andelka and her family, both inextricably tied to her country—as it was when she was a child and as it is when she becomes an adult. In this way, the novel becomes a tribute to Yugoslavia, an implied character that evolves with Andelka. We learn through her narrative that Yugoslavia was not merely a fiction of orchestrated acts and policies promoting brotherhood and unity, but a multifaceted country with successes and failures.
Andelka projects Yugoslavia, in effect, as a generational phenomenon, whose history corresponds to the trajectory of her life. She is able to recall all of this because “she approached the normal development of youth near the end of Tito’s life” (Bobić-Mojsilović, 2000: 30).

Andelka’s teenage years correspond to a time of turmoil in Yugoslavia (1978-1979), when Croats were demonstrating for greater recognition of their culture and differences from Serbs. It is during that time that she hears a group of older students singing the Chetnik song “Oh Vojvoda Sindelić” after Serbian New Year (Jan. 14), and she falls in love with the song and the Vojvoda even though she knows nothing about the song or the Vojvoda. She only comprehends that the song is forbidden, and because of that she loves it, as it gives her the opportunity to be rebellious. The song holds no real meaning for her. Prior to hearing the song, she claims no knowledge of it, Serbian New Year or anything specifically Serbian because she was a Yugoslav growing up in Yugoslavia. Andelka also recounts the shooting of a Serb in Kosovo, another incident that piques her interest in Serbia and Serbian issues. As undercurrents of nationalism in Serbia reinforced the idea that only a Serbian identity was completely tolerated, Andelka proclaims that she “fell in love with the Serbian people” (Bobić-Mojsilović, 2000: 32). In that love she finds everything that she needs, and as the novel unfolds, it is revealed that she never loves anything as much as she loves Serbia and Serbian people. She “becomes a Serbian nationalist out of spite” (Bobić-Mojsilović, 2000: 33). Despite these words, Andelka’s nationalism is false and surfaces only as a reaction to Milošević’s words and

A Chetnik song would have been forbidden at the time because of the nationalist and political implications.
actions. She follows Milošević because he is a strong man like Tito. Andelka’s “nationalism” is based on ignorance and confusion about what her new reality in independent Serbia connotes. She believes that she is a nationalist in the same way that Boban imagines that he is a punk. However, they both lack the substance that the each ideology requires.

The only direct statements about Andelka come from the titles of the chapters in the book, through which we garner details about her physical attributes, including her height, eye color and personality traits; we also learn that she is a good cook and that she loves what children love. What is revealed through the pages, most poignantly, though, is the social history of the end of Yugoslavia and the beginning of Serbia and independent Serbian identity.

Though *Diary of a Serbian Housewife* seems more akin to a work of pop-fiction and so-called chick-lit, it is not without its literary merits. In fact, like the Vidojković works, it was clearly written with an eye to Bobić-Mojsilović’s literary predecessors, a feature defying assumptions of highbrow literature. As discussed earlier, Vidojković’s first novel recalls Sologub. Bobić-Mojsilović, too, is well-versed in literary canons. In fact, during Andelka’s first musings of a love interest, she mentions that she is interested in finding her own Onegin or Vronsky, hardly the romantic goals of typical pop-fiction heroines. Furthermore, the fact that the novel is fashioned as a “diary,” even though it is not truly a diary, is in keeping with a traditional format utilized by women. Diaries personalize, and make more engaging, the otherwise abstract sufferings of war, bombings, and sanctions and often take place in the midst of a siege, such as the NATO bombings in Serbia and Kosovo in 1999. In addition, Andelka’s “diary” is as much a
testament to her life, its in and outs and difficulties, as to the social and cultural history of Yugoslavia and its transition into Serbia. It is similarly a family novel in that, though minor, the lives of her family members play a role in the work as well.

Of her own work, Bobić-Mojsilović has said, “the lead heroine Andelka Jovanović is a metaphor for seven million Serbs. [The work] is a story about generation X that was us, Tito’s Andelkas in Milošević’s Serbia” (knjigaknjiga.com). Through this statement, Bobić-Mojsilović seems to be reconciling the reality and the myth of Yugoslavia to post-Yugoslavia Serbia. If Andelka is a metaphor for all Serbs, it is because she, like so many Serbs in the 1990s, mistook pride for nationalism and failed to recognize her ignorance regarding Milošević. As an individual seeking to make sense of her surroundings, she clings to recognizable elements of Serbdom that reinforce her sense of community. Milošević seemed a strong leader to Serbs in the same way that Tito was a strong leader for Yugoslavs for the generation who fought in WWII and for the next generation of Tito’s pioneers who grew up believing in brotherhood and unity. Andelka illustrates the confusion that Serbs felt during the wars, suggesting that those who embraced nationalism were not aware of what they were doing, nor did they understand what their support of Milošević would cause. However, Bobić-Mojsilović is careful not to go down the path of apologizing for many Serbs knew exactly what nationalism was and how it was being used to justify heinous acts.

Vidojković and Bobić-Mojsilović are popular throughout Serbia, and their works have regularly appeared on Serbian bestseller lists. These two Serbian writers utilize vernacular to document the ethos and capture the aesthetics in the cultural products of the


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time, including Realism and first-person narrative. Simultaneously, these works evoke Russian literature from the Romantic and Modernist periods. It can be concluded that by alluding to Russian literature, arguably one of the most influential literary traditions in Yugoslav and Serbian literature and cultural ideology, these writers are attempting to make their works more literary as previous generations of Serbian writers did.

The works of Vidojković and Bobić-Mojsilović illustrate the failure of the narrator to see everything except what is directly within his or her line of vision. These narrators attempt to describe the experiences and surroundings of themselves and other characters, but cannot do so because of extreme “failure of the narrator’s unlimited knowledge” (Vladušić, 2006: 153). Such protagonists in (neo)realist works frequently lack a complete biography, a trait that Vladušić notes, can be found in Eavesdropping (Prikivanje, 2002) by Zoran Cirić and as early as In Bed with Madonna (U krevetu sa Madonom, 1998) by Vule Zurić. In the Bed with Madonna is a collection of short stories “set in a town under siege and continues with the experience of the refugee” and Eavesdropping is a novel composed of two parallel conversations in the Southern Serbian city of Niš during the NATO air raids (Vladušić, 2006: 155).

What the above examples illustrate is that in (Neo)realism, both the novel and short story forms are prevalent. What is most important, therefore, is not the method (genre) of expression, but the means of expression (fragment). In the Zurić and Cirić works, the fragment is expressed through both the novel and short story, and in those earlier referenced works, there are short stories and picaresque genres, what I have termed the “confessional genre.” However, the younger writers analyzed in this chapter have recently begun to publish collections of short stories as diverse in forms as the
novels of the Yugoslav generation, which may hint at an eventual turn to the short story. The genre of the short story does seem more compatible with (Neo)realism than any other genre, for it permits the projections of various realities, in shorter, and therefore more fragmented form than the novel. Adopting short stories seems especially compelling for identity formation in a society unaccustomed to nuance in identity.

In “The Rise of the Short Story in the Hierarchy of Genres,” English professor Suzanne Ferguson recounts the history of the short story from a lowbrow to prestigious art form on par with the novel. She concludes that only with Modernism did the short story become a predominant means of literary expression because of the “highbrow audience’s acceptance of fragmentation as an accurate model of the world” (Ferguson, 1989: 191). The short story preserves the prestige of the novel, in many ways, especially if the short story is published as a part of a collection, which is how the majority of realist short stories of the younger generation are being published (Brander, 1901: 17). In a rejection of the postmodernist aesthetic, collections of short stories with connected themes illustrate an embrace of a metanarrative, or an objective reality universally recognizable to their readers, so needed in a divided society.

Acceptance of an overarching truth is especially important during times of inner turmoil and identity fluctuation because such a truth may engender a unifying, all-encompassing reality. The imposition of one larger discourse coalesces identity formation by calibrating individual realities to one reality with the power to rally a larger populace. In this way, literature and especially realist literature, can establish a socially accepted reality that shapes a metanarrative to eventually form an identity. Perhaps this is why so

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58 This is in contrast to the short stories of Albahari, for example, which are sometimes published as singular stories. The recent piece “Head Weight” was published in Words Without Borders in 2010.

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many artistic works in Serbia are coded in experiences, memories, and cultural cues that are exclusively Serb. The metanarrative in these works frames a reality and a set of cultural indicators (historical narratives, wartime experiences, culturally coded language, etc.) that are uniquely Serbian and therefore unrecognizable for those outside of the Serbian cultural idiom.

One such example is the 2008 short story collection *Predator* by Arsenijević, which, as the back cover notes, “creates a novellese whole” because of the interconnectedness of the stories. Just as the first two works of Arsenijević attempted to show the everyday reality of an ordinary Serb in Belgrade during the Yugoslav wars, *Predator* illustrates a contemporary reality that voids differences between citizens of the world. *Predator* takes place over a period of approximately 20-25 years and primarily documents the life of the protagonist Nihil Musa Baksi. Nihil is a Kurdish Yazd who becomes a cannibal out of hunger during his long, unjust imprisonment under Sadam Hussein’s regime. Significant about his first cannibalistic act is that he eats his best friend, Musa, out of delirium, distress, and confusion. After eating Musa, Nihil assumes the name of his friend and becomes “Nihil Musa,” retaining this name until the end of the work, when he decides to begin a new life, whereupon he reclaims “Nihil,” a name that indicates his emptiness. He has no personal connections or obligations, making him free to begin his new life.

After some time in England, Nihil Musa moves to Denmark, where he runs a bread stand and interacts with other asylum seekers, among which are a Bosnian Muslim named Hassan (nicknamed Dumbo) who has his own story recounted in “One minute: Dumbo’s death” and a Danish photo journalist and documentarian, Hanna, whose details
are outlined in the story “Neukorenjenost” (which translates roughly as “Malrootedness”), the title of a picture taken by Hanna in which there is a Serbian woman comforting a dying Kosovar Albanian. The title “Neukorenjenost” highlights the Western construction of “Serb” in relation to “Kosovar Albanian,” and the expectation that there would be no humanity shared between the two individuals because the differences that divide them are too strong. They share no roots; they have no commonalities. However, in light of the possible ignorance of the photographer to their ethnicities, the title may simply indicate that as foreigners in a foreign land, their roots have been ripped from their foundation, and therefore they affix poorly to the ground and land in which they live.

Another compelling plot development takes place when a Serb woman, Marija, and Albanian man, Fatmir, attend a presentation entitled “Serbia v. Kosovo: No Acceptance/No Repentance,” which is an embodiment of the European position on the conflict between Serbia and Kosovo. Following the presentation, the Serbian and Albanian characters are asked questions about their wartime experiences. In the interview, Western preconceived notions about what it means to be a Serb and what it means to be an Albanian become clear, and when Marija declares “We are all Albanians,” Fatmir replies, “Some of us more than others,” causing the audience to laugh. This scene attempts to show how the paradigms of the West contrasted with the reality of what was actually happening for those on the ground in Serbia, and how prejudice and preconception only obfuscate and distort realities, rather than reflecting the truth. For all the demonstrations of individual Serbs against the regime’s actions in
Kosovo, the West bound all Serbs together in collective guilt and glossed over appeals for differentiation.

This scene enters into a dialogue with Slavenka Drakulić’s May 20, 1999 Nation article “We Are All Albanians,” in which she responds to a letter written by Arsenijević to a Croatian friend in Zagreb who believed the Serbs lacked remorse for Albanians in Kosovo. The text of the letter is included in Drakulić’s piece:

On account of lack of pity for the fate of Kosovo Albanians, I know (from my own experience—and I know that I have no bad feelings whatsoever directed toward anybody, least of all Albanians) that it is very hard to care about somebody else’s problems if you are personally experiencing major problems of your own at the same moment. There is no favoritism in this society. Everybody is too busy surviving here to be able to feel any remorse.... Remorse is a privilege of the well-nourished, clean and civilized. And we are all Albanians here. All of us: Serbs, Montenegrins, Hungarians, Slovaks.... Poor, underfed, degraded, oppressed. And I mean ALL of us, even those who have supported Milošević with all their heart through all these years of terrible hell. (Drakulić, 1999)

Knowing the content of the letter adds another layer to the press conference scene with Marija and Fatmir, and readers familiar with that letter would have grasped that, whatever the attitudes of Serbs in Serbia, the Western stance would have remained firmly entrenched. In this Western construction, Serbs are collectively at fault, regardless of the positions of individual Serbs.

Hence, when, in Predator, Arsenijević recalls his letter, and by extension Drakulić’s article, he turns the Western paradigm on its head by showing that “Albanian” holds no meaning for the Western nations, other than a redemption of their collective “remorse,” presumably for their inaction in the conflicts in Bosnia and Croatia (Johnstone, 2002). This idea is given a voice in Predator when the audience laughs at
Marija’s remark. She is simply trying to express that they all suffered under Milošević, the same idea Arsenijević was conveying in the letter to his friend, the essence of which was misrepresented and misunderstood by Drakulić and the West.

The scene between Marija and Fatmir skillfully constructs a heretofore unspoken dialogue between the West and Serbia, giving each the chance, albeit a small amount space, to present their arguments. However, more than anything, the work as a whole expresses the importance of the individuality of experiences, thoughts, and actions. Preserving the importance of the individual, which advances the agenda so important to the young and educated class in Serbia because it removes guilt and responsibility from the collective (the amorphous mass of Serbs), and respects the wishes, expectations, and opinions of the individual.

Arsenijević is careful to project an image of fairness and inclusiveness in his work, and there are only two portrayals of the Yugoslav wars in his work: the woman who sees her mother protesting against Milošević on television and the scene where the Kosovar Albanian tries to call his father, only to find out that Serbs are squatting in his family’s apartment. Through these two portrayals the novel acknowledge Serbia’s role in the war and that Serbs of all generations were protesting against Milošević, illustrating that opposition to those in power existed throughout society.

Vidojković’s The Claws chronicles how much the Serbs were actually suffering and how Serbs were trying to stand up against their government, even though they were failing. In addition, Predator illustrates that the Serbian population was not and is not a monolith, despite those continued projections of the West onto Serbia. The work includes a panoply of Serbian characters, some of whom are detailed above. Also important is that
he positions the Serbs within the greater context of Yugoslav psychology, by positioning Serbian, Bosnian and Albanian stories together.

Though the work is clearly an effort to address the aftermath of war in general, it is particularly focused on the aftermath of the Yugoslav wars. The historical span of the short stories provides a space to examine them and draw conclusions about them, which he indirectly does, not just through the protagonist, Nihil, but through the characters themselves whose displacement is the direct result of the wars or political environment that caused the wars. Other characters in Predator include a couple in Britain, and a Serbian woman and a German man, and former television star James Rice, stage name Oahu Jim, who has decided to die, and because he is a vorarephile, he would like Nihil Musa to eat him alive, an act which is detailed in the penultimate story. All of the stories relate back to Nihil Musa in some way. He is a cosmopolitan citizen of the world, having resided in the following countries: Iraq, and specifically Halabja, where the chemical war in 1988 changed his life forever; England; Denmark; and the U.S., where the work concludes. The transnational nature of Nihil Musa is replicated by nearly all of the characters in the stories who are also transient, including those Kurds persecuted because of their minority status.59

Though at first glance Predator may seem a clean break with the works that established Arsenijević as an important generational writer, but it relates to those other works in that many of the refugee characters are from nations that composed the former Yugoslavia and are the same generation of the main characters in In the Hold. Wartime

59 The Kurds in Predator are even more obscure minorities—they are Yazid Kurds, a non-populous group who have their own religion and speak a language other than Arabic. They, like other Kurds, however, lack a homeland.
realities from Yugoslavia are also featured in the work, and detailed in the ways in which
the wars changed individuals. By focusing on a Kurdish minority and how Nihil’s once
idyllic life is transformed into a horrific nightmare because of the 1988 gas attack on
Halabja, Arsenijević inserts the Yugoslav wars into a larger, global context and
ultimately takes the Balkans out of obscurity, and relates the Yugoslav wars to other
horrific wars and attacks in the 20th century, illustrating the Yugoslav wars did not
happen in a vacuum, despite the way they were presented throughout Western media. In
addition, the complex characters in Predator illustrate that “every criminal is not simply a
criminal and that every victim isn’t just a victim” (tportal.hr, 2008)60

This realist work illustrates many of the characteristics of the literature of the
younger generation of writers, and incorporates some of the (neo)realist aesthetics
outlined in Vladušić’s work and as it relays the minute details in individual lives, giving
each significant character a biography, (albeit incomplete for some characters) through an
unnamed, unbiased narrator of limited knowledge that simply records events. In addition,
this work also incorporates the war into the background of the work, which is a detail that
Đerić includes in his description of contemporary Realism with the “assured I.” This
blending of aesthetics also comes through the fact that incidental characters do appear.
One example comes from an unnamed Serb’s rants in stream of conscious letters to an
unnamed recipient and in a conversation when the Albanian refugee living in Denmark
attempts to contact his father, only to be greeted by Serbs who have been squatting in his
family apartment since the war in Kosovo. We do not know who the people are who
answer the phone. We only know that they are Serbs. The same is true of the letter

60 <http://www.tportal.hr/kultura/knjizevnost/2917/Vladimir-Arsenijevic-Predator.html>
writers mentioned above. The most complete biography is given to the main character, Nihil Musa, who is introduced in the first story but whose detailed biography appears in two subsequent stories. What these various forms indicate though is that *Predator* is a blend of genres, and includes traditional short stories, short stories within short stories, stream of consciousness rants, a modern-day interpretation of the epistolary story, including both traditional letter and email formats, and a non-linear chronology that challenges the traditional constructs of 19th century Realism, but provides diverse genres for the exploration of the (neo)realist aesthetic.

Regarding the short stories in *Predator*, each story could theoretically stand on its own; however, when the stories are conjoined, *Predator* resembles a novel for its attention to the development, biography, motivation, and psychology of the majority of characters. Because of the hybridity of this work, it cannot be neatly pinned to a genre. In addition, the non-linear chronology and the realist aesthetic also raises questions about the nature of the work in comparison to the works of Arsenijević’s peers. The structural beginning and end of the short story collection are, in essence, the beginning and ending of the narration. However, the stories are not chronological. Arsenijević’s play with genre and chronology may hint at a turn in his realist aesthetic. After all, his *In the Hold* marked the return of the realist aesthetic in Serbian fiction works, and *Predator* is also pioneering as it indicates that it is substance, not structure nor genre that dictates the realist, or (neo)realist aesthetic.

As *Predator* illustrates, Realism remains the dominant mode of expression for the younger generation of writers, despite the return, or in some cases continued adherence, to Postmodernism of the previous generation. Historically, the emergence of Realism in
19th century Serbia was the result of rapid change, and came into prominence when consciousness of self and country (i.e., nation and national identity) was attempting “to use language to get beyond language, to discover some non-verbal truth out there...depended in large measure on changing notions of what is ‘out there,’ of how best to ‘represent it’” (Walder, 1995: 240). The resurgence of Realism in Serbia therefore indicates that great change is once again sweeping through Serbia, and in this case it is the younger generation that is taking up the cause (Najdanović, 1962). These realist works are important in how they relate to genre and aesthetic preference and show that the younger generation is attempting to understand their present through recalling their very recent past.
Conclusion: The Confluence of Culture and Identity

Apart from shared language, cultural identity during Yugoslavia revolved around a few cultural products whose narratives were dictated by the state. As I have noted and as has been amply documented, these attempts at creating an overarching Yugoslav identity failed. However, the use of cultural products to shape culture has persisted as a tactic of those in power throughout the region. Through their attempts failed at creating an identity around which all Yugoslav citizens could coalesce, the notion of promoting a particular set of ideological goals for identity formation through cultural products, was an idea that has been embraced within the post-Yugoslav space. In fact, the cultural products that I have surveyed in this dissertation are, indeed, the same cultural institutions used by the makers of Yugoslav culture to impress an identity onto the Yugoslavs, namely literature, film, and media. Through these outlets, those in power in Yugoslavia set forth a goal of thwarting the individual national identities into exchange for one over-arching Yugoslav identity.

Products that I have analyzed in this dissertation provide narratives for the tumultuous path that Serbia has proceeded down since the Yugoslav wars. These cultural products provide forums for debate over the course, or potential course, of Serbian identity, and attempt to challenge the tarnished, one-dimensional image of Serbia, though what they wish to project out varies greatly depending on the particular set of goals and ideals that the artisan espouses.
That is not to say that Serbian identity is solely the result of artisans, because this analysis would be lacking if I were to disregard the role of those in power as they relate to the propagation of a particular view through political means. However, it is not the will of those in power that dominate, but rather the will of those who create that seems to be effecting the changes in cultural identity in Serbia.

In contrast to Yugoslav methods, Serbia’s quest to define its identity in the post-war post-Milošević era is currently an exercise that is not simply the result of canonical, top down ways of thinking about methods of cultural production, as it was in Yugoslavia. Quite contrary to former methods, artisans are playing a role in the construction of the new identity despite lack of official support; it is no longer a prerequisite. Through their works, they refute or endorse a particular set of beliefs or cultural imaginations and their positions are bolstered by individual choices of those cultural products that Serbian citizens regularly choose. That individuals regularly consume these cultural products proves that the ideologies that are presented and bolstered in them have great cultural capital within society, and are creating a codified definition of the aspirations for the direction of Serbian identity.

Results of that dialogue have produced articulations of an identity that are dominated by two primary poles, but the intricacies of those poles are multifaceted and multilayered. Currently, the lack of primacy of either preference indicates that as the interplay of Local and West remains in cultural products, so it does in Serbian society as well. The persistence of the primacy of tenets of Local and West aid in the continued interchanges on Serbian culture that have never been able to be realized in such a publicly disclosed way. In that way, the secession wars of the 1990s can be considered a
catalyst for renaissance in Serbia as well because it precipitated a debate on Serbian culture, similar to other nations in the region, specifically those that were former members of Yugoslavia. This rebirth continues in Serbia today and can be observed throughout various layers of society. Literature, film, and media provide an immediate expression of a particular position or point of view, and are therefore uniquely situated to directly convey a particular set of ideological goals. What’s more, these media have been tantamount to the formation of culture and identity since the inception of the second Yugoslavia. And, though not an exhaustive analysis, the similar positions presented by filmmakers, media publications and authors indicate stable viewpoints that have not only come into being since the 1990s, but also fundamentally remain within the society. Individuals are assuming their responsibility in the quest to articulate and secure a definition of Serbian cultural identity, and others are following suit, therefore their positions are solidified as unquestionably intrinsic to contemporary instances of the post-war Serbian identity. As such, cultural products will certainly continue to play a role in setting the agenda for Serbia’s future; whether that agenda will ultimately be controlled by progressive or regressive forces remains to be seen.
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Appendix A: Filmography

The Border Post/Karaula (UK / Serbia and Montenegro / Croatia / Slovenia / Republic of Macedonia / Bosnia-Herzegovina / Yugoslavia, Rajko Grlić, 2006)

Goose Feather/Jesen stiže Dunjo moja (Serbia, Ljubiša Samardžić, 2004)

Ivan’s Nameday Celebration/Ivkova slava (Serbia, Zdravo Šotra, 2005)

Mile against the Transition/Mile vs. Tranzicija (Serbia, Pavle Vuckovic / Ivan Zivkovic Radivoje Andric/Dragan Sarenac, 2003-)

Seven and a Half/Sedam i po (Serbia, Miroslav Momčilović, 2005)

Thunderbirds!/Munje! (Serbia, Radivoje Andrić, 2001)

When I Grow Up, I’m Going to be Kangaroo/Kad porastem biću Kengur (Serbia, Radivoje Andrić, 2004)

Where the Lemon Flower Blooms/Gde cveta limun žut (Serbia, Zdravko Šotra, 2006)

Who’s Singin’ Over There/Ko to tamo peva (Yugoslavia, Slobodan Šijan, 1980)

Wounds/Rane (Serbia, Srdjan Dragojević, 1998)

Zona Zamfirova (Serbia, Zdravko Šotra, 2002)
Appendix B: Novi Sad Postcards from 1999 Bombing
Figure 1. Postcards from 1999 Novi Sad Bobings
Figure 1 continued

C

D
Figure 1 continued

Get Lucky.

cigarettes not available.
don't know when they will be.
nor at what time.
nor where you can buy them.
thank you!

E

shelter

F